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BORDER MAKING, GEOGRAPHY, AND THE LIMITS OF EMPIRE IN THE NORTHWESTERN HIMALAYA, 1846-1962

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how colonial border-making practices in British India changed pre-colonial conceptions of territory and shaped postcolonial borderlands in South Asia. It focuses on the disputed Indo-Tibetan borderland of Ladakh, now a fragmented part of Kashmir that long served as a gateway between the plains of India and Central Asia. The project begins with a survey of pre-colonial understandings of space in Ladakh. By examining an array of Ladakhi, Urdu, and English sources, the dissertation first reveals how local cosmologies, seasonal trade, and pastoralism shaped indigenous conceptions of territory. It then analyzes the strategies that the British colonizers deployed to transform the region into a frontier: boundary commissions, surveys, road building, trade regulation, and the production and restriction of "trans-frontier" information. Finally, it illustrates the problems produced by these processes, exposing the troubled inheritance of imperial frontiers for the modern nation-state.

Although borders and borderlands are ubiquitous in the modern world, historians and political scientists often restrict their analyses to the political rivalries between imperial powers and their successor states. In so doing, they tend to overlook the physical practices that generated what are now often considered to be "peripheral" spaces. By drawing on insights from anthropology, geography, and environmental studies, I argue that the use of geography by the British imperial state reveals the increasingly intimate relationship between imperial security and the process of conceptualizing and making legible political territory. This relationship reflects a major spatial reorientation of the modern period, a geopolitical vision of the world as a set of coterminous territories tied to, and dependent upon, geographical features. This history also suggests that on its periphery at least, the postcolonial state is often still an imperial one.

The dissertation contains five chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion, each rooted in an analysis of an array of English, Ladakhi, Tibetan, Urdu, and French sources.

The first chapter examines pre-colonial understandings of space, boundaries, and frontiers in Ladakh. This chapter provides both a brief historical background to the making and unmaking of independent Ladakh, and an exploration of four major indigenous *modes of seeing* northwestern Himalayan space: *cosmological*, *political, linguistic*, and *material*. In illustrating multiple historical modes of seeing by indigenous historical actors, I suggest that the single, bounded entity called Ladakh was primarily a product of imperial possession in the nineteenth century. I am not arguing that there was not an earlier political entity known as Ladakh, but that indigenous conceptions of its space were more pluralistic than the subsequent territory envisioned by its imperial rulers. The comingling of cosmological, political, linguistic, and material modes of seeing produced identities that failed to map neatly onto maps. This chapter not only draws on the limited extant pre-colonial Ladakhi sources, but on an array of anthropological, linguistic, and archeological sources as well.

The second chapter draws on material from numerous colonial archives to examine the rationale behind early attempts to create a complete border within the northwestern Himalaya. These attempts were rooted in efforts to read the landscape and transcribe it onto paper using generalized principles that were meant to mitigate territorial disputes and would eventually grant the trans-frontier map unprecedented authority. But as this chapter will show, the determining and drawing of boundary lines was a task fraught with unexpected divisions and contradictions—both geographical and political. In short, the failure to successfully "border" the northwestern Himalaya was primarily the result of on-going tensions between ideas of natural

frontiers and strategic ones, frontiers ostensibly unified by the logic of the so-called "scientific" frontier.

The third chapter focuses on road building and the British Joint Commissioners in Ladakh, shifting from geographical information gathering to its technological, commercial, and political applications. It begins with the extension of the reach of the British colonial state into the northwestern Himalaya, largely through the construction of the Hindustan-Tibet Road and the Leh-Yarkand Treaty Road. Roads were conduits that became synonymous with communication. The early British Joint Commissioners stationed at Leh, beginning in 1870, produced substantial journals and trade statistics to detail commercial potential and communication with Central Asia and Tibet. As the commissioners were responsible for supervising the Indo-Yarkand and Indo-Tibetan trade routes, their primary tasks were to regulate the movement of people on these routes, and to ensure the roads were in good working order. But they were also concerned with gathering intelligence from Central Asia and Tibet. The records of the British Joint Commissioners highlight the simultaneous circulation of frontier expertise and the increased restrictions those experts imposed on the movement of "trans-frontier" people and materials. Here we see the interplay of technology, commercial expansion, and security, and the limits placed on each by the environment of the Himalaya. The chapter reveals the sharp rise of security concerns in late nineteenth century and the changing role of roads: from conduits of trade to instruments of imperial security.

The fourth chapter focuses on two different ways of "reading" the landscape of the northwestern Himalaya. The first evolved out of geographical exploration and results in an increasingly systematic body of environmental knowledge that became standardized and widely circulated in gazetteers, route books, and intelligence reports—reflecting the development of a

geographical episteme. This increasingly technocratic, and systematic, mode of seeing territory built off of earlier surveys that crafted the unified territory of India. But the cartographical and informational unification of India also produced a sense of understanding in the empire's capitals that would belie the deeper uncertainty of boundaries in the frontier locales. This tension is visible in a number of archival examples of geographical uncertainties that produced jurisdictional problems for the state: disputes over pre-colonial Ladakhi territorial claims in Tibet, grazing rights for semi-nomadic populations, taxation, and water rights. These examples offer an alternative reading of the landscape, one that is much less legible and reveals earlier pre-colonial modes of seeing that remained rooted in the Himalayan locale.

The fifth chapter re-examines boundaries, roads, and changing geographical epistemes in the context of the frontier experts like Thomas Holdich who emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and were increasingly central to imperial policy. These experts reflect the intimate relationship between geography and the state, and reveal the networks through which geographical information fused with political and military policy. The chapter focuses on the multiple categories of "trans-frontier," whether men, maps, or information, and the impact growing security concerns had on the need to "close" the frontier and restrict access to information about it. The chapter also examines the engagement of the frontier experts with the Royal Geographical Society and its *Geographical Journal*. The co-habitation of geographical studies and international political concerns reflected a new political mode of seeing the region and the world—geopolitics—that was in turn bequeathed to India at independence.

Finally, the conclusion takes up the state of the region before the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and illustrates how colonial practices produced a disputed postcolonial borderland in independent

India. It re-examines local perspectives and the political re-articulation of Ladakh as a crucial frontier of India against threats from China and Pakistan.

This dissertation makes four core interventions. It brings together macro-level historical studies on imperial frontiers and regional work on the northwestern Himalaya to examine the ways in which multiple modes of seeing space can cohabitate and conflict with each other, producing borderlands that simultaneously reflect the hegemony of the nation-state and the historical forces that undermine its limits. It also challenges political-theoretical and historical scholarship on territory that discounts the increasingly prominent role of applied geography in general, and border-making practices, specifically. Instead, this dissertation shows how geography played an intimate role in imperial state formation and, when coupled with growing security concerns, gave birth to a new, geopolitical way of envisioning space. Thirdly, it introduces an alternative approach to borderlands studies, one focused on the production of the border itself rather than the socio-cultural aspects that produce a broader borderland region. And lastly, it offers a new approach to the global history of frontiers, one that reveals the colonial practices and ideas that helped to shape postcolonial borders. By approaching the history of borders and frontiers as a complex of practices and ideas one can better understand the active legacies of empires in today's postcolonial nation-states.

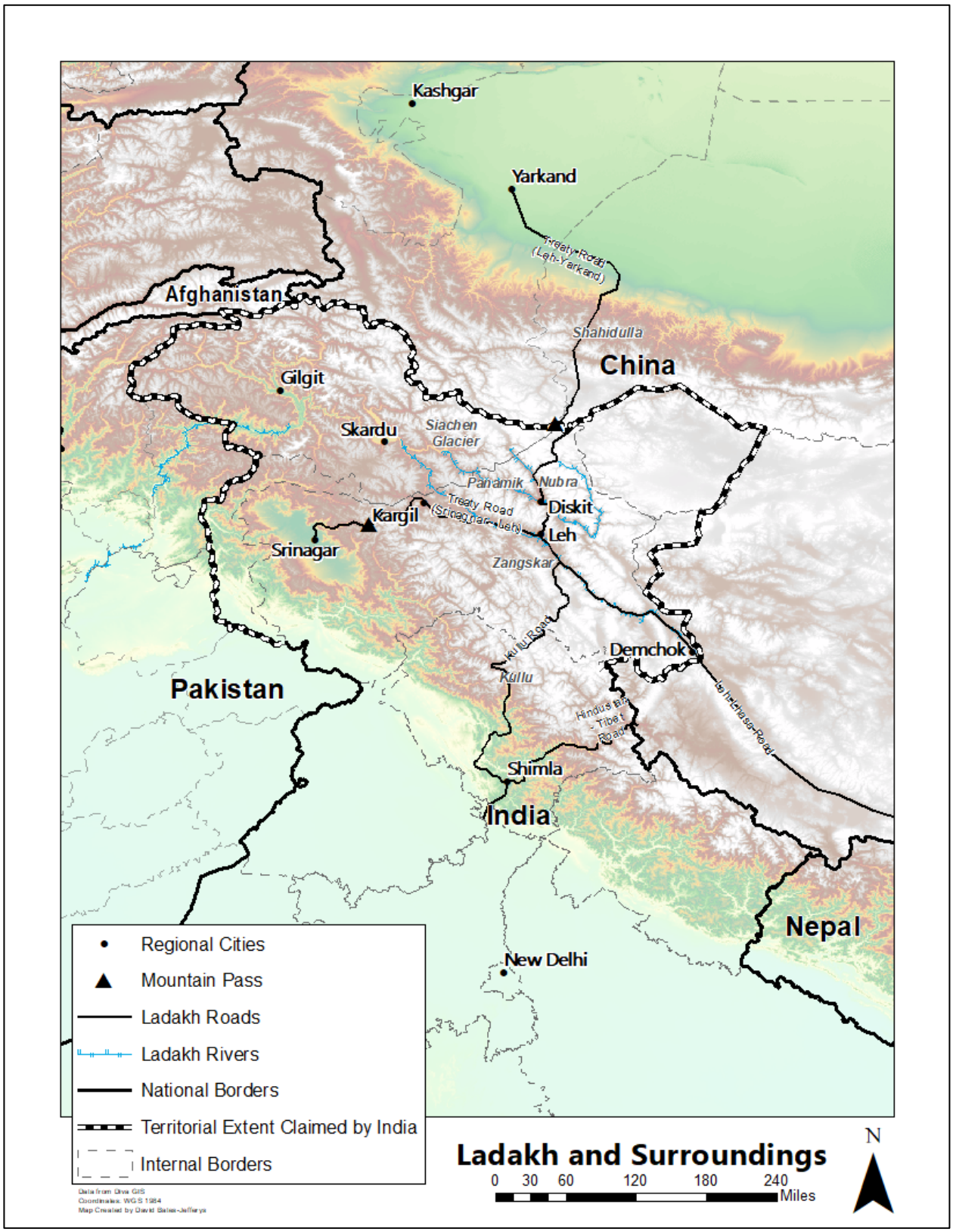


Figure 0.1 Ladakh and its surroundings (with terrain). Map by David Bates-Jeffreys.

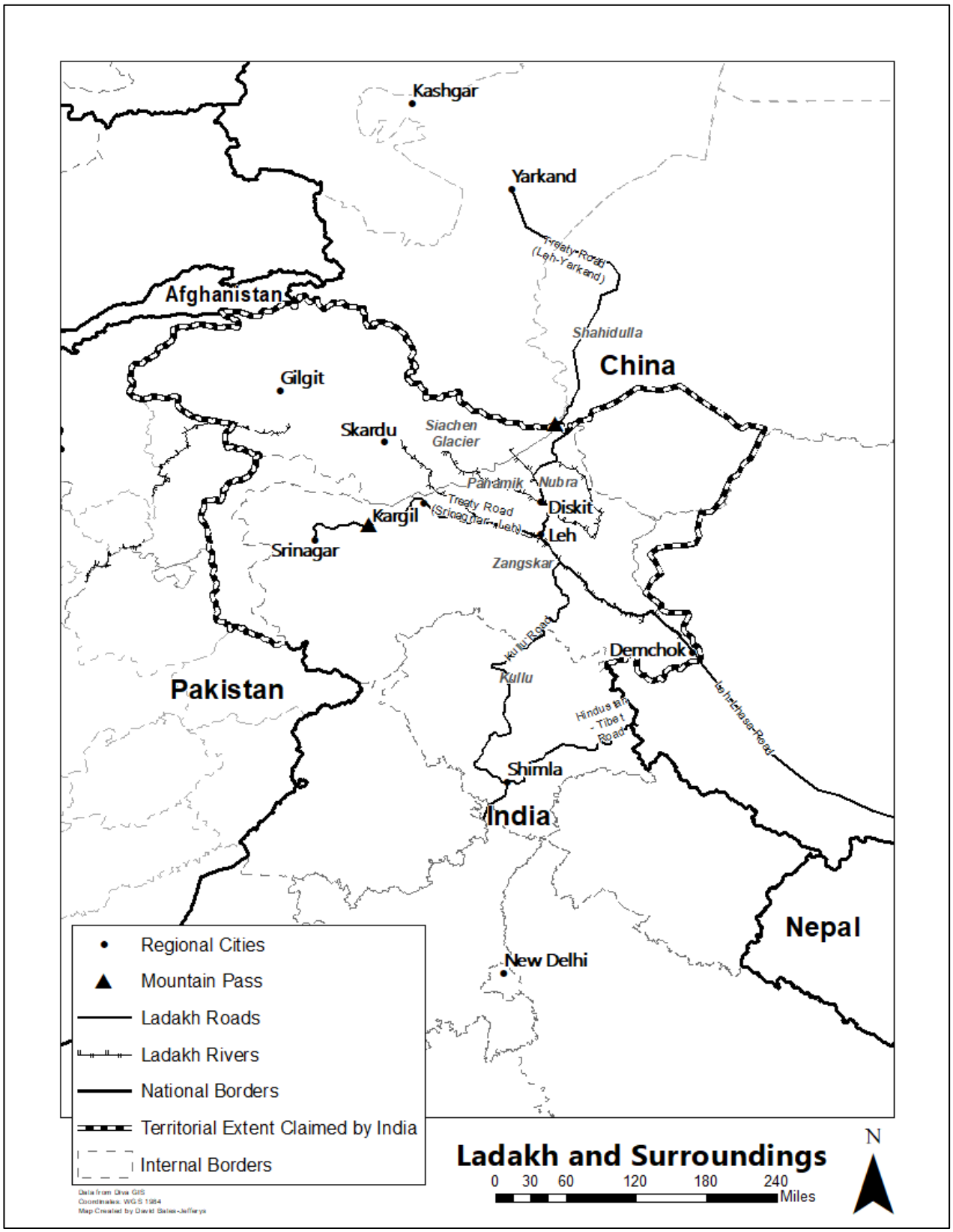


Figure 0.2 Ladakh and its surroundings. Map by David Bates-Jeffreys.

PREFACE

Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things.[1]
—Robert Browning (1855)

In a dark corner of the main reading room at the National Archives of India in New Delhi hangs an unusual map. Rendered in the standard colors of political maps of the late British Empire, this 1950 Survey of India production has one peculiar feature. In one very large segment of its northern extreme there is no sign of a border. Instead, the ubiquitous pink wash signaling imperial control gradually fades into the empty white space of northwestern Tibet, a region now generally referred to as the Aksai Chin. In this Switzerland-sized high-altitude region the map showed no borderline and no stark color contrast to delimit territorial control, nothing but the official acknowledgement of an absence. For the colonial and early postcolonial governments of India, the empire's northwestern Himalayan border was a "known unknown," to evoke a hierarchy of ignorance from a more recent moment of imperial hubris.[2] Numerous maps produced by the Survey of India from the late nineteenth century up to, and shortly after, independence and partition in 1947 show similar details (Figure 0.3).

[1] Robert Browning, "Bishop Blougram's Apology," in *Browning's Men and Women, 1855* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 141. The edge Browning speaks of in his poem is moral ambiguity, but ambiguous edges are equally applicable to the history of border making, as this dissertation aims to show.

[2] Though earlier instances of the phrase can be found, it was made famous by President George W. Bush's Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, during a Department of Defense news briefing on February 12, 2002. Rumsfeld used the term in response to questions of evidence linking the Iraqi government alleged supply of weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups.

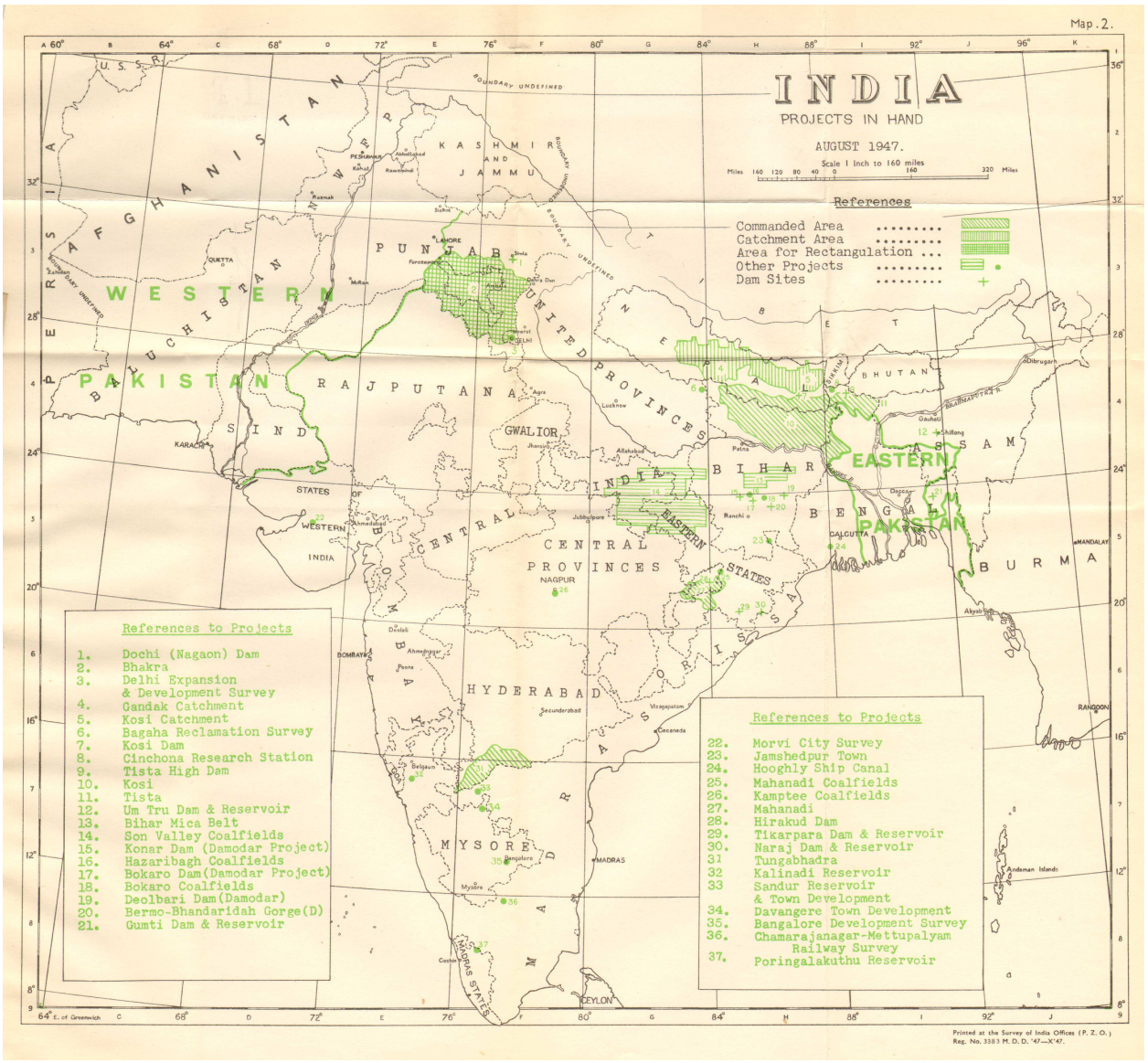


Figure 0.3 Survey of India, “India: Projects in Hand.” August 1947. Source: Pahar.in.

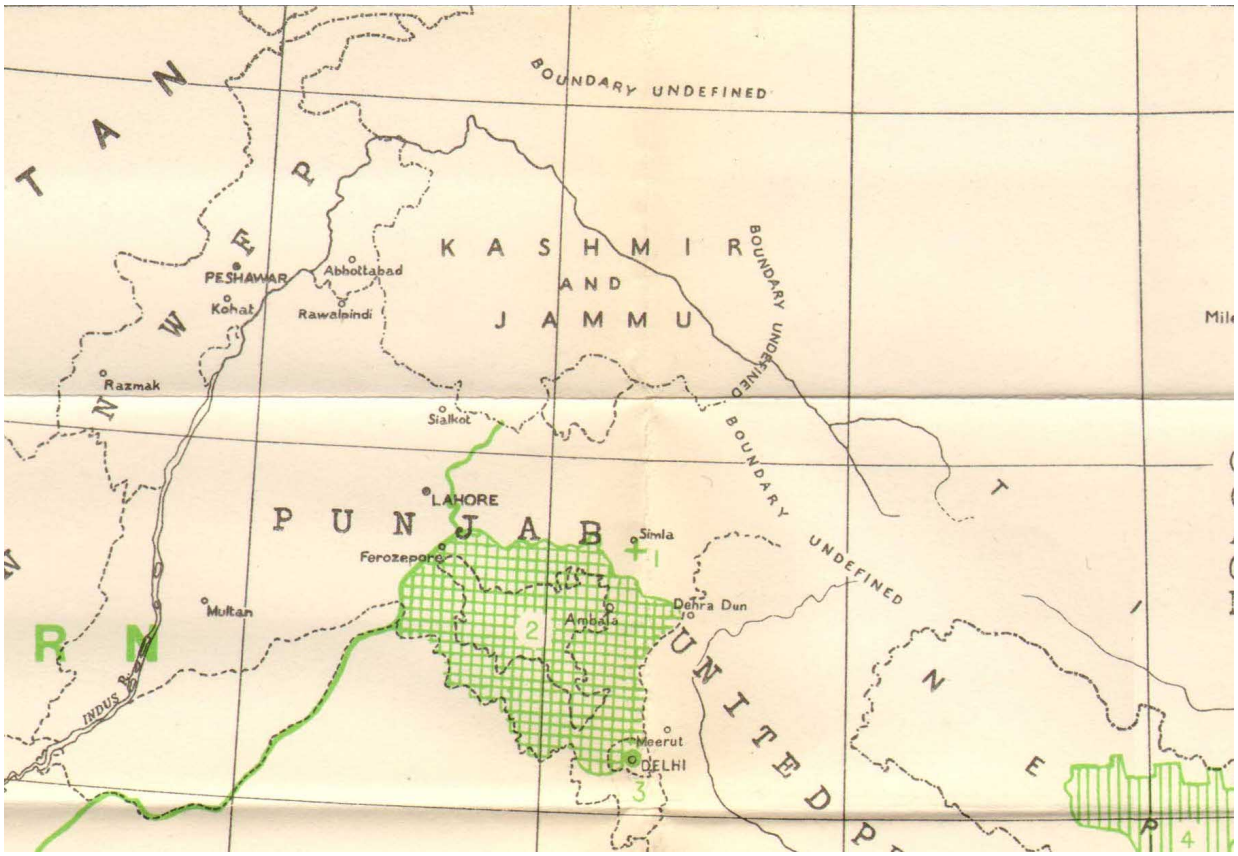


Figure 0.3a Detail of Figure 0.3 showing "Boundary Undefined" floating across the northwestern Himalaya.

Not all political maps of the newly independent state were as revealing as Figure 0.3, or the one hanging with quiet irony in the National Archives of India. But whether represented on maps or not, the ambiguity of the northwestern border proved intolerable to the young nation-state in the decades after independence. The imperial legacy of an undemarcated boundary—an ambiguity that troubled, but was tolerated by the British Raj—eventually culminated in a deadly face-off across the desolate Aksai Chin in 1962.[3] This brief Sino-Indian War imposed the first effective borderline in the region, referred to in India as the "Line of Actual Control" (LAC)—

[3] As well as the equally inhospitable terrain of the northeastern Himalaya in the region now a part of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, but referred to by the Chinese government as Zàngnán ("South Tibet").

though the line has yet to be demarcated by boundary commissions from either side.[4] Not only is the vast territory of this virtually unhabited region between the world's two most populous nations still contested, its cartographic representation has become a major concern for the Indian state. In 2015 the Indian government banned Al Jazeera from the television airways for five days in response to the news networks' failure to show territories now occupied by Pakistan and China in the northwestern Himalaya as part of India, a move the government labeled a "cartographic aggression."[5] And a year later legislation was unsuccessfully introduced in India's national assembly to criminalize maps failing to represent India's claimed border.[6] In responding to these "aggressions," the government of India was also responding to a legacy of colonial borders and the inheritance of an imperial frontier. The empire had tolerated a degree of ambiguity in its frontiers and borders that the new nation-state could not. But despite the existential significance of the young nation-state's border, the means by which that border was created—or failed to be created—was a legacy of empire and the way the empire came to view its territory. This book contends that the twentieth century global preoccupation with border making is not simply a function of the modern nation-state; it is the result of the technical practices of empire. But this legacy should not imply a neat trajectory from imperial frontier to national border. Instead, examining the complex array of imperial border-making practices reveals an uneven and non-linear transformation of space. It is the purpose of this work to show how colonial border-making practices rooted in changing conceptions of geography actively

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[4] Shaurya Karanbir Gurung, "India and China Need to Demarcate LAC," *The Economic Times*, September 6, 2017, http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-and-china-need-to-demarcate-lac/articleshow/60383451.cms.

[5] Avaneesh Pandey, "India Bans Al Jazeera for 5 Days Over 'Incorrect' Kashmir Map," *International Business Times*, April 23, 2015.

[6] Officially titled "The Geospatial Information Bill of 2016."

shaped conceptions of territory and produced borderlands. The coeval development of border-making practices, geography, and imperial security reveal a new, geopolitical way of envisioning space. This history also suggests that on its periphery at least, the postcolonial state is still, in many ways, an imperial one.

INTRODUCTION

Whether we acknowledge them or not, the territorial borders of our modern world still shape the narratives historians write. These ubiquitous lines of political control have become "global uniformities" emerging with what C.A. Bayly termed the "birth of the modern world."[1] The locations of today's borders are also often linear legacies of empire that reflect the territorialization of the globe in the nineteenth century. And while many historians have recently attempted to transcend these territorial limits by turning (or returning) to global scales of analysis, the persistence of questions of state formation at the core of even the most global

[1] C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

histories resists the boundary-dissolving tendencies of transnational history—though the history of modern border making is itself a decidedly transnational one.[2]

But for all their continued relevance and ubiquity, territorial borders are rarely examined through the historical practices and ideas that actually produced them, although recent work in political theory reflects a surge of interest in the (mostly twentieth-century) building of border infrastructures, particularly as they relate to the themes of globalization, migration, security, and

[2] Some recent historical work, like Manu Goswami's *Producing India : From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), has examined the coeval production of territory and nation, thus emphasizing the very modern notion of borders to nationalist projects. But for more Western-centric historians who are less concerned with the active lives of nations, histories constrained by national borders are increasingly seen as artifacts of older forms of historical writing. While universal history marked the spatial—and philosophical—scale beyond those nineteenth century histories centered on the nation-state, such macrohistorical work saw few practitioners by the second half of the twentieth century, with the notable exception of William McNeil. The recent return to world—or global—history is perhaps marked by Bright and Geyer's "World History in a Global Age," *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 4 (October 1995): 1034–1060. Subsequently, global histories have proliferated. This has included works like C.A. Bayly's *The Birth of the Modern World* that sought to construct macrohistorical patterns and narratives, and historiographical work, such as Lynn Hunt's *Writing History in the Global Era* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2014) and Sebastian Conrad's *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), that has sought to examine the genre itself. In a more political vein, David Armitage and Jo Guldi's *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014) argued for a "bigger is better" approach to ensure history's continued relevance in the public sphere. The varied and vociferous responses to their *Manifesto* suggested that historians are, by and large, still quite skeptical of this approach. This resistance has not prevented a few ambitious historians extending global history's temporal reach back to the limits of the human species (called "deep history"), and to the very limits of the universe ("big history"). For early examples of these last two recent genres, see Daniel Lord Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2008) and David Christian, "The Return of Universal History," *History and Theory* 49, no. 4 (December 2010): 6–27, respectively.

capital flow.[3] For historians, however, territorial borders are too often assumed to be the diplomatic or cartographic byproducts of imperial rivalries and state formation, ignored on the ground until walls were erected and military guards positioned along them.[4] But borders and borderlands, whether real or imagined, are spaces and ideas that are produced over time through particular practices. These practices may result in built structures—what the philosopher Thomas Nail has recently called "border regimes"—but these objects are rooted in much more significant changes in conceptions of space, geography, territory, and the concept of the border itself.[5]

Similarly, acknowledging the mutable quality of borderlands should not imply a neat, progressive trajectory within a given border's history. This teleological tendency has been too

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[3] In political theory and philosophy, recent examples include: Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books, 2010); Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013); Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), and Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Border* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Those works that do take into account the historical *longue durée* of borders tend to focus on European conceptions of borders (Elden 2013), though sometimes in an imperial context (Maier 2016): Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); and Charles Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging since 1500* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[4] There are some exceptions. Notable historical works on specific borders include: Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) and Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen, eds., *Borderlines and Borderlands: Political Oddities at the Edge of the Nation-State* (Plymouth, U.K.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010). In South Asia: Partition has seen quite a lot of historical scrutiny, though the process of partitioning India actually reflected very little concern over the lines of partition as borders as Joya Chatterji and others have shown: Joya Chatterji, "The Fashioning of a Frontier: The Radcliffe Line and Bengal's Border Landscape, 1947-52," *Modern Asian Studies* 33, no. 1 (February 1999): 185–242; Ritu Menon, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998); Lucy Chester, "The 1947 Partition: Drawing the Indo-Pakistani Boundary," *American Diplomacy* 7, no. 1 (February 2002); and Willem van Schendel, "Stateless in South Asia: The Making of the India-Bangladesh Enclaves," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 1 (February 2002): 115–47.

[5] Nail, *Theory of the Border*.

often asserted or assumed in scholarship on borderlands, including Michel Baud and Willem van Schendel's path-breaking essay, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," which is often considered to have inaugurated borderlands history beyond North America.[6] I aim to show why such progressive approaches to borderland histories are flawed by examining the intermingling of concrete practices of border making, idealized border-making principles, and abstract fears and fantasies concerning the categories of frontier, border (or boundary), and territory. While borders are invariably the ideal outcome of these practices, examining the processes and interactions between frontier formation and border making shows that the transformation is anything but linear. Archival records reveal ongoing tensions between pre-colonial understandings of space and territory and colonial ones, as well as frequent discrepancies between the on-the-ground practices of surveyors and the ideal conception of borders formulated by administrators and geographers far from them. More significantly, I will show how the use of geography by the imperial state became intimately tied to security and the process of making legible political territory. This increasingly close relationship between geography and the imperial state reveals a major spatial reorientation of the modern period, a geopolitical vision that conceived of the world as a set of coterminous territories tied to, and dependent upon, geographical features.

To explore this transformation, this dissertation focuses on the history of the northwestern Himalaya, centered on Ladakh—now a fragmented part of India's Jammu and Kashmir State that long served as a gateway between the plains of India and Central Asia. It

[6] This is the principle critique of the path-breaking essay of modern borderlands studies by Michel Baud and Willem van Schendel. Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 211–42. They propose a "life cycle" of borders: moving from "infant" and "adolescent" stages to "adult," "declining," and "defunct" ones.

examines the colonial-era border-making practices that transformed a once central "exchange market" (*tibādilah kī manḍī*) and "crossroads of High Asia" into a fractured and disputed borderland.[7] At the heart of this transformation was the deployment of geography in the service of the imperial state. The British Government of India attempted to rationalize its territory through geographical science and, in so doing, work towards what James C. Scott has described as "the complete elimination of nonstate spaces."[8] Challenging work that either discounts the role of geography in the making of political territory, or ignores the interactions between local and transnational scales in that process, this dissertation argues that examining the reciprocal relationship between state-sponsored geography and border-making practices not only reveals the political roles played by ostensibly natural objects, but more significantly shows that imperial geography actually produced a new kind of state—one still visible along the edges of India today.

Central to the idealized practice of colonial border making was the transformation of space into territory through the development of surveying techniques, cartography, and boundary-making principles. Indigenous landscapes long conceived of in multiple and non-contiguous ways were rationalized through the development of principles that used systematized

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[7] The phrase "crossroads of High Asia" comes from Janet Rizvi's Janet Rizvi, *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), though she credits Pinto Narboo in her acknowledgements with the title. Others before and after Rizvi have made similar observations. Hashmatullah Khan Lakhnavi, the Dogra-appointed *wazīr-i-wazārat* (district administrator) of Ladakh in the early twentieth century, and a classic example of the "administrator-scholar," made similar observations on Ladakh's position as a nexus of trade between Central Asia and the plains of India in his *Tārīk̲h-i Jammūn, Laddāk̲h, aur Bāltistān*, 1968, 380. "Ladakh's city [Leh]," he wrote, "is an exchange market for traded goods from the plains of India and the mountainous regions of Chinese Turkistan and Lhasa" (*Ladāk̲h kā shaher turkistān chīnī aur lhasa ke māl tajārat ke mamālik Hind ke medānī aur ma'tdil darjah ke kohistanī 'laqah jāt ke sāmān tijārat ke sāth tibādilah kī manḍī he*). My translation.

[8] Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 10-11.

natural objects—mountains, rivers, and, most importantly, watersheds (which combined mountain and river systems). To facilitate this transformation, British surveying rendered land and water onto increasingly authoritative maps that, in turn, became political instruments. These maps also shaped how geographical information about territory and borders was systematically organized into manuals of governance—most noticeably in the imperial and district-level gazetteers produced by the government of India beginning in the latter nineteenth century. As more precise geographical information was collected along India's limits, greater efforts were employed to control the flow of goods and people across it, most directly by regulating all forms of communication through a network of frontier roads. Finally, the increased volume of intelligence on the regions beyond the ideal border by a growing volume of experts induced the state to expend more resources on establishing and regulating the border itself. In the process, a new geopolitical approach to global territory, security, and geography emerged. This complex of practices and ideas about borders and border space was inherited by the Indian state at independence.

But in the case of the northwestern Himalaya—as in much of South Asia's borderland[9]—the ideal imperial border-making practices failed to achieve the desired territorial legibility. The apparently fixed "water-parting" lines of the limits of the "Indus watershed system" that were used to determine the northern boundaries of India had a suspicious tendency to move as more precise surveying complicated the assumption that the highest mountain ranges and watersheds

[9] For the history of ambiguous or non-existent borders in the northeastern Himalaya, see Bérénice Guyot-Réchard, *Shadow States: India, China and the Himalayas, 1910-1962* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017). For the history of the Indo-Afghan and Afghan-Pakistan borderlands, see B. D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) and Elisabeth Leake, *The Defiant Border : The Afghan-Pakistan Borderlands in the Era of Decolonization, 1936-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

were coterminous. Changing rationales in frontier road building, and in regulating the movement of people and goods along them, also challenged the imperial state's ability to demarcate its border, as security concerns gradually replaced commercial goals. In fact, the desire to open up trade and communication with Central Asia paradoxically helped produce the security concerns that pushed the state to attempt to close and secure its border. And pre-existing historical relations between so-called "trans-frontier" peoples eroded the political meaning of the imposed imperial border and resisted its authority.

The dissertation begins with a survey of pre-colonial understandings of space in Ladakh. By examining an array of Ladakhi, Tibetan, Urdu, and English sources, the dissertation first reveals how local cosmologies, seasonal trade, and pastoralism shaped indigenous conceptions of territory. It then analyzes the strategies that the British administrators, engineers, and strategists deployed to transform the region into a frontier: boundary commissions, surveying and mapping, road building, trade regulation, and the production and restriction of "trans-frontier" information. Finally, it illustrates the problems produced by these processes, exposing the troubled inheritance of imperial frontiers for the modern nation-state.

This dissertation makes four core interventions. It brings together macro-level historical studies on imperial frontiers and regional work on the northwestern Himalaya to examine the ways in which multiple modes of seeing space can cohabitate and conflict with each other, producing borderlands that simultaneously reflect the hegemony of the nation-state and the historical forces that have undermined the state's power. It also challenges political-theoretical and historical scholarship on territory that discounts the increasingly prominent role of applied geography in general, and border-making practices, in particular. Instead, this dissertation shows how geography played an intimate role in imperial state formation and, when coupled with

growing security concerns, gave birth to a new, geopolitical way of envisioning space. Geography not only rationalized natural objects like rivers and mountains, it turned them into political tools. Thirdly, it introduces an alternative approach to borderlands studies, one focused on the production of the border itself rather than the socio-cultural aspects that produce an often-ill-defined borderland region. And lastly, it offers a new approach to the global history of frontiers, one that reveals the colonial practices and ideas that helped to shape postcolonial borders. By approaching the history of borders and frontiers as a complex of practices and ideas one can better understand the active legacies of empires in today's postcolonial nation-states. The following sections will discuss each of these interventions in greater detail.

I. Space

Unlike the many social scientists seeking to identify laws independent of space and time, historians have long acknowledged the heterogeneity of time as one of the distinguishing features of historical approaches to socio-political phenomena.[10] Less explicitly articulated are historical investigations of the heterogeneity of space. While many scholars have explored what Edward Said noted as "the extraordinary constitutive role of space in human affairs," historians,

[10]William H. Sewell, *The Logics of History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 9-10.

with some notable exceptions, have tended to shy away from applying theories of space and place to the fluctuating temporality of their subjects.[11]

Philosophical engagement with the often-unwieldy concept of space has led to an array of understandings of the term itself.[12] Michel de Certeau chose to define space in contrast to place: place was stable and specific, while space existed "when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables."[13] Other philosophers have described an inverse relation: space is uniform and static, while place is a far more fluid concept.[14] And Michel Foucault posited a distinction between utopias and heterotopias, the latter being places (as

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[11]Edward W. Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).; Notable exceptions among historians to the tendency to ignore concepts of space include: Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (Williamsburg, VA: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Daniel Lord Smail, *Imaginary Cartographies: Possession and Identity in Late Medieval Marseille* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); André Wink, "From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean: Medieval History in Geographic Perspective," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (n.d.): 416–45; Lauren A. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty : Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400--1900* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Sara Shneiderman, "Are the Central Himalayas in Zomia? Some Scholarly and Political Considerations across Time and Space," *Journal of Global History* 5 (2010): 289–312.

[12] For an overview of philosophical perspectives on space and place in the Western tradition, see Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013). Other notable works of philosophy on space would include: Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2007) and the posthumously published, Michel Foucault, "'Des Espace Autres [Of Other Spaces],'" *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (1984): 46–49. Also, central to this large body of literature would be: Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," in *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993); Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), and numerous scholarly writings on memory and place ushered in by the "cultural turn."

[13] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.

[14] For instance, Pierre Gassendi (1592-1633), whose articulations of the place/space distinction, according to Edward Casey, "emboldened Newton to make his own, still more decisive formulations" of space. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, 139.

opposed to utopias: literally "no place") where "all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted."[15] But regardless of the particular aspects of differentiation, across the Western philosophical tradition "space"—particularly since the seventeenth century—has been uniformly privileged over "place."[16]

This philosophical place/space distinction is also reflected in the discipline of geography, particularly with regard to the scholarly traditions associated with Carl O. Sauer and Yi-Fu Tuan (cultural and human geography, respectively). However, drawing too sharp a division overlooks the inherent instability of the idea of place and space over time.[17] "Place," for instance, often reflects tensions between localizing and universalizing forces within complex traditions. One need only examine the history of pilgrimage sites to see how many conceptions of place have existed (and co-existed) at the same locale over time.[18] Place and space should, instead, be viewed as co-constitutive categories.[19]

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[15] Foucault, "'Des Espace Autres [Of Other Spaces]'"; and Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: une archeology des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 9.

[16] This is the argument of Edward S. Casey in *The Fate of Place*.

[17] Carl O. Sauer, "The Morphology of Landscape," *University of California Publications in Geography* 2, no. 2 (1925): 19–53. The two most prominent works of Yi-Fu Tuan are *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentiss-Hall, 1974) and *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

[18] On the history of sites of Indian and Tibetan pilgrimage see, for instance, Toni Huber, *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage and the Tibetan Buddhist Reinvention of Buddhist India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Diana L. Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography* (New York: Harmony Books, 2012); and Alex McKay, *Kailas Histories: Renunciate Traditions and the Construction of Himalayan Sacred Geography* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

[19] To invoke one more philosophical authority on this point, Martin Heidegger famously noted "spaces receive their essential being from locales and not from 'space.'" In other words, abstract generalities are not only refracted through, but also constituted by particulars. Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 356.

Without getting into the details of differences across this vast body of scholarship, most contemporary scholars addressing the concepts of space and place would broadly agree on a point put most succinctly by Lefebvre: "If space is produced, then we are dealing with *history*."[20] But missing from much of this philosophical literature is a sense of space in historical time. Over the last few decades, however, a range of scholars have begun to interrogate the construction of space in historical context—particularly in terms of the modern state, the rise of nationalism, and the processes through which the state comes to "see" its population and territory. Scholars like the historian Thongchai Winichakul (1994), the political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott (1998, 2009), the historical sociologist Patrick Carroll (2006), and the political theorist and geographer Stuart Elden (2013) have illustrated the role of various geographical, technological, and political practices in the standardizing visions of the modern state.[21] And James Hevia's *Imperial Security State* (2012) detailed the role played by imperial military intelligence, surveying, and expertise in "disciplining the space of Asia" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[22] This growing interdisciplinary body of literature elucidates the evolution of techniques with which the state (imperial or otherwise) attempts to make its population and territory legible.[23]

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[20] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 46. Lefebvre's emphasis.

[21] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994); James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998) and Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*; Patrick Carroll, *Science, Culture and Modern State Formation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006); and Elden, *The Birth of Territory*.

[22] James Hevia, *Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[23] In the sense of the term "legibility" employed by James C. Scott in Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

In contrast, scholarship in the fields of Ladakhi, Tibetan, and Himalayan Studies has highlighted the deep influence of locality (or place) on Himalayan societies.[24] It establishes a crucial perspective "from below" and explores the varied and complex means by which locality shapes a broader range of concepts of social, political, and spiritual space. This is particularly true of conceptions of locality that are separate from political visions of territory controlled by a central state or non-local government. Yet this scholarship has tended toward synchronic studies of culture and environment, owing in part to the dearth of traditional historical records and in part to the academic domination of anthropologists in studying a region that has long fallen under the antiquated categories of "primitive" and "remote" society. As one observer recently put it, historians of the Himalaya have often been "fundamentally dependent on the ethnographic studies that have defined the field [of Himalayan studies] since the 1950s."[25] Some of these regionally focused scholars have also employed compelling conceptual frames to explore and critique tendencies within their own field. Ravina Aggarwal, for instance, used Foucault's concept of heterotopia to discuss the tendency of anthropological studies of Ladakh to portray excessively "Tibetan," static, and homogenous images of Himalayan space.[26] Echoing earlier critiques by Arjun Appadurai and Margaret Rodman, Aggarwal showed that much of the

[24] i.e. Joëlle Smadja, ed., *Reading Himalayan Landscapes over Time: Environmental Perception, Knowledge and Practice in Nepal and Ladakh* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 2003).

[25] Arik Moran and Catherine Warner, "Charting Himalayan Histories," *Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 35, no. 2 (2016).

[26] Ravina Aggarwal, "From Mixed Strains of Barley Grain: Person and Place in a Ladakhi Village" (Indiana University, 1994); and "From Utopia to Heterotopia: Toward an Anthropology of Ladakh," in *Recent Research on Ladakh 6*, ed. Henry Osmaston and Nawang Tsering (Bristol, UK: University of Bristol, 1997).

regional literature, while producing valuable insights with deeply local textures, often reinforced a purely synchronic genre centered on the relationship between culture and environment.

Despite the potential complementarity of these macro- and micro-spatial approaches, there has been little historical scholarship analyzing multiple, cohabitating visions of a single region. More significantly, perhaps, few scholars have asked how these visions might change over time. Yet such an approach could effectively challenge the inevitability of the modern political mode of envisioning space (i.e. space as territory) over all others. There is much to be gleaned from a sustained focus on the pluralistic precursors to modern, statist visions of organized social space. In other words, I suggest, we should invert Scott's phrasing ("seeing like a state") to make the state a political object, not just a subject. But we should also extend this exercise historically. In doing so we may recover alternative spatial configurations—modes of seeing space that are simultaneously social, physical, and imagined.[27]

Ideas of space, I will show, are historical, multiple, and often rooted in their localities. To support this argument, in Chapter One I first focus on the question: how was the space of pre-colonial Ladakh envisioned by its inhabitants over time? I follow Rhys Isaac in asserting that

[27] "Imagined" in the sense employed by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), namely, spaces that are beyond the immediate community experienced in everyday life.

space (though Isaac prefers "landscape") is "not merely measured physical terrain—it is that terrain interpreted by the eye, or one might say, experienced in life."[28]

One of the central questions of modern South Asian historiography—and imperial historiographies more broadly—has been the degree to which colonial rule affected and transformed the societies it encountered. Studying the continued existence, modification, or erasure of concepts of space therefore serves as an indicator of the degree to which colonial practices impacted indigenous modes of seeing space, or, conversely, how colonial ideas of space might be challenged by indigenous conceptions. Recent work on the historical production of South Asian sacred spaces by Chitralekha Zutshi and others have shown how ideas of space were transformed—in Zutshi's case Kashmiri Islamic sacred space—by the colonial encounter.[29] I seek to build on this literature by extending it beyond the too-often segregated realm of "sacred space." In doing so this dissertation reveals significant transformations occurring in the last two centuries, across a wider range of modes of seeing, that included historically distinct ways of

[28] Isaac's detailed history of settlements along the Chesapeake Bay provided "a concept of social or experiential landscape" through which to explore broader questions of colonial American society. Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790*., 13. Replacing "landscape" with "space" not only adds a degree of capaciousness to the idea of "seeing," it also reduces the emphasis on composition and non-human space, two elements that have come to typify the literature on landscape (See, for instance, W.J.T. Mitchell's *Landscape and Power*). I use the term "space" to reflect the most capacious and neutral object category to be "seen." "Place" and "locality," on the other hand, connote specificity within space, while "landscape" connotes composed space, and "territory" connotes political control over a physical area.

[29] Chitralekha Zutshi, *Kashmir's Contested Pasts: Narratives, Sacred Geographies, and the Historical Imagination* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014). See also Huber, *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage and the Tibetan Buddhist Reinvention of Buddhist India*; Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography*; and McKay, *Kailas Histories: Renunciate Traditions and the Construction of Himalayan Sacred Geography*.

ordering past worlds.[30] In other words, the colonial history of the northwestern Himalaya graphically illustrates a broader *structural change in spatiality*, to roughly paraphrase Reinhardt Koselleck's observation on temporality in modern history.[31] This structural shift in seeing space was enacted through specific spatial practices (surveying, road building, map making) and through the development of scientific theories, fears, and fantasies about spatial limits and the peoples who lay beyond and moved across them. It is most graphically represented in the development of concepts of territory and changing geographical *epistemes* which were manifested in increasingly restricted "trans-frontier" maps, expansive boundary commissions, and the compilation of imperial- and district-level gazetteers, subjects discussed throughout this dissertation.[32]

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[30]This pushes against the aforementioned tendency within the social sciences to assert a constant set of principles for ordering the world. As James Hevia has noted, "Seldom is the proposition entertained that the principles upon which past worlds were ordered might be incommensurable with the theoretical structures posited by contemporary social sciences or definitions of sovereignty based upon the European nation-state model." James L. Hevia, "Tribute, Asymmetry, and Imperial Formations: Rethinking Relations of Power in East Asia," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, From "Tribute System" to "Peaceful Rise": American Historians, Political Scientists, and Policy Analysts Discuss China's Foreign Relations, 16, no. 1–2 (Spring-Summer 2009): 77.

[31] In *Futures Past*, Reinhardt Koselleck argues that modern history reflects a structural "shift in temporality." Reinhardt Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 12.

[32] Here, I borrow Foucault's definition of *episteme*: "the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities." In his rather rambling definition he also elaborates that *epistemes* are "the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems." Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), 191. I use Foucault's term here in a very general sense, given that the "discursive regularities" and "orders of things" I am focused on here are distinct from the subjects Foucault actually examines in his work (e.g. in *The Order of Things*, Foucault specifically examines the disciplines of biology, economics, and linguistics).

II. Geography and Territory

Few geological events in the earth's 4.54 billion-year-old history have produced such dramatic physical results as when the Indian Plate slowly collided with the Eurasian Plate some 50 to 55 million years ago. The result, the Himalayas ("Himalaya" for the broader cultural region), is one of the great corporeal features of the planet, "a rod taking the Earth's whole measure," as the Sanskrit poet Kālidāsa wrote in the fourth or fifth century CE.[33] This complex of the highest mountain ranges in the world—the Karakoram, the Pamir, the Hindu Kush and the Great Himalaya—shapes the Indian subcontinent in dramatic ways. It contains the sources of the largest rivers of South Asia, as well as a vast array of glaciers that act as critical, and shrinking, water reserves.[34] The monsoon rains, and with them the agricultural cycles of the subcontinent, are slowed and held in place by the massive array of mountains that rises from the plains. Unique animal and plant species (many of which are now ubiquitous in gardens the world over) climb its upper reaches and valleys.[35] At its edges lie the few gaps that have allowed conquering armies to

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[33] "Kumārasambhavam" in Chandra Rajan, trans., *The Complete Works of Kālidāsa: Poems*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2005), 109.

[34] The Indus and its tributaries, the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, The Yamuna, the Irrawaddy. "Ten of the region's largest and longest rivers (the Amu Darya, Brahmaputra, Ganges, Indus, Irrawaddy, Mekong, Salween, Tarim, Yangtze, and Yellow) originate in the Himalayas. These rivers help provide water, food, and energy for nearly 4 billion people in China and across South and Southeast Asia—nearly half of the world's population." Asia's ten largest rivers by volume—including the Yangtze, Mekong, Brahmaputra (which becomes part of the Ganges), and Indus—originate in the Himalayas or on the Tibetan Plateau and collectively serve 47% of the world's population. Kenneth Pomeranz, "Asia's Unstable Water Tower: The Politics, Economics, and Ecology of Himalayan Water Projects," *Asia Policy*, Himalayan Water Security: The Challenges for South and Southeast Asia, 16 (July 2013): 1–10.

[35] The Himalaya are home to between eighteen and twenty-one thousand plant species, some of which make up as much as a quarter of gardens around the world. Varieties originating in the Himalaya, such as rhododendron, peony, and azelia, have become ubiquitous fixtures in gardens the world over thanks to the botanical fieldwork of Hooker and others. The Gardens at Kew became an *entrepôt* of seeds. It continues in this role, now home to the Millennium Seed Bank, tasked with preserving the world's seeds.

enter the subcontinent. The range also holds the loci of sites sacred to millions of people across the region, most notably Shiva's temporal abode at Mt. Kailash, a mountain also sacred to Buddhists, Bön.po, and Jains for connected yet distinct mythological reasons.[36] And among this mass of mountains live diverse groups of people who have incorporated the region's great physical variety into particular lifestyle elements that have awed, reviled, and perplexed visitors for millennia.

In the timescale of human concern, "Himalaya" has come to act as one of the most potent geographical imaginaries in the world, at once tied to modern Western "Shangri-la" narratives associated with Tibet and the Himalaya and the older worldwide fascinations with mountains (whether to climb, to worship, or to bound their worlds).[37] This region centered on the complex of the world's tallest mountains has also been used by Euroamerican scholars and policymakers to demarcate regional divisions within the category of "Asia" itself: South, East, Southeast, and Central Asia are frequently marked by reference to the greater complex of mountain chains

[36] See McKay, *Kailas Histories: Renunciate Traditions and the Construction of Himalayan Sacred Geography*. For a critique of Mckay's work, see Kyle Gardner, "Review of *Kailas Histories: Renunciate Traditions and the Construction of Himalayan Sacred Geography*, by Alex McKay," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79, no. 3 (October 2016): 677–79.

[37] For the Western construction of "Shangri-la," see Peter Bishop, *The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel Writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). For a recent global history of different social and political significances of mountains, see Bernard Debarbieux and Gilles Rudaz, *The Mountain: A Political History from the Enlightenment to the Present* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

collectively referred to as the Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau which it supports.[38] But long before areas were being conceived of in the academy, the Himalayan region, as with many mountainous regions across the globe, functioned as a limit for those who lived far from it.

Though many in India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would have echoed Iqbal's ode to the Himalaya—"at first glance you are a mere mountain range / [But in reality] you are our guardian, you are India's wall"—for those who lived within its valleys and for those who regularly traversed its mountain passes, it was anything but a wall.[39] Rather, its vast array of routes produced one of the highest economic and cultural networks on earth.[40] The very name "Ladakh" (*la.dvags*) refers to a "land of passes," signaling the centrality of routes, and movement, in constituting the historical region.[41] The northwestern Himalaya, with Ladakh at its center, was, in the words of Janet Rizvi, a "crossroads of high Asia." Economically, culturally,

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[38] The complicating factor to this demarcation of Asian Studies is Tibetan Studies. Harvard, until quite recently, put Tibetan Studies in Central Asia, Chicago puts Tibetan Studies in South Asia, and Berkeley puts it in East Asia. Part of this has to do with the scholarly focus of the program. Buddhism-focused programs will tend to tie Tibet to the homeland of Buddhism in South Asia, while those that take the political history of the last few centuries as a prime factor include Tibet within the East Asian sphere. Those focusing on pre-modern Tibet, and its short-lived empire, will include it in Inner, or Central, Asia.

[39] Muhammad Iqbal, "Hamāla," 1901, http://iqbalurdu.blogspot.com/2011/02/hamala-bang-e-dra-1.html. "*imtihān-i-dīdah-i-zāhir mein kohistān hai tu/ pāsbān āpnā hai tu, dīwār-i-hindustān hai tu."* My translation.

[40] These networks stretched from Xinjiang to the Punjab, and from Kashmir to central Tibet. Traders moved from Yarkand through Ladakh to the plains of India, selling Chinese tea, Central Asian opium, and hashish/*charas*. The semi-nomadic Changpa sold precious pashmina wool to Ladakhi (both Buddhist and Muslim) and Kashmiri traders, some of whom resided in Lhasa so as to better oversee one end of this trade network. Muslim pilgrims from Kashgar and other parts of Central Asia travelled via Ladakh en route to Mecca. Buddhists from Ladakh, Spiti, and Zanskar made regular pilgrimages to Mount Kailash in western Tibet (Guge) and sent young monks (and a small number of nuns) to the monasteries of central Tibet.

[41] Similarly, the name of the northwestern Himalayan hill state Spiti—directly south of Ladakh—refers to the "middle land" between India and Tibet. See: Harish Kapadia, *Spiti: Adventures in the Trans-Himalaya* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1996), 9.

and politically the region long resisted the boundaries that its imposing heights evoked in the imaginations of those who never traversed its many paths. The Himalaya, in other words, was not a "natural" political border until it was configured as such.

As a region long assumed to be a natural barrier by the Mughals, the British, and the Qing, the role played by the Himalayan terrain in the history of modern border making actually reveals fraught tensions between how geography and state-formation interact.[42] These tensions became more pronounced as the concept of territory became more precisely tied to the state. Stuart Elden's recent exploration of the emergence of the idea of territory within Western political thought provides a working definition to test in the British imperial context in South Asia.

For Elden, the territorial notion of space is, broadly speaking, as "a bounded space under the control of a group of people, usually a state" that is historically produced.[43] The concept of territory is a conflation of a juridico-political idea with geographical space.[44] In a similar vein, territoriality constitutes "the properties, including power, provided by the control of bordered political space..."[45] Thus territory is an idea of space that requires some notion of limits to bound it, and a political power to exert control within the determined space. A border thus becomes the

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[42] For the Qing conceptions of the Himalaya, and India in general, see Matthew Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the Transformation of Geopolitics in Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013) and Matthew Mosca, "Kashmiri Merchants and Qing Intelligence Networks in the Himalayas: The Ahmed Ali Case of 1830," in *Asia Inside Out: Connected Places*, ed. Peter C. Perdue and Helen F. Siu (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015). For the Mughal conceptions, see Abul Fasl's *Ain-i-Akbari* and my discussion of it in Chapter 4.

[43] Elden, *The Birth of Territory*, 322.

[44] Thanks to Daniel Haines for helping me to refine this point.

[45] Charles Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," *The American Historical Review* 105 (June 2000): 808.

sine qua non of territory.[46] Unlike "frontier," a term that so often referenced a certain kind of zonal space, "border" (or "boundary") represents a starting point, or as Heidegger poetically put it, "the boundary is that from which *something begins its essential unfolding.*"[47] As such, border making is the necessary prerequisite for territoriality, a term that can be defined broadly as the state-imposed practices of conceptualizing, defining, and regulating territory.

Yet political theorists typically treat territory like sovereignty, a philosophical concept untethered from physical space. When such scholars as Maier do acknowledge the physical dimension of the concept, they often assert that the history of territory "excludes necessarily the histories of landscape and the natural environment."[48] By making territory a purely political space without content, these scholars assume that political conceptions cannot be rooted in natural ones. But natural objects—rivers, mountains, deserts, and seas—have long served to demarcate political influence, a point central to the former Viceroy of India George Curzon's 1907 Romanes Lecture on *Frontiers*. The nineteenth century witnessed the territorialization of the globe in large part through the slow process of surveying land and water, conceiving of

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[46] Elsewhere, Elden tests the proposition that territory requires borders. Stuart Elden, "Territory Without Borders," *Harvard International Review*, 2011, http://hir.harvard.edu/article/?a=2843. Elden writes that territory, in the "modern sense, should not be understood as defined by borders, in that putting a border around something is sufficient to demarcate it as a territory. Rather, territory is a multi-faceted concept and practice, one which encompasses economic, strategic, legal and technical aspects, and can perhaps better be understood as the political counterpart of the homogeneous, measured and mathematicized notion of space that emerged with the scientific revolution." But he quickly backtracks, noting that the "modern notion of territory is certainly partly about boundaries and impermeability." While his point that borders are not necessarily sufficient to define territory is an instructive one, it is impossible to think about territory without reference first to a limit. No political conception of space, short of one spanning the entire globe, could dispense with an articulation of its borders and still retain its coherence.

[47] Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 356. This quote is also found as the epigraph of Homi Bhabha's introduction to his *Locations of Culture* (1994), with a slightly different translation (i.e. "presencing" instead of "essential unfolding").

[48] Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging since 1500*, 6.

nature as sets of systematized objects, mapping the results of that process, and using that information, in turn, to redefine the degree to which the state "saw" the space it attempted to control.[49] These processes produced, in the words of the influential Nazi political theorist Carl Schmitt, a "new spatial order of the earth."[50] Across the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, geography not only transformed into a science, it became a political science.

Finally, to further complicate the history of territorialization in the nineteenth century, it is worth noting that, like sovereignty, concepts of territory can be multilayered, ambiguous, or incomplete.[51] Beyond the Westphalian model of "perfectly equal" and exclusive states that dominates the modern world system as a byproduct of European imperialism, there has existed an array of multilayered conceptions of inter-state relations that were neither "perfectly equal" nor strictly connected to the idea of exclusive control over a bounded space.[52] Even within those apparently Westphalian states, sovereignty was far from being clearly delimited. In her recent work on law and geography in the *longue durée* of European empires, Lauren Benton has noted

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[49] A process Patrick Carroll has referred to as "technoteritorialization." Carroll, *Science, Culture and Modern State Formation,* 161.

[50] Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2003).

[51] F. H. Hinsley, *Sovereignty* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1966); Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty : Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900*.

[52] The degree to which the Westphalian model can lay claim to a modern form of sovereignty, superceding pre-modern models like tributary systems has been a source of debate among historians, most notably historians of Qing China. James Hevia's *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995) called into question John Fairbank's Chinese "tributary system" by illustrating the degree to which Qing "guest ritual" during the Macartney Embassy (1793) constituted a Qing conception of sovereignty that was neither solely a guise for trade, nor the isolationist and sinocentric behavior that the British read it to be. Rather, Hevia argued, the embassy represented two competing views of sovereignty articulated by two expanding empires. Elsewhere, Hevia has also called attention to the degree to which the British themselves employed tributary systems within their own empire. See James L. Hevia, "Tributary Systems," *The Encyclopedia of Empire* (John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

that "European imperial pursuits" often produced "uneven legal geographies."[53] Although Benton's work largely focuses on maritime examples of sovereignty, law, and geography, she also acknowledges that these "uneven" geographies included undefined land borders, or ambiguous designations for particular spaces (enclaves, corridors, etc.). While it is less surprising that maritime sovereignty and territory should be rather fluid in legal definition, it is worth underscoring the distinction between the formal articulation of political space and the result of practices employed to produce it. Geography was employed to determine territory by attempting to rationalize and standardize boundary-making principles and practices. Frontiers and borders were not only physical spaces, they were spatial ideals reflecting a host of aspirations and anxieties of the state, both imperial and national.

III. Frontiers, Borders, and Borderlands

Few terms are as intimately tied to the history of empire, as is "frontier." In a certain sense—from the imperialist's perspective at least—frontier is synecdoche for empire, since it so often carries connotations of expanding territory, the violence associated with clashes of asymmetric power, and the spatial limits of imperial control. For imperial administrators and geographers, the term was also an epistemic defense again unknowns, as well as a concrete category of spatial organization that could denote the limit of settlement, a strategic military

[53] Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900*, xii.

position, ecological change, or the limit of political influence.[54] Tellingly, there is no comparable distinction between English "frontier" and "border" (or "boundary") in the two most widely spoken language families of the northwestern Himalaya, Ladakhi / Tibetan (*mtshams*) and Urdu / Hindi (*sarḥad* or *sīmā*). These terms do, however, have many distinct and varied meanings, but are most commonly utilized to refer to both precise spatial points and vague spatial limits.[55] The polysemic quality of the English term frontier reflects its longstanding utility among the historical agents of empire.

In historical studies, the definitional ambiguity of the term "frontier" goes back to the "father" of modern frontier history, Fredrik Jackson Turner. In his famous 1893 address to the American Historical Association in Chicago, "The Significance of the frontier in American history," Turner noted that, "[t]he term is an elastic one, and for our purposes does not need sharp definition."[56] For Turner, a frontier was a "nationalizing force," an idea just as much as it was a vague and changing space on a map. It was capable of moving westward, and it was also capable of "closing." The historian Lucien Febvre, elaborated on the polysemic quality of frontiers by exploring the etymological paths of the closely related French terms, *frontière* and *limite*. *Frontières*, Febvre concluded, can really only be studied in relation to the development of

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[54] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920). The vague nature of the term frontier and its implied directionality (a frontier requires a center) is instructive for the study of imperial territoriality. The relatively recent rise of borderlands studies has signaled a shift towards re-centering peripheral spaces, while also shifting away from the geopolitical and environmental foci long associated with frontier history towards social and cultural approaches. See Baud and van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands."

[55] The Tibetan term *mtshams* has a wide range of meanings that can include "border," "boundary," "retreat," and "intermediate direction." A *sa.mtshams*, is, more specifically, a land border. But there is no oppositional pairing of terms in the way that border/frontier have taken on in English—a long, historical absence of distinction, according to Matthew Kapstein.

[56] Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," 3.

the state because different states necessarily produced different frontiers.[57] While empires and other polities have long used variations of the term to designate peripheral spaces, the practices associated with one frontier do not apply to those of another. A case in point would be Alex McKay's application of Turner's Frontier Thesis to the Indo-Tibetan borderlands.[58] The absence of settler expansion and the imposition of the Himalaya between two established and distinct political and cultural spheres (India and Tibet) makes McKay's creative hypothesis highly implausible.

In the British imperial context in India, "frontier" took on a zonal quality employed to designate ambiguous or violent spaces and the limits of political control. Alfred Lyall defined a frontier as "the outmost political boundary projected, as one might say, beyond the administrative border."[59] Yet Lyall also spoke of the vague "influence" associated with the frontier.

> [O]ur political influence radiates out beyond the line of our actual possession, spreading its skirts widely and loosely over the adjacent country…. [T]he true frontier of the British dominion in Asia, the line which we are more or less pledged to guard, from which we have warned off trespassers, does not by any means tally with the outer edge of the immense territory over which we exercise administrative jurisdiction, in which all the people are British subjects for whom our governments make laws.[60]

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[57] Lucien Febvre, "Frontière: The Word and the Concept," in *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Lucien Febvre*, ed. Peter Burke (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1973), 213.

[58] Alex McKay, "'Tracing Lines upon the Unknown Areas of the Earth': Reflections on Frederick Jackson Turner and the Indo-Tibetan Frontier," in *Fringes of Empire*, ed. Sameetah Agha and Elizabeth Kolsky (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[59] Alfred Lyall, "Frontiers and Protectorates," *Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review* 30, no. 174 (August 1891), 315.

[60] Lyall, 313-14.

This ambiguous formulation also subtly reflected the inherent violence of the frontier. The Viceroy of India Lord Lytton made this violence more explicit when he wrote with considerable understatement that the word "frontier" was always a synonym for "quarrel."[61]

In contrast, a border could reflect the resolution of tension, by eliminating the friction caused by indeterminate space. By the end of the nineteenth century this rhetoric of reduced friction was articulated by a number of prominent frontier experts who worked to demarcate precise borderlines based on a set of boundary-making principles. A 1917 review in the Royal Geographical Society's *Geographical Journal*, for instance, observed that for the pre-eminent British frontier expert, Thomas Holdich, "the first and greatest object of an international frontier [was] to ensure peace and good-will between contiguous people by *putting a definite edge to the national political horizon*, so as to limit unauthorized expansion and trespass."[62] In other words, a frontier was made peaceful by the successful definition of borderline.

While many scholars from the historian Fredrick Jackson Turner to the economist Edward Barbier have acknowledged the role played by natural resources and environmental factors on the edges of expanding territories, few historians of South Asia have adequately examined the environmental and geographical aspects of frontier formation, particularly in the most neglected of Indian frontiers, the northwestern Himalaya.[63] Instead, historians have tended

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[61] G. J. Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier: A Study of Imperial Policy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1963), 4.

[62] "Frontiers in Theory and Practice," *The Geographical Journal* 49, no. 1 (January 1917): 58. Emphasis given by the anonymous author of the review.

[63] Edward B. Barbier, *Scarcity and Frontiers: How Economies Have Developed Through Natural Resource Exploitation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

to emphasize "Great Game"[64] narratives and the adventurous nature of a few enterprising British men who espoused a "forward" view of British regional expansion.[65] In the imperial semantic play that turned serious international rivalries into an understated "game," European explorers covertly penetrated the *terra incognita* of the mountainous regions surrounding India. Those "boys with digestions"—as Kipling styled these explorers who were often followed by their faithful and frequently nameless servants—became celebrities and best-selling authors.[66] But this perspective minimizes the role of those who actually inhabited these regions and whose pre-existing trade and cultural networks made these "unknown lands" anything but. The "Great Game" narrative also assumes that the only major imperial concern in gather information beyond the frontier was diplomatic and strategic. Instead, the work of imperial administrators, explorers, and surveyors along the frontier reflect the need to bring these spaces into accord with internal territorializing practices, while increasingly restricting access to this "trans-frontier" information.

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[64] For the anachronistic and misleading history of the term "Great Game," see Malcolm Yapp, "The Legend of the Great Game," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 111 (2001): 179–98; Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*; and the introduction to James Hevia's *Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia*.

[65] The work of Alastair Lamb, Alex McKay, Parshotam Mehra, Owen Lattimore and others has emphasized a picture of the broader Himalayan region that views British interest as driven almost exclusively by security concerns, pushed "forward" by a small cadre of adventurous men. This position is perhaps tellingly summed up in the title of Alex McKay's chapter in *Fringes of Empire* (2009), "'Tracing lines upon the unknown areas of the earth': Reflections on Frederick Jackson Turner and the Indo-Tibetan Frontier." McKay argues that the Younghusband mission of 1903-4 was the culmination of a policy of British frontier expansion that began in the latter half of the eighteenth century and was accelerated by the "forward school" in the late nineteenth century (McKay 2003).

[66] For a history that approaches these figures in this way, see Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). In his short story "Pig" Kipling wrote that, "The boys with digestions hope to write their names large on the Frontier, and struggle for dreary places like Bannu and Kohat [on the Afghan frontier]."Rudyard Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 162.

By drawing on recent scholarship on technology and state formation, and on environmental histories that emphasize the intimate connections among trade, politics, and environment, this dissertation aims to paint a more complex and dynamic picture of frontier formation by highlighting the crucial, co-constitutive roles played by geography, imperial politics, and security.

While the term "frontier" might hold an array of meanings, by the end of the nineteenth century it had become, generally speaking, distinct from its related term, boundary. As noted above, if a frontier roughly signaled the slow dissapation of a certain kind of political space, a border marked a definite transition—one where a single kind of political space stopped and another began. Throughout this dissertation I will use the more common term "border" instead of the term "boundary" preferred by empire-era sources, but both terms are generally interchangeable. Borders, or boundaries, are distinguished from frontiers by the degree of precise geographical and cartographical information known about them. As the frontier expert Henry McMahon noted in 1935, a "frontier often has a wider and more general meaning than a boundary, and a frontier sometimes refers to a wide tract of border country, or to hinterlands or buffer states, undefined by any external boundary line."[67] There was strategic ambiguity in the zonal term "frontier." Borders, in contrast, had come to unambiguously refer to a linear limit to a given territory by the turn of the twentieth century.

The ambiguous, core-centric, and directional qualities often implied in the term frontier—of a vague frontline facing outward from a safe center towards a "barbaric"

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[67] A. H. McMahon, "International Boundaries," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 84, no. 4330 (November 15, 1935): 3. McMahon gave this lecture on November 6, 1935 as his inaugural address as the incoming Chairman of the Council of the Royal Society of Arts, which subsequently published it in its *Proceedings*.

periphery—has generated doubts among academics as to the utility of the term as an analytic category.[68] Yet the indispensability of the term "frontier," as well as the "centrality of the margins" to what David Ludden referred to as the "process of empire," makes it imperative that we critically interrogate the meanings of "frontier" and "border" in tandem.[69] In recent decades, this refocusing on the periphery coupled with critiques of the dominance of state-centered (and inter-state) politics has helped drive the rise of borderlands studies. This interdisciplinary approach to historically peripheral spaces has signaled a shift towards re-centering the periphery by replacing the diplomatic and geopolitical focus of frontier history with more localized social and cultural approaches.[70] Yet though the border has now become a "method" as much as an object to be studied, it remains susceptible to the problem of the "objective" region first raised by Bernard Cohn.[71] Baud and van Schendel's "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands" (1997) suggested that within borderlands lie "heartland zones," "intermediate zones," and "outer zones," with the pre-established border centering this region.[72] Against this idea of neatly demarcating space, Cohn worked to disaggregate the various factors that could differentiate a single, "objective" region: language, history, social structure, cuisine, or culture. By illustrating

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[68] For critiques of the frontier as a category of analysis, see, for instance, Baud and van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands"; Manan Ahmed, "Adam's Mirror: The Frontier in the Imperial Imagination," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Reflections on Empire, 46, no. 13 (March 26, 2011): 60–65.

[69] David Ludden, "The Process of Empire: Frontiers and Borderlands," in *Tributary Empires in Global History*, ed. C. A. Bayly and P.F. Bang (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 132–50.

[70] Baud and van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands."

[71] Bernard S. Cohn, "Regions Subjective and Objective: Their Relation to the Study of Modern Indian History and Society," in *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, n.d.), 100–135. For the theorization of the border as a "method," see Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*.

[72] Baud and van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," 221.

how multiple regions cohabitate and overlap in the same spaces, Cohn cast doubt on the possibility of a fully coherent, "objective" region. Applying Cohn's critique to the borderland studies inaugurated by Baud and van Schendel therefore suggests that perhaps the sole "objective" feature of a borderland is the border itself.[73]

It is also doubtful whether a general re-centering on the borderland does much to diminish the "traditional view from the center," if the center is still the state that imposed the border in the first place (and hence created, or partially created, the borderland).[74] A critical approach to the categories of frontier and borderland must not only dispense with antiquated notions of "civilization" versus "barbarity," or "settled" versus "empty" space, it must be able to account for changing understandings of space and territory over time. This can be done, most concretely, by focusing on the border, whether real or imagined. By analyzing the practices and ideas that produced (or attempted to produce) borders in the Himalaya over time, this dissertation seeks to focus borderland studies more closely on the one object that can actually define a borderland, the border itself.

IV. The Frontier Complex

This dissertation thus examines the two sides of colonial frontiers and borders: the concrete practices of exploring, defining, and, above all, conceptualizing territory through geography, and the abstract obverse of those practices: fears, fantasies, and changing geographical and political rationales. Besides analyzing the factors behind the transformation of

[73] One recent edited volume that has focused on the history of the production of particular borders is Diener and Hagen, *Borderlines and Borderlands: Political Oddities at the Edge of the Nation-State*.

[74] Baud and van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," 212.

the northwestern Himalaya from a crossroads of commerce and cultural exchange to a disputed and isolated borderland, the more ambitious task of this dissertation is to make the now-remote region of Ladakh central to the histories of modern South Asia and the British Empire. As one of the first regions on what James Mill called "the most desirable frontier" of India to be surveyed and mapped (repeatedly and unsuccessfully, as it turns out, for over a century), the northwestern Himalaya offers a crucial and early example of the imperial frontier laboratory.[75] The case of Ladakh functions as a focal point for technical and epistemological frontier "problems" and practices that extended across British India, the British Empire, and the globe. Britain's imperial administrators' preoccupation with defining peripheral territory and their desire to cultivate commercial and political connections with the space beyond that periphery also highlight the psychological fears and fantasies that permeated British imperial history. Third, this history casts doubt on the "historical" claims of modern-day India and China to a space which was never "effectively occupied" by either of their imperial predecessors, but which has continued to be a major source of tension between the world's two most populous countries.[76] Finally, it underscores the perhaps obvious point that India's territory (its international borderlands and its internal national space) remains an assemblage of contested ideas; this was the case at Partition and continues to be so nearly seven decades later, despite waves of state dissolution and formation, forcible annexations, and continued calls for internal partitions. My research explores this tension by examining a wide array of local and colonial sources through an environmental

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[75] "Evidence of James Mill," 16 February 1832: *Parliamentary Papers, 1831-2*, Vol. xiv, p. 8, Qu. 49.

[76] "Effective occupation" became one of the military rationales that combined with "natural frontiers" to justify claims to so-called "no-man's lands" (see Chapter 2). It has long been a foundational—and undeniably colonial—pillar of international legal theory, from the days of Vitoria to the present.

lens. In doing so, I introduce the idea of the *frontier complex*, a set of practices that included surveying, mapping, road building, information collection, border demarcation, and the regulation of traffic (people, animals, and goods). The frontier also produced a "complex" in the second sense of the term, namely a set of emotionally charged ideas that often lead to abnormal behavior. The frontier was, after all, also a set of state-sponsored concerns about the limits of empire and the spaces and peoples that lay beyond and across them. In this sense, then, this work examines not only the shaping of the landscape of British imperial frontiers, but also—to employ Ashis Nandy's felicitous phrase—the "mindscape of British colonialism" as well.[77]

The first chapter examines pre-colonial understandings of space, boundaries, and frontiers in Ladakh. This chapter provides both a brief historical background to the making and unmaking of independent Ladakh, and an exploration of four major indigenous *modes of seeing* northwestern Himalayan space: *cosmological*, *political, linguistic*, and *material*. In illustrating multiple historical modes of seeing by indigenous historical actors, I suggest that the single, bounded entity called Ladakh was primarily a product of imperial possession in the nineteenth century. I am not arguing that there was not an earlier political entity known as Ladakh, but that indigenous conceptions of its space were more pluralistic than the subsequent territory envisioned by its imperial rulers. The comingling of cosmological, political, linguistic, and material modes of seeing produced identities that failed to map neatly onto maps. This chapter not only draws on the limited extant pre-colonial Ladakhi sources, but on an array of anthropological, linguistic, and archeological sources as well.

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[77] Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 63.

The second chapter draws on material from numerous colonial archives to examine the rationale behind early attempts to create a complete border within the northwestern Himalaya. These attempts were rooted in efforts to read the landscape and transcribe it onto paper using generalized principles that were meant to mitigate territorial disputes and would eventually grant the trans-frontier map unprecedented authority. But as this chapter will show, the determining and drawing of boundary lines was a task fraught with unexpected divisions and contradictions—both geographical and political. In short, the failure to successfully "border" the northwestern Himalaya was primarily the result of on-going tensions between ideas of natural frontiers and strategic ones, frontiers ostensibly unified by the logic of the so-called "scientific" frontier.

The third chapter focuses on road building and the British Joint Commissioners in Ladakh, shifting from geographical information gathering to its technological, commercial, and political applications. It begins with the extension of the reach of the British colonial state into the northwestern Himalaya, largely through the construction of the Hindustan-Tibet Road and the Leh-Yarkand Treaty Road. Roads were conduits that became synonymous with communication. The early British Joint Commissioners stationed at Leh, beginning in 1870, produced substantial journals and trade statistics to detail commercial potential and communication with Central Asia and Tibet. As the commissioners were responsible for supervising the Indo-Yarkand and Indo-Tibetan trade routes, their primary tasks were to regulate the movement of people on these routes and to ensure the roads were in good working order. But they were also concerned with gathering intelligence from Central Asia and Tibet. The records of the British Joint Commissioners highlight the simultaneous generation and circulation of frontier expertise and the increased restrictions those experts imposed on the movement of "trans-

frontier" people and materials. Here we see the interplay of technology, commercial expansion, and security, and the limits placed on each by the environment of the Himalaya. The chapter reveals the sharp rise of security concerns in late nineteenth century and the changing role of roads: from conduits of trade to instruments of imperial security.

The fourth chapter focuses on two different ways of "reading" the landscape of the northwestern Himalaya. The first evolved out of geographical exploration and results in an increasingly systematic body of environmental knowledge that became standardized and widely circulated in gazetteers, route books, and intelligence reports—reflecting the development of a geographical episteme. This increasingly technocratic, and systematic, mode of seeing territory built off of earlier surveys that crafted the unified territory of India. But the cartographical and informational unification of India also produced a sense of understanding in the empire's capitals that would belie the deeper uncertainty of boundaries in the frontier locales. This tension is visible in a number of archival examples of geographical uncertainties that produced jurisdictional problems for the state: disputes over pre-colonial Ladakhi territorial claims in Tibet, grazing rights for semi-nomadic populations, taxation, and water rights. These examples offer an alternative reading of the landscape, one that is much less legible and reveals earlier pre-colonial modes of seeing that remained rooted in the Himalayan locale.

The fifth chapter re-examines boundaries, roads, and changing geographical epistemes in the context of the frontier experts like Thomas Holdich who emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and were increasingly central to imperial policy. These experts reflect the intimate relationship between geography and the state, and reveal the networks through which geographical information fused with political and military policy. The chapter focuses on the multiple categories of "trans-frontier," whether men, maps, or information, and the impact

growing security concerns had on the need to "close" the frontier and restrict access to information about it. The chapter also examines the engagement of the frontier experts with the Royal Geographical Society and its *Geographical Journal*. The co-habitation of geographical studies and international political concerns reflected a new political mode of seeing the region and the world—geopolitics—that was in turn bequeathed to India at independence.

Finally, the conclusion takes up the state of the region before the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and illustrates how colonial practices produced a disputed postcolonial borderland in independent India. It re-examines local perspectives and the political re-articulation of Ladakh as a crucial frontier of India against the growing threats of China and Pakistan. This is, perhaps, further proof that the modern "nation-state" while fictive in idea, can also become a very real, very bounded object, whose members do not all chose to belong to its "imagined community." These communities are now frequently surrounded by walls and soldiers—like most of today's nation-states—illustrating how Iqbal's *dīwār-i-hindustān* ("wall of India") has become increasingly real.

CHAPTER ONE

The Space Between: Trade, Cosmology, and Modes of Seeing in Independent Ladakh

Ladakh traces its birth as an independent politico-geographical entity to the mid-tenth century, when sKyid.lde Nyi.ma.mgon (Figure 1.1) established himself as ruler of the western Tibetan region known as mNga'.ris skor.gsum.[1] Nyi.ma.mgon was descended from the Tibetan emperor gLang.dar.ma, whose assassination in c.842 C.E.—allegedly by a Buddhist monk in retaliation for gLang.dar.ma's persecution of Buddhists—signaled the fragmentation and collapse of the Tibetan Empire. On his death, Nyi.ma.mgon's territorial authority, tenuous as it may have been, was divided among his three sons.[2] The eldest, dPal.gyi.mgon, inherited (or perhaps conquered) Mar.yul, a region roughly corresponding to the portion of today's Ladakh centered on the upper Indus River.

[1] Prior to the tenth century, scant archeological and written evidence suggests that at least lower Ladakh was part of the Kusana Empire (second century BCE to the fourth century CE) and that it was certainly a part of the Tibetan empire from the seventh or early eighth century through Langdarma's assassination in 842 CE.

[2] Luciano Petech suggests that this was a theoretical right to rule. Luciano Petech, *Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950-1842 A.D.*, Serie Orientale Roma 51 (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1977).

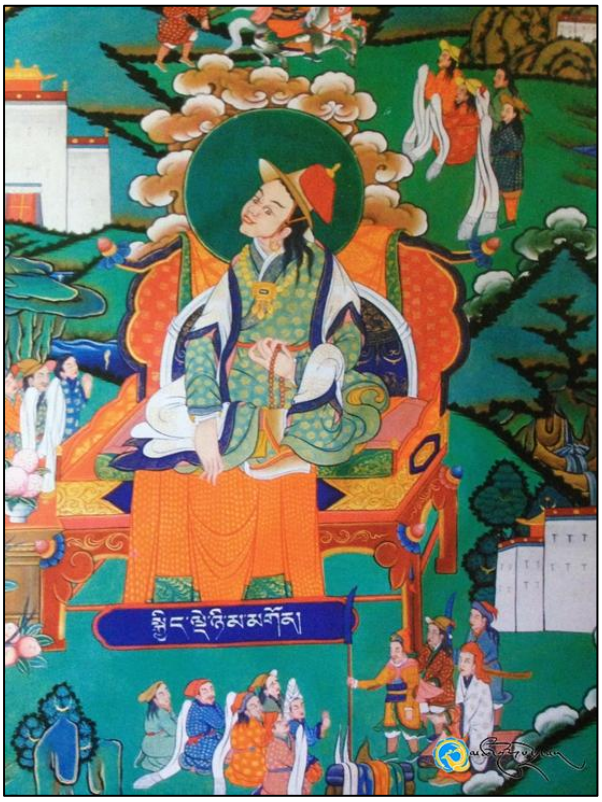


Figure 1.1. sKyid.de nyi.ma.mgon. Source: http://www.amdotibet.cn/html/rw/2014-09/17382.html

The Ladakhi historian dGe.rgan bSod.nams.Ts'e.brtan, whose supplement to the composite *La.dwags rgyal.rabs*[3] (the Royal Chronicles of Ladakh) synthesizes many now-lost documents, offers one of the earliest articulations of the dimensions of Mar.yul[4]:

> [Nyi.ma.mgon] gave to his eldest son, dPal.gyi.mgon, Mar.yul, where they possess black bows. The borders [*mtshams*] of Mar.yul are as follows: in the east bDe.mchog dkar.po and the red range as far as the Yi.mig boulder (the size of a yak); in the west, the stone with

[3] There are at least seven versions of the *La.dwags rgyal.rabs* (hereafter *LDGR*). For a description of each of these manuscripts, see Petech 1977, "rGyal.rabs" most literal translation would be "royal succession." See Dan Martin's *Tibetan Histories: A Bibliography of Tibetan-Language Historical Works* (London: Serindia, 1997) for an explanation of the various genres of historical writing in Tibet.

[4] A name often translated as "low country," a description that makes sense only when the region is compared to the even more elevated Tibetan Plateau (byang.thang).

> a big hole [i.e. cave] at the foot of the Kha.che pass[5]; in the north, as far as gSer.kha mGon.po. This is the extent of the [Mar.yul] lands.[6]

These royal records describe a series of localities that constituted boundaries in the eyes of the chroniclers of the Ladakhi ruler (the *rgyal.po*). The eastern and northern border points are specific places: Demchok and gSer.kha mGon.po.[7] The western border point is a definite feature, a cave at the foot of the Zoji pass (*la*) to the Kashmir valley. And no southern border marker is given.[8]

These physical points were merely referents that reflected a series of more dynamic, overlapping, and sometimes competing understandings of space across the northwestern Himalaya. There were, in short, multiple *modes of seeing* space for the pre-colonial inhabitants of Ladakh and its surroundings. In this chapter I provide both a historical background to the making and eventual demise of independent Ladakh,[9] and an exploration of four indigenous modes of envisioning that space: *cosmological*, *political*, *linguistic*, and *material*. Although I make generalizations about certain socio-cultural practices, often without being able to locate

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[5] i.e. the Zoji-la: the pass on the main road connecting the Kashmir valley to the upper Indus.

[6] dGe.rgan bSod.nams Ts'e.brtan, *BLa.Dwags* [Sic] *Rgyal.Rabs 'chi.Med Gter [The Immortal Treasury of the Royal Chronicles of Ladakh]*, ed. sKyabs.ldan dGe.rgan (New Delhi, 1976), 181.

[7] The names of both of these border villages suggest associations with two major protective deities. Tibetan *bDe.mchog* = Sanskrit *chakrasambara* and Tib. *mGon.po* = Sans. *Mahakala*.

[8] This suggests, perhaps, that the mountains to the south of the Indus valley were self-evident physical boundaries.

[9] While many scholars describe the period between the collapse of the Tibetan empire and the Dogra invasion as one of Ladakhi independence, it was a relative independence owing to the fact that the political integrity of the region frequently changed. Sometimes Ladakh was expanding or contracting under a single ruler. At other times, it was better understood as a loose territorial expression, subjected to external political and economic pressures that fragmented its rulers and left it beholden to the imperial machinations of its neighbors. In this last sense, Ladakh has long been a trans-imperial territory, situated both temporally and spatially across and between numerous empires.

their precise temporal origins (or the tempo at which they changed), my aim is not to suggest timeless practices of a "pre-modern" society. Rather, I seek to identify a dynamic assortment of tentative ways in which indigenous historical actors perceived the space(s) they inhabited, documented through a combination of cautious generalizations and particular historical examples.

Furthermore, the limited pre-colonial sources on Ladakhi history do not allow for a detailed excavation of many first-person accounts of "seeing" space. Few historical sources are kind enough to mediate themselves in this way. To present a persuasive schema, I must work backward from "seen" objects and institutions to the subjects who did the seeing. By drawing on insights from anthropologists, linguists, and historical records, I assert in this chapter that indigenous conceptions of space were more pluralistic than the subsequent political territory envisioned by Ladakh's imperial rulers in the nineteenth century. The complex amalgamation of cosmological, political, linguistic, and material factors produced spatial configurations that failed to map neatly onto, as it were, maps.

The chapter begins by exploring what I have termed the cosmological, political, linguistic, and material modes of seeing in independent Ladakh. I do this by identifying a number of broad cultural, economic, religious, and social developments over a period ranging roughly from dPal.gyi.mgon's "founding" of Ladakh in the tenth century to the present. Based on the limited historical records from the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century, I then survey the region's economic and political interactions with neighboring groups. By highlighting Ladakh's position as a religious, commercial, and political nexus, this chapter also illustrates how Ladakh had long been the central crossroads of a larger regional network of commerce and politics—not the peripheral and isolated borderland that it would later become.

Finally, the chapter recounts early British encounters with the broader Northwestern Himalayan region, the first sustained British interest in Ladakh, and the impact of the Dogra invasion of 1834 on Ladakhi society.[10]

By mapping the economic, cultural, and religious networks that encircled Ladakh and, more broadly, the northwestern Himalaya at the time of the Dogra and British conquests in the 1830s and 1840s, this chapter sets the scene for the region's final colonial encounter. I assert that Ladakh only became a peripheral space through this encounter—or, at the risk of tautology, that Ladakh only became a borderland when its rulers became preoccupied with making its borders.

I. Modes of Seeing

Long after the tectonic upheaval and erosion that formed the Himalayas, the valleys of the upper Indus became host to human settlements. The inhabitants depended on the seasonal fluctuations of snow: the springtime swell of streams irrigated high-altitude crops, while the melting away of snowpack in the region's many passes often cleared the way for crucial travel and trade. These inhabitants of the upper Indus moved from valley to valley and up to the

[10] The Dogras, an ethno-linguistic group primarily found in northern India and Pakistan gave their name to the Hindu Rajput dynasty founded by Gulab Singh in the early nineteenth century. Singh, a vassal of the Sikh Emperor Ranjit Singh, was made the first Maharaja of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir by the British as a result of the Treaties of Lahore and Amritsar in 1846. The Dogras, a Hindu ethnicity that came to rule over the Kashmir valley, exemplify the multi-layered, multi-ethnic nature of imperial rule in this corner of South Asia. In Ladakh, a Buddhist majority (which had long received tribute from its other neighboring hill states) was ruled by Jammu and Kashmir, a state with a Muslim majority (ruled by a Hindu minority) which, in turn, owed allegiance to the British.

Tibetan Plateau (byang.thang).[11] In addition to providing a lifeline for subsistence agriculturalists, this seasonal movement resulted in the trade of wool, salt, barley, livestock, other foodstuffs, and scarcer commodities amongst the region's agrarian and pastoralist communities.[12] Villages arose along glacier-fed streams or just beyond the flood range of rivers, and were often located en route to passes leading to neighboring valleys.

The ruler dPal.gyi.mgon gained authority over the region referred to as Mar.yul in the tenth century. By then, many of the region's settlements had likely established aspects of social hierarchy, localized cosmology, and complex irrigation and trade networks that would, in modified and expanded forms, flourish for the next millennium.[13]

a. The material mode of seeing

From at least the tenth century, the region began to see networks emerge through the interactions of transhumant goat- and sheepherders, traders, pilgrims, and the agriculturists of the upper Indus. Agrarian settlements grew along glacier-fed streams, developing complex forms of irrigation to account for variable water flow during the relatively short growing season that

[11] The Tibetan plateau is often referred to as the Changthang, literally "northern plateau." In terms of the uncertainty of snow melt on mountain passes, there were occasionally years when late snows, colder-than-average temperatures, or unusually high snowpack prevented the passes from opening in time for the necessary trade. Similarly, the loss of pack animals near the passes often resulted in the near total loss of caravan loads of goods.

[12] Janet Rizvi, *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh* (New Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[13] For an example of how irrigation systems constructed perhaps a millennium ago have endured the historical processes of settlement and social change in Ladakh (with modifications), see Corinne Wacker, "Can Irrigation Systems Disclose the History of the Villages of Ladakh? The Example of Tagmachig," in *Recent Research on Ladakh 2007*, ed. John Bray and Nawang Tsering Shakspo (Leh: J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages, 2007), 205–16.

loosely coincided with the opening of passes into neighboring valleys.[14] Networks of traded goods, "webs of water,"[15] and the seasonal shift of grazing herds to fresh pasture inscribed the region's many landscapes. The paths of migration and lines of material connection spread over vast, desolate, and uninhabited distances. Movement across this space was typically measured in time, not in distance. A day's walk, the common unit of measurement, reflected a widespread enmeshing of time and space that existed before standardized units of long-distance measurement proliferated. This seasonal movement of water, people, and traded goods evokes Michel de Certeau's conception of space as "vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables."[16]

Over subsequent centuries, trans-Himalayan trade routes expanded. This brought an array of peoples into the region and shaped Ladakh into an *entrepôt* that connected the Silk Road oases of Kashgar and Yarkand with the Kashmir Valley, Baltistan, the area of present-day Afghanistan, the many polities of the western Himalaya, western and central Tibet, the Punjab, and the plains of northern India. Tibetans traders regularly crisscrossed western Tibet, trading goods with

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[14] The *La.dwags rgyal.rabs* attributes the development of irrigation in the outlaying valleys of the broader Tibetan region to the reign of Khri.sngan.bzung.btsan, who ruled in central Tibet four generations before Srong.btsan sgam.po (600-650 CE): "During his lifetime the outlying valleys were brought under notice and cleared for fields. / 'The lakes were furnished with gates, / And drawn into irrigation canals. / The glacier-water was collected in ponds, / And the water collected overnight was used for irrigation during the day.'/ Such like things were done in his time." August Hermann Francke, ed., "La.Dwags Rgyal.Rabs," in *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1914).

[15] Kim Gutschow referred to the systems of irrigation common throughout the western Tibetan region and Ladakh as "webs of water" in Kim Gutschow, "'Lords of the Forth', 'Lords of the Water', and 'No Lords at All': The Politics of Irrigation in Three Tibetan Societies," in *Recent Research on Ladakh 6* (Bristol, UK: University of Bristol, 1997).

[16] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.

communities in Nepal and the western Himalaya.[17] Muslim traders known as the Lhasa Khaché (discussed further below) oversaw an even broader trade network stretching from Lhasa through Ladakh to Kashmir. The region became a conduit for luxury goods like *pashm* wool (used for pashmina),[18] brick tea, silk, precious stones, and eventually opium and hashish. As early as the sixteenth century, villages situated closest to neighboring polities, or adjoining the region's eastern and northern uninhabited spaces, became established border points. They signaled to traders, travelers, and pilgrims the jurisdictions of established authorities, which were typically monasteries (*dgon.pa*), local chiefs (*jo.bo*), or ministers (*blon.po* or *bka'.blon*) of the king (*rgyal.po*).[19] dGe.rgan bSod.nams.ts'e.brtan's map (Figure 1.2), based on numerous pre-colonial Ladakhi sources, marks the two most prominent border points (using the Ladakhi/Tibetan term *sa.mtshams,* or "land border"[20]) while significantly omitting any actual borderlines. These two borders, marked with "X," are at the Zoji Pass on the main route to Kashmir, and near Demchok on the Leh-Lhasa route (Figures 1.2b and 1.2c, for post-1684 border points).

As I will illustrate in the second and third sections of this chapter, controlling the flow of traded goods was a pivotal strategy for the imperial aspirations of Ladakh's neighbors. This

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[17] Wim van Spengen, *Tibetan Border Worlds: A Geohistorical Analysis of Trade and Traders* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 2000).

[18] Properly speaking, pashmina is the material woven from *pashm*, the downy undercoat of the Tibetan goat (*byang.ra*: "north[ern] goat").

[19] Janet Rizvi makes a similar point when she notes that "[perhaps] the most vibrant of the trading stations were the towns roughly at the border between inhabited and uninhabited portions of [Indian and Central Asian trade routes], where cultivation gave way to desert or mountain range. Here the merchants and caravan staff would pause to recruit [porters] and equip themselves for the rigours of the journey, or recover from its hardships." Rizvi, *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh*, 11.

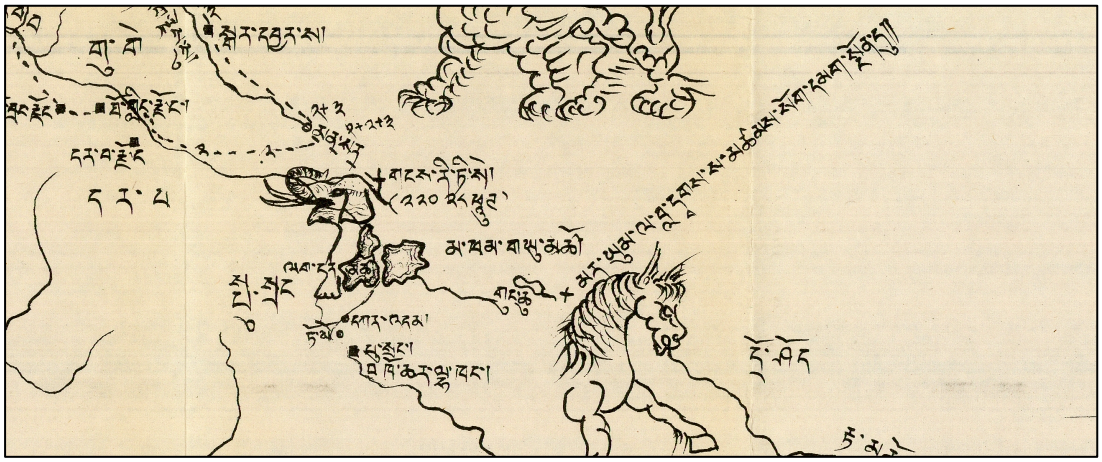
[20] Interestingly, the term *mtshams* has a wide range of meanings, including "border," "boundary," "retreat," and "intermediate direction."

aggressive interest underlay the Dogra invasion of 1834 and British designs on the region for most of the nineteenth century.

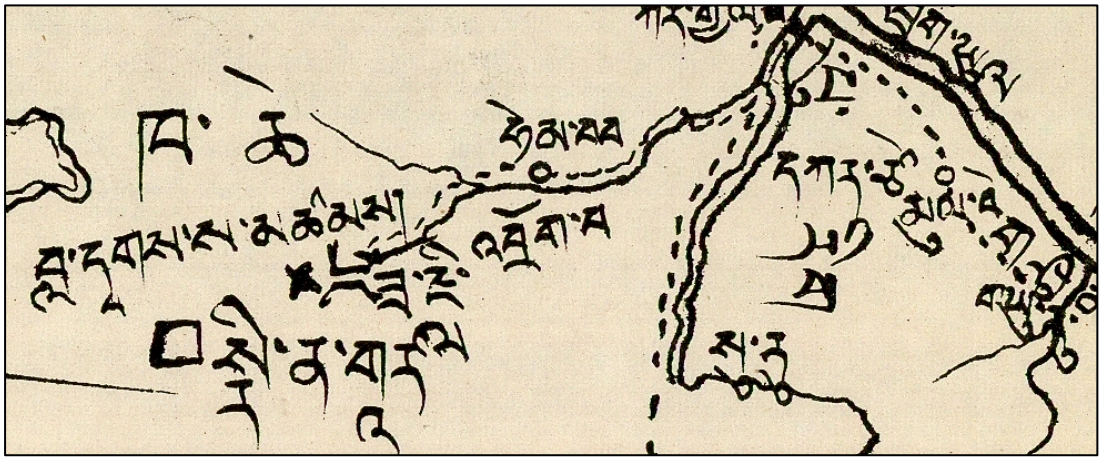


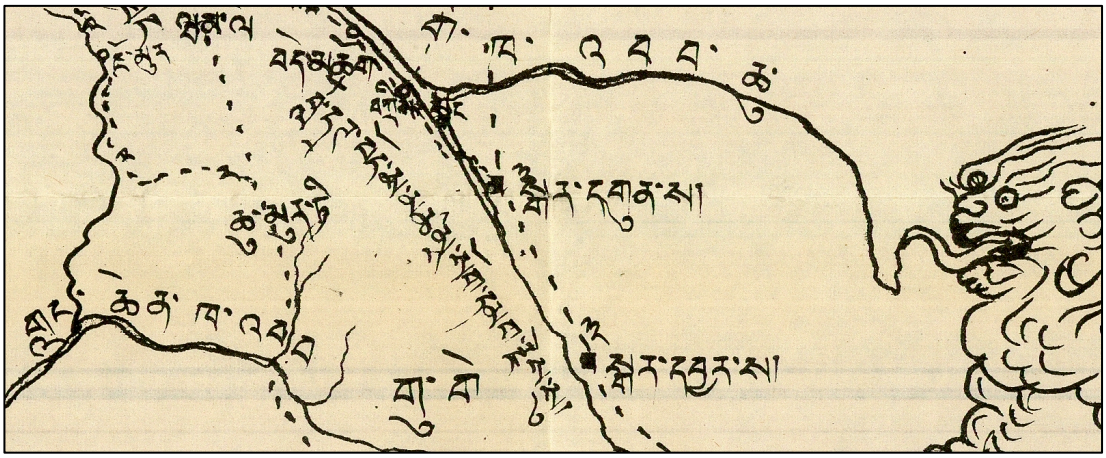
Figure 1.2. dGe.rgan bSod.nams.ts'e.brtan's map based on the *La.dwags rgyal.rabs* (Chronicles of Ladakh), marks the two most prominent border points (see figures 2a and 2b for detail). These two borders, marked with "X," are at the Zoji Pass on the main route to Kashmir, and near Demchok, on the Leh-Lhasa route.[21]

[21] Ts'e.brtan, *bLa.dwags* [Sic] *rgyal.rabs 'chi.med gter [The Immortal Treasury of the Royal Chronicles of Ladakh]*.



Figures 1.2a, 1.2b, and 1.2c. Above, an "X" marking the location of the border (*sa.tshams*). The text besides the X reads "In Mar.yul, the border of Ladakh before the war with Mongolia (i.e. the Tibet-Ladakh-Mughal War of 1679-1684 in which the Tibetans were assisted by Mongolian troops). In the middle, an X marking the border of Ladakh at the Zoji Pass to Kashmir. Bottom, the X marking the border at the Lha.ri stream near Demchok "after the Mongolian war."





b. The cosmological mode of seeing

Overlaying the material paths of trade, webs of irrigation, and pastoral migration routes was a patchwork of highly localized spiritual spaces and the vast cosmo-geography of Tibetan Buddhism that emerged in the ninth and tenth centuries C.E. across the Tibetan plateau.

i. local cosmo-geographies

The largely pre-Buddhistic worship of deities (*lha*) and other spirits (*klu*, *btsan*, etc.) associated with specific regions, mountains, streams, lakes, rivers, and trees, reflected spiritual ties to local landscapes. Natural features—particularly mountains and streams—were focal points that attracted and shaped communities. By the time of dPal.gyi.mgon, villages in the upper Indus had formed patri-familial groupings (*pha.spun*) that connected families at a sub-village level to a single deity (*pha.lha*) and to a single location of worship (the *pha.lha lha.tho*, i.e. the *pha.lha*'s "deity residence") (Figure 1.3). While local monasteries would eventually come to be seen as the religious centers of villages—analogous to the Hindu *mandir* or Christian village church—the sites of *lha* worship were distinct from the local monasteries in several significant ways.

Firstly, they lacked the political dimensions that arose in the monastic institution by the middle of the second millennium C.E. (discussed below). Like the monasteries that exacted tithes on food production, these sites were often tied to village agriculture. *Lha.tho*, which to this day are regarded as indicators of crop success for the coming year, were constructed and maintained by villagers who nurtured them with prayers (*sangs*) and material offerings to the *lha*. Over time,

local monasteries became involved in these rites. Nowadays, as in centuries past, it is the role of a local monk to oversee these prayers at the *lha.tho*.[22]

Secondly, these sites of worship gained significance by virtue of the particular deity or spirit's relationship to the natural feature with which it was associated (a mountain, stream, lake or tree). A *lha.tho* therefore connected people to a village deity, to a sub-village deity, or in some cases, to a villager's own family deity.[23]

Lastly, these sites reflected an array of deities that were unique to the space they inhabited, though they were often considered to be members of categories that loosely existed throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world.[24] The name of a deity, for instance, was often associated with a particular patri-familial communal grouping (*pha-spun*), hamlet, or village.

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[22] Martin Mills, "The Religion of Locality: Local Area Gods and the Characterisation of Tibetan Buddhism," in *Recent Research on Ladakh 7*, ed. Thierry Dodin and Hans Rather (Bonn: Ulmer Kulturanthroplogische Schriften, 1997), 309–28.

[23] Nawang Tsering Shakspo, *A Cultural History of Ladakh*, ed. Kyle Gardner (New Delhi: Centre for Research on Ladakh, 2010); and Kyle Gardner, unpublished research paper for Tibetan Studies Program, School for International Training, 2005: "*Lha*: Deity Worship in Family, Village and Monastery in Sabu, Ladakh."

[24] For a now somewhat antiquated typology of the (mostly higher-ranking) protective deities, see Rene de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities* (Delhi: Book Faith India, 1996) and Mills, "The Religion of Locality: Local Area Gods and the Characterisation of Tibetan Buddhism."



Figure 1.3. *lha.tho* (“deity-residence”) above the village of Basgo. The ruins of Basgo’s medieval fort in the background. Photo by the author.

A rough hierarchy exists within the ranks of these so-called mundane deities.[25] While scholars have been unable to date the practices associated with these deities with any precision, they certainly predate the arrival of Buddhism in Ladakh in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. They continue, albeit with less widespread veneration, today.

A *yul.lha*[26] wields power over a particular region. This may be a single hamlet or, as in the case of Chenrezig, all of Tibet.[27] In Ladakh, *yul.lha* are usually associated with specific mountains. They are regarded as wrathful or peaceful. Villages may require additional spatial "protection" from them in the form of *mchod.rten* (Sanskrit: *stupa*; "heap"), reliquary structures often venerated by circumambulation.[28] Many locals believe that these deities live inside of the

[25] That is, those deities still trapped within *samsara*, the Buddhist (and Hindu) cycle of death and rebirth for non-enlightened beings. The supramundane deities would be those who, like buddhas, bodhisattvas, and some dharmapala (protective deities) have achieved freedom from samsara.

[26] "Yul" is typically translated as country, or, in a loose sense, "territory." See Mills, "The Religion of Locality: Local Area Gods and the Characterisation of Tibetan Buddhism." For the Bhutanese context, see Francoise Pommaret, "Yul and Yul Lha: The Territory and Its Deity in Bhutan," *Bulletin of Tibetology* 40, no. 1 (n.d.): 39–67.

[27] *Spyan.ras.gzigs*, or Avalokitesvara, a bodhisattva, is also referred to as a *yul.lha* because of his status as Tibet's patron deity. Kyle Gardner, unpublished research paper for Tibetan Studies Program, School for International Training, 2005: "*Lha*: Deity Worship in Family, Village and Monastery in Sabu, Ladakh."

[28] Surrounding the upper part of the village of Sabu, 7 kilometers by road east of Leh, is the Ladakh Range. At the head of the village lie the peaks known as *Srin.mo.gan.rkyal*, the "sleeping demons" (or "supine demon"). Both of these, Nawang Tsering Shakspo writes, have been considered inauspicious by the villagers and have been countered by a number of *chorten* known as *rigs.gsum.mgon.po.* This translates as "the Three Reverences," referring to Chenrezig, Manjusri, and Vajrapani – the Bodhisattvas of Compassion, Wisdom, and Strength, respectively. Centre for Research on Ladakh (CRL), unpublished notes by Nawang Tsering Shakspo titled, "Historical Perspectives of Saboo."

lha.tho that are built by villagers and offered monthly prayers on auspicious days.[29] *rtse.lha*, or *khim.lha*, are family gods—more localized than the *pha.lha* mentioned above—and are worshipped at *lha.tho* within certain family compounds.

Klu, water spirits, reside in streams, springs, or marshes.[30] If appeased, they bring clean water.[31] *klu.stor*, offerings to *klu*, are occasionally performed at these sites near the *klu*'s resident, a *kLu.bang* (Figure 1.4a). Despite the seemingly low status of *klu* in the spirit world, treatises have been written about them. They are particularly associated with skin diseases. King Jams.yang rNam.rgyal (who reigned from 1595-1616) was apparently afflicted with leprosy. A lama from Mount Kailash came to perform a *klu.stor* for the king's sake. The success of this ceremony apparently convinced the king to invite Gelukpa monks to establish themselves in Ladakh.[32]

Other categories of spirits include *gzhi.bdag* ("lord of the place/locality"), *sa.bdag* ("lord of the ground/earth/soil"), *lha.lcang* ("deity-trees"), and *btsan*, spirits inhabiting the

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[29] Once a year their contents are changed during the *lha.tho po.ches*. At this event, representatives of each family and several lamas gather at the site of the *lha.tho* and dismantle it. A mud vessel filled with grain and butter is kept inside the structure. Predictions are made based on the state of the contents of the vessel. (e.g. If the butter is melted it will be a warmer season. If the amount of grain inside has risen, there will be a good crop. If it is sunken, the reverse will be true. If there are seeds other than wheat (i.e. barley), it will be a bad season.) The vessel is then emptied and refilled with grain and butter, covered in cloth, and sealed with mud. It is replaced in the *lha.tho* and covered with rocks. Juniper branches are tied to the top of the *lha.tho* and are decorated with prayer flags, a purification mantra is chanted by a monk, and incense is burned.

[30] These spirits are sometimes referred to as the nāgas of broader Indic Hindu and Buddhist traditions, but their worship has notable local inflections.

[31] For descriptions of *klu* see Patrick Kaplanian, "L'homme Dans Le Monde Surnaturel Du Ladakh," in *Recent Research on Ladakh 4*, 1995 and Sonam Phuntsog, "Sacrificial Offerings to Local Deities in Ladakh," in *Recent Research on Ladakh 6*, ed. Henry Osmaston and Nawang Tsering (Bristol, UK: University of Bristol, 1997).

[32] Francke, "La.Dwags Rgyal.Rabs."

netherworld.[33] The latter are warded off by *btsan.dos*, small clay markers painted red and installed throughout villages (Figure 1.4b). This final category of spirit, rarely spoken of today, also reflects temporal dimensions at work in local cosmologies. As ghosts, failing to be reborn, they often haunt the villages where they once lived.

Together, these spatial markers have connected individuals, families, sub-village groupings, villages, and whole regions to an array of deities. The geographic range of these deities may vary significantly, yet they have little correlation to political categories of space.



Figure 1.4a. *kLu.bang*, Sabu Village, Ladakh. Photo by author.

[33] Shakspo, *A Cultural History of Ladakh*, 237-243. Though Tucci, McKay, and Nebesky-Wojkowitz suggest that in Tibet they are more commonly viewed either as demons or powerful local gods.



Figure 1.4b. *bTsan.dos* near Sabu Monastery, Sabu, Ladakh. Photo by author.

ii. The worlds of Tibetan Buddhism

By the seventeenth century, as a result of both sustained cultural interactions with the region's neighbors and the regular movement of traders and pilgrims through its valleys, Islam and Buddhism were cohabitating in Ladakh. While both religions originally entered the region from Kashmir in the west, it was eastern influences—from central and western Tibet, the western Himalayan kingdoms, and even Bhutan and Sikkim—that would most profoundly shape Ladakh's Buddhist majority.[34] Although Buddhism may have been introduced there as early as the first or second century C.E., it was only by the twelfth or thirteenth century that *Vajrayāna,*

[34] Rizvi, *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia*, 56.

the Tibetan expression of Buddhism, became the dominant institutional religion in the upper Indus.[35]

According to the revealed textual tradition (*gter.ma*) that emerged in the Nyingmapa ("old school") tradition of Buddhism in Tibet, the abbot of the Indian Buddhist university of Nalanda, Śāntarakṣita (725-788 C.E.), summoned the Tantric master Padmasambhava from the Swat Valley to Tibet. Śāntarakṣita had, in turn, been summoned to Tibet by Emperor Khri.srong sde.btsan (755-c.800 C.E.). Padmasambhava's first major act was to subdue Srin.mo, the "supine demoness" whose wrathful control was said to have covered the whole of Tibet (Figure 1.5).[36] By erecting a series of temples and fortifications at geospatial points corresponding to vulnerable body points of the demoness, she was geomantically subdued by the Buddhist master. She was not vanquished, but rather pinned down by the extension of political and religious (or miraculous) control. Lhasa's Jokhang, Tibetan Buddhism's most revered site, was believed to be constructed over her heart. By exercising his spiritual (and overtly masculine) authority over a pre-existing world of regional deities, Padmasambhava laid the patriarchal foundation of

[35] Often referred to as *Vajrayāna* ("the lightning bolt vehicle") to distinguish it from *"Hīnayāna"* ("the lesser vehicle"—typically referred to less derogatorily as Theravada) and *Mahāyāna* ("the great(er) vehicle") variants. Vajrayana "the lightning vehicle" is an amalgamation of *Mahāyāna*, Kashmiri Shaivism, and pre-Buddhistic animist practices. Rizvi, 56-61 and Petech, *Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950-1842 A.D.*, 10.

[36] Janet Gyatso, "Down with the Demoness: Reflections on a Feminine Ground in Tibet," *Tibet Journal* 12, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 38–53.

Buddhism in Tibet.[37] In doing so, he enlisted, rather than rejected, a vast pantheon of local deities into a reconstructed Tibetan political cosmology.

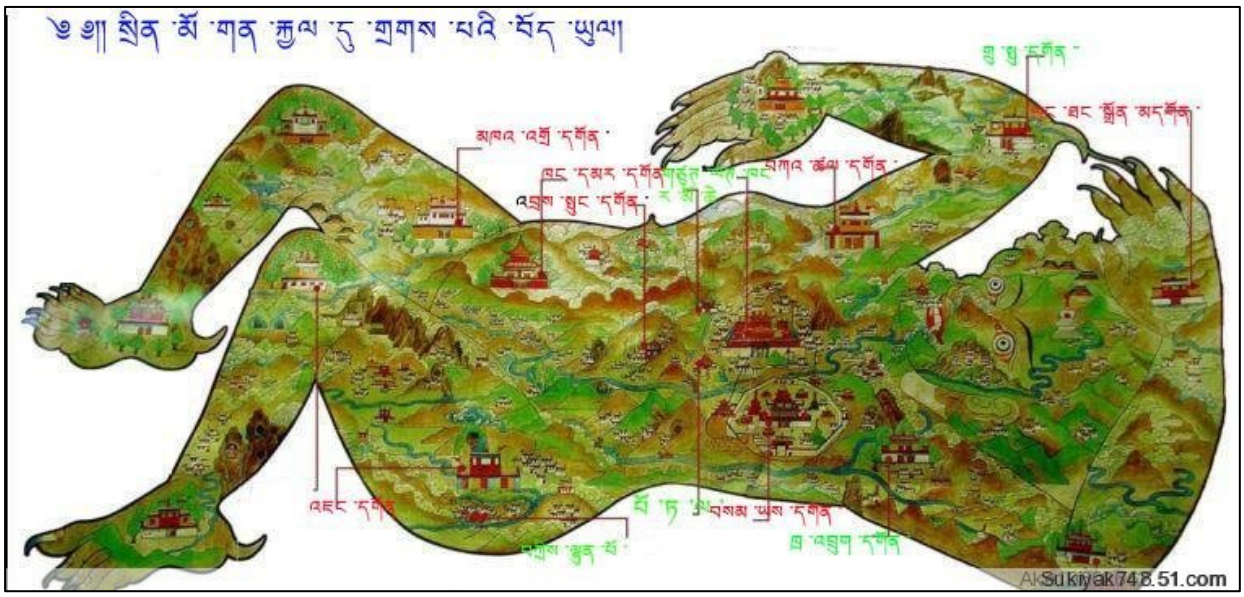


Figure 1.5. *Srin.mo*, the "supine demoness." http://highpeakspureearth.com/2016/the-senmo-map-or-the-resurrection-of-the-demoness-by-woeser/

A similar founding mythology lies at the heart of the *hbo.yig*, the earliest (now fragmentary) chronicles recounting the history of Zangskar, the region to the south of the upper Indus which existed under varying degrees of Ladakhi political influence since it was first ruled by dPal.gyi.mgon's brother in the tenth century.

[37] The gendered element of this subjugation and geomancy is worth noting. Gyatso makes this point forcefully in the case of Tibet (see Gyatso, "Down with the Demoness" 1987). The subjugation of numerous demonesses in Bhutan by the Buddhist master, Drukpa Kunley, is an even more graphic story of masculine Buddhist power exerted over pre-Buddhistic feminine forces. Drukpa Kunley wandered the Bhutanese countryside violently subduing demonesses with his "flaming thunderbolt of wisdom." Though his exploits are typically recounted in a comic mode, they could also be read as raping unruly spirits into submission. These stories account for the nearly ubiquitous presence of phalluses painted on the sides of houses in Bhutan and rendered in wood for popular plays. See Keith Dowman and Sonam Paljor, trans., *The Divine Madman: The Sublime Life and Songs of Drukpa Kunley* (Varanasi and Kathmandu: Pilgrims Publishing, 2000).

> In this Zangskar valley which is full of wealth and happiness, first of all came the Gesar of *gLing*, the prime mover in this land. Then came Padmasambhava who gained control over the non-human spirits and put down the bad features of the area. The valley is shaped like a female demon lying on its back; so he built Kanika on its head. His statue was made on its heart at Pipiting and on the feet of the demon was built a shrine (*gNya.nam.gu.ru*) in a garden of the future Buddha Maitreya (*Byams.gling*). Padmasambhava prophesied that Zangskar would be like the happy cemetery of Sukavati (i.e. a place for beneficial meditation) in India. To the east is Tsere, to the south is Mahakali (*dPal.lha.mo*), to the west is *Dur.lha.khrug.pa* and in the north is the jewel of Cintamani (*Yid.bZhin.gyi.nor.bu*). The owner of the valley is the Goddess with One Eye (*Jo.mo.spyan.gcig.ma*). [38]

Another spiritual-spatial tradition attributed to Padmasambhava is that of the beyul (*sbas.yul*), hidden valleys revealed by masters known as tertön (*gter.ston*). Their locations—ranging across present-day Pakistan, the northwestern Himalaya in India, Nepal Bhutan, Sikkim, Tibet and China—attest to the widely held belief in spaces that can only be seen or accessed by spiritual achievement and faith. Like the mountains and streams of local worship, these valleys are associated with and guarded by particular deities. The greatest of these beyul, common to Hindu, Tibetan Buddhist, and Bon traditions, is Shambhala, mentioned in both the *Kalacakra Tantra* and ancient texts from Western Tibet (Zhangzhung). Unlike Shambhala, which is often considered an ethereal "pure land" abode of buddhas and bodhisattvas, most beyuls are regarded as earthly realms that can be accessed by humans.

These kinds of spiritual territorialization connected Ladakh and Tibet through a web of sacred sites across the Himalaya and Tibetan plateau, and through shared histories and mythologies of heroic founding figures and peripatetic Buddhist masters. Besides the deep political connections between Tibetan and Ladakhi monasteries that emerged by at least the middle of the second millennium. the growing prominence of the sacred mountain Kailash in

[38] John H. Crook, "The History of Zangskar," in *Himalayan Buddhist Villages* (Bristol, UK: University of Bristol, 1994).

Western Tibet provided a cosmo-geographical focal point connecting Ladakh and Tibet.[39] On a still wider scale, the Buddhist world connected Ladakh with China and Mongolia to the east, and to the south, the plains of northern India, home to the birthplace of Buddhism and its most sacred sites.[40]

These connections undermined any limited political visions of Ladakh's territory by enmeshing the region within the larger Tibetan Buddhist world and eventually subordinating Ladakhi religious institutions to various powerful Buddhist sects within central Tibet. Of particular significance for this dissertation, the Treaty of Tingmosgang (discussed in the next section) gave the King of Ladakh the right to property near Mount Kailash in order to establish a pilgrimage station for Ladakhis traveling to the sacred mountain and its lakes. As the British later attempted to solidify territorial boundaries in Ladakh in the nineteenth century, the status of this enclave (called *Min.sar*) became one of several problems that complicated their imperial notions of sovereignty, territory, and legal jurisdiction (see Chapter Four).

Finally, it worth noting that the legitimacy of the *rgyal.po* was directly tied to his role as a "dharma king" (*chos.rgyal*), asserting descent from the early Buddhist kings of Tibet.[41] Thus, the very foundation of political power in independent Ladakh was rooted in a spiritual connection to the historical lineages that had ruled in central Tibet. With the assent of the

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[39] The extent to which Kailash can claim authority as the region's preeminent sacred geographical center has recently been disputed by McKay, *Kailas Histories: Renunciate Traditions and the Construction of Himalayan Sacred Geography*.

[40] See Huber, *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage and the Tibetan Buddhist Reinvention of Buddhist India*.

[41] John Bray, "The Lapchak Mission from Leh to Lhasa in British Indian Foreign Policy," *Tibet Journal* 15, no. 4 (1990): 75–96; Peter Schwieger, "Power and Territory in the Kingdom of Ladakh," in *Recent Research on Ladakh*, ed. Thierry Dodin and Rather, Heinz (Ulm: Universität Ulm, 1997), 427–34; and John Bray, "Ladakh's Lopchak Missions to Lhasa: Gift Exchange, Diplomatic Ritual, and the Politics of Ambiguity," forthcoming.

Ganden Phodrang (dGa'.ldan pho.brang) in central Tibet and its consolidation of power in the seventeenth century under the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag.dbang blo.bzang rgya.mtsho, the political relationship between Ladakh and Lhasa was further complicated, but remained connected through formalized political, religious, and economic ties, as we will see in the chapter's second part.

iii. Islam

By the seventeenth century, Islamic networks of major significance stretched throughout Ladakh and often produced villages and families where the region's two religions easily cohabitated. It was not uncommon to find Muslims partaking of spiritual resources—such as local oracles[42]—that were typically associated with Buddhism.

Regular trade carried on by Tibetan Muslims between the Kashmir valley and Lhasa, and the presence of Central Asian Muslims—traders and *Haj*-goers alike—passing through Ladakh, signaled Islamic identities distinct from those of Kashmir and Central Asia. The Tibetan term for Muslim is *kha.che* (also a term for Kashmir). By at least the seventeenth century, it came to refer to a group of Muslim traders—the Lhasa Khaché—from Kashmir and Ladakh who often resided in Lhasa to oversee their trade network.[43]

Besides the Lhasa Khache, numerous long-established trade networks connected northern India with Central Asia. Though neglected until recently, the vast webs of commerce and pilgrimage connecting the subcontinent to Central Asia saw a bustling trade in everything from

[42] Known as *lha.mo* when the possessed is female, and *lha.ba* when male.

[43] Known as the Lhasa Khaché or simply Khaché. David G. Atwill, "Boundaries of Belonging: Sino-Indian Relations and the 1960 Tibetan Muslim Incident," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 3 (August 2016): 595–620. For a detailed account of a trip to Lhasa from Kathmandu in 1882-1883 with details on the *Kha.che* in Lhasa, made by Ghulam Muhammad, a Kashmiri residing in Kathmandu (in Urdu, with French translation), see Ghulam Muhammad, *Récit d'un Voyageur Musulman Au Tibet*, trans. M. Gaborieau (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1973).

textiles to slaves.[44] As Muzaffar Alam has shown, the long-held view of the Mughal Empire and Uzbek khanates as hostile to inter-region trade is largely unsupported by the historical records of the mid-sixteenth to mid-eighteenth centuries.[45] Sometimes, these networks drew on Islamic pilgrimage networks connecting Sufi *dargāh*s (shrines) and were, in some cases, actively facilitated by Sufi orders engaged in trade. While there appear to have been no established dargāhs in Ladakh, the Nurbakhshiyya Sufis had a sustained presence in the region from at least the early fifteenth century up to the nineteenth century.[46]

Whether Buddhist, Muslim, Bön.po, Hindu, Sikh, or animist, the networks spread across the western Himalaya—and across northern South Asia—were vast and multidirectional.

It thus seems fair to suppose that for a typical Ladakhi of the independence period (mid-tenth through early-nineteenth centuries)—whether an agriculturalist tied to a village, or a trader, herder, or occasional pilgrim with an annual range of perhaps hundreds of miles—the visible and spatial dimensions of his or her world were profoundly shaped by both local and distant cosmologies, distinct from, if often related to, political conceptions of space.

c. The political mode of seeing

Coexisting with the material and cosmological modes of seeing space were political visions formed by the growing power of monasteries and regional allegiances to ruling families.

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[44] Arup Banerji, *Old Routes: North Indian Nomads and Bankers in Afghan, Uzbek and Russian Lands* (Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2011).

[45] Muzaffar Alam, "Trade, State Policy and Regional Change: Aspects of Mughal-Uzbek Commercial Relations, C. 1550-1750," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 37, no. 3 (August 1994): 202–27.

[46] Abdul Ghani Sheikh, "The Traditions of Sufism in Ladakh," in Abdul Ghani Sheikh, *Reflections on Ladakh, Tibet and Central Asia* (Leh, Ladakh: Yasmin House, 2010), 78-87.

The taxation systems that developed in much of the western Himalaya and Tibet in the second millennium C.E. were imposed by increasingly powerful monasteries and local chiefs. Kings functioned as religiously ordained temporal rulers. Taxation typically demanded *corvée* labor (Tibetan: *u.'lag*; Urdu/Persian: *begar*), military service, or varying percentages of crop yields.

Rivalries among Buddhist sects from the fourteenth century onwards—particularly between the Drukpa Kagyupa (*'brug.pa bka'.brgyud.pa*) and Gelukpa (*dge.lugs.pa*)—signaled the political hold of the monasteries and the often-tenuous authority of the king (or, at times, competing kings).[47] These rivalries also indicated affiliations and strong allegiances to the monastic institutions of far-off central Tibet. The practice of sending novice monks to central Tibet's monasteries began, according to the *La.dwags rgyal.rabs*, during the reign of Lha.chen dngos.grub (c. 1290-1320).[48] Around this time, the similar practice of each Buddhist family sending a son to the local monastery for training likely began. These practices cemented ties between local monasteries, villages, and families, while also establishing degrees of loyalty to particular sects.

While the *rgyal.po* of Ladakh may have exerted primary political control over his vassals, both the monasteries and local chiefs complicated notions of unitary allegiance. This was a society where, as the historian John Bray has noted, "political structures [were] centred on personal allegiances to ruling families rather than on 'nations' defined by clearly marked

[47] "In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the kings' closest links were with the 'Bri.gung.pa school. By the mid-fifteenth century, the dGe.lugs.pa had gained influence. However, from the seventeenth century onwards the royal family's closest relationship was with the 'Brug.pa bKa'.brgyud.pa sect." John Bray, "Introduction: Locating Ladakhi History," in *Ladakhi Histories: Local and Regional Perspectives*, ed. John Bray, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library 9 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 10.

[48] Francke, "La.Dwags Rgyal.Rabs." 98.

boundaries."[49] The kings expended fortunes as patrons of monasteries in Ladakh and western Tibet, underscoring that their legitimacy was contingent upon their support of Buddhism.[50]

In this political mode, control of space was contested by allegiances to monastic networks, local rulers, and the king—all of whom sought to regulate territory for the purpose of extracting revenue, labor, and military service. In contrast to how they were viewed by the cosmological and material modes of seeing space, streams, rivers, and mountains were objects used to delineate ranges of taxation and demarcate local political dominance. Critically, inter-village political affiliations were not contiguous; villages varied depending on their sectarian affiliation and the political allegiances of its ruling class. By the time of the Treaty of Tingmosgang in 1684, hierarchies of political power arose that resisted any formal and absolute notion of sovereignty tied to territory. There was, for instance, the *rgyal.po* of Zangskar who offered tribute to the *rgyal.po* of Ladakh. The Ladakhi *rgyal.po*, in turn, offered occasional tribute to the Mughal emperor and triennial tribute to the Dalai Lama (though not, it is worth noting, to the Qing emperor).

Owing to the close and often indistinguishable ties between the monastic establishment, local rulers and the *rgyal.po*s, a neat distinction between political and formally religious spheres cannot be drawn. The *La.dwags rgyal.rabs* offers numerous instances of kings and local chiefs building temples, as well as numerous *mchod.rten* (Figures 1.6a and 1.6b), *ma.Ni* walls (hereafter *ma.ni*), and prayer wheels, all of which cemented direct ties to the monastic establishments.

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[49] Bray, "Introduction: Locating Ladakhi History," 7.

[50] Bray, 10.



Figure 1.6a. *mChod.rten* near Hemis Monastery, Ladakh. Photo by author.



Figure 1.6b. An array of old *mchod.rten* in Nubra valley, northern Ladakh. The soldier on the bridge marks the last point non-locals are allowed to travel before the disputed border with Pakistan. Permits to visit Nubra are required for all non-local residents. Photo by author.

mChod.rten, prayer wheels, and *ma.ni* walls also bridged the gap between cosmological and political modes of seeing. *mChod.rten* construction, in particular, was a way for rulers to

interact with the cosmo-geographies of specific villages. By covering the construction cost of these reliquaries, they could simultaneously engage the monastic establishment, the village populace, and the local deities (whose sometimes wrathful disposition the *mchod.rten* would help appease). Often the products of royal or monastic patronage, or tied to historical figures like the tenth century translator Rinchen Zangpo, these reliquaries profoundly shaped local space and movement. As objects designed to be circumambulated clockwise for the accrual of merit, *ma.ni* walls, *mchod.rten*, and prayer wheels guided people through village and town space. *Ma.ni* walls (long rectangular raised earthworks covered with stones with mantras[51]) were often built between villages in uninhabited spaces. They also served a practical role in offering shelter to weary travellers.[52] Like the fortresses often perched on ridges above villages, these monasteries, temples, *mchod.rten*, *ma.ni* walls and prayer wheels were physical objects that shaped village space while also—less visibly perhaps—asserting the authority of a local or distant political power.

The coordinated looting and destruction of many monasteries by the Dogra invaders from Jammu (discussed in this chapter's final section) in the 1830s was a testament to the widely perceived political and economic power of the monastic institutions, as well as the monasteries often-substantial wealth. Zorawar Singh, the Dogra general who oversaw most of the conquest, decreed that the surviving monasteries increase their local taxes. This began a period of hardship that was relieved, in part, decades later by the British Joint Commissioners, who saw the high taxation as hindering the stimulation of trade with Central Asia and Tibet (see Chapter Three).

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[51] A mantra is a word or sound, usually with a sacred connotation, that is repeated silently or aloud to aid focus in meditation.

[52] Shakspo, *A Cultural History of Ladakh*.

d. The linguistic mode of seeing

As numerous scholars have detailed, language provided another means of shaping Ladakhi space, segmenting it with local linguistic variation while connecting certain communities through various lingua francas. As Michel Neyroud notes in regard to the organization of space in Zangskar, "When the Zanskarpa divided their territory, it was most often to signal a difference in the spoken language."[53] These linguistic variations were often associated with specific valleys. A more pronounced example of language dividing space is Tibet's historical regions (i.e. Kham, Amdo, U-Tsang), each of which has a dialect distinct enough to hinder mutual intelligibility. When the geologist Frederic Drew compiled a series of maps of Jammu and Kashmir in the 1870s, his "Language Map" tellingly illustrated the variety of major languages in the broader region. It overlooked, however, the subtler shifts in dialect from valley to valley in Ladakh, classifying the whole territory as "Tibetan" speaking (Figure 1.7).

Besides dialects within the Ladakhi language, there were numerous examples of lingua francas in use throughout the region. Most of the traders and caravan leaders who plied the Leh-Yarkand and Leh-Lhasa trade routes were multi-lingual, often speaking Urdu and Uighur in addition to their native tongues. The *kiraiyakash*, local Ladakhi transporters in Dras, Kargil, Leh, and Nubra, often encouraged their children to learn Uighur to better communicate with the Yarkandi traders and caravan leaders with whom they sometimes worked.[54] It was common throughout the nineteenth century, according to numerous sources, to hear Ladakhi, Tibetan,

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[53] Michel Neyroud, "Organisation de l'espace, Isolement et Changement Dans Le Domaine Transhimalayen: Le Zanskar," in *Ladakh Himalaya Occidental Ethnologie, Écologie: Recherches Récentes Sur Le Ladakh No. 2A*, 2nd ed. (Université de Pau: Centre de biologie des Écosystèmes d'altitude, 1985), 25. My translation.

[54] Bray, "Introduction: Locating Ladakhi History," 19-20.

Urdu, Uighur, Kashmiri, Persian, Pashto, and Punjabi spoken in the market at Leh in trading season.

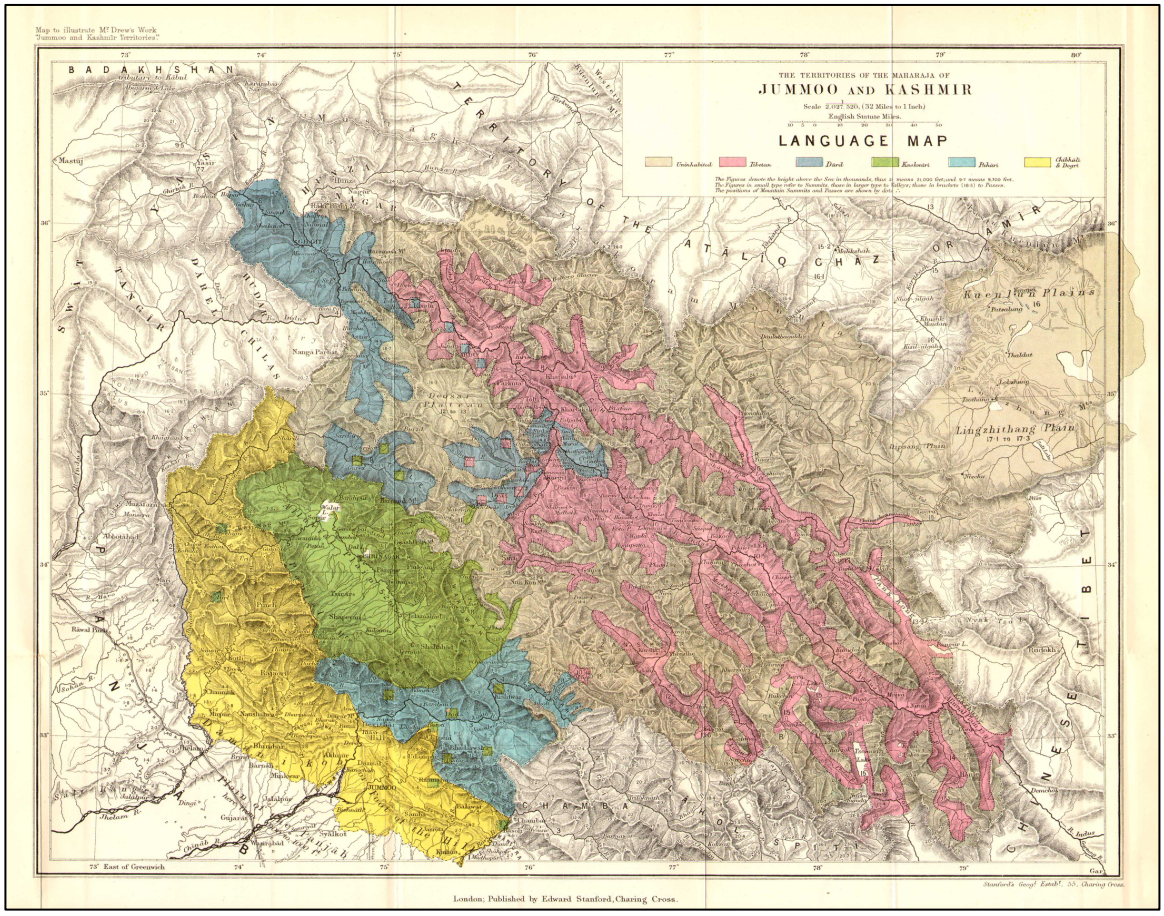


Figure 1.7a. Frederic Drew's "Language Map." Frederic Drew, *The Jammu and Kashmir Territories.* London: Edward Stanford, 1875. Detail below.

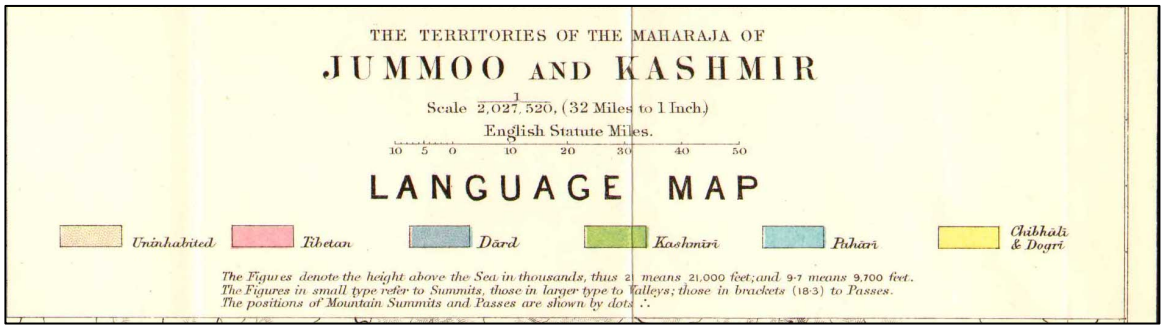


Figure 1.7b. Detail from Frederic Drew's "Language Map." Frederic Drew, *The Jammu and Kashmir Territories.* London: Edward Stanford, 1875.

e. From seen to seeing

In sum, to a person residing in the upper Indus prior to the Dogra invasion of 1834, it is likely that she would not look over this high-altitude landscape and simply envision a homogenous political entity called Ladakh. Rather, when she cast her eyes up at the mountains over her village, she would perceive a barrier and conduit, a source of water and food, and the presence of a deity. When she looked across the valley to a distant neighboring village, she would see a natural and human landscape colored by various dialects, traded commodities, and local hierarchies. These political, cosmological, linguistic, and material spaces did not neatly align. For those living in the region prior to Dogra and British rule, there was scant awareness of a contiguous, sovereign, and bounded territory—let alone a hegemonic state with jurisdiction over that territory. Political identity was tied to local rulers and monasteries. As such it was often pluralistic. Cosmological identities varied by family, village, and sub-village community. Conceptions of the material physicality of daily life, whether based on seasonal trade, transhumance, or local agriculture, connected valleys to each other and villages to the glaciers whose snowmelt supported them. These layers of life produced a tapestry of multiple, cohabiting spaces.

Any society, of course, has multiple ways of conceiving physical, social, cosmological, and political spaces. Imperial encounters are frequently moments that render these spatial conceptions most visible, particularly when one vision conflicts with another. When the British first attempted to determine Ladakh's boundaries in the late 1840s, they did so assuming that the means of understanding and organizing Ladakh was as a bounded, uniform physical space to be mapped—that is, primarily, in a political mode of seeing. Secondarily, the British endeavored to promote the expansion of trade with Central Asia, often viewing Ladakh as a material conduit to

untapped markets throughout the continent. These two modes of seeing, as I will illustrate throughout this dissertation, competed over the course of the nineteenth century. The desire to "open" trade with Central Asia conflicted with the implicitly "closed" nature of a settled border. By the early twentieth century, the political mode of seeing a territorialized state became pre-eminent. In the process, the British began to "see" a different Ladakh, one surrounded by a solid border and governed by uniform regulations for those seeking to cross it. While the other modes of seeing did not disappear, they were relegated to an undeniably inferior status by the British. As I will show in Chapter Two, geography—the pre-eminent "imperial science"—profoundly reconfigured Himalayan space.

II. Ladakh: "Crossroads of High Asia"[55]

Relatively little is known of Ladakh in the period prior to the seventeenth century. A mixture of archeological evidence, however, along with *rnam.thar* (Tibetan Buddhist hagiographies), various fragmentary versions of the *La.dwags rgyal.rabs*, a few foreign travellers' accounts beginning at least by 1603,[56] and the histories of neighboring and invading countries[57] collectively sketch a mountainous polity with growing economic and cultural ties to Central Asia, Tibet, and Kashmir. At the height of the rNam.rgyal dynasty in the seventeenth century, the rulers of Ladakh asserted various degrees of control over neighboring regions like Zangskar, Nubra, Purig, Rudok, Guge, Purang, Lahoul and Spiti.

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[55] The phrase is Janet Rizvi's. See Rizvi, *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia*.

[56] Some early scholars (Alexander Cunningham, for one) attempted to find references to Ladakh in the writings of the peripatetic Chinese monk, Xuanzang (602-664 CE). These are dubious.

[57] For instance, Mirza Muhammad Haider Dughlat's *Tārīḵh-i-rashidi* which recounts his failed 'holy war' against Tibet; see Chapter Two.

This political expansion of Ladakh provoked tensions with Tibet in the east and Kashmir in the west. In the first instance, these tensions manifested as the struggles of various sects of Tibetan Buddhism to establish dominance in the region. In the second instance, it provoked occasional invasions and attempts by Kashmir and the Mughals to secure access to Ladakh's valuable trade routes. Throughout periods of external attack, the rulers of the upper Indus also contended with the oscillating powers of local rulers whose political machinations could challenge their dominance.

With the rise of Islam in the Kashmir valley in the fourteenth century, some newly converted rulers sought to wage jihad on their mountain-bound neighbors. Sultan Zain ul-Abidin (1420-1470), according to the *Rajatarangini*, personally led an expedition that "plundered the country and massacred the people" of Ladakh and western Tibet.[58] Another sultan of Kashmir, Hasan Shah (1472-1484), sent a military expedition to Ladakh that was apparently destroyed.[59] And Mirza Muhammad Haider Dughlat—a Chagatai general, adventurer, and cousin to the first Mughal emperor, Babur—waged an unsuccessful jihad through Ladakh to Tibet beginning in 1532.[60]

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[58] Petech, *Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950-1842 A.D.*, 22-23.

[59] Petech, 26.

[60] Ney Elias, ed., *The Tārīkh-i-Rashidi of Mirza Muhammad Haider, Dughlát, A History of the Moghuls of Central Asia*, trans. E. Denison Ross (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co., 1895). 407. In the tradition of his ancestor Timur, Mirza Haider laid siege to the chief fortification of the Nubra valley, north of Ladakh's central Indus valley. He eventually killed all those who fought: "their heads formed a lofty minaret—and the vapour from the brains of the infidels of that country ascended to the heavens" (p. 418). Haider was forced to retreat to Kashmir as a result of the effects of altitude, the brutal cold of winter, and the lack of food and water. See also Jigar Mohammed, "Mughal Sources on Medieval Ladakh, Baltistan and Western Tibet," in *Ladakhi Histories: Local and Regional Perspectives*, ed. John Bray (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 147–60.

The *Tārīḵh-i-Rashidi* noted that there were two rulers of Ladakh at this time. It enumerated the region's well-established routes to Yarkand, Kashmir, Tibet, and Hindustan. Mirza Haidar, returning as the ruler of Kashmir in 1545, established a short-lived nominal governorship over Ladakh and Baltistan that likely dissolved on his death in 1551.[61] With the rise of the rNam.gyal dynasty, a branch of the earlier royal family, political power became more centralized and there is no mention in the chronicles of multiple rulers after the rein of bKra.shis rNam.rgyal (c. 1555-1575).

On the Turkic front, an invasion from *Hor.yul* (in this instance likely the region of Yarkand and Kashgar) was repelled in the late sixteenth century.[62] When Tse.dbang rNam.rgyal became king, he was dissuaded from attacking the people of Hor by the "entreaties of the Nubra people," who argued that such a military invasion "would have seriously damaged the trade through the passes, which was of vital importance to Nubra."[63] On the eastern front, sectarian disputes fostered ongoing tensions between Ladakh and the central Tibetan authorities, as well as the often-autonomous western Tibetan local rulers.

Historians generally agree that King Seng.ge rNam.rgyal's 1630 annexation of Rudok, Guge and Purang is considered to be the apogee of Ladakh's political power.[64] The terms of this annexation were brokered by the famous Buddhist translator, sTag.tsang.ras.pa.[65] Seng.ge rNam.rgyal then attempted to conquer Baltistan. Although the *La.dwags gyal.rabs* records a great victory over the combined Mughal-Balti Muslim forces, the episode is omitted from the

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[61] Petech, *Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950-1842 A.D.*, 27-28.

[62] Petech, 30.

[63] Petech, 32.

[64] Bray, "Introduction: Locating Ladakhi History," 11.

[65] Petech, *Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950-1842 A.D.*, 40.

more reliable contemporary account found in sTag.tsang.ras.pa's biography. Mughal sources claim the Ladakhis were defeated. In response, according to the French traveller Francois Bernier who visited the region in 1663, Seng.ge "entirely closed the route and permitted no one to enter his country from Kashmir."[66] Instead, according to Bernier, the caravans coming from India would travel to Patna and from there cross the mountains to Lhasa.

This proved foolish. As Rizvi notes, "It surely indicates a total failure to grasp economic realities, for to close any one important route obviously cost Ladakh its position at the center of a network of routes, and so large part of its revenue."[67] Indeed, the decline of Ladakh's commercial fortunes that set in after his death in 1642 may be attributed to, in Luciano Petech's words, Seng.ge's "economic suicide."[68]

bDe.ldan, Seng.ge's successor, made the mistake of granting the Drukpa Kagyupa sect royal favor at a time when the Fifth Dalai Lama was, quite ruthlessly, ensuring the domination of the Gelukpa sect. Following the routing of Tibetan forces by Drukpa-dominated Bhutan, the Ladakhi king decided to provoke a fight with Tibet. The Tibetans, in response, promptly began a campaign against Ladakh. This forced bDe.ldan to seek the assistance of the Mughal emperor,

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[66] Francois Bernier, *Voyages de François Bernier, Contenant La Description Des États Du Grand Mogol, de l'Indoustan, Du Royaume de Cachemire, Etc.* (Paris: Imprimé aux frais du gouvernement, 1830), 294. The relevant passage reads: "...mais depuis cette entreprise que fit Chah-Jehan de ce côté-là, le roi du grand Thibet a entièrement fermé le chemin, et ne permet que personne du côté de Cachemire entre dans son pays; et c'est pour cela que les caravanes partent à présent de Patna sur le Gange pour ne point passer par-dessus ses terres, les laissant à la gauche, et gagnant droit le royaume de Lassa. [but from the undertaking made by Shah-Jehan on that side, the king of Great Thibet (i.e. Ladakh) has entirely closed the route, and permits no one from Kashmir to enter his country; and it is for this reason that the caravans now depart from Patna on the Ganges in order to avoid passing through his lands, leaving them to the left, and gaining access to the Kingdom of Lhasa]." My translation.

[67] Rizvi, *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia*, 68-69.

[68] Petech, *Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950-1842 A.D.*, 43(?).

Aurangzeb, to whom he had pledged nominal allegiance decades earlier. Aurangzeb's Kashmiri troops eventually arrived and pushed the Tibetans back.

Having already agreed to convert to Islam and build a mosque in Leh, bDe.ldan signed a treaty with the Kashmiri-led Mughal forces. Soon after the Kashmiri soldiers left, however, the Tibetans returned with Mongol assistance and concluded a separate treaty with Ladakh at Tingmosgang. This treaty fixed the border between the two countries at the Lha.ri stream, which flows into the Indus five miles southwest of Demchok.[69] No original text of the treaty exists, however its outcome is described in the *La.dwags rgyal.rabs*. The treaty marked the Lha.ri stream near Demchok as a border point at the edge of Ladakhi territory (figure 2c).[70] It included monopoly concessions on significant trade. The Ladakhis obtained a trading monopoly over the shawl wool produced in Western Tibet, while the Tibetans gained a monopoly over the brick tea trade with Ladakh. It also established two complementary tribute missions: the triennial Lopchak (*lo.phyag*) from Ladakh to Lhasa, and the reciprocal annual *La.dwags gzhung.tshong*.

These aspects of the treaty are significant for three reasons. First, as mentioned earlier in reference to Gergan's map, they stipulate as a historically established border a point, not a line. Second, the Lopchak and *gzhung.tshong*, also called the *ja.ba* (because of the tea (*ja*) that was typically traded during the mission, symbolized the easy coexistence of religion, trade, and politics in regional relationships. It also suggested that sovereignty and territory were not necessarily neat and absolute concepts, and that the geopolitical space of the northwestern Himalaya itself was conceived of in plural, overlapping, and non-contiguous ways. Finally, the

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[69] The southeasternmost settlement in Ladakh, the name of which suggests a connection to the deity Chakrasambara and, by extension, to Mt. Kailash, which Chakrasambara is said to inhabit.

[70] The relevant line of the *La.dwags rgyal.rabs* reads: "*mtshams bde.mchog lha.ri chu nas byas* [The border is made at the Lha.ri [literally "sacred mountain"] stream [near] Demchok]." My translation. Francke, "La.Dwags Rgyal.Rabs," 42.

treaty indicates that at least as early as the seventeenth century, trade had become an essential facet of the political and social order of the region. For a high-altitude region with immense mountainous obstacles, this trade was remarkably complex and wide-ranging. As Rizvi writes, "By the mid-1680s, the trade in 'shawl wool' had become a matter of such importance as to be the subject of the most significant clause of the Treaty of Tingmosgang, which was to define Ladakh's relations with Tibet on the one hand, and Kashmir on the other, for the next century and a half."[71]

The tension between trade and consolidated political power that had marked the century leading up to Tingmosgang were resolved, to an extent, by the granting of monopolies, the establishment of border points, and the creation of reciprocal trade missions. But the treaty concerned only one of many significant trade networks that stretched through Ladakh. While this text might be taken as a sign of a dominant political vision of Ladakh, it also overlooks a vast array of smaller material networks omitted in the royal chronicles.

Like much of the periphery of South Asia, complex networks of movement had long crisscrossed Ladakh. The very name "Ladakh" (*la.dwags*: "expanse/land of passes") reflects the significance of its transportation routes in forming its historical identity. In her impressive synthesis of the complex historical trans-Himalayan trade networks, Rizvi employs a host of historical documents and an extensive array of oral histories to paint a detailed and multifaceted picture of the centuries-old networks crisscrossing what she aptly terms the "crossroads of high Asia." While there was an ebb and flow to the volume of trade over the many centuries that trans-Himalayan trade has existed, it persisted with remarkable continuity until the mid-twentieth century. Much of this continuity can be attributed to the relative lack of interference by regional

[71] Rizvi, *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh*, 53.

political actors and the durability of networks of mobile peoples—two key features James C. Scott and Willem van Schendel have attributed to the regions they each describe as "Zomia."[72] The occasional slides and surges in trade figures also assert that this trade was intimately tied to regional politics and to economies of various scales, as well as to seasonal climatic conditions that affected the flow of people over passes and rivers and through high desert valleys.[73] Ladakhi trade statistics, collected regularly from the 1860s till 1946, show that trade volume was affected by diverse factors, from heavy snowfall on the Karakoram Pass to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Unlike Rizvi, most scholars who have examined Ladakh's trade history have focused on the glamorous and global pashmina trade. They overlook the great variety of items flowing throughout the region. Some was of high value (precious stones, charas, opium, brocades, silk, ponies) and some of local necessity (salt, coarse wool, butter, and borax). Access to many of these resources was highly variable and dependent on seasonal flux. Pashmina wool, for instance, came from sheep that were migrated from the high summer grazing lands of the Tibetan plateau to the lower altitudes of Ladakh, Spiti and Lahaul in the winter months by their transhumant Changpa (*byang.pa*) herders. Likewise, the flow of traded items (brick tea, charas, opium, borax, and wool) was dependent on when and whether the annual accumulation of snow would allow access over mountain passes.

This commercial activity continued through much of the colonial period. The Dogra Administrator of Ladakh and historian Hashmatullah Khan remarked in his *Tārīk̲h-i-Jammun, Laddak̲h, aur Baltistan* [The History of Jammu, Ladakh, and Baltistan] that "Ladakh's capital

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[72] Van Schendel coined the term and included the Himalayan region, while Scott used the term to refer more exclusively to the highland regions of Southeast Asia.

[73] For the nineteenth century trade statistics, see Figure 3.4.

[was] an exchange market for traded goods from the temperate plains of India to the mountainous regions of Chinese Turkistan and Lhasa."[74] While these terminal points—Amritsar in the plains of the Punjab, Lhasa in Tibet, and Yarkand in Turkistan—marked the longest and most lucrative routes, there were numerous shorter routes that crisscrossed the mountainous region. Collectively, these local and long-distance routes ensured that Ladakh was the critical hub that connected Central Asia to the plains of India and the Tibetan plateau to Kashmir. In contrast to foreign perceptions of the region as isolated and remote, those regularly moving across Ladakh knew the networks crisscrossing it to be vast and intricate.

III. Where Traders, Mountains, and Empires Meet: William Moorcroft to Zorawar Singh

The British East India Company first initiated formal contact with the broader Himalayan region in 1774, when Warren Hastings speculated on its significance for India's defense and for the expansion of British trade (with Tibet and, relatedly, China).[75] That year he sent George Bogle to Bhutan and Tibet (which Hastings initially believed to be one state) in a first attempt to establish trans-Himalayan diplomatic and commercial relations.

A few Western travellers had ventured into the Himalayan regions earlier—notably the Tuscan Jesuit, Ippoliti Desideri, and the aforementioned Francois Bernier.[76] But it was only after the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-1815) and the ensuing territorial concessions that the British directly contacted the western Himalayan regions of Garwhal and Kumaon. It was a gradual

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[74] Khan, *Tārīk̲h-i Jammūñ*, 380.

[75] Kate Teltscher, *The High Road to China: George Bogle, the Panchen Lama and the First British Expedition to Tibet* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 49-50.

[76] For an example of such writings, Ippolito Desideri, *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri of Pistoia*, ed. Filippo de Filippi (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1937).

contact, however, and (and to use Aniket Alam's phrase) "non-cataclysmic." The regions' terrain made standard British administrative practices difficult to establish and apply.[77]

The fifty years following Bogle's mission witnessed a consolidation of numerous small hill states in the northwestern Himalaya by a series of regional imperial aspirants: first the Gurkha rulers of Nepal, followed by the Sikh Empire (1799 to 1849) of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Dogra Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu (1846-1857), and finally the British East India Company and its formal imperial successor, the British Government of India.

Following 1803, when the EIC took the Delhi territories, the Calcutta-based Company's attention gradually turned northward. They sent their first official expedition to reconnoiter the territories under Gurkha rule in 1808, Sponsored by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, this mission was charged with exploring the upper reaches of the Ganges.[78] The published report of the expedition indicates another goal of investigating the region's economy (specifically trade with the region known as Chinese Turkestan), its socio-political condition, and the nature of Gurkha rule. It details the organization of the Gurkha rulers' administration in this region, the nature of agricultural production, natural resources, and geography.

In 1818, the British sent a team under Alexander Gerard to explore the Sutlej and the possibility of trade across its mountains. This team eventually crossed into western Tibet along the route that would later become the Hindustan-Tibet Road.[79] By the 1820s, British media reported sporadic accounts of western Himalayan commercial goods arriving in British-held

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[77] Aniket Alam, *Becoming India: Western Himalayas under British Rule* (Delhi: Foundation Books, 2008).

[78] Alam, 99-102.

[79] J. D. Herbert, "An Account of a Tour Made to Lay down the Course and Levels of the River Sutlej or Satudra, as Far as Traceable within the Limits of the British Authority, Performed in 1819," *Asiatic Researches* 18 (1819): 227–58. For the Hindustan-Tibet Road, see Chapter 3.

towns (particularly Rampur, in Bashahr) along this route.[80] Slowly, the British began to recognize the pre-existing trade routes and to appreciate the commercial potential of the region.

William Moorcroft, one of the most enterprising English travelers in the service of the East India Company, who styled himself as "Superintendent of the Hon'ble Company's stud," reached Ladakh's capital in September 1820 while en route to Central Asia.[81] The first officially practicing veterinarian in the Company, Moorcroft sought more robust horse breeds to improve the EIC's stock. Het was also tasked with exploring the possibilities of opening the trans-Himalayan region to British commerce. G. J. Alder, C. A. Bayly and others have shown that Moorcroft's activities constituted an early form of intelligence gathering.[82] But the term "intelligence" was, at this point, an undeniably vague and capacious category that included geographical, ethnographic, botanical, and commercial information, as well as the more specific details of commercial penetration by Russia in the region and the likely demand for British goods. Moorcroft was furnished with certificates of introduction in English, Russian, Persian, and Chinese, all stamped with the Company's seal.

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[80] Cf. *Calcutta Gazette* (13 March 1828) and *The Morning Chronicle* (London) (22 September 1828), which detail the arrival of Ladakhi grain in the Punjab.

[81] For the story of Moorcroft, I have drawn on the published accounts of his travels: William Moorcroft and George Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara; from 1819 to 1825*, ed. Horace Hayman Wilson, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1841).m. I've also benefited from the biographical work done by G. J. Alder, "Standing Alone: William Moorcroft Plays the Great Game, 1808-1825," *International History Review* 2, no. 2 (April 1980): 172–215. Bernier, *Voyages de François Bernier, Contenant La Description Des États Du Grand Mogol, de l'Indoustan, Du Royaume de Cachemire, Etc.*

[82] For a view on his role as intelligence gatherer, see C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 135-40. For an analysis that plays up the Russian specter, see Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, 90-1.

Although distrusted and obstructed by the Ladakhi officials in Leh, Moorcroft managed to make a number of useful friends. These included the peripatetic Hungarian linguist, Sándor Kőrösi Csoma,[83] whom Moorcroft convinced to write the first English-Tibetan dictionary, thereby "founding" Tibetan Studies.[84] During his stay in Ladakh, Moorcroft wrote detailed letters to the Governor-General (Lord Hastings) in Calcutta, highlighting the commercial and strategic importance of Ladakh. He observed that British control over the region would facilitate the project of tapping the shawl-wool trade from western Tibet, and that Ladakh would serve as a key for opening up the potentially "vast markets of Chinese Turkestan" and other Central Asian regions.[85] Moorcroft estimated that the Company's monthly expenditure for maintaining peace in the region would not exceed a thousand rupees.[86] Furthermore, he asserted, Ladakh could serve as a base for operations against China should it become necessary. Influence of the region could

[83] Known to most English speakers as Alexander Csomo de Koros.

[84] Moorcroft's encounter with the peripatetic Hungarian linguist, Alexander Csoma de Kőrös highlights a curious spatial disposition within the field of Tibetan Studies. Much of the early formal study of Tibet and the Tibetan cultural world has transpired at the region's edges. Ladakh and the western Himalaya, India, Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan have played particularly prominent roles as sites of Tibetology. Csoma de Kőrös' story also highlights, in a modest way, a prominent theme in the history of Tibetan Studies, and in the history of historical writing in South Asia more generally: the relationship between scholarship and politics. When the Hungarian scholar met William Moorcroft near the Zoji-la, two sets of interests became one. The first century of Western attempts to gather systematic information about Tibet's culture, religions, language, and history was guided by this relationship between colonial interests and scholarly ones. This is a theme not just in Tibetan Studies, but in the history of historical writing in South Asia more generally. See, for instance, Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Birth of Academic Historical Writing in India," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 4: 1800-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 520–36.

[85] Moorcroft and Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara; from 1819 to 1825*, 151-54.

[86] National Archives of India (hereafter NAI), Foreign Political Proceedings, September 20, 1823, No. 63 (207).

also keep Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the distant yet ambitious Russians at bay.[87] Moorcroft painted the "prize" of British trade with the region in fantastical language.

> Whether [Tibetans and Central Asians] shall be clothed with the broadcloth of Russia or of England... with hardware of every description from Petersburgh [i.e. St. Petersburg] or Birmingham, is entirely in the decision of the Government of British India. At present there is little doubt to which the prize will be awarded, for enterprise and vigour mark the measure of Russia towards the nations of Central Asia, whilst ours are characterised by misplaced squeamishness and unnecessary timidity.[88]

In May 1821, Moorcroft exceeded his mandate and signed a commercial agreement with Ladakh's rulers. The EIC's merchants were thereby "permitted to trade with Ladakh and through it with the Chinese and Western Turkestan."[89]

Moorcroft's stay in Ladakh aroused the suspicions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who sent envoys to look into his activities in Leh. Moorcroft openly replied to the envoys that if the rumors of a Sikh military force being assembled were true, the pashmina industry of Kashmir would be injured. His letter was, according to Moorcroft, written to alarm the Sikh ruler and forestall an invasion of Ladakh until the Governor-General decided whether to accept the Ladakhi ruler's request for aid. The letter did not have the intended effect.

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[87] Moorcroft and Trebeck, *Travels*, 154.

[88] Moorcroft and Trebeck, 154. This quotation would later be used by the principal engineer on the Hindustan-Tibet Road, Lieutenant David Briggs, supervisor of much of the Hindustan-Tibet Road's construction, as an unheeded warning (circa 1820), House of Commons United Kingdom, "Minutes and Correspondence in Reference to the Project of the Hindostan and Thibet Road, with Reports of Major Kennedy and Lieutenant Briggs Relating Thereto; and, an Account of the Expenditure Incurred in the Construction of the New Road between Kalha and Dugshai," Sessional Papers, 1857 East India (roads), February 2, 1857. 73.

[89] Nisith Ranjan Ray, *Himalaya Frontier in Historical Perspective* (Calcutta: Institute of Historical Studies, 1986), 198.

Ranjit Singh's agent in Delhi passed the letter on to the "white Mughal," Sir David Ochterlony, the British Resident at Delhi. The maharaja's agent demanded an explanation.[90] In response, the Governor-General wrote to the maharaja explaining that Moorcroft had acted on his own and that the offer from Ladakh was rejected. Concern for an overextended territory, plus high costs incurred in the Anglo-Nepalese War, no doubt contributed to British reluctance to extend their imperial holdings in South Asia.

Moorcroft's actions would help drive the Sikh invasion of Ladakh in the following decade. The desire to maintain control over the lucrative pashmina trade was central to Maharaja Ranjit Singh's logic of invasion.[91] When the time came, despite many pleas to the British, no help arrived. Similar waves of disorder, invasion, and political consolidation also struck several of Ladakh's neighboring states.[92] Moorcroft's visit also signals the first instance of commercial expansion and imperial security concerns causing tension between the "man on the spot" and administrators in Calcutta.

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[90] William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (London: Viking, 2002), 183-184. Ochterlony was knighted for his role in the Anglo-Nepalese War.

[91] K. M. Panikkar, *The Founding of the Kashmir State: A Biography of Maharajah Gulab Singh, 1792-1858* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953).

[92] In 1820, the people of Kulu invaded Spiti through the Losar Valley. As Trebeck described in his 1821 visit, they "destroyed several houses by lighting large fires in the rooms. The Gompa of Kih was much injured. The property taken off consisted chiefly of yaks, horses, and other livestock." The raid was caused by the suzerain Sikhs' heavy taxation of the people of Kulu. Similarly, circa 1825, the ruler of Chamba invaded Zanskar and made it a tributary district. In 1821, a strong Balti force entered Ladakh, plundered several villages and took off with a hefty amount of booty. Ladakh's relations with Bashahr state also deteriorated. Bashahr, one of the most important of the Simla Hill States, had come under EIC control in 1816 and had been a friendly trade partner to Ladakh prior to Tse.pal rNam.gyal's erratic and damaging reign (1802-1837). Captain C. P. Kennedy, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, Sikh and Hill Sates, wrote in 1824 that the aggressions between Ladakh and Bashahr "resembled those that formerly occurred in Scotland in feudal times, consisting of forays and assaults on the borders the seizure of cattle and firing of villages." Moorcroft, *Travels*, 60-63.

IV. Enter the Dogras

In 1834, a century and a half after the conclusion of the Ladakh-Tibet-Mughal War of 1679-1684, Ladakh was again invaded. This time it was by the Raja of Jammu, Gulab Singh, a dependent of Ranjit Singh's short-lived Sikh Empire. Gulab Singh's general, Zorawar Singh, crossed the Zoji pass. The Dogra's principal concern in invading Ladakh was to ensure a monopoly over the Pashmina trade routes.[93]

Over the following years, Zorawar Singh pressed on towards Tibet to further consolidate control over the trade routes and subdue a resisting Ladakhi populace.[94] As he was marching towards Lhasa, his supply lines were stretched by severe winter conditions. His army was forced to retreat to Ladakh after an attack in western Tibet left the general dead.[95] But Zorawar Singh's incursion did lead to a tripartite treaty between the Raja of Jammu, the Emperor of China, and the "Lama Guru of Lhasa" (the Dalai Lama) in 1842. The treaty reaffirmed the "boundaries of Ladakh and its surroundings as fixed from ancient times."[96] Although most of the upper Indus had been swiftly conquered in 1834, it was not until 1842 that the Dogras formally annexed Ladakh.

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[93] Rizvi, *Trans-Himalayan Caravans*, 19, 61-62.

[94] Mohammad Amin Panḍit, *Laddāk̲h Kī Kahānī: Maḳhtasar Tārīk̲h Laddāk̲h* (Srinagar: Badshah Publisharz, 1970); Sukhdev Singh Charak, trans., *Gulabnama of Diwan Kirpa Ram: A History of Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu and Kashmir* (New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers, 1977), 206-233.

[95] *The Examiner* (London), 12 February 1842: "Thibet: it at one time appeared probable that Zorawar Sing would succeed in wrestling from the Chinese some portion of their Thibetian territory. Our celestial friends, however, have now entered the field against the enemy; and the Seikh forces have given way, and are retreating on Ladakh, quite discomfited."

[96] J&K State Archives, Jammu (JKSA-J). "Treaty between Ladakh and Tibet: 1920, 276/R.P-4."

This annexation led to major economic and political changes. The *rgyal.po* was exiled from Leh Palace. Ladakh was divided into five districts: Ladakh (referring to the central district around Leh); Zangskar, Kargil, Dras, and Nubra. Each of these districts was placed under a *thanadar*, who exercised both military and civil authority and was accountable only to Raja Gulab Singh.[97] The raja also imposed a tax on the monasteries, and instituted a death sentence for those convicted of slaughtering cows.[98] Prior to the Dogra conquest, taxation varied depending on size of home and profession, and the monasteries were entirely excluded.[99] Large-sized houses paid twelve seers [roughly 1.25 kg] of grain annually, while medium-sized houses paid eight, and small ones paid six. In addition to this, each village was expected to work the *rgyal.po*'s land held in every village and collectively pay him forty-eight seers annually. Any owners of substantial flocks paid an annual tax of one animal for every thirty, though the semi-nomadic *byang.pa* were expected to pay two sheep and one sheep's load of wool and salt for every hundred sheep in the caravan, in addition to a seer of wool, ten seers of salt, and one sheep per caravan "irrespective of its size." There were also taxes on "shops, brokers, and trade passing through Ladakh," but the details of these rates are not known. Following the Dogra conquest, the first thanadar of Ladakh (later referred to as the *wazīr-i-wazārat*), Basti Ram implemented a land

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[97] C. L. Datta, *Ladakh and Western Himalayan Politics: 1819-1848. The Dogra Conquest of Ladakh, Baltistan and West Tibet and Reactions of Other Powers* (New Delhi: Mushiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1973). 39.

[98] Alexander Cunningham, *Ladak, Physical, Statistical, and Historical; With Notices of the Surrounding Countries* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1854), 268, 272. The tax amounted to Rs. 6,300 each year, and according to Cunningham, the death toll from cow-related executions totaled 8.

[99] This is according to an 1887 report on the Revenue Assessment in Ladakh by the British official stationed there. He noted that his principal informant was the Dogra-appointed governor of Ladakh, the *wazīr-i-wazārat*.

tax that was quite severe and generated substantial complaints from Ladakhis.[100] He was succeeded as thanadar by his son, Mehter Mangal (also known as Mangalju) who revised the land taxes in 1864 to be in closer accordance to the rgyal.po's earlier rates on houses. The resulting system assumed that larger houses were to have one "*zamīn*" (literally "land"), which was defined as the amount of land requiring 30-40 "khals" of seed to sow it (a khal was "a sheep's load" of twenty-four pounds). Medium- and small-sized houses were expected to pay the equivalent of one half and one quarter of a *zamīn*, respectively. Later still, in 1884, the *wazīr* would again change the tax system by extending a uniform tax rate to the monasteries. They greatly resented the added taxes and appealed to the Maharaja, who allowed them to push their share of taxes onto Ladakhi peasants, some of whom could not afford the added twenty-five percent and were forced to flee their land.[101]

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[100] Francke, "La.dwags rgyal.rabs," 133-34.

[101] NAI, Foreign, Frontier Part B, July 1890, no. 157. "Proposal of the British Joint Commissioner, Ladak, to put a stop to the trade between Ladak and Lhassa." "Briefly stated the position is this: that cultivators pay revenue, under some old system, which existed before the Dogra conquest, and under which Rs. 7 is paid for each "holding", irrespective of the extent and quality of the land. Some are overtaxed and some are undertaxed. In 1885 the wazir announced the results of his survey of the country, and charged each man according to the extent and quality of his "holdings". The Lamas, who were the chief sufferers by the new system, induced the Ladakis to agree to pay an extra 25 per cent, provided the old system was reverted to. The Jamu authorities agreed, and the new settlement was set aside. The result is, that the inequalities of taxation have been further increased, and that there are many persons, who instead of paying a reduced revenue rate, in accordance with the wazir settlement, are now having to pay, not only the old rate, but an extra 25 per cent in addition. These are the people who want to run away. For my own part I thoroughly sympathise with them, and should not be sorry if they ran away in such numbers as to compel the state authorities to enquire into their grievances. Hitherto, a system of rahdaris has existed, and no one could leave the country without a rahdari—but in October last I induced the Council to abolish the system. The result is that overtaxed zamindars can now run away if they please, and that if the state authorities attempt to reduce them to the position of slaves, by compelling them to cultivate land against their will, I shall be able to submit a strong representation on behalf of the zamindars."

Although the British largely ignored these internal changes in Ladakh, they took control of Ladakh, as a part of the broader princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1846. In 1845, the had Sikhs crossed the Sutlej, the disputed boundary marker between Sikh and British territories. This gave the British an excuse to start what became known as the First Anglo-Sikh War.[102] After a British victory in March 1846, Ranjit Singh's successor signed the Treaty of Amritsar. Under the treaty, Gulab Singh, the Dogra ruler of the suzerain state of Jammu,[103] was appointed the Maharaja of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Baltistan, and Hazara. In exchange for this title, he acknowledged the supremacy of the British and agreed to a joint frontier commission to officially establish his state's borders. He also agreed to pay the British an annual tribute of "one horse, twelve perfect shawl goats of approved breed […] and three pair of Kashmir shawls," a tribute that the British insisted would continue into the twentieth century.[104]

When the British finally achieved apparent regional hegemony at the close of the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-49), they began to appreciate just how diverse and active the region was. Alexander Cunningham, an enterprising East India Company captain soon to become one of the most prominent British experts on Ladakh, noted that the results of the 1842 Treaty left an unfavorable monopoly in the hands of the Dogra Maharaja. British attention, he wrote, "might also with great advantage be directed to the removal of abuses which considerably impede the trade of their frontier through Ladak."[105] Cunningham was tasked with determining the borders

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[102] Byron Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 37-8.

[103] Gulab Singh had earlier helped the British against the Sikhs.

[104] Frederic Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories: A Geographical Account* (E. Stanford, 1875), 547.

[105] NAI, Foreign Department (hereafter Foreign), Erskine, Superintendent for Hill States, to Ellit, Secretary to the Government with the Governor-General. "Mission to Thibet of Cunningham, Captain A. Result of": 28 Aug. 1847, 139-142, S.C. No 101. Dated Simla, July 19, 1847.

of Ladakh, and assigned to inquire about trade opportunities with Tibet and Central Asia. The first two British boundary commissions, in which Cunningham played a major role, form the basis of the next chapter.

Conclusion

In the late 1830s, towards the end of his long reign, it is said that Maharaja Ranjit Singh was shown a map that depicted in large swathes the extent of British-controlled territory on the subcontinent. After looking upon the map in silence, the aging ruler responded ominously, "*sab lāl ho jāyegā* [all will become red]."[106] From his position in Lahore, he had witnessed the rapid expansion of the East India Company's military-fiscal machinery and its ever-widening territory. With the defeat of the recently unified Gurkha kingdom of Nepal in 1816, the British had taken their first territorial steps into the Himalaya. By the end of the 1840s, the British had achieved, either by direct or indirect rule, expansion towards what James Mill had called "the most desirable frontier" of India.[107] But a series of major problems soon arose. As I will show in the

[106] The episode may be apocryphal. Majumdar in his *Advanced History of India* (p. 741) mentions the remark but fails to give a source, date, or location. Was it originally spoken in the given Hindustani or in the maharaja's native Punjabi ("sabh lal ho javega")? More context is given in a less authoritative chapter by S. K. Pachauri, "British Perceptions of Relations with Maharaja Ranjit Singh," in *Maharaja Ranjit Singh: Ruler and Warrior*, ed. T. R. Sharma (Chandigarh: Panjab University Publication Bureau, 2005). No mention of the statement is made in Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia and Parm Bakhshish Singh's *An Overview of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his Times* (2001), or in the expansive *Life and Times of Ranjit Singh: A Saga of Benevolent Despotism,* by Bikrama Jit Hasrat (1977). Despite the questionable nature of its origin, it is instructive to note that Ranjit Singh has recently reemerged as a major political figure of South Asian history whose short-lived empire has wrongfully been consigned to a peripheral position because of its defeat by Britain and the relatively more central role played by the declining Mughal empire in the central narrative arc of South Asian political history. For an example of this type of literature, see Patwant Singh and Jyoti M. Rai, *Empire of the Sikhs: the life and times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (2008).

[107] "Evidence of James Mill," 16 February 1832: *Parliamentary Papers, 1831-2*, Vol. xiv, p. 8, Qu. 49.

next chapter, the simultaneous and contradictory view of the northwestern Himalaya as both a secure boundary and a commercial conduit produced a complex frontier for the British. The prospect of accessing the region's high-value trade networks would tempt generations of British administrators and a couple of short-lived private ventures. Yet the more time the British spent surveying this "most desirable frontier," the less clear that frontier became.

This political mode of seeing distinctly reflected imperial concerns. It understood Ladakh to be first and foremost a territory to be controlled—be it for economic, political, or military gain. The political landscape of Ladakh had long been contested by aspiring conquerors and home-grown rulers alike. But it was only with the conquests of the 1830s and 1840s that the new rulers found it necessary to enclose Ladakh in an often-shadowy borderline that symbolized unambiguous sovereignty.

Complicating the static territorial vision of this space were long-established networks of trade. Seasonal change led to uncertainties in all spheres of daily life, from trade and pilgrimage to crop yields and the survival of animal herds. Flooding, precipitation, and unusual temperature fluctuations impacted pashmina prices in the far off plains of India and beyond, while these climatic variables had an even more profound impact on staples consumed closer to home. The crucial role played by the transhumant Changpa in the wool and salt trades illustrates how critical migration was to the economic livelihoods of many Ladakhis. These material connections to the landscape did not neatly transpose onto a political vision of territory.

Similarly, the Himalayan landscape was imbued with cosmological significance. This no doubt resulted from agricultural dependence on the land, but was also the result of a deep mixing of spiritual traditions at this "crossroads of high Asia." Acknowledging this cosmological aspect of northwestern Himalayan space leads to a multidimensional image of Ladakh that complicates

a strictly political conception of space. Mountains, rivers, streams, and trees were associated with particular deities, many of whom were worshipped through sub-village and village-level social groupings. This further connected individual Ladakhis to their local environments by means of a variety of spiritual-spatial beliefs and practices. Through these connections, natural features like mountains would, in many cases, become "centering" objects that tied the landscape together rather than divide it.

While the bounding of village-level geography was precisely reflected in walls, irrigation systems, and other structures, the bounding of the larger polity of Ladakh was much less defined. Instead, distances reflected the space between points such as a particular mountain pass, stream, village, or pilgrimage site. As I will show in Chapter Two, a novel kind of geography would soon arise to transform the spatial conception of Ladakh. A region that had long been a nexus would be increasingly pushed to a new, ill-defined periphery.

CHAPTER TWO

Incongruent Frontiers: Moving watersheds and borderless maps in India's northwestern Himalaya[1]

The whole of the intervening country between India and China is a blank.
—H. H. Wilson, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab* (1841)[2]

Precisely defined international borders are ubiquities of the modern world. So too are the maps that represent those borders, imbued with the signifiers of territory, sovereignty, and the nation-state. But while every border has a long and elusive prehistory, few have proven as indefinable as those found in the northwestern Himalaya region centered on the historical entrepôt of Ladakh. By the mid-nineteenth century this region found itself increasingly close to the point where the empires of Britain, China, and Russia would meet. But while the massive Himalaya might have seemed like an ideal candidate to represent the solidified lines of British India's political borders, when India gained independence in 1947 the new republic inherited a largely borderless northern frontier. But this borderlessness was not for lack of trying. Beginning in the 1840s and inspired by the geographical principles espoused by Alexander von Humboldt, a century of surveys using ever more sophisticated technologies attempted again and again to define a border based on the idea of the limit of a watershed.[3] These efforts yielded maps of staggering technological sophistication and personal daring which attempted to put nature to

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[1] An abridged version of this chapter has been accepted for publication in *The Historical Journal*.

[2] Horace Hayman Wilson, preface to Moorcroft and Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara; from 1819 to 1825*, xiv.

[3] The term watershed first appeared in English just after the turn of the nineteenth century, and perhaps slightly earlier in German (*wasserscheide*). The rapid growth of the term suggests that it fulfilled a role that its antecedent geographical and hydrology forebears did not.

work for the imperial state. But the scientific precision of utilizing the watershed produced unintended complications, as it slowly became apparent that the edge of the Indus River watershed and the highest range of the northwestern Himalaya did not align. This geographical incongruity laid the groundwork for a conflict between the two most populous nations of the twenty-first century, over one of the least inhabited spaces on earth.

The causes of the long-running borderlessness in much of the Himalaya has long been ascribed by historians to "top-down" diplomatic failures.[4] But this approach overlooks the history of the changing practices and concepts used to produce borders. Historians interested in explaining the causes of the Sino-India War of 1962 pointed to the absence of a single accepted borderline between China and India. But they rarely questioned the problems produced by the geographical principles that generated those lines in the first place. By the second half of the nineteenth century colonial geography had organized the world into natural systems (river

[4]The "top-down" focus of much of the initial historical scholarship on Himalayan borderlands reflected a pressing need to understand why the world's two most populous nations went to war in 1962 over territorial claims at both ends of the Himalayas: the area in the eastern Himalaya now known as Arunachal Pradesh and the in the northwest the virtually uninhabited Aksai Chin, a cold plateau roughly the size of Switzerland and situated almost entirely above 15,000 feet in elevation. Alastair Lamb's extensive writings offer in-depth detail about the geopolitical rivalries on British India's northern frontiers: Alastair Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960); *The China-India Border: The Origins of the Disputed Boundaries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); *The Sino-Indian Border in Ladakh* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973). Other works include: Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier: A Study of Imperial Policy*; Margaret W. Fisher, Leo E. Rose, and Robert A. Huttenback, *Himalayan Battleground: Sino-Indian Rivalry in Ladakh* (New York: Praeger, 1963); Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian, and Russian Rivalries* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1969); Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970); and Parshotam Mehra, *An "Agreed" Frontier: Ladakh and India's Northernmost Borders, 1846-1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992). This last work is so riddled with factual errors and a pervasive and pernicious bias against all things Chinese, that I am reluctant to even cite it. Mehra, a well-respected historian from Panjab University even plagiarizes the documents his preports to analyze (i.e. page 31, when he takes Governor-General Hardinge's language as his own without citing the NAI sources).

systems, mountain systems) and bounded territories that utilized those systems. This view of systematized natural objects was reflected in the development of the "water-parting principle," wherein the edge of a watershed was used to establish a border. In the Himalaya, this principle was used to impose a border*lin*e in a region that had only established notions of border *points*—a practical solution in a mountainous region where the limited number of routes into the region functioned as effective points to extract customs. But the apparently fixed "water-parting" lines of the limits of the "Indus watershed system" that were used to determine the northern boundaries of India had a suspicious tendency to move as more precise surveying complicated the assumption that the highest mountain ranges and watersheds were coterminous. The development of these geographical concepts also revealed contradictions within imperial frontier policy, particularly between the notion of natural frontiers and strategic ones. Despite these incongruities, by the twentieth century the water-parting principle—as it came to be called—became a key tenet of international boundary making around the world.

But while historians have fruitfully explored the technological and political role of surveying and mapping in crafting colonial borders, few have examined the crucial geographical

concepts resting beneath these border-making practices.[5] In focusing on the development of these practices and concepts this chapter contributes to a diverse body of historical scholarship at the nexus between imperial statecraft and science.[6] At the heart of imperial border making was the deployment of geography in the service of the state. As the *sine qua non* of territory, borders and frontiers became of existential importance to the imperial state. As the viceroy George Curzon grandly (and rather strangely) put it in 1907, frontiers were "the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations."[7]

By examining the assumptions and contradictions at work in the theorizing, configuring, and mapping of frontiers and borders, this chapter delves into the geographical thinking that produced them. It also illustrates an example of how imperial statecraft became tied to changing

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[5] Matthew H. Edney's *Mapping an Empire* perhaps comes closest, yet his work ends in 1843, stopping short of the late Victorian period when boundary demarcation, mapping, and their connected underlying geographical propositions became increasingly important to the configuration of the imperial state. Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Ian J. Barrow's *Making History, Drawing Territory* studies the Survey of India till 1905 and the end of Curzon's tenure as viceroy, a point often seen as the high-water mark of British imperialism in South Asia. Ian J. Barrow, *Making History, Drawing Territory: British Mapping in India, c. 1756—1905* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003). Yet unlike Edney's focus on the cartographic construction of modern India, Barrow is more interested in how British imperial identity was shaped by the "idea" of India. Other work that explores colonial surveying include D. Graham Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); and Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650—1900* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[6] On the broad literature between colonial knowledge, imperial statecraft, and technology see, Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*; and, most recently, Hevia, *Imperial Security State*. For the concept of territoriality and its relation to practices of the state see Charles Maier, Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era."

[7] George N. Curzon, *Frontiers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 7

scientific practices and ideas. The development of the water-parting principle reveals how natural features were systematized and generalized for both cartographical and political ends. As this chapter will show, this process becomes visible through two interrelated developments. First, it was revealed through *cartographical thinking*—making maps that reflected both the concrete location and abstract representation of natural features. Mountains became more abstractly linear objects on maps, just as their dimensions were being more precisely recorded. Along with this transformation in cartography, tensions between ideas of natural frontiers and strategic began to reveal the increasingly intimate relationship between geography and the imperial state. This tension resulted in the repeated failure to craft a suitable border through the northwestern Himalaya in the century before Indian independence in 1947. These two different categories of frontiers—natural and strategic—were unified by the logic of the so-called "scientific frontier."[8] The tension between natural and strategic frontiers was also illustrated by tensions between central colonial administrators, who desired maps that reflected broad strategic concerns, and frontier experts, who appreciated the technical requirements of boundary demarcation. Together, the scientific frontier and cartographical thinking reflected attempts to standardize colonial frontier practices and optimize the frontier's visibility to the colonial state, while also obscuring the often-uncertain terrain upon which they rested. By the mid-nineteenth century, this terrain was increasingly connected to the idea of the watershed, which emerged as a natural *and* political unit capable of being precisely surveyed, mapped, and utilized for border making.[9]

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[8] Curzon, 26.

[9] This chapter draws inspiration from recent work by Bernard Debarbieux and Gilles Rudaz, which explored the ways in which mountains are socially constructed objects. Debarbieux and Rudaz, *The Mountain: A Political History from the Enlightenment to the Present*.

Although some scholars have viewed the surveying of British India as a triumph of state-sponsored scientific practice, this was not the case across much of the Himalaya.[10] Rather, surveying was a slow and uneven process of attempting to stitch together distinct frontier segments, not only on increasingly restricted maps, but also under increasingly unified frontier policy. But a shift in policy does not always correlate with direct or consistent increases in information. Integrating frontiers was often done at the central governmental level, with maps that presumed an authority over those peripheral spaces. In defining imperial territorial limits the British were also testing the limits of their geographical knowledge. But the repeated attempts by the British to configure a scientific frontier across northern India failed, in part because surveying revealed fluctuating locations for the Indus watershed and in part because political and military rationales for border locations changed in response to Russian and Chinese encroachment of India. These challenges to border making also reflect a more abstract notion of incongruity, one where the idea of the colonial state and its claimed territory failed to neatly overlap.

This ambiguity often stemmed from maps and their political use. One of the great hidden powers of maps is their capacity to obscure the processes and "propositional logic" that produced them, particularly the assumptions and conventions that simplify, obscure, or enhance the natural features used to define territory.[11] As advances in surveying techniques yielded maps with

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[10] For the history of the ambiguities of the northeastern Himalayan frontier, see, most recently, Guyot-Réchard, *Shadow States: India, China and the Himalayas, 1910-1962*. For a comparative study of the failures of mid-nineteenth century frontier making in the northeastern and northwestern extremities of the British Empire, see Thomas Simpson, "Bordering and Frontier-Making in Nineteenth-Century British India," *The Historical Journal* 58, no. 2 (June 2015): 513–42.

[11] Denis Wood and John Fels, *The Natures of Maps: Cartographic Constructions of the Natural World* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 26.

greater degrees of detail, maps came to hold more political authority. But despite recent critical interventions in the history of cartography, maps were "technologies of power" only in so far as they could achieve the state's desired degree of territorial legibility.[12] The cartographic ability (or inability) to represent territory—whether state-controlled territories like the Aksai Chin, Kashmir, or Arunachal Pradesh, or uncontrolled (or at least ungoverned) territories like the many enclaves of the Indo-Bangladeshi borderlands—symbolized how the threat of "non-state space" erodes "territorial inviolability," in Willem van Schendel's words.[13]

This notion of territorial inviolability emerged coevally with territorial legibility—at least in the abstract form presented by authoritative maps. In other words, the clearer the territory appeared on the map, the greater the assertion of political control (or the need for political control). By the end of the nineteenth century *terra incognita* had almost completely disappeared. As the whole world became mapped, a theory of interdependent parts constituting that whole and dependent on geography emerged, known as "geopolitics." Coined in 1899 by Rudolf Kjellén to reflect an approach to international politics that emphasized territory and geographical information in forming and sustaining states, the portmanteau reflected interconnected trends in geography and imperial state formation decades in the making.[14] The

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[12] J. B. Harley, "Deconstructing the Map," in *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. Paul Laxton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 150–68; Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps* (New York: Guilford Press, 1992); and Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

[13] van Schendel, "Stateless in South Asia."

[14] Coined in 1899 by Rudolf Kjellén, a conservative Swedish professor of political science, the term "geopolitics" signaled a new approach to international politics, one that emphasized territory, natural resources, and geographical information in forming and sustaining states. John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); and Brian Blouet, *Geopolitics and Globalization in the Twentieth Century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010),187, n. 2.

intimate relationship between geography and state was reflected in publications like *The Geographical Journal* of the Royal Geographical Society, which provided a forum for recent discoveries, evolving surveying technologies, new maps, and newly discovered routes across imperial frontiers. Crucially, it also provided a platform for former imperial frontier experts and scholars, like Oxford's first Professor of Geography, Halford Mackinder, to articulate theories of geography's determining effect on human societies and states.[15] Geographical science had become political science. And watersheds had become political instruments.

This chapter begins with a brief history of the idea of the watershed, which grew out of earlier notions of water and mountain systems, Humboldtian geography, and international legal theory. It then explores the first British boundary commissions (1846-48) in the northwestern Himalaya and their employment of the "water-parting principle," which would form the basis of increasingly authoritative and restricted trans-frontier maps. The third section shifts to the 1870s and 1880s, when revisions to the initial demarcation attempts asserted that the "Indus watershed system" should be the natural boundary of northern India. This watershed system was understood by late nineteenth century colonial administrators, and international legal theorists, statesmen, and surveyors around the world, to be the land through which the Indus and its tributaries drained, up to the water-parting ranges that separated the Indus from its neighboring watershed systems. However, the application of these principles also reflected tensions between the surveyors, who sought to identify natural markers to map, and administrators, who appreciated the elegance of a single boundary principle even if its mapped reality failed to correspond to a

[15] Halford Mackinder presented to the Royal Geographical Society on January 25, 1904 his influential paper, "The Geographical Pivot of History," which was subsequently published in *The Geographical Journal*. Halford J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (April 1904): 421–37.

line on the ground. The chapter concludes by showing how the production of borderless maps up to 1947 was the result of the continued insistence on the water-parting principle and the assumed authority of earlier survey maps of the region. The eventual omission of a northwestern Himalayan boundary line on successive Survey of India maps was not simply the result of a diplomatic failure to determine an acceptable international border: it was the result of competing and contradictory ideas about how best to use natural features as a means to achieve political ends.

I. Bounds of Nature: Water, Law, and Humboldt's new Geography

Bodies of water have long served as regional demarcators. Across the world one finds many examples of names of regions shaped, literally, by water: Mesopotamia ("between rivers"), the Doab ("two waters"), the Punjab ("five waters"), Sichuan ("four rivers"), Hebei ("to the north of the (Yellow) River"), or Henan ("to the south of the (Yellow) River"). The significance of the hydrographical networks of the Indus and Ganges are well documented in the major texts of pre-colonial India, from ancient Sanskrit Ayurvedic texts to the Mughal *Akbarnama*.[16] In his *Ai'n-i-Akbari* ("the Regulations of Akbar"), Emperor Akbar's vizier Abu'l Fazl 'Allami (1551-1602) described Hindustan as a land bordered by oceans, including the mountains separating the Mughal territories from Central Asia and Tibet. Thus water—actual and metaphorical—has deep historical roots in shaping definitions of territory and serving as natural boundaries. Yet water was never fixed. As understandings of water's nature changed, so too did boundaries.

[16] On the former, see Francis Zimmerman, *The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats: An Ecological Theme in Hindu Medicine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), particularly chapters one and three.

In the European colonial context, connected bodies of water (rivers, lakes, and bays) have been associated with territorial claims since at least the seventeenth century.[17] But only in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries did the study of water and earth systems become increasingly schematized within the study of geography and geology. In the minds of political actors, these systemic visions of the natural world combined with older notions of mountains and rivers as boundaries to manifest in the political utilization of so-called "natural divisions" that marked the edges of territories. While mountains had long been natural dividers the combination of mountains and water to form "water-partings" was a product of eighteenth-century knowledge formation and colonial claims to territories first in North America and later elsewhere across the globe.[18] The increased frequency of river exploration that accompanied European imperial expansion also enhanced the political importance of waterways as simultaneous conduits and potential boundaries.[19] These developments were largely ignored by the natural philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century who studied changes in the land and water networks.

Although James Hutton (1726-1797), the "father" of modern geology, had earlier discussed "the system of the earth" in the context of geological time, his consideration of the role of water was largely relegated to questions of fluvial decay.[20] It was another Scottish natural philosopher, John Playfair (1748-1819), whose *Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth*

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[17] See, for instance, the Royal Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company, accessed on 1 July 2015: http://www.hbcheritage.ca/hbcheritage/collections/archival/charter/charter.asp

[18] On the role of mountains in shaping early modern borders, see Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*; and, more recently, Debarbieux and Rudaz, *The Mountain: A Political History from the Enlightenment to the Present*.

[19] See, for example, Noboru Ishikawa, *Between Frontiers: Nation and Identity in a Southeast Asian Borderland* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010).

[20] Keith J. Tinkler, *A Short History of Geomorphology* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble Books, 1985), 49.

(1802) first detailed the theory that came to be known as Playfair's law of accordant junctions: "Every river appears to consist of a main trunk, fed from variety of branches, each running a valley proportioned to its size, and all of them together forming a system of vallies [sic]…"[21] While acknowledging the connected, systemic nature of rivers and streams, Playfair—like Hutton—was principally concerned with the apparent relationship between river and valley size as indicators of the eroding force of water.

In contrast, Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) arguably was one of the earliest geographers whose theories were regularly employed by political actors. Humboldt combined growing geological and hydrological understandings of water networks and mountain ranges with the increased authority of maps, concerned as he was with not just geological time, but also historical time. Humboldt sought to establish general principles by which accurately defining and visually rendering the world's regions would lead to better understanding of the "unity of nature"—the deep and intimate connections that exist between the branches of science and between human society and its varied environments. Like Montesquieu and others before him, Humboldt also sought to explain human culture through the lens of climate. Colonial explorers, boundary commissioners, and legal jurists all regularly cited Humboldt, not the earlier natural philosophers like Hutton and Playfair. "Invoking Humboldt," Burnett notes, "suggested that the explorer was working within what many thought the most reliable and measurement-centered geographical science of the day."[22] Critically, Humboldt's work followed several decades of notable advances in the expanding fields of geography, geology, and cartography, each of which also exerted increased political influence. Through the medium of maps in particular, watersheds

[21] Tinkler, 58-59.

[22] Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado*, 15.

emerged as territorial objects assembling systems of mountains, valleys, plains, and bodies of water.

By the 1840s, European and American legal scholars were citing Humboldt's writings, suggestive of his widespread influence as well as the *ex post facto* colonial concern with legal justification for territorial conquest and demarcation. The prominent English jurist, Sir Travers Twiss (1809-1897), writing about legal disputes over the Oregon territory, frequently utilized examples from Humboldt's *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* (1811)—a geographical and cartographical description of Mexico. In his *The Oregon Question Examined, in respect to the Facts and the Law of Nations* (1846), Twiss employed Humboldt's work to articulate a theory of discovery. He used the example of disputes over the Columbia River between Britain and the United States in the 1820s to illustrate a growing principle of "progressive discovery." Against protests by the British, the U.S. government maintained that, in the words of one American diplomat, "a nation discovering a country, by entering the mouth of its principal river at the sea coast, must necessarily be allowed to claim and hold as great an extent of the interior country as was described by the course of such principal river, and its tributary streams."[23] Thus, Twiss concluded, the American discovery of the Columbia River gave, "by the acknowledged law and usage of nations, a right to the whole country drained by that river and its tributary streams."[24] This type of claim departed from previous riparian principles articulated by international legal theorists like Emer de Vattel (1714-1767) and Henry

[23] Travers Twiss, *The Oregon Question Examined, in Respect to the Facts and the Law of Nations* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846).

[24] Twiss, 148-149.

Wheaton (1785-1848), who favored the use of rivers as boundaries.[25] However, it became increasingly apparent to colonial officials that rivers rarely divided politically distinct peoples, as the viceroy George Curzon would later note in his discussion of the history of natural frontiers in 1907. In his words, a river was a better "means of access to a country than a line of division between races," a category of increasing importance to the definition of nations.[26]

Twiss' work on the "Oregon question," and his well-known later work, *The Law of Nations Considered as Independent Political Communities* (1884), articulated the advantages of using watersheds and boundary limits. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the term "watershed" was regularly invoked to assert a principle of territorial organization and border making.[27] Twiss' early reliance on Humboldt and other "scientific travellers" highlights the powerful confluence of geography, cartography, colonial expansion, and international law by the mid-nineteenth century.

Humboldt's work was also cited by numerous European travelers in the western Himalaya in the first half of the nineteenth century.[28] Although the Prussian Humboldt gained permission from the Russian Government to travel through Central Asia, the British authorities

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[25] Emer de Vattel, *Droit des gens; ou, Principes de la loi naturelle appliqués à la conduite et aux affaires des nations et des souverains* (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1916); and Henry Wheaton, *Elements of International Law*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1846).

[26] Curzon, *Frontiers*, 12.

[27] See, for instance: Legislative Assembly, *The Proceedings before the Judicial Committee of Her Majesty's Imperial Privy Council on the Special Case Respecting the Westerly Boundary of Ontario ...* (Toronto: Warwick & Sons, 1889). Thanks to Zak Leonard for bringing this text to my attention.

[28] Examples include Victor Jacquemont, *Letters from India; Describing a Journey in the British Dominions of India, Tibet, Lahore, and Cashmeer, during the Years 1828, 1829, 1830, 1831. Undertaken by Order of the French Government*, 2 vols. (London: Edward Churton, 1834).; and William Lloyd and Alexander Gerard, *Narrative of a Journey from Caunpoor to the Boorendo Pass in the Himalaya Mountains*, 2 vols. (London: J. Madden, 1840).

refused him access to the Himalaya.[29] His principal work on the geography of Asia, *Asie Centrale*, was thus a compilation of travellers' accounts, his own observations from traveling through Russian Central Asia, and older material from European, classical Greek and Roman, and Chinese geographers. In it, he applied theoretical insights from his earlier works to construct a geography of mountain and water systems, glaciers, and climates that shaped the region. He begins the first of three volumes by outlining his process and general theory:

> I have reviewed the current state of our knowledge, the foundations of our maps, and the directions assigned to unevenness in the surface of a vast continent. It is in the uprising of the masses, in the extent and orientation of mountain systems in their relative positions, dominant traits that from ancient times have exerted influence on the state of human societies and determined the trends of their migration…[30]

Like his earlier work on Europe and the Americas, in *Asie Centrale* Humboldt sought to identify the sources and major courses of rivers, and to determine dominant mountain systems in order to define a naturally demarcated region and show, in the process, the environmental foundations of human societies. This association with "natural" regions and race was a common feature of nineteenth century geographies. The English geologist Frederic Drew, for instance, wrote of the inhabitants of the northwestern Himalaya that "[o]f the four races of men who inhabit the country on the northeast of the main chain of mountains—*the country which drains into the*

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[29] Richard Stratchey, "On the Snow-Line in the Himalaya," *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, April 1849, 287. In a recent biography of Humboldt, Andrea Wulf suggests that it was owing to Humboldt's well-known anti-colonial opinions that the British refused to allow him to conduct his scientific travels in the Himalaya. Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World* (New York: Vintage, 2015), 192-95. For the Russian government's assistance to Humboldt, he dedicated *Asie Centrale* to the Russian emperor.

[30] Alexander von Humboldt, *Asie Centrale: Recherches Sur Les Chaines Des Montagnes et La Climatologie Comparée*, 3 vols. (Paris: Gide, 1843), vol. 1, xi.

Indus—whose names are Champa, Ladakhi, Balti, and Dard, the first three belong to the Tibetan race."[31]

Foremost among Humboldt's observations on the great mountain systems of the world was the strong tendency towards "parallelism"—that is, the tendency of mountains to form in linear, parallel chains. The Himalayan boundary commissioner Alexander Cunningham remarked in his *Ladak* (1854) that "[t]he general parallelism of the principal mountain-ranges of the world—of the Himalayas and the Altai, in Asia—of the Atlas, in Africa—and of the Alps and Apennines, the Pyrenees and Carpathians, in Europe—has already been noticed by Humboldt and others."[32] But Humboldt also acknowledged a crucial divide within the Himalaya and the Tibetan plateau, thanks largely to the writings of the explorer William Moorcroft and other scientific travellers' accounts published in the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* and the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London.* Humboldt wrote that east of the sacred lakes of Manasarovar and Rakshastal in Western Tibet there was a "transverse uprising"[33] that signaled the "water-parting" ("formant le partage d'eau (divortia aquarum) à l'est des lacs sacrés") between the Indus and the Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra, the origins of which still remained a mystery to these geographers. Humboldt further noted these rivers divided the Tibetan plateau into two great parts and that "the part of the plateau the least interrupted" by "the system of mountains of the Himalayas" was in Western Tibet, situated "between Ladakh, Gartok [a town in Western Tibet], and the arid shores of Lake Manasarovar."[34] While he stops short of using the term "watershed," Humboldt's insistence on the water-

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[31] Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, 238. My emphasis.

[32] Cunningham, *Ladak*, 42.

[33] That is, a mountain range running perpendicular to the main axis of the mountain range.

[34] von Humboldt, *Asie Centrale*, vol. 1, 13-15.

parting as a key object of dividing natural units of land reflected a shift in geographical thinking towards a territorial unit that could be determined by water and mountain systems, and, most importantly, mapped.

More than sixty years later, the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin would assert that Humboldt's combination of Asian sources and travellers' accounts with his own peripatetic observations produced a "more reliable" description of the region than had ever existed previously. But Hedin went on to criticize Humboldt for his excessively mechanistic description of the region. "Humboldt considers the mountain skeleton of Asia very simple and regular," wrote Hedin, "and on his map the various systems were drawn with the greatest geometrical preciseness."[35] Hedin noted that most mid-nineteenth century maps of Central Asia relied on "Humboldt's four systems, the Altai, Tian-Shan, Kwen-lun, and Himalayas," while omitting smaller non-parallel ranges.[36] The omission of complicating perpendicular ranges and "spurs" reflected the practice seen on many large-scale maps of rendering the greater Himalaya as a neat, thin line of mountains. Hedin's "discovery" of the "Trans-Himalaya" during his travels in 1907-09 would complicate the notion that the Himalayan range and the Indus water-parting line were roughly co-terminus, a central assumption of the first Himalayan boundary commissions.[37]

A century after the first Himalayan boundary commissioners applied Humboldt's theories to their survey of the northwestern Himalaya, the "water-parting principle" would be an

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[35] Sven Hedin, *Trans-Himalaya: Discoveries and Adventures in Tibet*, 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1909), vol. 3, 139.

[36] Hedin, vol. 3, 142. Humboldt describes the four mountains in volume two of *Asie Centrale*.

[37] There would, in fact, be several "Trans-Himalayas" discovered over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

established ideal in international border making. Applying this principle, however, required surveyors to first locate the water-parting line.

II. From Valley to Ridge: The first Boundary Commissions and the "Water-Parting Principle"

By the time of the establishment of the two Himalayan boundary commissions in 1846-48, the British had already presided over a violent and rapid territorial expansion that required extensive definition of its limits. In many places throughout Britain's South Asian empire, historical boundaries were readily adopted, particularly those districts that utilized older political divisions from the Mughal period. But in places where boundaries were unknown or unsatisfactory, commissioners frequently resorted to utilizing nearby rivers and streams. The "Thalweg Principle"—measuring a boundary from the lowest point of a riverbed—was frequently used in relatively flat riverine regions, such as the Indo-Nepalese plains. Rivers, however, proved less than ideal boundary markers because, to quote a British Resident in Kathmandu, Charles Girdlestone, "their tortuous, shifting and erratic character" made them less suitable than boundary pillars and mountain peaks, which formed "straight lines from conspicuous point to point."[38] Straight lines, unlike "erratic" rivers, are rarely found in nature, but they work very well on maps.

Boundary pillars were often used in the plains, allowing for precise geodetic points to be determined and plotted on maps. "Should the boundary marks themselves vanish," the frontier expert Thomas Holdich noted, "there should always remain a record of their position on the map, and a repetition of the same survey process will show precisely where the original site may have

[38] NAI, Foreign, A Pol E, 187-196, May 83. "Alluvial Streams (Nipal). Permanent land line Boundaries to be adopted in supersession of Boundaries."

been."[39] But it was the "water-parting principle" that gained pre-eminence in the mountainous frontiers and would, by century's end, be the undisputed ideal of boundary demarcation. "The best and most recognizable natural boundary," noted Holdich, "is a well-defined watershed."[40] By 1945, the water-parting principle had become a key tenet of international boundary making. In his *Boundary-Making: A Handbook for Statesmen, Treaty Editors and Boundary Commissioners,* the American geographer Stephen B. Jones noted that "[t]he virtues of waterparting [sic] boundaries are that…they are precise and unique and that they separate drainage basins, which for many purposes are best treated as units under a single government."[41] The development of this international border-making principle reflected a transformation in how borders were conceived of and represented.

Unlike borderlines, the general acceptance of border points had long existed in the Himalayan region. Typically located on established trade and pilgrimage routes, these points served as means for signaling seasonal customs duties to be paid, or *corvée* labor to be given for the triennial trade mission to Lhasa and the biennial reciprocal mission from Lhasa established by treaty in 1684 (the *lo.phyag* and *gzhung.tshong*, respectively).[42] These border points acknowledged the transition of jurisdictions at the edges of populated regions. Most of the region to the north and east of Ladakh—now referred to as the Aksai Chin—had no permanent

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[39] NAI, Foreign, Secret, no. 41, October 1896.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Stephen B. Jones, *Boundary-Making: A Handbook for Statesmen, Treaty Editors and Boundary Commissioners* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945), 101-2.

[42] See John Bray, "Corvée Transport Labour in 19th and Early 20th Century Ladakh: A Study in Continuity and Change," in *Modern Ladakh: Anthropological Perspectives on Continuity and Change*, ed. Martijn van Beek and Fernanda Pirie, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 43–66.

population, though it was regularly traversed by traders, pilgrims, and semi-nomadic herders. While rarely explicitly referenced in indigenous accounts, these border points continued to function as political markers for centuries.

In 1842, eight years after the Dogra-led invasion of Ladakh, representatives of the Dogra Raja of Jammu,[43] the Emperor of China, and the Dalai Lama, signed a treaty that reaffirmed the "boundaries of Ladakh and its surroundings as fixed from ancient times," though without acknowledging the location of those boundaries.[44] Four years later, the first British boundary commission arrived to survey its newly acquired dependent princely state, Jammu and Kashmir.

In November 1846, Sir John Davis, governor of British Hong Kong, wrote to Qiying, "with the aid of the best maps,"[45] urging that they ascertain "the exact boundaries which divide the Thibetan territory from that pertaining to Great Britain, and from that also which has been conferred on [Gulab] Singh," the newly aggrandized maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. Qiying replied that, "the borders of those territories have been sufficiently and distinctly fixed so that it will be best to adhere to this ancient arrangement, and it will prove far more convenient to abstain from any additional measures for fixing them." But it was unclear whether the Qing officials themselves knew what exactly this "ancient arrangement" was.

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[43] The northern principality of Jammu, ruled by a dynasty of Dogra Rajputs, was a tributary of the Sikh Empire after its conquest and eventual annexation by the Sikhs in 1816. Gulab Singh, the Raja of Jammu (1822-1857), invaded Ladakh at the likely behest of the Sikh emperor Ranjit Singh in 1834 to secure access to the high value pashmina trade routes threatened by British expansion further south. Following the defeat of the Sikh Empire in the first Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-6 the East India Company granted Gulab Singh who tacitly assisted them during the war, the title of Maharaja of Kashmir and Jammu, thus inaugurating the Dogra dynasty that would rule the princely state of Kashmir and Jammu until 1947.

[44] JKSA-J. "Treaty between Ladakh and Tibet: 1920, 276/R. P-4."

[45] NAI, Foreign, Secret, nos. 139-142, August 28, 1847, "Result of Captain A. Cunningham's Mission to Thibet."

In 1846, the East India Company's Governor General, Henry Hardinge, appointed two successive commissions to determine a permanent boundary in the northwestern Himalaya, on the easternmost edge of the newly conjoined and politically subordinate state of Kashmir and Jammu. The commissions comprised the future founder of the Archaeological Survey of India, Alexander Cunningham, and a celebrated Himalayan explorer, Henry Strachey. It also involved a botanist, Thomas Thomson, whose inclusion reflected the growing practice of including natural scientists as members of boundary commissions. The Governor General wanted a "clear and well defined boundary [that would] prevent the possibility of dispute."[46] The commissioners were told by those in charge to seek out as boundaries "such mountain ranges as form water-shed lines between the drainages of different rivers." For their published contributions to the study of Himalayan geography, both Strachey and Thomson would receive the Royal Geographical Society's highest prizes.

When the British requested that the Qing Government send representatives to the northwestern Himalaya to jointly demarcate a border between the two empires in 1846, the Governor-General of Liang-Guang, Qiying, refused. Qiying cited a long historical understanding of the boundary, re-affirmed in an 1842 treaty, which could be traced back to at least the seventeenth century and the Treaty of Tingmosgang. In 1684, following five years of Tibetan incursions fueled by sectarian disputes,[47] the Ladakhi king had enlisted the aid of the Mughals and expelled the Tibetans from his kingdom.[48] The king, having agreed nominally to convert to Islam and to build a mosque in Leh, signed a treaty with the Kashmiri-led Mughal forces. He

[46] NAI, Foreign, nos. 162-164, August 28, 1847. "Instructions for his guidance on his approaching Mission to the Thibetan Frontier."

[47] Between the Drukpa Kagyu of Ladakh and Gelukpa-dominated Government of Tibet.

[48] Francke, "La.dwags Rgyal.rabs," 101.

then had concluded a separate treaty with the Tibetan government at Tingmosgang, fixing a border point between the two countries at the *Lha.ri* stream, high up on the Changtang Plateau on the main Leh-Lhasa route.

Once the British determined that no Chinese boundary commissioners would participate in the demarcation, the three boundary commissioners, Cunningham, Strachey, and Thomson, were given orders to begin, thus establishing the precedent for unilateral boundary making in the region that would continue for more than a century.[49] Again, the commissioners were given instructions to make use of the region's natural features for the purposes of deriving a paper boundary:

> Boundary marks are neither requisite nor probably possible, you will find plenty of mountains ready to your hand. And these natural pillars should not only be carefully mapped for registry with the British Government, but their appearance and bearings should be fully and distinctly recorded in writing, and a copy furnished to the representations of each of the three contracting parties. The experience acquired in your last trip should enable you to accommodate your route to the seasons, i.e. to finish your work in the higher tracts before snow falls and cuts off your retreat.[50]

The botanist Thomas Thomson set about testing Humboldt's general principles. "The whole of the Tibet," he wrote, "appears to be characterized by great uniformity of climate and productions and perhaps also of natural features, on which account it appears convenient to retain the name for the whole country, … as has already been pointed out by Baron Humboldt, is naturally separable into two grand divisions."[51] The first of these was the watershed of the Tsangpo, which in India becomes the Brahmaputra, and the second was the Indus.

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[49] NAI, Foreign, nos. 162-164, August 28, 1847. "Instructions for his guidance on his approaching Mission to the Thibetan Frontier."

[50] Ibid.

[51] NAI, Foreign, 29 Dec. 1849, 332-334, F.C. "Thomson, Asstt.-Surgeon T. Report on Western Thibet."

But Thomson also began to see complications. In his report to the East India Company, he noted that if all of western Tibet were a single, "extensive plain bounded on the South by the great chain of the Himalaya and on the north by the lofty mountains of Kunenlun [sic] it would be an easy task to define its boundaries."[52] However, in reality, he noted:

> A line of high snowy peaks may doubtless be traced in a direction nearly parallel to the plains of India, but these are separated from one another by deep ravines along which flow large and rapid rivers, and *therefore afford no tangible line of demarcation between the two countries.* Between the river Indus and the plains of N.W. India is interposed a mountain tract which has a breadth of about 150 miles in line as distance.[53]

Thomson thus acknowledged that the geographical reality of the supposedly systemic, parallel Himalaya was much more complicated than had earlier been assumed, and that deriving a clear, natural line of demarcation was no simple task. This complication also highlighted a critical topographical irony of much of the history of surveying in the region. The Himalaya was long seen as a barrier—what the poet Muhammad Iqbal would later call the "dīwār-i-Hindustān" ("wall of India")—that separated India from the land beyond. But, as most topographical maps drawn since 1800 illustrate (Figure 2.1, below), Ladakh is beyond (Figure 2.1a), or within that "wall." When Thomson wrote of a mountain tract 150 miles wide, he effectively acknowledged that Britain's frontiers could not end at a clear wall of mountains, but potentially stretched somewhere deep within them. But Thomson also recognized that the main rivers running through this complex of mountains could offer a means of resolving this topographical tangle. "If [the rivers] be taken as a guide, the mountains will be found to resolve themselves into two great systems, connected to the eastward but otherwise independent of, though nearly parallel to one another." Thus, the watersheds of the Indus and the Tsangpo/Brahmaputra became two central

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid. My emphasis.

objects of demarcation. The “Indus watershed system,” as it came to be known, would soon become the understood frontier of northern India.



Figures 2.1 and 2.1a (below). “Hindoostan,” an atlas map by Aaron Arrowsmith, London 1800. Figure 2a, a detail of the top of the map, shows “Latac” (i.e. Ladakh) on the far side of a now linearly represented Himalayan range. It is also represented as being on the Ganges River, not the Indus.

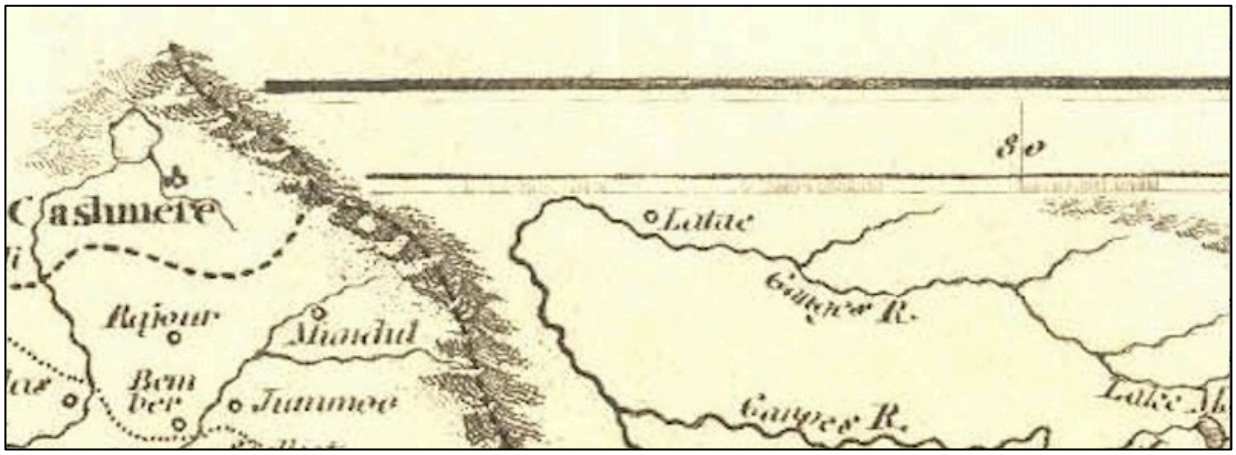


Figure 2.1a. Detail of "Hindoostan," an atlas map by Aaron Arrowsmith, London 1800.

The maps generated by the second commission satisfied colonial officials in charge, asserting that a natural boundary had been found and that a principle had been established (Figures 2.2 and 2.3). But more pressing problems of governance drew the attention of the East India Company back to the plains of India.



Figures 2.2 and 2.3 (below). Above, a composite photo of a sketch map taken from the report submitted by Captain Cunningham in 1848. Below, the final product. On Figure 2.3, note the fragment of the "Chinese Empire." National Archives of India.

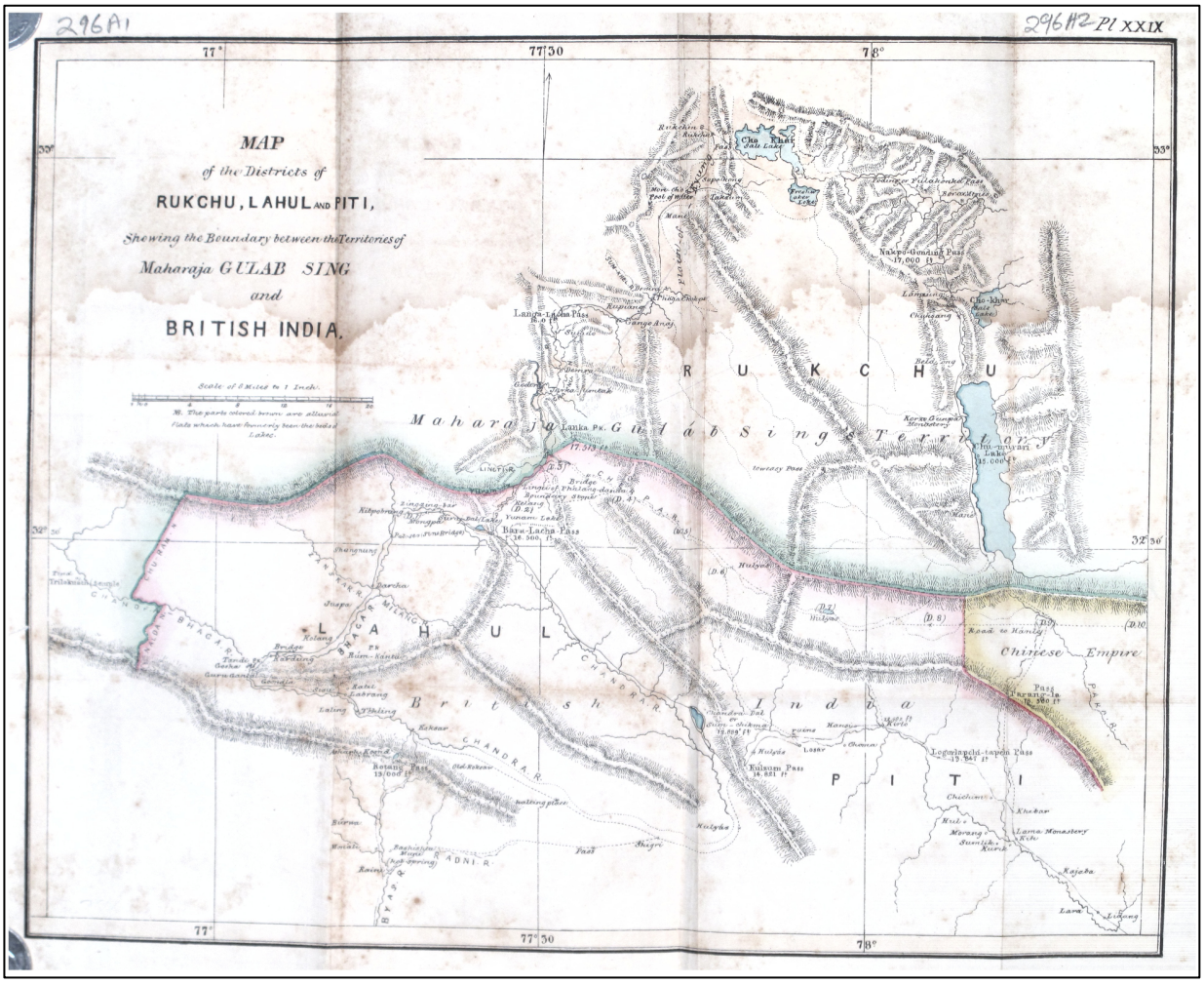


Figure 2.3. The map resulting from the sketch included with Alexander Cunningham's report. Source: pahar.in.

III. Securing the Perimeter: Scientific Frontiers and the Indus Watershed System

The rebellion of 1857-58 marks a critical moment in South Asia's political history. In the face of widespread violence, political upheaval, and brutal retribution, problems pertaining to mapping mountains and rivers at the edges of the empire became a decidedly peripheral concern. But as the British refashioned their rule of the subcontinent in the wake of internal rebellion, they also grew concerned by the external threats posed by the approach of the Russian and Chinese empires to their still vague northern frontiers. From this moment forward, security suffused all

political and commercial considerations for British administrators in India—and increasingly guided the production of maps. As the government of India grew increasingly alarmed by Russian encroachment, more precise techniques and extensive boundary commissions were established to detail India's frontier, which became an increasingly restricted and "classified" space.

By the early 1850s, the Survey of India had completed its "series of great triangles" from its base in Dehra Dun up to the northwestern town of Peshawar (Figure 2.4).[54] The Survey's mapping of Kashmir began in 1854 and recommenced in 1858, utilizing the more precise trigonometric technique employing a theodolite that had become standard for Survey of India maps.[55] The results were a series of detailed maps of the region in 1859 and 1861. Owing to altitude, its vastness, and the harshness of climate, Ladakh was not surveyed in the same way when mapping recommenced there in the 1860s. Instead it was mapped by "traverse" survey—sketched maps based on measured distances on the ground—akin to the method of the 1846-48 boundary commissions.

[54] NAI, Foreign, nos. 314-315, June 10, 1853, "Proposed Survey of Cashmere and the adjoining mountains."

[55] For a detailed description of this surveying process by the large boundary commissions and surveying parties of the late nineteenth century, see Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 73-106.

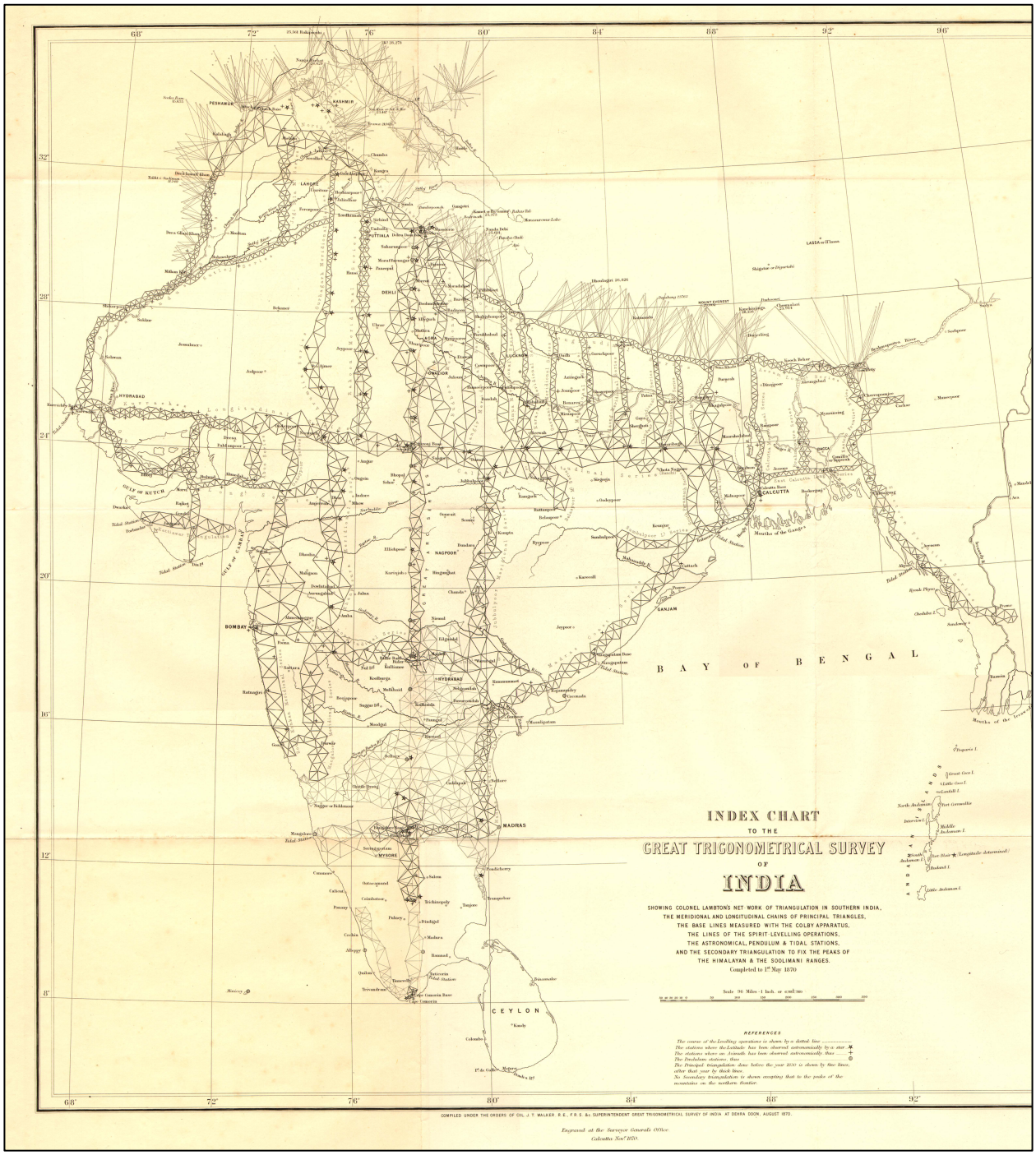


Figure 2.4. The "Index Chart to the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India," Survey of India, 1870.

In 1865, William Johnson made a north-south traverse of the Aksai Chin, which followed the principle trade route through the region but did not triangulate the distances to, and heights

of, the mountains and hills scattered across the barren plateau. The resulting map was published in 1868. Johnson would later become the Dogra-appointed *wazīr-i-wizārat* ["district administrator"] of Ladakh. Johnson's survey of the region, and the eventual "line" of mountains it produced, remained the basic cartographical representation for the remainder of the nineteenth century. It endures as one of the main sources for India's continued claims to the Aksai Chin today.[56] Critically, however, Johnson did not survey the mountains that formed the supposed outer perimeter of the Aksai Chin and a possible edge of the Indus watershed. Given the paucity of snowfall on the arid, largely glacier-less plateau, determining water partings was a nearly impossible task.

The increased interest in commercial ventures in Central Asia, coupled with growing concerns about the Russian empire looming large from the north, pushed the Survey of India to produce more detailed maps of "trans-frontier" regions—representations of the limits of British territory, however vaguely defined it may be. However, political uncertainties and the occasional unfriendly welcome in regions beyond British territories forced the Survey to do so more covertly, often with the aid of trained Indians, known as pundits.

The pundits—often from the hills but sometimes from Bengal or other plains areas—were trained by the Survey of India to take part in covert intelligence gathering missions beyond the borders of India. Often disguised as pilgrims or traders, these agents were equipped with an array of hidden instruments to facilitate their work—practices made famous by Kipling's portrayal of Anglo-Russian Himalayan intrigue in *Kim* (1901). These highly praised "human instruments"—as Kapil Raj has styled them—formed a hybrid colonial scientific practice of

[56] Lamb, *The Sino-Indian Border in Ladakh*, 8-9.

colonizers and colonized.[57] The maps that the pundits and other Indian surveyors produced served to fill in the blank trans-frontier spaces on the Survey of India's maps. They also made it even clearer to central administrators that the Government of India needed more precise demarcations of the frontier. Regarding the earlier 1846-48 boundary commissions in Ladakh, for instance, the resulting "information and the maps [were] so conflicting, that it [was] impossible to say what was the boundary...."[58] Due to the conflicting maps, the government of India determined that a new boundary commission should ignore the 1846-48 boundary and that "the whole question should be re-investigated *de novo*." Therefore, in the 1870s, renewed attempts were made to determine Ladakh's boundaries, again applying the water-parting principle.[59] "To fix the boundary on the permanent water-shed," wrote the Secretary to the Government of the Punjab to the Foreign Secretary, is "to act on a clear and distinct principle."[60]

By the early 1870s, the Government of India's Foreign Department indexes show a significant spike in boundary commissions, a trend that would only accelerate until the turn of the century. This new wave of attempts at border demarcation came in part because earlier commissions, like those in the northwestern Himalaya, were increasingly seen as technically deficient "traverse" surveys that produced inaccurate maps. It was also the result of an increasingly scientific approach to boundary settlement, one where teams of surveyors, naturalists, and boundary experts, like the aforementioned Thomas Holdich, would

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[57] Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*.

[58] NAI, Foreign, Political A, nos. 240-241A, May 1870, "Boundary between Cashmere and lingti."

[59] NAI, Foreign, Political A, nos. 10-12, May 1872, "Boundary between Spiti and Ladakh"; and NAI, Foreign, Political A, nos. 203-206, January 1873, "Settlement of the Spiti and Ladakh boundary."

[60] NAI, Foreign, Political A, May 1873, nos. 10-12.

systematically "lay down" a borderline by way of standardized practices centered on identifying natural markers, or creating them (i.e. producing boundary pillars), when necessary. Experts like Holdich represented a new generation of frontier experts who employed the latest precision surveying instruments to generate an increasingly detailed accounting of imperial territory. Most of the major bilateral boundary commissions—the Anglo-Russian Afghan Boundary Commission, the Anglo-Russian Pamir Boundary Commission, and the Sino-British Burma Boundary Commission—succeeded in producing highly detailed demarcated borders, even if these borders were often ignored locally. But the northwestern Himalaya, like the northeastern Himalaya would later prove, was a different case. The high altitude, inhospitable climate, and difficulty in determining a legible water-parting line in the Aksai Chin together produced a series of hypothetical border configurations. While those who attempted to survey parts of it fretted about the lack of geographical information available, imperial administrators were more concerned with eliminating For "no-man's lands," like the Aksai Chin, which represented a threatening and incongruent "nonstate space."[61]

In 1879, the then-Viceroy, Lord Lytton, articulated the first general frontier policy for northern India—a policy with roots going back beyond the first Himalayan boundary commissions. "The natural boundary of India," he wrote, "is formed by the convergence of the great mountain ranges of the Himalayas and of the Hindu Kush… [If] we resolve that no foreign interference can be permitted on this side of the mountains, or within the drainage system of the Indus, we shall have laid down a natural line of frontier which is distinct, intelligible, and likely to be respected."[62]

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[61] Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 10-11.

[62] IOR. PS/Letters and Enclosures from India, Vol. 21, No. 49, February 28, 1879.

As the specter of Russian and Chinese advances in Central Asia provoked deepening anxieties in Calcutta, Shimla, and London, more resources were spent on surveying and demarcating the northern and eastern edges of Kashmir. These projects became covert, classified, and militarized. In 1876, Captain Henry Trotter made a trans-Himalayan survey and produced a map, fragments of which ended up in several Indian newspapers. The government reacted angrily to this. As a result, reports on trans-frontier survey operations were subsequently deemed "strictly confidential."[63] In 1884, the Government of India ordered that notifications of boundary demarcations were not to appear in the *Gazette of India*.[64] Access to trans-frontier maps was formally restricted in 1885.[65] And regular frontier intelligence gathering became routine, organized through the recently formed Intelligence Branch that played a critical role in operations on the Afghan frontier.[66]

In 1888, Captain Henry Ramsay, the British Joint Commissioner at Ladakh, wrote to his superiors in the Government of India's Foreign Department urging them to consider defining the boundaries in northern and eastern Kashmir once again.[67] His predecessor, Ney Elias, now a frontier expert whose advice would be sought by the Government of India on political frontiers from Afghanistan to Siam, responded that he believed that "complete surveys [had] long ago been made by the regular survey of India, of all the country up to limits of the Indus system

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[63] Henry Trotter, *Account of the Survey Operations in Connection with the Mission to Yarkand and Kashghar in 1873-74*…. (Calcutta: The Foreign Department Press, 1875).

[64] NAI, Foreign, A Political E, nos. 201-222, June 1884.

[65] NAI Foreign, Secret F, nos. 1-3, November 1885. "Trans-frontier information. Publication of frontier maps containing only sketchy Survey(s) permitted."

[66] For a history of the Intelligence Branch, see James Hevia, *Imperial Security State*.

[67] NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, March 1889, nos. 115-116. "Frontier between Ladakh and Chinese-Turkestan."

watershed."[68] But after much back and forth with the Foreign Department, officials concluded that the available maps (the Johnson map of 1865, in particular) did not inspire much confidence in the exact location of the Indus watershed, thus calling into question their conception of the northern frontier. While much of the subcontinent was mapped with the precision of trigonometric surveys, the difficult terrain of the Aksai Chin and the sketchy traverse surveys of Johnson and the pundits did not allow for a satisfactorily whole cartographic image upon which to demarcate a complete borderline.

The British Resident in Kashmir wrote to the Foreign Secretary of India, Mortimer Durand, that he was of the "opinion that the adjustment of the whole northern and north-western frontier of Kashmir should not be further postponed." He continued,

> The recent development of Imperial policy and the measures taken within the last three or four years to secure against attack or surprise routes leading from Central Asia or Afghanistan to India make it, I think, undesirable longer to defer the settlement of this boundary. … I would advise that some officer …should be sent early this year confidentially and quite quietly, … accompanied with *two or three clever mappers to work out on the spot the best scientific frontier to include the most inaccessible portions*. … Scientific accuracy need not be prescribed as so essential relatively as military features, and in this way I hope the Government of India would within the present year, be furnished with a valuable report, showing the best scientific boundary for the north and north-western frontier of Kashmir. Thus the work of a future delimitation commission would be rendered comparatively simple.[69]

A scientific frontier, as defined in 1907 by the former Viceroy, George Curzon, was "a Frontier which unites natural and strategical strength."[70] The period term "scientific" reflected a process of merging precise geographical information with military or political strategy and revealed the development of geopolitics as an analytic frame derived from the premise that

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid. My emphasis.

[70] Curzon, *Frontiers*, 26.

geography was a determining factor in the success or failure of states. And frontiers were "the razor's edge" upon which the "life or death" of nations rested.[71] The strategic aspect of frontiers could shift alongside the geopolitical fluctuations of imperial politics. As maps came to include greater technical detail, they often retained symbolic references to early renderings of solid, parallel mountain ranges that made for the appearance of a concrete and legible border. But the certainty of solid lines on large-scale maps—and the geographical principles upon which they apparently rested—continued to belie deeper uncertainties on the ground.

The water-parting principle, which in theory had previously offered such a clear means of removing any disputes, became increasingly difficult to apply on the ground. Curzon remarked in his 1907 Oxford lecture on frontiers. "In every mountain border, where the entire mountainous belt does not fall under the control of a single Power, the crest or water-divide is the best and fairest line of division; for it is not exposed to physical change, it is always capable of identification, and no instruments are required to fix it."[72] But this "fairest line" was itself not always clear. Curzon went on to note "the well-known geographical fact that in the greatest mountain systems of the world, for instance, the Himalayas and the Andes, the water-divide is not identical with the highest crest, but is beyond it and at a lower elevation."[73] By this time Curzon's was hardly an original observation.

This inconvenient geological situation—which had been remarked on by Strachey in his 1854 *Physical Geography of Western Tibet*—provoked heated debates in the highest echelons of the imperial government. The War Office's Director of Military Intelligence, John Ardagh – with

[71] Curzon, 7

[72] Curzon, 19.

[73] Curzon, 19-20.

an eye to the tactical advantages of keeping potential enemies off the high ground—advocated refraining from more precise demarcation in the Karakoram in the hopes of coaxing China into the expansive lower terrain of Kashgaria and the Tarim Basin while retaining effective occupation of the glacial high ground.[74] Strategically speaking, Ardagh wanted the Chinese to occupy the vast and inhospitable western Tarim Basin in order to prevent Russia from surreptitiously taking over that no-man's land. But this departed from the water-parting principle in so far as it gave up what was then believed to be the northeastern reaches of the Indus watershed.

Throughout the last three decades of the nineteenth century, military and civilian strategists struggled to agree where the strategic or natural frontiers would lie. Military advisors appreciated keeping potential enemies off the high ground, but that conflicted with the natural water-parting principle, which offered both sides—theoretically at least—access to the heights. Civilian administrators tended to favor the less stringent amalgamation of boundary pillars, bodies of water, and mountains ridges that reduced the range of territory to govern. By 1890, a vague strategy was reached: "The Government have now decided that, for the present at any rate, the limits of the Indus watershed should be considered as the boundary of the Kashmir territories to the north, and that the line of natural water-parting … should be regarded as the limit of our political jurisdiction."[75] In other words, the political line that marked the northern edge of India would be coterminous with the limit of the Indus watershed. In choosing this model, military logic co-existed with the indeterminacy of the often-un-demarcated watershed limits. But given the dearth of trigonometric-based survey maps of the northern and eastern edges of Ladakh, the

[74] NAI, Foreign, Secret F., November, nos. 110-114. "Kashmir-Frontier. Memorandum by Sir John Ardagh."

[75] Ibid.

Survey of India was obliged to rely on the sketchier shapes of a handful of traverse surveys when representing the limit of the watershed. The result was the production of two kinds of maps: those that showed a border that relied on a handful of precise points and a speculative line representing a suggested water-parting, and those maps that showed no borders at all.

On March 14, 1899, this ambiguous arrangement was formalized in a memorandum sent to the Qing Government by Claude MacDonald, the British Minster at Peking. Echoing the East India Company's language to the 1846-8 boundary commissioners, MacDonald wrote to the Zongli Yamen[76] that it was now proposed "that for the sake of avoiding any dispute or uncertainty in the future, a clear understanding should be come to with the Chinese Government as to the frontier between the two States." Yet the memo also went on to assert that "it will not be necessary to mark out the frontier… The natural frontier is the crest of a range of mighty mountains, a great part of which is quite inaccessible." It was sufficient from the British perspective to outline the prominent features of the Indus watershed in the memo, and to cite this line described on a map of the "Russo-Chinese frontier brought by the late Minister, Hung Chun, from St. Petersburg, and in possession of the Yamen."[77] The vague description in the letter, which continues to generate much debate between India and China, suggested a line that largely followed what the British understood to be Indus watershed limit, though they did not have a satisfactory map to represent the whole region. As the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, had earlier written to

[76] China's Foreign Affairs body established in 1861 and replaced with a ministerial Foreign Office in 1901.

[77] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, August 1899, nos. 168-201. There is no known surviving version of this map.

the Secretary of State for India, "we regret that we have no map to show the whole line either accurately or on a large scale."[78]

When Fanny Bullock Workman and her husband, Dr. Hunter Workman, requested permission from the Government of India in 1912 to survey the Siachen glacier in the Karakoram, north of Ladakh, their expedition was given approval contingent on the inclusion of a Survey of India surveyor. The Secretary to the Foreign Department, Henry McMahon—who, like his ministerial predecessor, Mortimer Durand, would have his own infamous boundary line—acknowledged that the Workman expedition would help to confirm or adjust an earlier survey. Based on the premise that "We understand the watershed of the Indus to be our boundary and have thought that the Karakoram was that watershed," McMahon then asserted that since the watershed determined the boundary, the Government of India was "*not bound to adhere to the Karakoram if it is proved not to be the watershed, but will claim the real watershed as our boundary*."[79]

Further south, the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin was tracing the origins of the Indus watershed in Western Tibet. His discovery in 1907 of the perpendicular so-called trans-Himalaya range complicated Humboldt's purely parallel vision of the Himalayas. In doing so, he noted that the Indus and Brahmaputra watersheds were incongruent with the mountains that were assumed to form a natural, "scientific" boundary. "The Trans-Himalaya," Hedin wrote, "is not only a watershed of the first rank, but is also a geographical boundary of exceptional importance."[80]

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[78] Lamb, *The Sino-Indian Border in Ladakh*, 7.

[79] NAI, Foreign, Frontier B, May 1912, nos. 125-126. "Contention that the real watershed of the Indus is the (1) Kashmir Boundary if it is proved that the (2) Karakoram range is not the water shed." My emphasis.

[80] Hedin, *Trans-Himalaya*, vol. 1, 273.

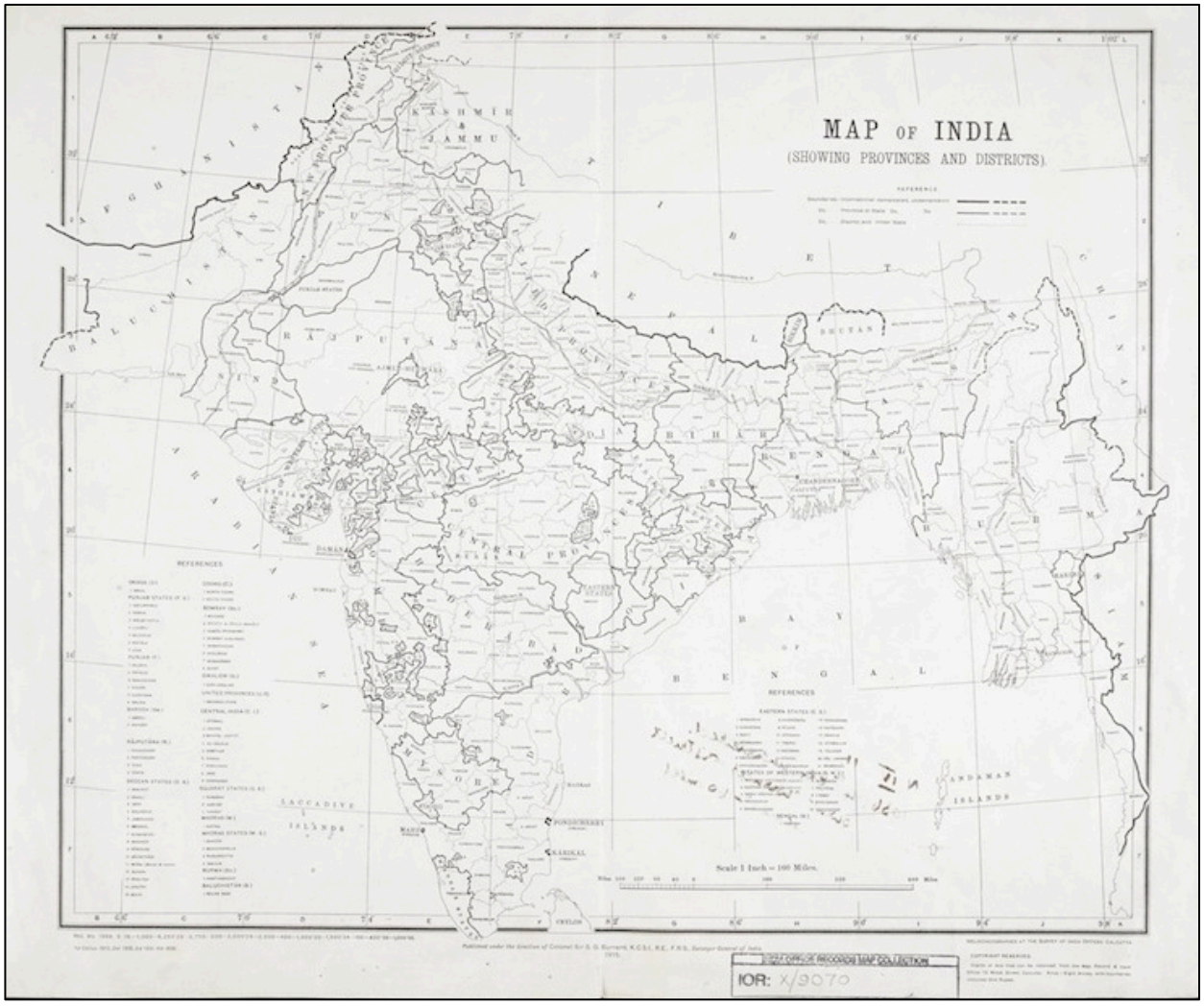
Hedin's discovery came under criticism from subsequent generations of geographers who argued that it was an ill-defined mountain area. If he proved anything, it was that watersheds could cause as much trouble in boundary making as rivers, or any other natural or human-made object.

The decades following MacDonald's and Hedin's revised lines revealed patterns much like those evident in the decades that preceded them: periods of intense interest in boundary-making, followed by years of neglect; continued restriction and standardization of maps (including the standardization of map colors and symbols) that eventually produced an agreed upon restricted zone after independence for all trans-border maps; and continued debates between central and regional, and military and civilian administrators, about what should be done to address frontier problems.

Few terms are as intimately tied to the history of empire as "frontier." In a certain sense—from the imperialist's perspective at least—frontier is synecdoche for empire, since in so often carries connotations of expanding territory, uncertain political control, and the violence associated with clashes of "asymmetric" power. By the twentieth century the frontier had became an idea and a space suffused with security concerns and represented by restricted trans-frontier maps. But in the northwestern Himalaya—as with other parts of the Himalayan frontier—the natural objects designed to provide a strong and legible border instead produced continued complications. The vastness of the land to be surveyed and mapped, the continued insistence on a legible water-parting line as the northern limit of India, and the increased restriction of "trans-frontier" information yielded political maps without borders.

Conclusion

A century after Governor General Hardinge had requested "clear and well defined boundaries," the British still lacked a satisfactory border in the northwestern Himalaya. This was reflected, most graphically, by the production of maps that failed to include any borders in the region. As was later in 1962, "Survey of India maps issued in 1865, 1903, 1917, 1929, 1936, and 1938 *do not show any boundary at all* in the western (i.e. Ladakh) sector."[81] These borderless maps illustrated the formal representation of territorial ignorance on supposedly precise maps (Figure 2.5).



[81] National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK). DO 196/190, 1962, "India's Himalayan Frontier." My emphasis.

Figure 2.5. "Map of India (showing provinces and districts)." Published under the direction of Colonel Sir S. G. Burrard, Surveyor General of India, 1915. 1st Edition 1915; 2nd 1930; 3rd 1934; 4th 1936. Scale 1 inch = 160 miles. IOR/X/9070. Courtesy British Library.



Figure 2.5a. Detail of Figure 5

In the British imperial context, the practice of imbuing maps with authority involved transforming *terra incognita* into colonial territory, a process that oscillated between surveying the land and rendering it on paper. D. Graham Burnett describes how Americans charged with resolving boundary disputes in Guyana went in search of maps and documents in Europe, presuming the scientific accuracy and the completeness of work done on the ground in the

tropics of South America. In appearing to present physicality, cartographic images attempt to settle the political and technological struggles they represent.

The cartographical construction of the northwestern Himalayan frontier was itself an epistemological development of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and drew on the work of a number of geographers, most prominently Alexander von Humboldt, "the scientific traveller *par excellence*."[82] For British surveyors and administrators of the mid-nineteenth century, the naturalness of the great Himalayan barrier—and its apparent linearity (Figure 2.6 for the cartographical linearity and, for a satelite contrast, Figure 2.7)—could be reinforced through its water partings, which increasingly acted as territorial demarcators and formed the basis of a major principle of international boundary making enshrined in international law by the twentieth century. The rise of cartographical thinking illustrates both the growing authority of colonial (and eventually postcolonial) maps and the evolving logics of border making. Surveying and map making came to represent a vision of a space organized and triangulated through a set of specific technologies of measurement and vision. But the clarity of that vision was often obstructed by complex mountainous landscapes, as was the case in Ladakh and the broader northwestern Himalaya.

[82] Kapil Raj, "La Construction de L'empire de La Géographie: L'odyssée Des Arpenteurs de Sa Très Gracieuse Majesté, La Reine Victoria, En Asie Centrale," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 52, no. 5 (October 1997): 1157.

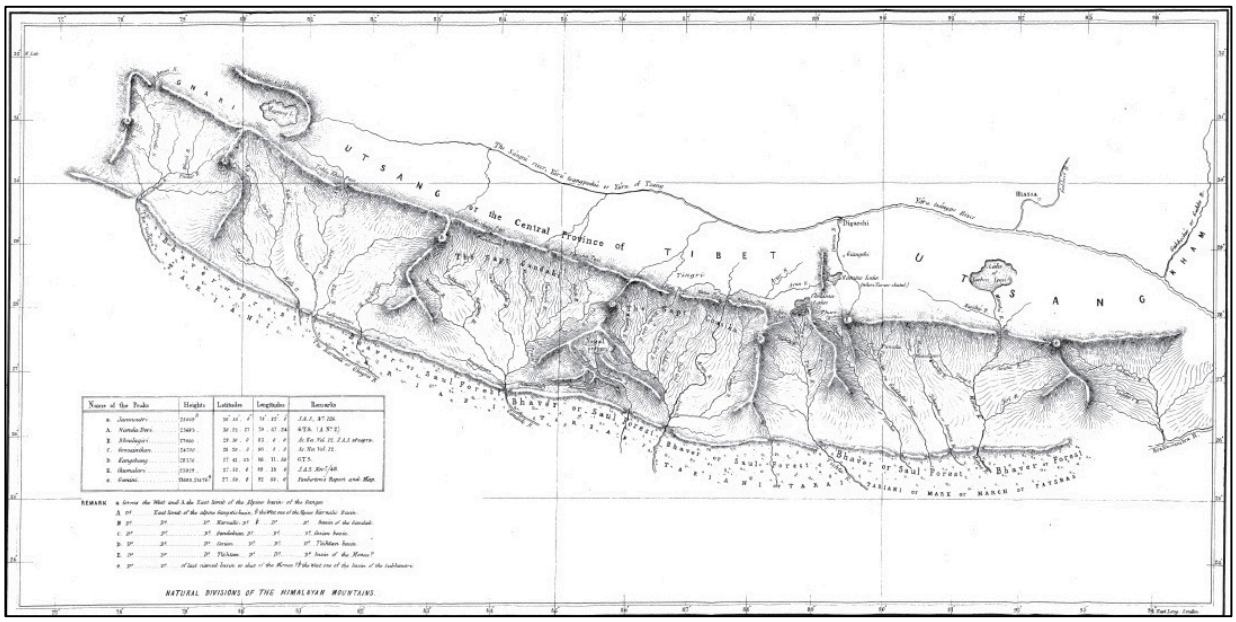


Figure 2.6. "Natural Divisions of the Himalaya," from B. H. Hodgson, "On the Physical Geography of the Himalaya" Journal of the Asiatic Society, (August 1849) p. 763. Contrasted with Figure 2.7 below.

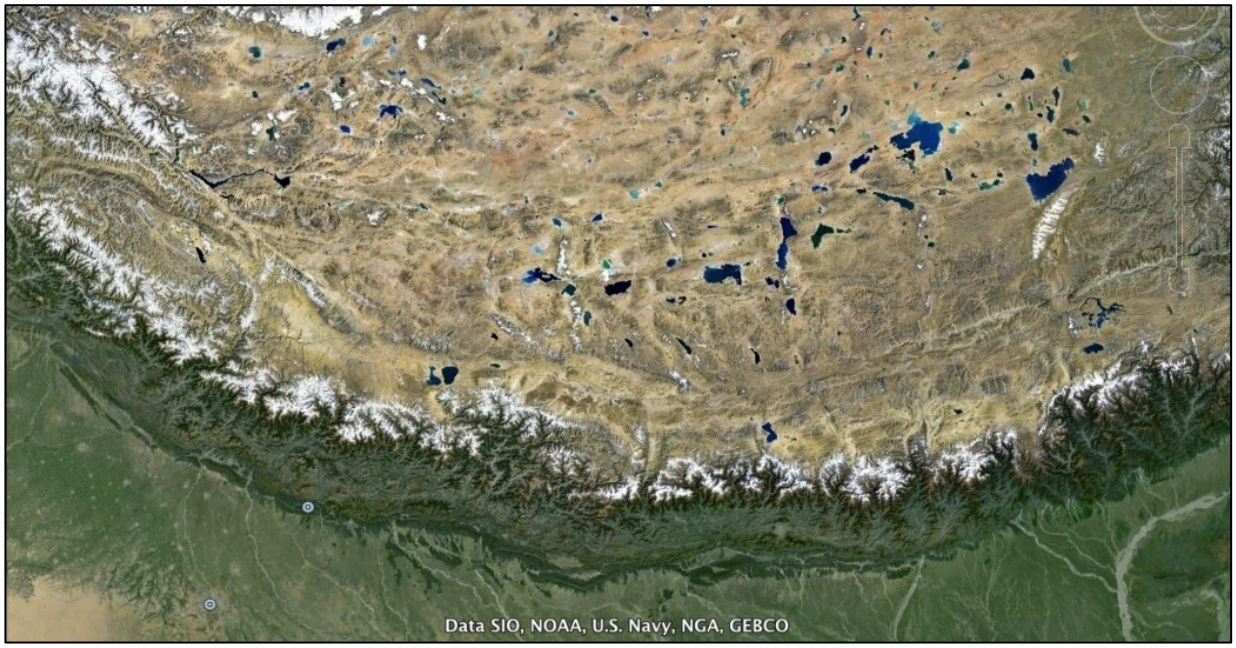


Figure 2.7. A satellite image of roughly the same region as Figure 2.6 above. Google Earth, Accessed April 30, 2015.

The story of mapping the northwestern Himalaya demonstrates that it is important to disaggregate three apparently interwoven aspects of these colonial maps as historical sources: first, the representation of land and water rendered on the map from a variety of surveying practices and speculations; second, the lines drawn over that representation to denote political units and their limits (aka territory); and third, the cartographic and geographic rationales used to render and determine the first and the second aspects. While historians of the Himalayan borderland do acknowledge inaccuracies on maps (particularly pre-1899 maps) as sources of disputes arising from this first aspect, they tend to ignore the third aspect—the process and the rationale involved in making the land and its supposedly natural boundaries conform to the map.

Paying closer attention to how practices (the rise of the science of surveying, and the coeval rise of the geographical sciences) and products (maps, survey reports, the regular publications of the Royal Geographical Society) worked to facilitate this shift to a more border-centric world can reveal the deeply uneven texture of the process of border making. Such an analysis could not only denaturalize maps, but also denaturalize frontiers and the supposedly natural foundations upon which they were established. The history of the long-elusive border in Ladakh—a boundary supposedly derived from mountain systems and watersheds—offers a perfect test case for such a revision. The production of borderless maps of the northwestern Himalayan region reflected the simultaneous lack of sufficiently precise information, and an unwillingness to acknowledge that ignorance. It also reflected the unsuccessful application of a geographical concept—the water-parting principle—that was meant to provide a clear means to determining natural *and* political limits. The nature in natural was all too human.

CHAPTER THREE

Communication: Roads, Regulation, and the British Joint Commissioners

"The British are the road-makers of Tibet"
—Charles Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama* (1946)[1]

Following the 1846 Treaties of Lahore and Amritsar,[2] which gave the East India Company control over the newly formed princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, Governor-General Henry Hardinge penned a letter to the "Vizer of Lhassa-Gartok," the *gar.dpon* (governor) of Western Tibet.[3] It was to be delivered to the *gar.dpon* by the boundary commissioners Alexander Cunningham and P.A. Vans Agnew, who Hardinge had tasked with determining in the northwestern Himalaya "a clear and well defined boundary in a quarter likely to come little under observation."[4] In the letter, the Governor-General articulated his hope for free trade between the new British dependency of Jammu and Kashmir and the Chinese dependency of Tibet.[5] He also stated that the East India Company had taken the liberty of modifying the 1842 Treaty of Chushul between the recently defeated Sikh Empire and the

[1] According to Charles Bell, this was a "Tibetan prophecy, which [he] had heard many years before...." Charles Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama* (London: Collins, 1946), 204.

[2] These treaties, as detailed in Chapter 1, together dissolved the Sikh Empire, granted the Raja of Jammu rule over the newly configured state of Jammu and Kashmir, and gave the British East India Company paramountcy over it.

[3] This title referred to the governor(s) of Western Tibet (Tib. *gar.dpon*, sometimes also spelled *sgar.dpon*) posted at Gartok, a trade-mart along the bank of the upper Indus on the Leh-Lhasa route in far Western Tibet.

[4] NAI, Foreign, S.C., 26 December 1846, nos. 1331-1343. "Governor General to Vizer of Lhassa-Gartok. Instructions for laying down the boundary between the territory of Maharajah Golap Sing and the British Government."

[5] Tibet's status as a dependency of China became increasingly nominal by the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Government of Tibet, signed after General Zorowar Singh's death at the hands of a Sino-Tibetan army. "Such persons," the modification went, "as may in future proceed from China to Ladakh or to the British Territory, its dependencies, or from Ladakh or the British territory and its dependencies to China *are not to be obstructed on the road*."[6]

Hardinge repeatedly emphasized the importance of free travel and the need to identify accessible routes to untapped markets beyond the limits of the Company's territory. Echoing Hardinge's instructions on the importance of locating and improving these conduits of commerce, Alexander Cunningham wrote from the "high road through Kulu to Ladak" that substantial modifications should be made to the course of that road to provide better access the mountainous region of Ladakh and the trade that passed through it.[7] For Hardinge and for Cunningham, the development of mountain roads was the *sine qua non* of communication and commercial development on the imperial frontier. Though in reality the routes these officials referenced were often simple footpaths prone to frequent blockage and destruction—not the macadamized (or "metalled")[8] roads common in the plains of India by the mid-nineteenth century—these modest tracks carried the aspirations and anxieties of the growing imperial state.

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[6] NAI, Foreign, S.C., December 26, 1846, nos. 1331-1343. "Governor General to Vizer of Lhassa-Gartok. Instructions for laying down the boundary between the territory of Maharajah Golap Sing and the British Government." My emphasis.

[7] NAI, Foreign, S.C., 28 August 1847, nos. 162-164. "Instructions for [Captain Alexander Cunningham's] guidance on his approaching Mission to the Thibetan Frontier." Imbricating himself in the history of colonial exploration of, and expansion into, the region, Cunningham noted that "[i]t is remarkable that we crossed the Bara-Lacha on the anniversary of the day on which Moorcroft had crossed it twenty-six years before us."

[8] The process of macadamization, named after the Scottish engineer John Loudon McAdam who first employed it around 1820, involves a layer of single-sized crushed stone layers, placed in shallow lifts and compacted thoroughly before sometimes being topped by a layer of finer grained stone dust. It simplified earlier processes that required greater depths of stone and steeper cambers to roads.

Roads are, at first glance, the opposite of borders. They enhance movement and connect far-flung locales. But for the imperial state in India in the latter half of the nineteenth century, roads were increasingly approached under the same logic and with the same end as borders: regulating the movement of people and goods, and establishing influence, if not always effective control, over neighboring regions. For all their ubiquity, roads rarely receive attention from historians as anything more than anonymous infrastructural technologies associated with trade, travel, and the expansion of the state—though recently several scholars have explored the histories of specific roads and the communities they impacted.[9] Yet as tools of political power and catalysts for commerce developed in particular locales at particular times, roads are also the point at which the changing aspirations of the state meet the environmental realities of particular lived spaces. As such, these reticular spaces are ideal objects of inquiry when examining the shifting priorities of the imperial state over its frontiers. This chapter will focus on two roads of crucial importance to the British frontier in the northwestern Himalaya: the Hindustan-Tibet Road and the Leh-Yarkand Treaty Road.

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[9] There are several notable historical exceptions. Joseph A. Amato's *On Foot: A History of Walking* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2004) explores the long social history of walking in the Western world, "a narrative of human walking through the ages, the story of its major forms and transformations" (p. 15). Joe Moran's *On Roads: A Hidden History* (London: Profile Books, 2009) examines roads in the north of England (Thanks to Rob Butler for these first two references). Most recently, Bruce D. Epperson, *Roads through the Everglades: The Building of the Ingraham Highway, the Tamiami Trail and Conners Highway, 1914-1931* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2016) explored the particular political, technological, and environmental factors at work in the construction of a road in southern Florida. Several notable histories of the trade routes collectively known as the Silk Road have been written, though they have focused on economic and cultural exchange, rather than the development behind the routes themselves. See, for instance, James Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Susan Whitfield and Ursula Sims-Williams, *The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War, and Faith* (London: British Library, 2004). Recent anthropological work most relevant to the region discussed in this chapter is Jonathan Demenge, "The Political Ecology of Road Construction in Ladakh" (University of Sussex, 2011).

Examining the historical development of these frontier roads also offers notable examples of uneven infrastructural development both within Britain and across its rapidly growing empire.[10] The imperial state in nineteenth-century India did not attempt the uniform approach to road building seen in Jo Guldi's examination of Britain's "invention" of the "infrastructure state."[11] Unlike the more systematic extension of roads across the Celtic periphery of Scotland in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, British administrators in the Himalaya were willing to invest in so-called "experiments" like the Hindustan-Tibet Road, particularly when access to untapped markets in Central Asia offered the potential for commercial growth. This divergence between metropolitan policies and opportunistic imperial "experiments" inverts the arc of Guldi's *Roads to Power*. Whereas the historical road networks Guldi examined in Britain were born out of military intervention and eventually led to enhanced commerce and movement, the purpose behind the Himalayan roads examined in this chapter shifted from experiments in enhancing commerce and movement to instruments of imperial security that attempted to regulate movement across the frontier and obstruct "undesirable" classes of people.[12] Thus we find in the early twentieth century trans-frontier roads that are being left intentially unimproved to prevent "free access to every road into [India]."[13] Roads, in other words, eventually became a

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[10] Road construction in the Punjab, for instance, was approached more systematically than in the mountainous Himalaya. Thanks to Professor James Hevia for this observation.

[11] Jo Guldi, *Roads to Power: How Britain Invented the Infrastructure State* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[12] JKSA-J, 1924, 417/F-52. "Insertation of a rule in Kashmir Visitors' Rules regarding preventing the entry into Tibet of undesirable Indians"; and "Submission to His Highness the Maharaja Sahib Bahadur in Council, August 12, 1924."

[13] NAI, Foreign, Keep-with ("K.W.") for Secret F, October 1890, nos. 14-31. From Captain F. E. Younghusband, to the Secretary to the Foreign Department, August 1, 1890. "Notices in English and Persian to be posted at Suget, Kilian, Kugiar, Sanju, and Polu, prohibiting Travellers and explorers (European) from Central Asia from crossing the frontier of British India and States subordinate to it without a passport from the Government of India."

feature of the frontier complex: a key infrastructural instrument of imperial security and geopolitical thinking.

This chapter focuses on the changing imperial encounter with, and expansion of, roads in the northwestern Himalaya.[14] It begins with a brief examination of the first major British road-building endeavor in the region, the Hindustan-Tibet Road. The chapter then shifts to the colonial "man on the spot" in Ladakh, the British Joint Commissioner (BJC). From 1870 until the end of British rule in India, the BJC was tasked with overseeing "the Treaty Road"—a term used to describe several major routes connecting Kashmir to Ladakh and Ladakh to Central Asia and Tibet. In this role, the BJC was the key regional frontier official regulating trade, gathering commercial intelligence, and controlling the flow of people across the mountainous region on a series of roads that he continually attempted to improve. Finally, the chapter examines the increased emphasis on the military role of roads by revisiting the Hindustan-Tibet Road and the Treaty Road at the turn of the twentieth century in the context of Younghusband's invasion of Tibet and the expanding imperial security state in India.

This chapter illustrates, quite simply, that roads are constant points of tension for the colonial state, points that often neatly reflect the limits of the state's ability to gather information, its aspirations of commercial growth, and the growth of security concerns that so often accompanied the acumulation of colonial knowledge. The possibilities of commercial growth induced the colonial state to expend human and financial resources on developing trade. This increased attention to "communication" with the regions beyond the imperial frontier then required added political oversight, which in turn produced a growing set of concerns over what

[14] In keeping with established norms among Himalayan studies scholars, I use the name "Himalaya" to refer to the region and its constituent subregions (i.e. Northwestern Himalaya), while I use the term "Himalayas" to refer more specifically to the mountain range itself.

the imperial state did not know, encouraging the accumulation of trans-frontier commercial and political information. Thus, by the time of Younghusband's 1903-4 invasion of Tibet, frontier roads took on a janus-faced role: keeping regions beyond India "open" and accessible, but working to restrict the ingress of unwanted trans-frontier groups. The interconnected histories of several prominent—if rather humble—roads in the Northwestern Himalaya illustrates these broader frontier trends.

I. Trade, Servitude, and the Hindustan-Tibet Road[15]

Unlike the continuing tumult on the northwestern edges of the British Empire in India, the 1846 settlement of Britain's relations with its newly formed dependency of Jammu and Kashmir made the northwestern Himalaya one of the most pacific portions of a still vaguely defined imperial perimeter. Sparsely populated and enclosed by some of the world's highest peaks, the region could be thoroughly explored, lightly administered, and easily defended. This stability convinced the Earl of Dalhousie (Governor-General, 1847-1856), who had begun to regularly visit the northwestern Himalaya, to explore the possibility of expanding routes through the mountains, in part to access the primary object of commercial interest: pashmina (typically referred to as "shawl wool").[16]

[15] Sections of this first part come from Kyle Gardner, "The Ready Materials for Another World: Frontier, Security, and the Hindustan-Tibet Road in the Nineteenth Century Northwestern Himalaya," *Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 33, no. 1–2 (Fall 2013): 71–84.

[16] Dalhousie regularly visited Kalpa in Kinnaur, then known as Chini.



Figure 3.1. Pashmina goats in Ladakh. Known in Ladakhi and Tibetan as *byang.ra* ("north[ern] goat") or Changthangi after the Western Tibetan plateau (byang.thang) upon which they graze in summer. Source: Wikipedia Commons.

Properly speaking, pashmina is the material woven from *pashm*, the downy undercoat of the Tibetan *byang.ra* (Figure 3.1). Originating high up on the Tibetan Plateau in the goat herds of the semi-nomadic Changpa (*byang.pa*), the combed pashm was traded annually to Ladakhi or Kashmiri middlemen. These traders in turn sold the wool to Kashmiri merchants who, in turn, sold it to merchants from the great shawl-weaving houses of the Kashmir Valley.[17] Eighteenth-

[17] Janet Rizvi and Mona Ahmed estimate that in 1823, "the annual turnover of the industry at first price (before the addition of taxes, manufacturers' and middlemen's profits, brokers' fees, and transport costs) was estimated at some Rs 30 *lakh* (1 *lakh* = 100,000), amounting perhaps in today's money to Rs 120 *crore* (1 *crore* = 10,000,000) [roughly US$25 million in 2009]." Janet Rizvi and Monisha Ahmed, *Pashmina: The Kashmir Shawl and Beyond* (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2009), 13-14, 18.

century European traders discovered Kashmiri shawls, which were marked by a characteristic woven design, a teardrop with a bent tip.[18] This design inspired one of the most often-repeated Western textile motifs, commonly known today as "paisley," named after the Scottish town that first began producing imitations of the Kashmiri pattern.

The long-established network of (mostly) Muslim traders stretching through Ladakh from Kashmir to Lhasa (known as the *Lha.sa Kha.che*[19]) further illustrated the deeply entrenched role played by the pashmina trade throughout the broader region. These trade routes were reinforced by the connections between the Buddhist centers of Central Tibet and the Tibetan Buddhist centers of the Western Himalaya. The reciprocal flows of pilgrims, monastic students, and traders ensured a well-worn series of routes with villages along the way that could provide fresh supplies of food, as well as ponies, yaks, or donkeys for transportation.

The British, like the Sikhs and Dogras before them, wanted access to these trade routes and the potentially lucrative materials flowing along them. The first major British undertaking to accomplish this was the construction of the Hindustan-Tibet Road, from the plains of Northern India up to Shimla, and then northeastward to Kinnaur, with two further planned branches leading north to Ladakh. This project, begun in the spring of 1850, utilized nearly one million laborers in the course of its five-year initial phase of construction.[20] In its first years, more than

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[18] Chitralekha Zutshi, "Designed for Eternity: Kashmiri Shawls, Empire, and Cultures of Production and Consumption in Mid-Victorian Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (2009): 420–40.

[19] See Chapter One.

[20] United Kingdom, "Minutes and Correspondence in Reference to the Project of the Hindostan and Thibet Road, with Reports of Major Kennedy and Lieutenant Briggs Relating Thereto; and, an Account of the Expenditure Incurred in the Construction of the New Road between Kalha and Dugshai."; and IOR/V/25/700/83.

sixty percent of the labor used was unpaid, furnished by the individual hill states as part of an agreement to offer indentured service (known as *begār*) to their suzerain rulers.

The initial justifications for the road were three-fold: First, the completed road could, over time, open up a commercial route to Tibet that would give the British dependable access to Central Asian goods and markets, and in particular *pashm*, the raw material for pashmina (also known as cashmere) which was increasingly being demanded by the Victorian British upper classes. Early in 1850 the Earl of Dalhousie wrote that, "this road had been mentioned to me before as being of great importance with reference to the large trade which it is believed might be attracted to the plains of India from the countries beyond the Himalayan range."[21]

Second, the widening of the first stages of the road would quickly help ease the difficulties of a growing number of British tourists visiting the hills and their burgeoning "sanatoria." This rationale was, perhaps, the main reason why so much work was done so quickly. By 1850, British officials were increasingly escaping to the milder climate of the hills.[22] Following the rebellion of 1857 this trend intensified. Beyond growing fears of disease and "degeneration" in the plains, as Barbara and Thomas Metcalf have noted, the hills were also "meant to reproduce England."[23] These "hill stations" not only became sites of refuge and leisure, they also became sites of governance, most notably in the case of the summer capital of the British Raj, Shimla.

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[21] United Kingdom, House of Commons 1857, 4.

[22] See Pamela Kanwar, *Imperial Simla: The Political Culture of the Raj* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[23] Tom Metcalf and Barbara Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 111.

The third reason the British gave for the road's construction was the abolition of the *begār* system of indentured servitude, which in the tradition of ironic logics of rule in South Asia, they themselves had exploited. As John Bray has shown, forms of obligatory labor—most commonly referred to by the generic Persian/Urdu term *begār*—had long been present in the Western Himalayan hill states, Ladakh, Kashmir, and Tibet. This *corvée* labor had been used in road construction in the region at least as far back as the 16th century.[24] For the British, however, the system of local semi-feudal obligations between hill chiefs and their peasantry offered a cheap and convenient means of travel in regions where commercial transport was otherwise costly or not available. In particular, *begār* allowed for transport to and around the growing number of hill stations, which the British were building in the foothills of the Himalayas. "As embodied in their settlement agreements," Ramachandra Guha notes, "landholders were required to provide, for all government officials on tour and for white travellers (e.g. shikaris and mountaineers), several distinct sets of services."[25] These included laborers for carrying loads and building temporary rest huts, as well as provisions. According to the papers on the Hindustan-Tibet Road's construction, the use of these indentured laborers appears to have been most widespread on the initial segment of the road, running from the plains at Kalka up to Shimla (Figure 3.2). Dalhousie wrote in 1850 that his "first experience of the system, when my camp came to Simla in April 1849, satisfied me that it was a great and crying evil, and I have since that time both seen and heard much that has not only confirmed my conviction of the reality of the

[24] Bray, "Corvée Transport Labour in 19th and Early 20th Century Ladakh: A Study in Continuity and Change," 46.

[25] Ramachandra Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 25.

oppression, but has determined me to omit no effort to effect its removal."[26] "The first step towards this end," he continued, was "the formation of a road from Simla to the plains at Kalka, capable of being easily and safely travelled by baggage animals."

As such, the expansion of access to Shimla and alleviation of *begār* may have been the most immediate reasons for expanding the existing rough road between the plains and Shimla, but neither reason was deemed a major factor in the construction of much of the road, which extended beyond Shimla along the Sutlej and into the mountains towards the Tibetan Plateau. In the case of *begār*, the problem was ocassionally spoken of, but largely ignored by colonial officials for the remainder of British rule. And the practice continued in parts of the Northwestern Himalaya, such as Ladakh, beyond independence in 1947.[27]

STATE.	Population.	Quotas demanded for Road.	STATE.	Population.	Quotas demanded for Road.
Bussahir - - - -	150,000	500	Koomarhsen - - -	12,000	200
Bagul - - - -	40,000	50	Konyar - - - -	2,500	10
Bujjee - - - -	25,000	50	Kothar - - - -	4,000	20
Burrowlee and Bughat -	5,000	100	Kotkai - - - -	5,000	100
Bulsun - - - -	5,000	50	Maugul - - - -	1,000	40
Dhamie - - - -	3,000	20	Mylog - - - -	13,000	400
Hindoor - - - -	50,000	200	Puttecalla - - -	40,000	400
Joobal - - - -	15,000	200	Sirmoor - - - -	77,000	300
Kyloor - - - -	50,000	200	Turroch - - - -	3,000	50
Keunthul - - -	14,000	250			

Figure 3.2. Indentured labor expectations from certain Himalayan Hill States, 1852 (United Kingdom, House of Commons 1857:39)

[26] United Kingdom, House of Commons 1857, 3.

[27] The reincarnate lama and preeminent political figure of post-independence Ladakh, Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, noted this problem in nearly identical letters to Sheikh Abdullah and Jawaharlal Nehru in 1951. NAI, Ministry of State (Kashmir), Secret, 19(16)-K52. Ganesan, Deputy Secretary to Govt. of India, Ministry of States. "Political Developments in Ladakh," April 30, 1952; and "Buddhists in Ladakh; Representations from head Lama of Ladakh; General position re: Ladakh."

The papers concerning the initial phase of construction of the Hindustan-Tibet Road detail the technological and physical struggles to master the rivers, mountains, and passes of this terrain. The British attempt to physically intervene in this mountainous landscape represented a substantial financial investment and an ambitious and laborious undertaking. Regarding the determination of the exact route of the road, one superintendent, David Briggs, wrote:

> It…appears beyond a doubt that the best line between Thibet and Hindostan, whether in a commercial, mathematical, or political point of view, is one from the uplands of Chang Tang through Bassahir and Simlah to the plains near Kalka. Here and here only has the awful barrier of the Himalayahs been pierced and its ramifications threaded by the waters of the Sutluj, so that passes of great elevation do not present themselves, and the mathematical correctness of the line is not impaired. This is the line that has been adopted for the Hindostan and Thibet Road... When completed, the keen reproach uttered by Moorcroft thirty-five years ago, will have lost its point and applicability.[28]

Recall William Moorcroft's insistence on the viability and profitability of Central Asian trade through the Northwestern Himalaya. His views had been met with little interest by the directors of the East India Company decades earlier.[29] But under Dalhousie's expansionist policies, commercial opportunities in Central Asia looked increasingly viable. Despite the grandiosity of the road-building endeavor and the concurrent rhetoric of experimentality, the project itself was placed in the hands of military engineers, who spoke of it in the dry language of technological challenge.

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[28] Here, Lieutenant David Briggs, supervisor of much of the Hindustan-Tibet Road's construction, cites William Moorcroft's unheeded warning (circa 1820), that "whether [Tibetans and Central Asians] shall be clothed with the broadcloth of Russia or of England...with hardware of every description from Petersburgh [i.e. St. Petersburg] or Birmingham, is entirely in the decision of the Government of British India. At present there is little doubt to which the prize will be awarded, for enterprise and vigour mark the measure of Russia towards the nations of Central Asia, whilst ours are characterised by misplaced squeamishness and unnecessary timidity." United Kingdom, House of Commons, 73.

[29] See Chapter One.

Major J.P. Kennedy, the first superintendent tasked with overseeing the road's construction, wrote regarding the planning process that "[t]he obviously correct mathematical line for a road passing from the plains northward through the Hill States, offering at once a commercial communication with Central Asia through the Hill States, and an approach to our several sanitary stations, was indicated by the course of the rivers Jumna, with some of its tributaries, and the Sutlej."[30] Kennedy's statement reflected an assertion earlier expressed by Alexander Cunningham while on assignment in Ladakh as a boundary commissioner, namely that "mathematically" rerouting, expanding, or grading existing paths alongside the region's major rivers could reduce the friction of movement across this mountainous landscape, thereby "opening up" regions beyond the frontier to British commercial development.

Initially the Hindustan-Tibet Road project employed an average of 3,000 laborers daily. This number steadily increased. The irregular arrival of conscripted labor proved to be a continual problem for the overseers. One superintendent exasperatedly wrote in 1851: "When at last the numbers [of laborers] were down to so low an ebb that the native chiefs (threatened by the Superintendent of the Hill States) became alarmed, a large influx of wild hill-men was poured upon the road, a sufficiency of tools was wanting for so great an increase, and could not be procured at a moment's warning; the mass was utterly ignorant of the work required of them."[31]

The lack of consistent labor and the apparent failure of the local chiefs to provide food and shelter for their own finally forced the road's superintendents to pay more of their laborers a bare minimum wage. This increased cost resulted in a reduced expenditure on the construction of

[30] United Kingdom, House of Commons 1857, 6-7.

[31] Ibid., 32.

routes deemed to be of less immediate importance. The road from Shimla to Ladakh, via Kulu, was considered one such route.[32] This route, wrote Dalhousie, one of several branches "intended to open up the commerce of central Asia with Hindustan, is of importance also, but its completion is of less immediate consequence."[33] Enhancing access to the growing British sanatoria of the hills became the principal short-term consideration of the road builders.

The project faced continued technological challenges for the next five years. Delays resulted in the experimental utilization of heavy quantities of gunpowder to demolish rock impeding the road's course. Similar technologies designed for military use were employed in surveying. While the latter portion of the Hindustan-Tibet Road's proposed route in Kinnaur was surrounded by relatively barren land, Lieutenant Briggs suggested that certain areas immediately surrounding the road could be planted with deodar, "thus in 20 years…the Government will be in possession of the finest timber in India."[34] This potentially innovative solution to replenishing and expanding timber supplies depleted as a result of high demand for temporary bridges, workers lodgings, and cooking fuel never came to fruition. However, other regions of the Himalaya became heavily utilized timber sources, particularly from the 1860s onwards.

Throughout the documents relating to the road's construction there is scant mention of the working conditions of the people who built it. One temporary superintendent, however, revealingly wrote that, "[t]he road coolies unquestionably suffer, and are mulet [i.e. mules] in every possible way, though this would be denied, and stoutly, and which is my firm belief,

[32] This is the route discussed by the boundary commissioner Alexander Cunningham at the start of this chapter.

[33] United Kingdom, House of Commons 1857, 12.

[34] Ibid., 44.

makes the coolies detest every one and every thing connected with the road."[35] Statistics were not kept for the native workers, though occasional reports on "casualties of European troops" suggested that the numbers of Indian deaths were likely considerable, since there were thousands of native laborers for each European troop. One such report for British troops read: "One man Private George Lewis severely wounded by the accidental blowing up of a rock and who died at Dughai on the twentieth December 1850. Another man Private William Smedley killed by falling from a precipice 7th April 1851."[36]

Thousands of prisoners were also used to build sections of the road. "Not the least remarkable circumstance connected with this work is, that it was constructed almost entirely by prisoners, and without a single accident. The night reliefs were alone composed of free labourers, and a few of the same class during the day, assisted the convicts in wheeling barrows, and in such work as their chains rendered irksome."[37] These remarks give a passing glance at the degree of coercion that accompanied this massive infrastructural undertaking.

By 1855, as construction slowly proceeded closer to "Chinese Tartary," Lieutenant Briggs optimistically looked beyond the commercial value of the road, suggesting that in the lower elevations there might one day be a colony of British retirees whose families will form the basis of a growing and "acclimated" army.

> It has been stated by some, that the annual repairs of this road will be enormous. [...] As traffic increases, it will probably be necessary to metal[38] certain portions of the line, but it is to be supposed that the increased traffic will afford increased income. But far above and beyond these considerations, is the opening out of the fertile vallies of these

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[35] Ibid., 60.

[36] NAI, Foreign, Political B, December 22, 1852, no. 278. "Casualties of European troops on the HTR."

[37] United Kingdom, House of Commons, 47.

[38] That is, to use broken stones to reinforce the surface of the road, possibly through macadamization.

> mountains to future European colonists. […] All, and far more than the early colonists of America ever promised themselves, is to be found here, where under the blessings of a mild and paternal government, the colonist might increase his store, as *fully assured of safety to life and property, as if the scene were in the heart of Great Britain, instead of under the shadows of the mighty Himalayahs*. Instead of permitting the old worn-out European pensioner to idle away all that is left to him of life, under the scorching sun of Chunar, it might be worthy the attention of government to give him a cottage and a spot that he might call his own within some of these elevated vallies; where, with something to occupy his time, he might, under proper superintendence, lay the foundations of an European colony; the youth of which, educated to a military life…might furnish our Indian army with recruits as strong, and better educated and acclimated, than the mother country does produce.[39]

Briggs' optimism for potential "European colonists" here highlights the perception of the region as a secure space in which British pensioners and children might flourish, far away from any perceived external threats or, indeed, from any border that required defending.

Though Briggs' plan was never formally implemented, his tone reflects a common optimism and experimentality found throughout the early writing on the road. The Governor-General himself echoed this attitude. Responding to an earlier report by Briggs, Dalhousie triumphantly wrote:

> The whole thing was experimental. People scoffed at the idea of being able to form a level road through these enormous mountains at all. No estimate could be formed of the expense, for no data existed by which to calculate it. Any reference to the Military Board[40] would have been useless for this reason. I, therefore, took upon myself the responsibility of ordering its construction at once, directly under my own authority. I venture to think that the experiment has been eminently successful.[41]

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[39] Ibid., 80-1.

[40] First established in 1785, the Military Boards were composed of various top military personnel within each presidency. They grew to be quite powerful governing bodies, and Dalhousie happily abolished the institution in 1855, noting that when he had first come to India the Military Boards were "omnipotent and omnipresent." Dalhousie wrote that the institution "managed everything and marred everything. It had under it the Commissariat, the Ordnance, the Powder Factory, the Gun Foundry, the Department of Public Works, the Studs and divers other things. One by one, I have got the departments withdrawn and now the Board itself, supposed to be immortal and unvulnerable, is dead and buried. So may all Boards perish." H. A. Young, *The East India Company's Arsenals & Manufactories* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), 17.

[41] United Kingdom, House of Commons, 54.

The Governor-General's tone here suggests that the project, or the technical challenge of it, may have been its own end. The road's construction illustrated—to some at least—that one of the most challenging landscapes on earth could be "tamed."

By the time of the rebellion of 1857, the road had reached just beyond Sarahan, approximately 100 miles beyond Shimla towards Western Tibet. Work resumed in 1861, but at a smaller scale and with a goal of making "a road suitable for pack mules only."[42] A fatal accident in 1864 convinced the government to close the upper branch of the road through Sarahan and "that solid roadways be made to replace the wooden galleries which then traversed the cliff faces." Work recommenced several years later, was again stopped in 1869, and again resumed in 1874-75. When it again stopped, in 1875, it was still "4.5 marches short of its objective" of the frontier around the Shipki-*la*.[43] As was the case of much of the road, the route up to this pass followed a preexisting "native path." The mountain ridges near the Shipki-la signalled, roughly, where the Chinese frontier was understood to begin.

The massive undertaking of the Hindustan-Tibet road's construction—particularly in the wider portions closer to the plains—required a vast amount of labor and produced a detailed accounting of the progress made and the technological processes involved in surveying, constructing, and recording the project. The failure of the road to produce any significant commercial results, however, signaled British reluctance to continue developing routes to Central Asia and Tibet from the region south of Ladakh. By the mid-1870s, we find references to

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[42] NAI, Foreign, Political A, April 1869, nos. 141-142. And NAI, Foreign, Secret E, September 1908, nos. 407-417, 503. "Report by Major S.H. Powell on the proposed extension of the Hindustan-Tibet to Shipki, with estimates of cost."

[43] The Tibetan and Ladakhi suffix "*la*" refers to a mountain pass. Hence, Ladakh (*la.dwags*) means "land of passes."

the road being occasionally used by a growing number of hunters, tourists, geologists, and botanists, but rarely by traders of any sort, whether *pashm* or other goods. One commentator in the *Pall Mall Gazette* reviewing Major T. C. Montgomerie's "Routes in the Western Himalaya, Kashmir, &c," speculated that:

> No attempt has been made to continue "the great Hindustan and Tibet road" past Pangay[44] to the frontier of Chinese Tartary, and we understand the Indian Government has no intention of expending money on any such continuation at present. The Government has been blamed for not doing so on the alleged ground that without the completion of this road to the Chinese border the part which has been made is useless for the purpose of developing traffic; but the traffic on that line must always be very limited, and it was really rather for military than commercial purposes that the road was constructed as far as Pangay.[45]

This anonymous reviewer's insistence on the primacy of a military rationale behind the road's construction suggests that by the time of his writing the road was already being conceived of primarily as an instrument of imperial security. Instead of a conduit for trade it became viewed as a tool for defense of the empire. But the questionable strategic value of the road's location casts doubt on whether such an undertaking would ever be financed without an anticipated revenue source.[46]

Furthermore, in all of the Parliamentary papers concerning the road's construction and in Dalhousie's own published writings there is no mention of stationing troops along its path beyond Simla or the construction of any garrison beyond those temporary structures built to

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[44] See Figure 3.3 for a photograph of the road at "Pangi."

[45] *The Pall Mall Gazette*, July 15, 1874.

[46] The road was directed at the trade marts of Western Tibet, most notably Gartok, that were found along the route that paralleled the arc of the Himalayas from Central Tibet to the Karakoram and the Silk Road entrepôts of the Tarim Basin. But apart from these small seasonal trading centers there were few strategic "targets" to necessitate the road's construction. The road north from Ladakh to Yarkand was a far more direct route to Central Asia, while the routes through Sikkim and the Chumbi Valley were the most direct access routes to Lhasa and Shigatse.

house EIC officers involved in the project. As his invasion of Burma indicates, Dalhousie was not a Governor-General who shied away from military projects. Besides being known for his ruthless expansion of British possessions in South Asia (through conquest and his infamous Doctrine of Lapse), Dalhousie left behind him a tremendous series of public work projects (roads, telegraph lines, irrigation systems, and the beginnings of a railway system). But again, he never articulates a connection between the Hindustan-Tibet Road and his broader infrastructural projects. Perhaps, then, the road was primarily a pet project of his—simply an "experiment," as he frequently described it, one with the possible benefit of added revenue from trade in pashmina and an easy conduit for travellers seeking outdoor adventure. Or perhaps it was built, like many a monument, to symbolize territorial dominance and the challenge of the undertaking. But the initial rationale for its construction was not primarily for purposes of security or control over the regions beyond the vaguely defined frontier.

In any case, by the 1870s it was clear to the imperial government that, in the words of the Duke of Argyll (then Secretary of State for India) to the viceroy, "the commercial value of the road in question has been much exaggerated, and that the outlay on it should, for the future, be confined within the narrowest possible limits."[47] The duke went on to suggest that while he agreed that, owing to financial constraints, further funding should be minimal, he believed that the road's potential role as "an alternative route…into Chinese Tartary, is a matter of considerable importance, and one which should not be lost sight of when a favourable opportunity occurs."

[47] NAI, Foreign, Political A, April 1870, no. 120. "No further expense to be incurred on the Hindoostan and Thibet Road for the present." From Duke of Argyll, Secretary of State for India to Government of India, February 24, 1870.



Figure 3.3. "The View from the new road at Pangi—the Great Chini Peaks in the back-ground." Samuel Bourne, 1866. V&A Museum. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O107826/the-view-from-the-new-photograph-bourne-samuel/

II. The Treaty Road and the British Joint Commissioners

In the years following the rebellion of 1857, the British renewed their interest in the commercial potential of Central Asia, but they did so by focusing on the region north of the line of the Hindustan-Tibet Road, running from the plains of the Punjab through Kashmir and Ladakh. In 1867, the Government of India sent Dr. Henry Cayley to Kashmir and Ladakh to gather information on trade with Yarkand, Kashgar, and the broader region known to the British

as Eastern, or Chinese, Turkestan.[48] While the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir's officials in Ladakh chafed at the doctor's presence, the British Government of India pressured the Maharaja to acquiesce to the "experimental measure" of posting a British officer in this mountainous corner of the northernmost Indian princely state.[49] His three years of travel throughout the region generated a report lauding its commercial potential via a series of narrow paths that varied in quality, but which were all capable of substantial improvement that would lead to greater traffic and trade.[50]

On April 2, 1870, the imperial government and the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir signed a treaty meant to expand British access to Central Asian markets.[51] The treaty began by declaring that, [w]ith the consent of the Maharaja, officers of the British Government will be appointed to survey the trade routes through the Maharaja's territories from the British frontier of

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[48] NAI, Foreign, Political A, July 1870, nos. 90-115. "Apointment of Dr. Cayley as 1st joint commissioner for the new route to Eastern Turkistan."

[49] NAI, Foreign, Political A, November 1868, no. 82. "Wish of the Maharaja that the appointment of a British officer to Ladakh should not be renewed next season." From W.S. Seton-Karr, Secy to Govt. of India, Foreign Dept., to T.H. Thornton, Secretary to Government of Punjab, November 9, 1868: "His Honor is well aware that for nearly two years a British officer has been deputed to Ladakh. This appointment was sanctioned in the letter from the Foreign Office dated the 22nd of January 1867, after considerable correspondence. It was then treated as an experimental measure, the object of which was, primarily, the maintenance of the tariff fixed by the Maharaja of Cashmere in 1864. A second object was an enquiry into the state of trade between India and Central Asia, and the recommendation of measures calculated to secure its extension; and, lastly, the officer appointed was directed to collect and to sift political information regarding the progress of events in Chinese Turkestan."

[50] IOR/L/PS/20/226. "Reports on the trade routes through Ladakh to Yarkand, by Dr H Cayley, on special duty at Ladakh, and W H Reynolds, Assistant Surveyor; with opinion of Maj T G Montgomerie, Officiating Superintendent, Grand Trigonometrical Survey of India, on routes between Punjab and Turkistan, and connected papers, 1870-71."

[51] NAI, Foreign, Political A, July 1870, nos. 73-118. "Treaty with the Maharaja of Cashmere for improving communications between British India and Eastern Turkistan."

Lahoul to the territories of the Ruler of Yarkund…"[52] It went on to state that whichever route was determined by the surveyors as "best suited for the development of trade with Eastern Turkestan, shall be declared by the Maharaja a free highway in perpetuity and at all times for all travellers and traders." "For the supervision and maintenance of the road in its entire length through the Maharaja's territories," the treaty mandated the appointment of two commissioners tasked with "the enforcement of regulations" and "the settlement of disputes between carriers, traders, travellers, or others using the road." Thus was established the role of British Joint Commissioner (BJC). His fellow commissioner was typically the Maharaja's representative and chief administrator in Ladakh, the *wazīr-i-wazārat*.

The treaty defined the jurisdiction of the British Joint Commissioner, confining it, technically at least, to the actual space surrounding the road itself:

> The jurisdiction of the Commissioners shall be defined by a line on each side of the road at a maximum width of two Statute *koss*,[53] except where it may be deemed by the Commissioners necessary to include a wide extent for grazing grounds. Within this maximum width the Surveyors appointed under Article 1 shall demarcate and map the limits of jurisdiction which may be decided on by the Commissioners as most suitable, including grazing grounds; and the jurisdiction of the Commissioners shall not extend beyond the limits so demarcated. [54]

The routes to be identified by the Joint Commissioners would come to be called the "Treaty Road." The British Joint Commissioner was in effect a district commissioner of a road stretching across the territory of an indirectly ruled princely state. While his jurisdiction was technically confined to the road and its immediate environs, in practice these officers often exceded the

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[52] C. U. Aitchison, ed., *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads, Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, vol. 9 (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of the Government Printing, India, 1892), 360-362.

[53] One *kos* is roughly 2.25 miles.

[54] Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, 360-362.

treaty's mandate, exerting pressure on the *wazīr-i-wazārat* either directly in Ladakh's capital, Leh, or indirectly through the British Joint Commissioner's superior, the "Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir" (later titled the Resident in Kashmir).

The BJC—in keeping with the practices initiated by Dr. Cayley—was tasked with keeping diaries and trade statistics, which were to be dutifully forwarded to his superiors in the Foreign Department by way of the Resident in Kashmir. Diaries were sent weekly, fortnightly, or monthly, and were regularly seen and initialed by the Secretary to the Foreign Department and the viceroy. These diaries and trade reports reveal the central position of the Treaty Road in the political and commercial life of an imperial administrator on the frontier, as well as insights into the daily goings-on of Ladakh.

While the activities of the BJC stretched well beyond the upkeep of the roads, one of the most striking features of the voluminous diaries they kept is the preeminent position of information about the state of the roads. Throughout the hundreds of surviving "Ladakh Diaries" held at the National Archives of India, it is clear that the condition of roads was an essential precondition for all other kinds of commercial and political information. Those mundane details—of snow on passes, the state of the paths themselves, the feed available at road-side serais, or the structural integrity of bridges—prefigured all other information about communication, intelligence, and trade.

a. Commercial Intelligence: Dr. Henry Cayley and Robert Shaw

The British signatory to the 1870 commercial treaty between Britain and the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir was Thomas Douglas Forsyth, a career administrator and diplomat who had long argued for the expansion of trade between India and Yarkand, a Silk Road entrepôt around the western Tarim Basim. In the summer of 1870, Forsyth led an expedition to Yarkand

accompanied by Robert Shaw, a tea planter with similar hopes and ambitions for Central Asian trade. Following the signing of the treaty in 1870, Dr. Henry Cayley was sent to Ladakh for a residence period limited to six months. When, in 1873, the Government of India wished to appoint a permanent Resident at the Kashmir *Darbār*,[55] "the Maharaja suggested as a compromise that the British Joint Commissioner might be allowed to remain at Leh throughout the year," a solution that the British accepted until the appointment of the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir in 1877.[56] Dr. Henry Cayley's first task in Ladakh was to determine the precise and optimal location of the road he was to govern. Of this process, Cayley wrote, "...[m]y journey will, of course, take time, … but it is most important that the future trade route beyond the Changchenmo [far-eastern Ladakh] should be definitely settled, and I can only do this satisfactorily by personally examining all the different routes. I shall be able afterwards, in consultation with Pundit Bukshi Ram [the *wazīr-i-wazārat*], to lay down the road through Ladakh Proper, and arrange for serais &c." [57] After months surveying these regions, Cayley and Bukshi Ram gave instructions to crews tasked with improving the selected routes, largely comprised of local inhabitants conscripted for short-term bouts of unpaid labor. Returning in 1873, Cayley revealed that the "road from the Indus to the Changchenmo by Fantsi is now excellent, and serais have already been built at several places which I pointed out last year. …"

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[55] The term darbār referred to the court of a ruler of a princely state as well as his or her ministers and government.

[56] NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, April 1888, nos. 164-165. "Desire of the Kashmir Darbar to constitute the sale of "Kut" root in Leg, a state monopoly." From the Resident in Kashmir to Foreign Department, October 25, 1887.

[57] NAI, Foreign, Political A, August 1870, nos. 242-255. "Weekly narrative of events connected with the mission to Ladakh."

Besides overseeing the initial improvement to several branches of the Treaty Road, Cayley spent much of his time in Leh overseeing a small medical practice and training a "native doctor."[58]

Cayley's regular memoranda to the Foreign Department joined a number of similar reports from across the Indian frontier with Tibet that helped the imperial government weigh the relative merits of accessing the trade routes to Tibet and Central Asia. As early as 1874, administrators in the Foreign Department were remarking that for trade with Tibet, "the route by Darjeeling [in the Central Himalaya] will probably be found the easiest to develop, and therefore the most attractive to trade."[59] But this did not dissuade numerous officials from promoting Ladakh as an established and suitable access point for Tibetan and Central Asian markets. Cayley's reports on the riches of Central Asian towns like Yarkand and Kashgar painted an optimistic picture of commercial opportunities across the mountains.

Dr. Cayley's successor, Robert Shaw, was equally enthusiastic of the prospects of Central Asian trade along the Treaty Road. Beyond Shaw's own interests in private trade, some of this enthusiasm was no doubt the result of attention paid to the region by the very top of the imperial administration. "A special report on the road has been called for by His Excellency the Viceroy," Shaw wrote, "and will be furnished, according to instructions, on my arrival at Leh."[60] The result of the initial "efforts of Government in opening out the road and encouraging the mule taffic is

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[58] NAI, Foreign, Political A, October 1873, nos. 167-178. "Ladakh Diary From 4 to 31 August and from 1 to 14 September 1873." This also illustrates John Bray's point about how medicine, diplomacy, and trade often worked together through the early British encounter with Ladakh.

[59] NAI, Foreign, Political A, 1874, nos. 289-291. "Trade route between Thibet and Central Asia." From Secretary of State for India to Government of India, India Office, London, July 2, 1874.

[60] NAI, Foreign, Political A, September 1873, nos. 26-31. "Ladakh Diary From 25 June to 3 August 1873." No. 27: from BJC on Special Duty, Ladakh. to Sec of Punjab Govt., dated camp Lingti, eighteenth July 1873.

one of very great importance." Shaw had already put in efforts back in Britain to sell the potential value of Central Asian trade. "When advocating the claims of the Turkistan market to the attention of English manufacturers and merchants," Shaw wrote, "I was met by the objection that the local carriage to be obtained in the remote hill districts through which the route passes would be insufficient for the transport of a trade of any importance." But the initial improvements made to the main routes solved this carriage problem "in the most satisfactory manner." "The whole of the carriage supply (in the shape of mules, horses, etc) of Northern India is now available for the service of the new trade." However, Shaw's visit to the road in southeastern Ladakh (Rupshu) proved that not all locals could be relied upon to improve the roads or provide the necessary carriage. "[E]xperience shows," he wrote, "that it is a futile waste of funds to send general directions to Tibetan headmen to improve the road."

The Ladakh Diaries, as the commissioners' reports quickly became referred to by the Foreign Department, provide the most detailed glimpse into the daily life of the BJC and the traders and local officials he regularly encountered. While the form the diaries took varied over time (and the level of detail shifted with the enthusiasm of each officer), the entries invariably focused on the conditions of roads and the variety of experiences surrounding them. In the entries journaled-style we catch glimpses that reveal the lives (and deaths) of those passing through the region: One daily entry simply noted that "…[t]he dead body of a Hajjee [Muslim pilgrim] was lying near the camping-ground of Malikshah, on the old road. Another dead body is reported to be lying at Nischoo, on the original route via Lingzithang."[61]

[61] NAI, Foreign, Political A, February 1872, nos. 52-65. "Ladakh Diary from twentieth August to 25 Nov. 1871."

Other entries reflected logistical difficulties often brought to the BJC's attention by traders. "[The] dak [mail] runners on the road have not been supplied with food at their respective stations, as promised when they were sent out, and are consequently in great distress." In response, the BJC sent "Rupees 5 for provisions for all the men along the road, with orders for all to return to Lahoul as the season is so far advanced."[62] The road was the center of the BJC's world and all information he provided to the Government of India depended on its condition.

The Ladakh Diaries for the first half of the 1870s reveal a pattern that would continue for the remainder of British rule in India. Roads were endlessly improveable. Yet when satisfactory improvements were made and dramatic surges in trade revenue were not seen in the trade figures (compiled in Figure 3.4, below), the blame was cast on the continued poor conditions of the roads and the seasonal variability in their opening or the damaged caused by unexpected floods or rock slides. In a certain sense, the condition of the Treaty Road became a Rorschach test for the British administrators. The BJCs could see at once endless possibilities and endless problems in the series of humble paths he was tasked with regulating and improving. But by the late 1870s, events in Central Asia would push the Government of India to approach these roads from a new perspective. Information, more than goods, became the more valued commodity traveling along them.

[62] NAI, Foreign, Political A, March 1872, nos. 402-404. "Ladakh Diary From 12 to 18 Nov 1871."

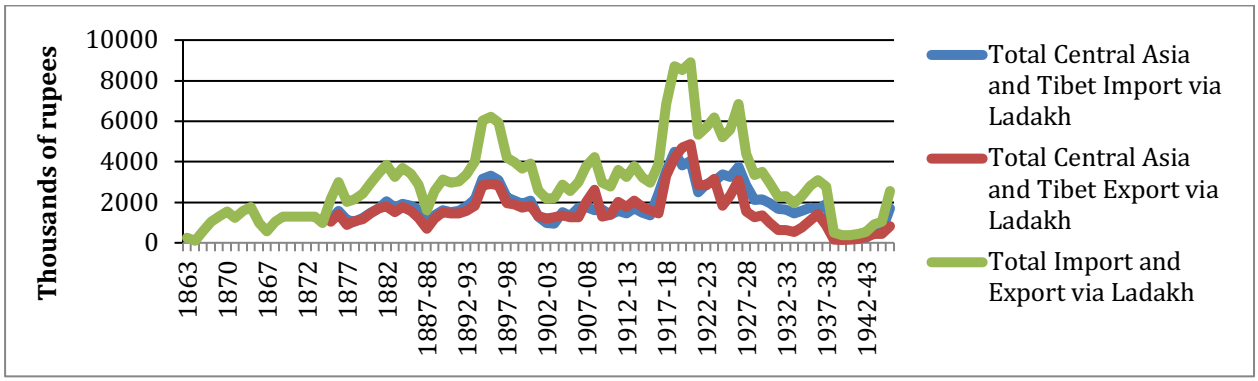


Figure 3.4. Total import and export figures through Ladakh, 1863-1946, compiled from annual trade statistics submitted by the British Joint Commissioners in Ladakh. Source: NAI and IOR, British Library

b. Political Intelligence: Ney Elias and Henry Ramsay

Though largely forgotten today, Ney Elias was—along with Henry Morton Stanley—one of the best-known British explorers of the late nineteenth century.[63] Both he and Stanley won the Royal Geographical Society's top gold medals in 1873 (the Founder's Medal and the Patron's Medal, respectively).[64] Elias became the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh in 1877. Unlike his predecessors, who were primarily concerned with developing commercial connections with Central Asia, Elias was charged with keeping a close watch on political events beyond the frontier, particularly in Kashgar and Yarkand.[65] Robert Shaw, in turn, was sent to Srinagar to

[63] Gerald Morgan, *Ney Elias: Explorer and Envoy Extraordinary in High Asia* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971), 15. Morgan is, admittedly, a rather fawning and strangely psychoanalytical biographer, which might be accounted for by the author's own relation to Elias.

[64] In receiving the Society's top prize for a combination of daring travel and information gathering in Central Asia or Tibet, Elias joined the pantheon of colonial-era Himalayan explorers that included Henry Strachey (1852), Thomas Thomson (1866), Robert Shaw (1872), Nain Singh (1877), Henry Trotter (1878), Thomas Holdich (1887), Francis Younghusband (1890), Hamilton Bower (1894), George Curzon (1895), Sven Hedin (1898) and many others.

[65] Morgan, *Ney Elias*, 109; and NAI, Foreign, Secret, 206-229, April 1878. "Ney Elias, British Joint Commissioner, Ladakh. Appointed to officiate as British Joint Commissioner and directed to collect information of events in Eastern Turkestan."

become the top British official stationed there in the newly created role of the "Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir" (later renamed the Resident in Kashmir). The BJC was to report directly to the Officer on Special Duty, who reported to the Secretary to the Foreign Department, to whom the Officer on Special Duty forwarded the Ladakh Diaries. He passed along his own summaries of the BJC's diaries and directed the Foreign Department's attention to any particularly pressing matters.

The main reason Elias was chosen for the posting was the death of Ya'qub Beg in 1877, which heightened the Foreign Department's concerns over Russian encroachment on India. In 1862, the population of Eastern Turkestan had revolted against the Qing imperial authorities who had controlled the region for over a century. Ya'qub Beg, a strongman from the Khanate of Khoqand (in present-day Tajikistan) emerged as ruler of the whole region.[66] As a result of a slow trickle of information about the revolt, Eastern Turkistan became an object of concern for the British and Russian governments, both of which saw diplomatic and economic opportunities opened up by the Qing defeat.[67] In his account of traveling through the region in 1868-69, Robert Shaw noted that the Qing retreat brought massive upheaval to the region, with Kirghiz nomads looting Kashgar and commiting various atrocities against the city's population. Ya'qub Beg was able to restore order with a string of executions in Kashgar.[68] In addition to lauding the great commercial potential of Eastern Turkistan, Shaw also noted the advantage of having Ya'qub Beg's territories interposed between the British, Russian, and Chinese empires. But this convenient buffer was eroded in 1876 with the Qing reconquest of the Tarim Basin and Ya'qub's

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[66] Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier: A Study of Imperial Policy*, 25.

[67] Alder, 123

[68] Robert Shaw, *Visits to High Tartary, Yarkand, and Kashgar (formerly Chinese Tartary) and Return Journey over the Karakoram Pass* (London: J. Murray, 1871), 50.

death in 1877. With this bulwark to Russian and Chinese expansion removed, the Government of India began to pay closer attention to events on their otherwise quiet Northwestern Himalayan frontier. To oversee this intelligence gathering, they sent Ney Elias to Ladakh as BJC, with the hope that he might also travel directly to Kashgar to report on the situation there. But excessive snows across the Karakoram Pass prevented Elias from going to Kashgar in 1878. Elias remained in Ladakh and began to gather intelligence from traders, state officials, and pilgrims.

Roads were synonymous with a broad sense of communication, and for Elias the great value of the Treaty Road was as a vehicle for information, and less for the expansion of commerce. "The trade hardly came up to Shaw's enthusiastic promises," wrote Elias soon after commencing his duties in Leh.[69] During Elias' eight years as the British Joint Commissioner, he oversaw the gathering of intelligence that regularly informed the government's views on Central Asia, particularly in terms of Russian advances and the Qing reconquest of Eastern Turkestan (renamed Xinjiang, or "New Frontier," in 1884). But while his principal object of interest was the often-vague political goings-on beyond the frontier, Elias ended up gathering a good deal of information on how people and information circulated across Ladakh. At a basic level, his diaries tell of the conditions of movement across the major regional routes. They also contain statistics as to who, and what passed along those roads.

[69] Morgan, *Ney Elias*, 111.

Routes	Men							Horses*				Other Laden Animals					
	Merchants	Attendants	Laden Coolies	Pilgrims to Mecca	Women	Children	**Total of people**	Laden	Ridden	For sale	**Total**	Camels	Bullocks	Donkeys	Sheep and goats	**Total**	Remarks
India via Kulu	52	362	252	---	2	--	668	1767	36	---	1803	---	---	35	765	800	Outward caravans are estimated as equal to inward caravas; none remain at Leh
Do. Rampur	3	15	---	---	---	--	18	5	3	---	8	---	---	43	---	43	
Do. Kashmir	42	153	---	63	11	5	274	1059	119	---	1178	---	---	---	---	---	
Changthan (Tibet)	52	1447	85	---	---	--	1584	1391	104	---	1495	---	859	2551	36010	39420	
Turkistan	68	426	---	110	10	--	614	1641	198	237	2076	22	---	44	---	66	
Local from Maharaja's territory	133	2801	722	---	---	--	3656	1682	10	107	1799	---	693	3363	---	4056	
Total	**350**	**5204**	**1059**	**173**	**23**	**5**	**6814**	**7545**	**470**	**344**	**8359**	**22**	**1552**	**6036**	**36775**	**44385**	

Figure 3.5. "Number of men and cattle composing the inward caravans of 1882." Source: Ney Elias Papers. Royal Geographical Society. *It is possible that the category of "horses" includes ponies and mules.

Statistics like those in Figure 3.5 reveal a shift in the kinds of information the BJC was meant to collect. It was not enough to simply register the value of the goods carried along the Treaty Road. Elias was concerned with the people moving along the road. Besides goods, they brought information. From this regularly collected intelligence, Elias provided the Government of India with an increasingly detailed image of the kinds of people who crossed the vague northern frontier of India. He also gathered crucial historical information on the region that would help make him a frontier expert after his time as BJC.

If Ney Elias asserted a confidence in the ability to extract useful information about Ladakh and the regions beyond the northern frontier of India, Captain Henry Ramsay, who

became BJC in 1888 several years after Elias left the post, exuded anxiety regarding the limits of British control in the region. Like Elias, Ramsay's principal focus was on expanding the kind of communication along the Treaty Road that could better extract political intelligence. However, a number of issues surfaced during his tenure as BJC that cast doubts on how well he knew the road he was tasked to supervise.

The first of these occurred in 1887, when Ramsay realized that a particular root, used in incense and medicine, was being traded along the Treaty Road and subjected to certain "special local rules."[70] "The case has arisen through the interference by Kashmir authorities in British subject traders of Leh, in order to prevent them from trading in the 'kut' root which has been made a State monopoly in the rest of Kashmir and is subject to special local rules."

The circulation of this root, which British officials initially confused with betel nut used for *pān*, raised the question of whether the Treaty of 1870 prevented the Kashmir Darbār from "issuing rules within the limits of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commissioners."[71] From 1870 to 1879, when the matter first arose, the BJCs had considered the entire town of Leh to be within their purview. Ramsay's superior in Kashmir also noted the difficulty in delimiting local and "through trade," which were "so closely allied that it would be difficult to know how far taxes on

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[70] NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, April 1888, nos. 164-165. "Desire of the Kashmir Darbar to constitute the sale of "Kut" root in Leg, a state monopoly." From the Resident in Kashmir, October 25, 1887.

[71] Ibid. The Resident in Kashmir noted that: "Kut (pronounced koot, and known in Indian bazars as *kust* and *patchak*) is the sliced and dried bulbous root of a plant which grows in abundance in the elevated parts of the Kashmir hills. [margin: This is right. The Foreign Department has mistaken the nature of the article mentioned. / J. E. O'C. Some information as to the trade in it is given in Aitchison's book on the trade products of Leh (pages 144-145). It is used to perfume oils, and to protect bales of shawls from insects; and Buddhists burn it as an incense in their temples. True Kashmir shawls were known by the peculiar scent they had of this koot, and latterly (I remember to have read somewhere) woolen manufacturers in Europe who were imitating Kashmir shawls were completing the deception by the use of koot or patchak to perfume them."

the latter affected the former." Yet they also acknowleged that "the treaty had its origin for the security of the through trade only." This uncertainty pointed to a larger jurisdictional issue.

The Foreign Department acknowledged that "[t]he limits of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commissioner have never been clearly defined."[72] As the "free high road" had yet to be determined at the time of the 1870 treaty, the "jurisdiction was to be defined by a line on each side of the road at a maximum width of 2 statute *kos*, with exceptions where grazing grounds should prove necessary." However, the only point that the Government of India had subsequently insisted on was that Leh was to be "'an obligatory point' on any trade route that might be chosen." After many memoranda were sent back and forth between the Government of India, the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, and the BJC, it was decided to let the matter of the trade in "kut" drop. The decision not to press the Maharaja's government was allegedly to avoid "excit[ing] feelings of irritation and suspicion in the minds of the Darbar, quite out of proportion to the value of the commercial advantages gained."

Both Elias and Ramsay were aware of the tensions between certain exceptional features of their posting and the desire for uniformity in governance. Ramsay expressed repeated concerns about the existence of a long-established tributary mission between Ladakh and Tibet, as well as other anamolous instances of customary relations with neighboring polities that cast doubt on the nature of British paramountcy over the region. If, for instance, Ladakhis continued to send a triennial tribute mission to Lhasa (known as the Lopchak, Tib. *lo.phyag*), then the political meaning of the would-be border was diminished. Ramsay insisted that the Lopchak and

[72] Ibid.

other missions should be abolished, citing his understanding of international law to defend his position.[73]

But Ney Elias was more circumspect. "Were Ladak a portion of India, either in territory or population," Elias wrote, "it might be necessary to administer it in uniformity with the rest of the country; but it is entirely separate as regards the one [territory], and distinct and exceptional as regards the other [population]. A country like Ladak is scarcely to be found among the administrations of India, and its people are, as yet, at all events, too rude and ignorant to appreciate the refinement of a lightly organized rule, while they are too few and too isolated to render it worth while to break down the self-governing institutions to which they are wedded, as a race, *for the sake of obtaining symmetry*."[74] The tension between "obtaining symmetry" and accepting anamolies was revealed in the persistence of a number of debates over Ladakhi territory and sovereignty—including the aforesaid tribute missions between Ladakh and Tibet—that will be discussed in Chapter Four.

The interlude between Elias' and Ramsay's tenures as BJC saw a brief return to discussions of trade. Again, the improvement of roads became their overarching concern. And again, we can see the continued detailing of environmental obstacles that rendered commercial development difficult:

> In reforming the administration of Ladak, there is no subject of greater importance than improved means of communication. The external trade in every direction and the ordinary internal traffic of the province are carried on, at present, under most

[73] Ramsay wrote that "it is incompatible with our dignity as a leading Power that the petty State of Lhassa should treat Ladak, which by right of conquest belongs to one of our Indian feudatory chiefs, as being politically subordinate to Lhassa. For the international law on this point, please see Wheaton, Chapter 2, page 52." NAI, Foreign, Secret F, September 1889, nos. 211-217. "Lhassa authorities still recognize the Ex-Raja of Ladakh as in power and ignore the Kashmir Wazir."

[74] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, March 1886, nos. 1-7. "Ladaki Diaries for October, November, and December 1885 and for January 1886." From Ney Elias, 5 (?? Double check). My emphasis.

> unfavourable conditions, on account of roads being periodically broken down by snow or rain, and bridges being carried away by freshets in the streams; while in some places traffic is entirely put a stop to, for weeks at a time, during the flood season, for want of a bridge or ferry to supply the place of the ford used in the dry season. To show the importance of keeping up the trade routes between India and Central Asia would be superfluous; it has been insisted on by every Political Agent who has been in Ladak since 1866, and has been acknowledged by Government in their treaty of 1870 with the Kashmir State, which provides, above all things, for promoting trade between India and Turkistan.[75]

The challenges idenfied by the BJC in this passage reflected the seasonal unpredictability of consistent "communication" via the Treaty Road. The upkeep of the road was the first task of the BJC each year.



Figure 3.6: "Pack animals crossing the finished bridge." by Henri R. Ferger, 1913. This appears to be a *mdzo*, the male cross-bred offspring of a bull and a 'bri (female yak), or a yak and a cow. They are frequently used for agricultural work and as pack animals for steep or treacherous routes. Source: www.Pahar.in.

[75] Ibid.

c. The Case of Haberhaver

In July 1890, the Resident in Kashmir forwarded a letter from Captain Ramsay in Ladakh. The letter concerned "the movements of a *soi-disant* Austrian named Haverhaver [*sic*], at present at Panamik or Shahidulla [settlements along the Treaty Road between Leh and Yarkand]" who wished to come to Ladakh.[76] Lieutenant Hamilton Bower, who encountered this Austrian man in Kashgar while on an expedition to Eastern Turkestan, provided the Foreign Department with some sparse and rather strange biographical details. "Mr. Haberhaver gives out that he was born at Buda Pesth, but was brought up in the Caucasus. He speaks only German, Russian and Turki, and would have people believe he is very anti-Russian, as he abuses all things Russian. He has house property at Samarkand, where he lives with a Russian lady, the wife of some other man."

While apparently being held up by Kirghiz nomads at Shahidulla, the Austrian penned a letter in German to Ramsay seeking permission to enter Ladakh, which he sent along with a group of traders headed south. Translated by the head of the Moravian missionary at Leh, Reverend Friedrich Redslob, the letter asserted that Haberhaver was on a mission to collect butterflies. "The British Museum for Natural History in London sent me to make collections," he wrote, "and for that purpose in regard of entomology, I am on an exploration trip from Europe through Turkistan. If you kindly will give me permission, I should like to collect butterflies and

[76] NAI, Foreign, Keep-with for Secret F, October 1890, nos. 14-31. "Notices in English and Persian to be posted at Suget, Kilian, Kugiar, Sanju, and Polu, prohibiting Travellers and explorers (European) from Central Asia from crossing the frontier of British India and States subordinate to it without a passport from the Government of India."

beetles in the Maharaja's territory. I am an Austrian subject, and am accompanied by a Muhammadan servant. Hoping you will favor me with an answer." [77]

Captain Ramsay sent his response with two Kashmiri sepoys (soldiers) who took the Treaty Road to Panamik. The sepoys were to prevent the Austrian from proceeding any closer to Leh. Ramsay's letter stated that as Haberhaver had "no passport from the British Government, he could not be allowed to come on to Ladak, and that he should return at once to Chinese Turkistan."[78] When the two sepoys reached Panamik, they discovered Haberhaver had already been there two days. After they delivered Ramsay's letter, Haberhaver at first refused to turn back, "saying that no notice had been put up at Shahidulla, forbidding Europeans to proceed in the Leh direction."

Hamilton Bower gave further details to the Foreign Department about Haberhaver after he returned from a failed attempt to track down the murderer of the Scottish trader Andrew Dalgliesh in Kashgar and Yarkand.[79] Bower noted, and the Secretary of the Foreign Department agreed, that Haberhaver was "probably harmless, for it does not appear what the Russians are to gain from the explorations of a man of this class. Still, that our action may be consistent it is better he should go back."[80] By mid-August 1890 the Resident in Kashmir suggested that

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[77] NAI, Foreign, Keep-with for Secret F, October 1890, nos. 14-31. "Notices in English and Persian to be posted at Suget, Kilian, Kugiar, Sanju, and Polu, prohibiting Travellers and explorers (European) from Central Asia from crossing the frontier of British India and States subordinate to it without a passport from the Government of India."

[78] NAI, Foreign, Keep-with for Secret F, October 1890, nos. 14-31. "Notices in English and Persian to be posted at Suget, Kilian, Kugiar, Sanju, and Polu, prohibiting Travellers and explorers (European) from Central Asia from crossing the frontier of British India and States subordinate to it without a passport from the Government of India."

[79] Discussed in Preface and Chapter 5. Andrew Dalgliesh was murdered near the Karakoram Pass in April 1888, apparently by a Pathan trader named Daud Mohammed.

[80] NAI, Foreign, Keep-with for Secret F, October 1890, nos. 14-31. "Notices in English and Persian."

Haberhaver should be escorted back to Chinese Turkestan by Captain Francis Younghusband, who was set to embark on an extensive survey of the region. Younghusband, the nephew of Robert Shaw, was born in the hill station of Murree and joined the army at a young age.[81] He became an intrepid explorer whose intelligence-gathering journal from Peking to Yarkand in 1886-87 quickly made him well known across India and Britain. Younghusband weighed in on Haberhaver's case while in Leh, pointing out "the impolicy of allowing foreigners to become acquainted with the approaches to India."[82]

As a result of this episode, Ramsay asked the Foreign Department for "defininte orders as to the treatment to be accorded to Europeans entering Ladak from the Turkistan direction."[83] He also expressed the opinion that "no person other than a pure Asiatic should be permitted to cross our frontier at Shahidulla, unless in possession of a British passport authorizing the visit. And he would apply the rule to European British subjects as well as to all other Europeans, for, if this is not done, it would be easy for foreigners to come down, and pass themselves off as British subjects, from Malta, Canada, or any other distant part of our Empire." The Resident in Kashmir recommended that notices might be posted "on the passes prohibiting travellers from Central Asia from entering" India.[84] The Foreign Department approved, and Captain Ramsay was tasked

[81] Patrick French, *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer* (London: HarperCollins, 1994).

[82] NAI, Foreign, Keep-with for Secret F, October 1890, nos. 14-31. "Notices in English and Persian."

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid., referencing: NAI, Foreign, Secret F., February 1890, nos. 59-84; and NAI, Foreign, Secret F., July 1890, nos. 212-213.

with having a notice posted on the road north of the Karakoram Pass, wherever the frontier of India was determined to be.[85]

The Secretary to the Foreign Department sought advice from Ney Elias. Elias suggested that notices be put up along the road at Suget (or Duget), near Shahidulla.[86] "Captain Younghusband might be directed to arrange with the Yarkand Amban," Elias wrote. "He might explain what we want to do (to stop Europeans unprovided with passes), give him a notice in English and Persian, and ask him to send it out to the Kirghiz with an order to post it in a conspicuous position."[87] Elias suggested a modification to the Resident's recommendation and drafted a letter reflecting those changes to be carried to Younghusband in Leh. The Foreign Department realized that there was no demarcated limit of British territory in the region, though it had already been agreed upon that the limit of the "Indus Watershed System" should form that border. The government was quick to insist on a degree of ambiguity in acknowledging the point at which British territory began. In order to avoid to committing to the recognition of Shahidulla and Suget as Chinese territory, the Secretary to the Foreign Department suggested that Younghusband's "request to the Chinese might be so worded as to avoid an admission of what is the frontier."[88]

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[85] See Chapter 2 for the development of the "Water-Parting Principle" in boundary demarcation and the problem of the "moving" Indus watershed.

[86] Elias suggested that the Chinese might be in a better position to post the notice at Suget, since "Turdi Kol," the leader of the nomadic Kirghiz who had held Haberhaver for a month, could not be counted on to still be there at Shahidulla.

[87] NAI, Foreign, Keep-with for Secret F, October 1890, nos. 14-31. "Notices in English and Persian."

[88] NAI, Foreign, Keep-with for Secret F, October 1890, nos. 14-31. "Notices in English and Persian."

Viceroy Lansdowne agreed with the letter to the Chinese, though he fretted over the possible ambiguity of the notice. "A clumsily worded document might do mischief," the viceroy wrote.[89] Ney Elias drafted the notice, the viceroy and Foreign Department agreed to his wording, and the text was sent to Younghusband who then accompanied the unfortunate Haberhaver back to Yarkand. The posted notice ran as follows:

> Inconvenience having arisen in consequence of attempts made by persons unprovided with the requisite authority to cross the frontiers of British India and the States subordinate to it, it is hereby notified, for the information of all travellers and explorers, that no British, European, or American subject is permitted to cross the land frontier of British India, or the States subordinate to it, without a passport from the Foreign Department of the Indian Government, and that all persons not furnished with such passports will be sent back from the first post at which they may arrive in British or British feudatory territory. [90]

Soon, similar rules were drafted for those moving in the opposite direction, from India to Central Asia. By the early twentieth century the British exerted pressure on the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to formally enact prohibitions against those traveling close to the frontier, whether British Indian subjects, or Britons, Europeans, and Americans. The Kashmir Visitors' Rules, first published in 1906 and revised in subsequent decades, prohibited from entering Tibet and Central Asia all "undesirable Indians," "other than those who have already by usage traded or resided in Tibet elsewhere than at the marts and persons such as carriers, cartmen, labourers and regular petty traders." Ladakh's capital, Leh, became "the most suitable limit of travel for Indians in the direction of Chinese Turkistan and Tibet."[91]

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[89] Ibid. Dated, 3rd September 1890. From Viceroy Lansdowne.

[90] NAI, Foreign, Keep-with for Secret F, October 1890, nos. 14-31. "Notices in English and Persian."

[91] JKSA-J. "Tibet (entry into). Insertation of a rule in Kashmir Visitors' Rules regarding preventing the entry into Tibet of undesirable Indians." 1924, 417/F-52. "Submission to His Highness the Maharaja Sahib Bahadur in Council, dated Gulmarg the 12th August 1924."

These rules were further restricted in the early 1930s, when it was determined that the Indus River in Ladakh would form the limit to restrict the "ingress of individuals from Chinese Turkestan into Kashmir by Leh route and egress from Kashmir to Chinese Turkestan."[92] Only those "in possession of British passports, travellers' or pilgrims' passes or other travel documents duly granted or vised by a recognised British authority shall travel North or South of the River Sindh in Ladakh."

This growing desire to restrict the entry and exit of certain groups of people was initially driven by late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century fears concerning the advance of the Russian Empire. Far from being the light-hearted "Great Game" portrayed in the pages of Kipling's *Kim*, this geopolitical struggle across the mountainous terrain surrounding India produced acute anxieties.[93] The consummate imperial adventurer Francis Younghusband supported Ramsay's refusal to let Haberhaver enter Ladakh on the grounds that any and all knowledge of "the approaches to India" must not reach Russia. The episode with Haberhaver coincided with an earlier attempt by a Russian explorer, named Gromchevsky, to travel south of Kashgar. Younghusband noted gravely:

> Good-natured unthinking people may say that there is nothing to see, and that they can do no harm by coming through; and the foreigners themselves may say, as, according to Bower, Gromchevsky did when he was turned back, that "the Government of India take no interest in scientific enquiry." But we have to remember that Russia is advancing on India and striving to gain a knowledge of every possible means of access to it, and that, if the case were reversed, and we were edging our way towards Turkistan, we should be very glad if our agents were allowed free access to every road into the country, and opportunities of calculating

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[92] NAI, Foreign, 127-X (Secret), 1936. "Control of ingress into and egress from Ladakh (Kashmir) and Gilgit over the land frontier between India and Chinese Turkestan. Ladakh Frontier Crossing Regulation." From Harisingh, Maharaja. Jammu, February 14, 1936; and JKSA-J, "Limits of travel in the direction of Gilgit and Ladakh." 1932, 534/V.B.32.

[93] For a critique of the "Great Game" narrative, see the introduction to Hevia, *Imperial Security State*.

> our exactly how many men could advance by each, or estimating the character and disposition of the people as possible allies.[94]

This "knowledge of every possible means of access" to India was central to the military strategies of keeping India secure. Foremost in the imperial arsenal of military intelligence, as James Hevia has recently shown, were military reports and route books, which instructed military leaders on the best routes for moving troops to particular frontier locales.[95] Accurate information was crucial to the utility of these manuals. When the Resident in Kashmir forwarded the Ladakh Diaries to the Foreign Department in July 1891, he noted that the mail from "Captain Younghusband having taken 20 days on the road which is reported to be much damaged by snow." He also noted that it "may interest I.B. [Intelligence Branch] to know that the info in the Route Books regarding distances and supplies between Simla and Leh is incorrect…."[96] The precise location of these routes was key to the mobilization of forces across the frontier, a task implemented a decade later when Younghusband led the British invasion of Tibet.

III. The British invasion of Tibet and the regulation of Himalayan roads

By the turn of the twentieth century, Himalayan road building had become unambiguously tied to a unified frontier policy asserted by the imperial government and articulated by a number of frontier experts including Thomas Holdich, Alfred Lyall, and the arch-imperialist himself, the viceroy George Curzon. Roads had become key defensive and offensive instruments of the imperial state. They were the principal subject of manuals for

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[94] NAI, Foreign, Keep-with for Secret F, October 1890, nos. 14-31. "Notices in English and Persian." From Captain F. E. Younghusband, to the Foreign Secretary, August 1, 1890.

[95] Hevia, *Imperial Security State*.

[96] NAI, Foreign, Frontier B, November 1891, nos. 84-94. "Ladakh Diaries for the period from 1st Feb to 30th September."

military mobilization, which instructed officers on the optimal lines of movement for troops to and beyond the frontier. Over the last decades of the nineteenth century the central government of India's approach to its territorial periphery shifted from a policy of many individual frontiers to a unitary one. The North-West Frontier and others "must be considered as a whole," telegraphed the Secretary of State for India in 1884 in reference to the development of roads and railways in that corner of India.[97] Central to this changing territorial vision was the configuring of the states beyond the formal limits of the empire into protectorates, "buffer states," and "spheres of influence"—categories detailed in writings of numerous notable frontier experts—perhaps most famously by Curzon's *Frontiers* (1907) lecture delivered shortly after concluding his tenure as Viceroy of India.[98]

Tibet was notably absent from the growing array of territories being arranged into buffers, spheres of influence, and protectorates encircling British India at the end of the nineteenth century. Its "closed" policy and its status as a dependent of the Qing Empire made it at once an object of fascination for British explorers and a growing concern as a neighboring state that refused to engage in diplomatic and commercial relations with British India—though it had long interacted with Ladakh and the plains of India, via the Himalayan polities to its south and west. In 1903, two letters from the viceroy sent to Lhasa to once again attempt to open up talks were returned, unopened.[99] This blow to British prestige magnified long simmering fears

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[97] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, October 1885, nos. 118-128. "Construction of roads and railways for the purpose of improving the defences of the North-West Frontier of India." No. 120. "Extract from a Telegram from the Secretary of State," November 27, 1884.

[98] Curzon, *Frontiers*.

[99] Viceroy Lansdowne to His Majesty's Charge d'Affaires at St. Petersburg, November 17, 1903, in "Appendix 10: The Tibet Question," in Geoffrey Drage, *Russian Affairs* (London: John Murray, 1904), 719.

over Russian "intriguing" in Tibet. The Government of India's awareness of this growing Russian influence in the form of the Buryat monk Dorjieff "became intolerable to the Raj."[100]

Walter Lawrence, the British Settlement Officer in Kashmir justified Younghusband's invasion of Tibet in 1903-4 by pointing to the "unneighborly trespass of our good friends the Russians."[101] He bemoaned the apparent Russian provocation that forced Britain's hand and caused the sad end to the idyllic reclusiveness of Tibet. "For eight long months, that quiet, pacific political officer, Colonel Younghusband, has been perched on the cold mountains vainly endeavoring to convince the fatuous monks of Lhasa that he was there on serious business." But this did not work and the British brutally mowed down the Tibetan soldiers whose antiquated muskets proved no match for the British Maxim guns at Guru.[102] "Such lessons," Lawrence asserted, "act as a tonic on the great continent of India, and as a prophylactic on our restless neighbors beyond the frontier."[103]

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[100] Alex McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj: The Frontier Cadre, 1904-1947* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997), 7. Dorjieff was a Buryat monk attendant to the thirteenth Dalai Lama who visited St. Petersburg at the Dalai Lama's request.

[101] Walter Lawrence, "The British Mission to Tibet," *The North American Review* 178, no. 571 (June 1904): 869-870.

[102] At the battle of Guru (31 March 1904), the British killed nearly 700 disarmed and retreating Tibetans, wounding another 200. They suffered just 12 casualties. The brutal military force used by the expedition, and the subsequent looting of various monasteries challenged Curzon's attempts "to fulfill the role and ultimate destiny of the British Empire as the arbiter of moral justice in the colonial situation." It divided the British metropolitan populace over the legitimacy of imperial interventions and made subsequent governments—in Britain and in India—more reluctant to engage in similar military aggressions. Michael Carrington, "Officers, Gentlemen and Thieves: The Looting of Monasteries during the 1903/4 Younghusband Mission to Tibet," *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 1 (February 2003): 86. By the turn of the century, imperialism and its policies had generated considerable and articulate critics. In his "Introductory Note" Alexander Maccallum Scott, *The Truth about Tibet...* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1905), The Member of Parliament Sir Robert T. Reid wrote: "The aggressive folly which led to the fruitless invasion of Tibet may, if unrestrained in the future, lead to enterprises that will involve the whole Empire in war."

[103] Lawrence, "The British Mission to Tibet," 871.

George Curzon had sent a mission to Lhasa headed by the enterprising Francis Younghusband. Though the route the expedition took was far away from Ladakh, the invasion of Tibet—remembered by Tibetans as the Anglo-Tibetan War—revealed how each frontier road was viewed as a key tool of imperial security.[104] In the months leading up to Younghusband's invasion, reports were gathered in Darjeeling and Sikkim from Tibetan traders who were "firmly under the impression that war will shortly be declared between the British Government and Tibet. They give as their reasons for this impression the repairing of the Sikkim road, the heavy transport of rations from Siliguri to Rungpo, and the presence of a large body of troops in Darjeeling."[105] Roughly 600 Kashmiri ponies and their drivers were sent to Sikkim to aid Younghusband in assembling his "Tibet Frontier Commission."[106]

Quickly concluding a treaty with the Tibetan Government in 1904, Younghusband signaled the necessity of improving the roads connecting India and Tibet. "We have just broken down the barriers of exclusion which the Tibetans have kept up against us for so many years," Younghusband wrote.[107] "It is eminently desirable that we should keep Tibet thoroughly accessible, and that the Tibetans should continue to realise that they are accessible, and that no

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[104] Carole McGranahan, "Empire Out of Bounds: Tibet in the Era of Decolonization," in *Imperial Formations*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), 177.

[105] NAI, Foreign, Secret E, November 1903, nos. 40-80. No. 43: "Weekly 'Darjeeling Confidential Frontier Reports.' Information regarding Tibetan traders named Jhampa Nagovang and Jhampala." From J.H.E. Garrett, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, May 12, 1903.

[106] Supply of Kashmir Ponies for the Tibet Frontier Commission: Extl., Dec. 1903, 1-13, Part B.: Pro. No. 3: "Kashmir as a limitrophe State is interested in Tibet, and I think we might allow the Darbar to send a transport corps of 250 ponies with drivers complete. The draft is for Your Excellency's approval. / L.W. Dane, 8-9-1903/ Curzon, 8-9-1903.

[107] NAI, Foreign, Secret E, March 1905, nos. 101-170. No. 141: "Instruction to Mr. Bell to enquire into the matter of disputed territory between Bhutan and India."

such natural barrier, as that which the Nathu and Jelap roads cross, lies between us and them." With the "political object of keeping Tibet open and accessible and easily connected with India and with the commercial object of getting round obstacles which stand in the way of a promising trade," Younghusband urged the Government of India to construct "a thoroughly good line of communication" through the Central Himalayan Chumbi Valley to Tibet. The Hindustan-Tibet Road was another such "line of communication" to be improved to keep Tibet "open" to the British. Younghusband returned to India and a flurry of books like Edmund Candler's *The Unveiling of Lhasa* (1905), Perceval Landon's *The Opening of Tibet* (1905), and Thomas Holdich's *Tibet, The Mysterious* (1906) soon followed.[108]

a. The Hindustan-Tibet Road, Again

After Younghusband's invasion of Tibet in 1903-04, improvements to the Hindustan-Tibet Road were revisited.[109] In 1905, the Resident in Kashmir, E. G. Colvin, wrote optimistically to the Secretary of the Foreign Department that "the effect of the Tibet Mission on

[108] Landon—in an example of life mirroring fiction—cites Kipling's *Kim* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1901) numerous times in *The Opening of Tibet*, attesting to the truthfulness of Kipling's representation of the country and its inhabitants. Perceval Landon, *The Opening of Tibet; an Account of Lhasa and the Country and People of Central Tibet and of the Progress of the Mission Sent There by the English Government in the Year 1903-4; Written, with the Help of All the Principal Persons of the Mission* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1905). References to Kipling's *Kim* occur on numerous pages, including: 103, 192, 228, and 250. It is also worth noting that Younghusband had read *Kim* prior to the mission, though I have yet to come across Younghusband referencing the book himself. See also: Edmund Candler, *The Unveiling of Lhasa* (London: Arnold, 1905); and Thomas Hungerford Holdich, *Tibet, the Mysterious* (New York: F.A. Stokes Company, 1906).

[109] NAI, Foreign, Secret E, November 1903, "Tibet Negotiations"; and NAI, Foreign, Secret E, February 1905.

Ladakh Trade are interesting."[110] "I am of the opinion," he continued, "that the considerable trade which already exists between Leh and Western Tibet would be very considerably increased if measures were taken to improve communications." The government decided to focus first on the Hindustan-Tibet Road to the south of Ladakh by allocated funds to improve the mule track up to the Shipki-*la*, neglected by the government ever since the Duke of Argyll nixed its expansion in the mid-1870s. Commercial justifications were interspersed with military rationales that reflected an accepted policy of roads as the principal instruments of frontier security. While progress reports submitted in 1906 and 1908 acknowledged that "the imports from Western Tibet along the Hindustan-Tibet road continue to decrease," this was attributed, in part "to the fact that while the uncompleted portion of that road [is] scarcely passable by laden sheep and goats, and its rivers are unbridged, other communications with Tibet are being gradually improved."[111] Despite the development of other roads that connected India with Tibet, the Hindustan-Tibet Road was still seen as a dependable, if secondary, access to Tibet, worth the cost of upkeep for political, not just commercial, reasons. For one, the route to the Shipki pass could be accessed for most of the year. The benefit of a so-called "all-weather road" was substantial in a region cut off from the rest of India for half the year, when the passes were snowed in.

Still, debates over the affordability of the road continued. In September 1908, the road was expanded in the final 50 miles up to the Shipki pass. "The new portion of the road is to be of

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[110] NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, March 1905, Nos. 3-9. "Report on the trade between India and Ladakh, and between India and Russian and Chinese Turkestan *via* Ladakh for the year 1903-1904."

[111] NAI, Foreign, Secret E, September 1908, nos. 407-417, p. 503. "Report by Major S.H. Powell on the proposed extension of the Hindustan-Tibet to Shipki, with estimates of cost," and "Extension of the Hindustan-Tibet Road to Shipki. / Note on the conclusions arrived at after a reconnaissance carried out between August and October 1906." See also: NAI, Foreign, Secret E, November 1908, nos. 118-158. "Progress on the Hindustan-Tibet Road."

the same standard as the furthest sections of the present mule road, the width being 8 feet (in the most difficult places 6 feet), and the ruling gradient one in seven, with occasional lengths of one in six. The Sutlej and one important tributary stream [is] to be crossed by light suspension bridges."[112]

In November 1912, after several years of discussions across various departments of the Government of India, the British Trade Agent, recently stationed in Western Tibet at Gartok, submitted an estimate for the further extension of the Hindustan-Tibet Road into Tibet, from the Shipki pass to Gartok. "If it is desirable to keep permanent relations with Tibet, the first thing required to secure this object will be to improve our trade routes up to Tibetan borders and then to improve the Tibetan internal routes. The Government have taken the work of completing the Hindustan-Tibet road as far as Shipkee. This route will greatly improve not only our commercial interest but political as well."[113]

But the Trade Agent's request was postponed by his superiors, who were once again considering the diplomatic status of Tibet and the limits of its territory. On March 18, 1913, A. H. McMahon, the Secretary to the Foreign Department, wrote that "the Government of India do not consider it desirable at present to take up the question of the improvement of the route from Shipki to Gartok. Should our relations with Tibet shortly be placed on a more definite footing, the matter of the improvement of the route can be taken up then."[114] McMahon was about to embark on a protracted tripartite conference at Shimla that included Tibetan and Chinese

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[112] Ibid.

[113] NAI, Foreign, Secret E., May 1913, nos. 220-223. "Administration report of the Gartok Trade Agency for the year 1912," November 12, 1912.

[114] NAI, Foreign, External, April 1913, 46, Part B. "Question of the improvement of Hindustan-Tibet road from Shipki to Gartok."

representatives. The resulting "McMahon Line" was never fully demarcated on the ground, but was instead hastily superimposed over a map of the borderlands and, like the infamous "Durand Line," became a source of post-independence territorial disputes.

Writing in 1935, the career political officer Olaf Caroe acknowledged that the "Hindustan-Tibet road from Simla onwards to Shipki in Tibet and eventually to Gartok has a certain international importance."[115] It was one of only two roads into Western Tibet, where the government maintained a Trade Agent (the other being through Garhwal and Kumaon). Caroe noted that the government's Tibet policy was "to keep that country to the greatest possible extent within the Indian orbit, both politically and commercially." Acknowledging that the "key position" in Tibet was Lhasa, he insisted that, "the maintenance of commercial relations between Northern India and Western Tibet has a definite importance from the point of view of the Foreign Dept. and the external relations of the Govt. of India on this part of the India frontier." He noted that "[i]f there were no road to Gartok either via Simla or Almora our relations with Tibet would certainly suffer. … From this point of view the maintenance of the Hindustan-Tibet road should certainly be a liability of the Govt. of India and not of the Punjab State.

[115] NAI, Foreign, 1935, 375-P. "Question of maintenance of the Hindustan-Tibet Road(s)," July 9, 1935. Caroe would become the Chief Secretary of the North West Frontier Province in 1937, the Secretary to the External Affairs Department in 1939, and the Governor of the North West Frontier Province in 1946. After retiring along with the Raj, Caroe set about writing numerous books, including Olaf Caroe, *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1953); and Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans: 550 B.C.- A.D. 1957* (London: Macmillan, 1958).



Figure 3.7. Jawaharlal Nehru, Louis and Edwina Mountbatten, and an unknown woman in a car on the Hindustan-Tibet Road in Shimla. The sign says "Tibet 182 [miles]." Wikipedia Commons.

b. The Treaty Road, Again

Following the invasion of Tibet, Younghusband was sent to Srinagar to become the Resident in Kashmir, overseeing the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh and the British Consulate-General at Kashgar, stationed there beginning in 1890 to better oversee intelligence gathering.[116] The early twentieth century Ladakh Diaries continued to reflect the preeminent

[116] NAI, Foreign, Frontier, November 1906, nos. 56-66A, Part B. "Leh Diary(ies) for the period 12th June to 1st September 1906." The Qing Government did not officially recognize the British Consul in Kashgar until 1908.

importance of the conditions of the Treaty Road to political and commercial concerns. And improvements to the road continued. The number of grain godowns along the Treaty Road increased, though the Kashmir authorities often found it difficult to stock them.[117] Unseasonable snow, flooding, and diseases afflicting animals were of common concern.[118] In 1905, for instance, rinderpest broke out among yaks in the region. The BJC—then typically referred to as the Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir for Leh—requested a veterinarian to examine the yaks used for carriage of goods across the passes of the Treaty Road. "The death of the yaks," the BJC wrote, "is causing bad blocks on the Trade Road as the ponies have now to carry all the loads and their numbers are of course limited. Many consignments are therefore lying for more than a week at a time at various stages awaiting transport. The unfortunate ponies are being over worked. Traders from Yarkand tell me that there is a great difficulty in obtaining ponies this year in that quarter. They attribute it to the fact that the Russians have bought up numerous ponies around Kashgar and taken them to Andijan."[119]

By this time the BJC spent only the warmer months in Ladakh, returning to Srinagar before the passes closed with snow in the early autumn. Younghusband directed the BJCs under his command to spend as much time as possible out on the Treaty Road. This trend continued until the last BJC left in 1946. The best part of their months in Ladakh each year was spent overseeing repairs to the roads and bridges comprising the Treaty Road, as well as keeping track

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[117] NAI, Foreign, Frontier, June 1904, nos. 110-111, p. 161. "Ladakh. Supplies. Difficulty experienced by the Kashmir Darbar in obtaining grain for stocking the godowns established on the road between the Zogi and Karakoram Passes for the requirements of Central Asian traders."

[118] NAI, Foreign, Frontier, November 1906, nos. 56-66A, Part B. "Leh Diary(ies) for the period 12th June to 1st September 1906."

[119] NAI, Foreign, Frontier, January 1906, nos. 98-107, Part B. "Leh Diary for period 4th June to the 14th October 1905."

of the incoming and outgoing trade caravans, and issuing passes for the small number of Europeans and Americans who went to Ladakh in the summer months to travel or hunt. While this last group was typical of a group of travelers present in the region since the 1870s, they were more closely regulated and charged more for the services they received. One soldier on leave from the army apparently complained about the cost of carriage across the Zoji-*la* (the pass between Kashmir and Ladakh). The BJC wrote regretfully that "[o]ne cannot help noting that it is very hard on the sporting subaltern who spends his leave in shooting to have to pay Rs. 100 or more in order to cross this pass …."[120]

The British Joint Commissioners still wrote of commercial potential in the trade with Yarkand, though less frequently about the trade potential with Tibet, which by the twentieth century was carried on most successfully via Sikkim and the Chumbi Valley, the part of the Central Himalaya closest to the major Tibetan centers of Lhasa and Shigatse. But there were two notable sources of hope for an improved Central Asian trade. First was the increased flow of *charas* (hashish) along the Treaty Road, including a particularly strong surge in the trade around 1895 (visible on Figure 4 as the first major spike). This "extremely important article in the Central Asian Trade" was "the largest medium of exchange in the Leh Bazar between the Yarkandi and Punjabi trader." Fluctuations in quality and quantity generated ocassional seasons where the godowns of Leh were left filled with the drug. The BJC even went so far as to appoint a Charas Officer whose sole purview was overseeing this commodity-currency.

[120] NAI, Foreign, Frontier, September 1909, nos. 42-45, Part B. "Leh Diaries from 30th June to 15th August 1909."

The second cause for hope was the Russian Revolution of 1917.[121] Referring back to the graph in Figure 3.4, one of the few notable spikes in revenue from the Indo-Yarkand trade occurred immediately after 1917. "Anarchy in Russia has paralysed Russian trade with Central Asia," wrote the Resident in Kashmir to the Secretary of the Foreign and Political Department in 1919. This "resulted in an enormous increase in the trade between British India and Central Asia," which "impos[ed] a heavy strain on the very limited transport facilities available on the Treaty road between Srinagar and Leh."[122] But many of the improvements requested by the BJC were denied, the result of a major policy change that occurred after Younghusband's invasion of Tibet and his tenure as Resident in Kashmir. This policy was directly antagonistic to the development of trade along the Treaty Road.

The Treaty Road itself had become an instrument of security. It was to be improved up to Leh, but the branch running from the Nubra Valley in northern Ladakh across the Karakoram Pass to Yarkand was not to be improved. In 1904, "[t]he question as to the desirability of improving the Leh-Yarkand trade route was discussed" by the Foreign Department. It was decided that, "*on military grounds, it was undesirable to improve it to any greater extent than had been done in the past*."[123] The "strategical grounds" that suggested leaving the road in a bad

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[121] For the significance of *charas* see: NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, March 1905, nos. 3-9: "Report on the trade between India and Ladakh, and between India and Russian and Chinese Turkestan *via* Ladakh for the year 1903-1904." S. B. Patterson, Captain, Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir for Leh.

[122] NAI, Foreign, Frontier, February 1919, nos. 69-71, Part B. "From Lieut-Col. A D'A.G. Bannerman, Resident in Kashmir, to Sir Hamilton Grant, Foreign Sec. Foreign and Political Dept. 2 August 1918. "Policy to be pursued with respect to Central Asia trade via Leh. Undesirability under existing war conditions to take any measures having for their object the establishment of improved facilities for the export to Central Asia of piece goods, leather and dyes."

[123] NAI, Foreign, Secret F., June 1910, nos. 6-8, Part A. "Proposal to improve the Leh-Yarkand trade route." My emphasis.

state were less apparent with the Hindustan-Tibet Road farther south. But with the continued threat of Russia to the north, the Leh-Yarkand route was forecast as a potential invasion route my military strategists.[124] Weighing in on another round of recommendations for road improvement by the BJC in 1910, the Viceroy Minto, agreed not to improve it. "Our policy as to the northern communications into India has hitherto been very clear, and for political reasons I am quite opposed to reversing it," though he recognized the advantages of road improvement "from a commercial point of view."[125] Following the end of the First World War when "war conditions" continued to severely restrict budgeting for infrastructure, the non-improvement policy was maintained, though it was acknowledged that certain facilities were required for military concerns.

> It is understood that as much pony transport as can be made available is required for military purposes. In the circumstances as military exigencies must preponderate at present it will be difficult if not undesirable to do anything towards improving the present transport facilities existing on the treaty road between Srinagar and Leh, more especially as some of the export trade mentioned in the Resident's letter must find its way through Central Asia into enemy hands. In this connection it should be noted that both dyes and leather would appear to be among the articles of which the export to all destinations is prohibited.[126]

Frontier roads had become, first and foremost, infrastructural instruments of imperial security.

Conclusion

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[124] NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, June 1906, nos. 102-103. "Objection to the extensive improvement of the Leh-Yarkand route on strategical grounds. Approval to some slight improvements on the section between Murgo and Kazil Augar to save the loss of life in animals at present occasioned by bad gradients."

[125] Ibid.

[126] NAI, Foreign, Frontier, February 1919, nos. 69-71, Part B. "Policy to be pursued with respect to Central Asia trade via Leh. Undesirability under existing war conditions to take any measures having for their object the establishment of improved facilities for the export to Central Asia of piece goods, leather and dyes."

By the turn of the century, imperial policy shifted from one focused on several frontiers to a policy connecting frontier locales to each other. The histories of the Hindustan-Tibet Road and the Treaty Road through Ladakh reveal this shift through several key facets of the development of imperial frontiers in India. Initially, each project was driven largely by the perceived potential of commercial markets beyond British India. With the growing awareness of political changes in Central Asia and the encroachment of the Russian Empire, these roads gradually became subsumed under larger rubrics of security, though local administrators still frequently promoted the roads' commercial potential. Thus, as will be illustrated in Chapter Five, the Hindustan-Tibet Road became a secondary avenue to Tibet following Younghusband's invasion in 1903-4, while the Indo-Yarkand Treaty Road became an access point to Central Asia and a potential invasion route to defend—albeit a less likely invasion route than the one hypothesized by military strategists through Afghanistan.[127] The roads examined here developed through particular histories that increasingly emphasized their position as regulatory mechanisms of the frontier, and, as such, the empire. Roads meant to decrease the friction of moving through mountainous terrain and promote connections to regions beyond India transformed into tools for restricting potentially dangerous "trans-frontier" people.

Finally, it is worth noting that roads themselves are not static objects. They are, as Joe Moran has observed, palimpsests—objects "laid on top of earlier versions like overwritten texts."[128] The two roads examined in this chapter were further widened in the mid-twentieth century when cars and trucks began to travel on them. Private, motorized vehicles were allowed

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[127] See, for instance: Chief of Staff's Division, Army Headquarters, India, *A Study of the Existing Strategical Conditions on the North-West Frontier* (Simla: Government Central Branch Press, 1909).

[128] Moran, *On Roads: A Hidden History*, 1.

along the Hindustan-Tibet Road only in 1946, a boon to apple farmers in Kinnaur, Kulu, and Shimla, who could more easily sell their produce in the plains.[129] While the first motorized vehicle to reach Ladakh was an Indian Army plane in 1948,[130] it was followed by tanks and trucks entering Ladakh from Kashmir along the Treaty Road, and by troops arriving from the south along the road from Kullu. In 1960, the administration of these and other mountain roads along the Indian border was handed over to the Indian Army's Border Roads Organization (BRO). Ongoing territorial disputes between India and China, and between India and Pakistan have ensured a highly visible military presence across these border regions. The continued improvement of these roads is now unambiguously spoken of in terms of security, and the roadsides in Ladakh and other border regions are littered with patriotic messages and amusing slogans and innuendoes that suggest both the danger of the mountain roads ("Darling I like you, but not so fast"), and the technical challenge and significance of road building (Figures 3.8 and 3.9, below). In this last sense, at least, we hear echoes of Dalhousie's triumphal "experiment": "People scoffed at the idea of being able to form a level road through these enormous mountains at all."[131] But as for Hardinge, Dalhousie's predecessor, his "free" and "unobstructed" road to Central Asia and Tibet has become anything but.

[129] Himachal Pradesh State Archive-Shimla (HPSA-S). "Motor Lorry Transport Scheme on H. T. Road." No date.

[130] See Figure 6.4 in Conclusion. The arrival of this vehicle prompted the (perhaps apocryphal) story that locals brought hay for the plane, assuming that it was a *rlung.rta* ("wind horse") and that it would be hungry.

[131] United Kingdom, House of Commons 1857, 54.





Figures 3.8 and 3.9. Signs from HIMANK, a division of the Borders Road Organization (BRO) in Ladakh. These are typical of the genre found throughout Ladakh. Sources: Wikipedia Commons and http://www.dnaindia.com/lifestyle/report-this-biker-collects-the-amazing-road-safety-signs-of-ladakh-1884960

CHAPTER FOUR

Reading the Border: Gazetteers, Tribute Missions, and the Problem with Goats

When Syed [Ahmed Khan] went around with the *Gazette* [*of India*], he brought in lakhs [of rupees].
When the sheikh went around showing the Qur'an, he received not a single paisa.[1]
—Akbar Allahabadi

The true territorial unit of Indian history is, indeed, much smaller than the British District.[2]
—William Wilson Hunter

By the 1870s the Government of India began issuing instructions to administrators for compiling district entries for *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*.[3] The entries were to begin with "[a] short paragraph giving the name of the District, its latitude and longitude, boundaries, area in square miles, and the estimated population." "Care should be taken," the directions continued, "that the latitudes and longitudes and area are procured from the Surveyor General's Department, and that the area represents the true size of the District, allowing for any recent transfers of parganas,[4] or changes in the boundary." The district gazetteers that soon accompanied the

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[1] Syed ūṭhe jō gazeṭ le ke to lākhō lāe; sheḵh Qurān dikhāte phire pæsā na milā. Akbar Allahabadi, "ākbar ke cand āsān āsh'ād," in *Introductory Urdu*, by C. M. Naim, 3rd ed., vol. 2, 2 vols. (University of Chicago: South Asia Language & Area Center, 1999), 203, 207. The *Gazette of India* was (and continues to be, albeit in a modified form) an annual Government of India publication that lists new laws, official appointments, and government reports, in addition to financial figures (revenue and costs). One *lākh* equals 100,000. My translation.

[2] William Wilson Hunter, Preface to the 1881 edition of the William Wilson Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. 1, 9 vols. (London: Trüber & Co., 1881), xviiii.

[3] NAI, Department of Agriculture, Revenue and Commerce, Statistics, General B. 1872. William Wilson Hunter (Director General of Statistics to the Government of India), *Heads of Information Required for the Imperial Gazetteer of India, with Rules for the Spelling of Indian Proper Names* (Simla: Government Central Press, 1871).

[4] The *parganā* was an administrative unit employed by the Mughals and other South Asian dynasties. The British formally abolished them (and the revenue system associated with them) with their permanent settlements, but retained them as geographical terms that often overlapped with their own districts.

Imperial Gazetteer reflected an even more detailed formal order of information within their initial "descriptive" section. Boundaries, latitude and longitude, and area were followed by subsections on the district's "natural divisions and hill system," "river system, and lakes," geology and botany, "characteristic or noteworthy wild animals," and meteorology.[5] The second half of the descriptive section contained accounts of the district's history, population, public heath, religions, tribes and castes, and languages. The gazetteer then continued with sections devoted to economic and administrative subjects.

By the end of the nineteenth century the gazetteer was an indispensible and ubiquitous tool for the colonial official "on the spot" and for administrators in the central government. Over the course of formal British rule in India, more than 1400 editions of district, provincial, and imperial gazetteers were published.[6] These authoritative guides were frequently used by all levels of government, regularly revised, and consistently arranged. The form they took illustrated a very basic epistemological assumption of how the colonial state made legible who, and what, it governed: place preceded people. In particular, these manuals of governance asserted the primary importance of a clearly demarcated border in defining their human and territorial subjects. The establishment of this narrow, linear limit to imperial territory reflected a global transformation in how geography shaped political thinking.

While writers of travelogues and histories across the world have long employed the commonsensical convention of beginning their works with a brief physical description of the

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[5] HPSA-S. J. M. Douie to All Revenue Officers in the Punjab, 1890. Circular issuing instructions for "the preparation of Final Settlement Reports, and the revision and maintenance of District Gazetteers; and Appendix B in HP State Archives-Shimla, B. No. 63, S. No. 1077, Deputy Commissioner, Kangra, Head 40, file N. 40(1) "Rules for the preparation of district gazetteers," dated 8 May 1903.

[6] Robert C. Emmett, "The Gazetteers of India: Their Origins and Development during the Nineteenth Century" (University of Chicago, 1976).

particular place concerned, the nineteenth century witnessed a major expansion in the volume and authority of geographical information included in both public and private writings on historical, ethnographic, and political subjects. In particular, the growth and inclusion of this information in official reference manuals illustrates Foucault's insights on the rise of governmentality—that is, the organized practices through which the state governs its subjects—and the development of the principal objects of concern and analysis for the state: population and territory. Historians of empire have applied this general observation to an array of information-gathering practices analyzed under the capacious category of colonial knowledge. These practices ranged from ethnographic and linguistic studies to the development of census-related statistics and military intelligence—distinct forms of "objective" knowledge resulting from official practices that Bernard S. Cohn referred to collectively as "surveys."[7]

But the cardinal position of geography within manuals associated with governance also asserted a significant if basic hierarchy at work within the ordering of this governing information, a point central to another insight of Foucault's. In the *Order of Things* (*Les mots et les choses*, 1966) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (*L'Archéologie du Savoir*, 1969), Foucault demonstrated how systems of knowledge shift over time depending on their internal *epistemes*,

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[7] Cohn uses the term in several essays, but most notably in: Bernard S. Cohn, "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia," in Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delh, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 224-254. The category of colonial knowledge originates from the work of Foucault and Said. For the most notable historical work on colonial knowledge in the past two decades see: Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*; Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*; Hevia, *Imperial Security State*. For a succinct survey of the pre-2008 canon of "colonial knowledge" literature, see Tony Ballantyne, "Colonial Knowledge," in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 177–97.

that is, "the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities."[8] For the purpose of the present chapter, it is simply worth observing that "discursive regularities" and a consistent "order of things" emerged in nineteenth-century imperial manuals of governance, most notably within detailed district-level gazetteers. This order placed geographical information before social, historical, economic, and political. This consistency in the relations between increasingly distinct subjects of inquiry also suggested a new and particular mode of seeing space and people, one in which population and territory were formally separated and largely static. But placing geography before people and their history also suggested a causal relation. It is not too much of a logical stretch to see in this episteme articulations of a clear geographical determinism, particularly the later "scientific" variant associated with geographers like the prolific Ellsworth Huntington, whose contributions to *Explorations in Turkestan* (1905) articulated a deterministic view of

[8] Or, earlier on in Foucault's rather rambling definition, "the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems" Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 191. I use Foucault's term here in a very general sense, given that the "discursive regularities" and "orders of things" I am focused on here are distinct from the subjects Foucault actually examines in his work on epistemes (e.g. in *The Order of Things*, Foucault specific examines the disciplines of biology, economics, and linguistics). In a similar vein, we might also think of Thomas Kuhn's paradigms—a set of concepts and practices that define a scientific discipline at any particular period of time. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

"Climate and History."[9] More concretely, this determinate quality of geography reflected the rise of geopolitics, as will be shown in the fifth and final chapter of this dissertation.

This chapter focuses on two different colonial approaches to "reading" the northwestern Himalaya, particularly the borderlines British administrators in India presumed ran, or insisted should run, through it. I use the term "reading" because unlike the pluralistic ways one might "see," reading requires a fixed set of symbols, a cohesive grammar, and a cultural context that restricts possible outcomes of understanding. As James C. Scott has shown, the "vision" of the state is imperfect. The state may attempt to render its territory and population legible through various "distance demolishing technologies" that enhance the state's vision. But it also makes sense of what it "sees" by ordering its objects in certain ways, providing a kind of grammar for accessing this information. Moving from seeing to reading requires the development of "discursive regularities" reflective of a particular epistemic language. British officials and explorers, I argue, attempted to craft this language by formalizing an order of geographical information, producing and bequeathing to subsequent generations of colonial, and eventually

[9] Raphael Pumpelly, ed., *Explorations in Turkestan, with an Account of the Basin of Eastern Persia and Sistan. Expedition of 1903, under the Direction of Raphael Pumpelly* (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1905). Huntington later developed this geographical determinism in his Ellsworth Huntington, *Climate and Civilization* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1915). Tellingly, Huntington made extensive use of the writings of British frontier experts like the surveyor Thomas Holdich and the Viceroy of India and *Frontiers* author, George Curzon. Huntington cites Holdich, Curzon, and other British imperial frontier experts on, for instance, page 303. Huntington further elaborated his environmental determinism in numerous works, including: Ellsworth Huntington, *The Pulse of Asia, a Journey in Central Asia Illustrating the Geographic Basis of History* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1919); Ellsworth Huntington, *The Character of Races as Influenced by Physical Environment, Natural Selection and Historical Development* (New York and London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1924); and Ellsworth Huntington and Sumner Cushing, *Principles of Human Geography* (New York and London: J. Wiley & sons, 1934).

postcolonial,[10] administrators texts to reference and revise. The primacy of a legible border in this process further illustrates how geography was used by the state to produce borderlands.

As Chapter Two illustrated, the development of apparently natural boundary objects, surveying techniques, and the production and growing authority of maps reflected an emerging geographical episteme. Like the atlases that resulted from the compiling of maps, gazetteers represented "systematic compilations of working objects."[11] The varied information-gathering practices these objects represented were centered on the frontier and helped to craft an increasingly unified image of imperial India and its constituent administrative parts. But the informational (and cartographical) unification of India belied deeper uncertainties on frontier locales, which produced a second kind of reading, one which revealed how administrators struggled to understand trans-regional political relations, local uses of the land, and movement of people, animals, and water through it.

The chapter begins by tracing the genealogy of the gazetteer, revealing the growing prominence of detailed descriptions of borders, in particular, and geographical information more generally. This geographical episteme was reflected in increasingly standardized and widely circulated reference manuals: gazetteers, settlement reports, route books, and military reports. This top-down model offers one way of organizing information about imperial territories and populations, from the level of the directly administered district or indirectly administered princely state, to that of the whole of the empire.[12]

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[10] District gazetteers are still produced in India today.

[11] Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 22.

[12] The authoring department, it should be noted, varied depending on whether the subject was a part of (directly administered) British India (Gazetteers published by directly by the provincial government), or whether it was, as an indirectly administered dependency covered by the Foreign Department (Gazetteers published by the Intelligence Branch).

The second half of this chapter is devoted to case studies that challenge the top-down—or perhaps "border-in"—reading of imperial space-as-territory in different ways. These seemingly insignificant cases are striking in the degree to which they concerned the imperial state, often involving voluminous engagement from the highest imperial officials. The first cases center on the limits of Ladakhi sovereignty as it relates to territory. These are illustrated in particular by debates over the Maharaja of Kashmir and Jammu's *jāgīr*[13] in Tibet and concerns over the triennial Ladakhi "tribute" mission to Lhasa and the annual reciprocal mission from Lhasa (*lo.phyag* and *La.dwags gzhung.tshong*, respectively).[14] The second set of local challenges to a top-down model of imperial territory concerned taxation and borders. These cases include an abduction of a Ladakhi trader by Tibetan authorities and debates between Tibetan, Kashmiri, and British officials over where pastoralists were to pay taxes when fixed boundaries on the ground were rarely known and respected by local pastoralists. Each case casts doubt on the ability of the imperial state to represent and impose a border and, therefore, casts doubt on the very category of territory.

I. Top-Down Information

[13] A *jāgīr* was "a rent-free estate obtained as a grant in perpetuity" (Platts Dictionary of Urdu DSAL). Those who held them were often referred to as *jāgīrdārs*, though in the archives of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, the most common term for such land grants at the sub-state level was the Persian term *muāfīdār*. This *jāgīr* in particular was the result of an earlier Ladakhi enclave, *Min.ser*, discussed below.

[14] These debates return throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century and extend beyond Ladakh to include "tribute" missions in Sikkim and Bhutan. There are numerous recommendations, particularly from several British Joint Commissioners (Elias, Ramsay) to discontinue them. See, for instance, NAI, Foreign, Secret F., September 1889, nos. 211-217.

a. Defining the Object of Inquiry

Rulers have long sought to collect information on the people and places they governed by compiling historical, ethnographic, and geographical information into reference manuals. In China, early prototypes of what later came to be known as gazetteers (called generally *difang zhi*) have been dated to the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE), while the first known version of a form of gazetteer that would later proliferate was compiled in the Jin dynasty (265-420 CE).[15] The 4th century *Chronicles of Huayang* contained biographies of notable figures, chronicles of notable events, and some geographical information on the region around Mount Hua. More than a millennium later in South Asia, the Mughal Emperor Akbar's vizier, Abul Fazl 'Allami, compiled similar information in his 16th century *Ai'n-i-Akbāri* ("the Regulations of Akbar").[16] In the third volume of the *Ai'n-i-Akbāri* Abul Fazl briefly describes the borders of Hindustan after a detailed accounting of the administrative and military structures of the Mughal Empire. He asserted that Hindustan was surrounded by oceans—with the mountainous "intermediate" region between it and China also likened to an ocean. In contrast to his earlier detailing of regional and sub-regional administrative divisions (*ṣūba* and *sarkār*, respectively), Abul Fazl is brief in his description of the extent of Hindustan.[17]

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[15] Thanks to Jesse Watson for this information.

[16] http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D00702053%26ct%3D0

[17] For more on the Mughal conception of borders, see Jos Gommans, "The Silent Frontier of South Asia, c. AD 1100–1800," *Journal of World History* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 1–23.; and "Western Expansion, Indian Reaction: Mughal Empire and British Raj," in J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). Both authors suggest that internal imperial frontiers were more significant than exterior borders. Thanks to Nick Abbott and Daniel Haines for these suggestions.

In Britain, several self-described gazetteers were published in the eighteenth century, containing alphabetized descriptions of villages, towns, cities, and other locales. In the Enlightenment spirit that yielded monumental compilations like Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (1751-72) and Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Richard Brooke's *General Gazetteer* (1762) sought to improve on a perceived lack of British knowledge of the world's geography, and, indeed, of British knowledge of Britain's own geography.[18] In his preface Brooke complained that "[t]he description of our own country has been greatly neglected, as if it was hardly worth our notice, though it ought to be the first and principal object of enquiry to every Briton." By way of a telling analogy, Brooke continued: "This is not unlike the sending young [*sic*] gentlemen abroad to visit foreign parts, before they have obtained any adequate knowledge of the laws, constitution, trade, product, and geography of the realm in which they drew their first breath."[19] By comparing the "grand tour" of the youthful elite to an education in a variety of subjects, Brooke asserted the fundamental importance of geographical knowledge for a whole variety of practical and scholarly reasons. He enumerates these at length, and it is worth recounting them in detail.

> As for the usefulness of geography in general, nothing need be said, it being a study now greatly in vogue; and there are none but the very dregs of the people that have

[18] The full title ran: Richard Brooke, *The General Gazetteer, or, Compendious Geographical Dictionary Containing a Description of All the Empires Kingdoms, States, Republics, Provinces, Cities, Chief Towns, Forts, Fortresses, Castles, Citadels, Seas, Harbours, Bays, Rivers, Lakes, Mountains, Capes, and Promontories in the Known World ; Together with the Government, Policy, Customs, Manners, and Religion of the Inhabitants ; the Extent, Bounds, and Natural Productions of Each Country ; and the Trade, Manufactures, and Curiosities of the Cities and Towns ; Their Longitude, Latitude, Bearing and Distances in English Miles from Remarkable Places ; as Also, the Sieges They Have Undergone, and the Battles That Have Been Fought near Them, down to This Present Year : Including, an Authentic Account of the Counties, Cities and Market-Towns in England and Wales ; as Also the Villages with Fairs, the Days on Which They Are Kept According to the New Stile ; as Well as the Cattle, Goods and Merchandises That Are Sold Thereat* (London: J. Newbery, 1762).

[19] Brooke, iii.

> not some occasion or other to be acquainted therewith. It is absolutely necessary to men of letters, because no history can be well understood without it: as also to politicians, it being impossible to understand the true interest of different states and countries, without the knowledge of this science. Officers, both by sea and land, have great need of it, because it lets them into the nature and circumstances of places and towns, and enables them to take their measures accordingly. Merchants and traders ought to study it beyond all doubt, because it assists them in taking prudent measures in order to establish a beneficial commerce. In short, all those who have either interest or curiosity to know any thing of the transactions of the world, or are desirous of forming some judgment of the different events, which happen in the times of war or peace, ought not to be ignorant of geography.[20]

Whether for the scholar, the military man, or the merchant, geography was to be, according to Brooke, a foundational and fundamental body of knowledge. Aside from its evident utility, by the eighteenth century geography had also become immensely popular through the medium of travel literature, which Richard Grove asserted was "the single most widely read and sought-after category of English literature."[21] By the end of the eighteenth century other gazetteers, like Clement Cruttwell's *A Gazetteer of France* (1793), were published following in roughly the same order of information that Brooke gave: first came a brief detailing of borders, area, mountains, and rivers, and then came a description of the inhabitants, their history, culture, trade, and political organization.[22]

Particularly in Western Europe, the eighteenth century witnessed a rapid rise in the prominence of technological and statistical practices designed to generate more detailed

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[20] Brooke, iii-iv.

[21] Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 54. To back up this claim Grove cites Peter James Marshall and G. Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Dent, 1982), 54-9.

[22] Clement Cruttwell, *A Gazetteer of France: Containing Every City, Town, and Village in That Extensive Country ... / Illustrated with a Map Divided into Departments* (London: Printed for G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1793).

information for the state to use to better understand and control its population and territory.[23] Though not exclusively state-sponsored, these practices often sought out statistical, cartographical, and technological means to address problems associated with public health, revenue generation, and agriculture. In the case of eighteenth-century Ireland, as Patrick Carroll has shown, a colonial periphery became a site of experimentation in "engineering land into the state," a process Carroll termed *technoterritorialization*.[24] At the core of such practices—often involving cartography, statistics, natural history, geology, and public health—was a belief in the positive impact of organized information on state administration. For instance, John Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland* (1790s-1800s)—modeled in certain ways on eighteenth century Prussian land surveys—reflected the use of parish questionnaires to gather information on geography, population, agricultural and other productions, and the welfare of its people.[25]

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[23] As James Hevia notes: "In the eighteenth century, European governments formulated and deployed a variety of tactics to enhance control over their populations and lands, and heightened efforts to identify weaknesses within the state." Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 107.

[24] Carroll writes: "I use the term *technoterritoriality* to emphasize the theoretical point that the issue of territory, in the context of the modern state, is only partly captured by reference to coercive or sovereign dominion within a landmass (which can include territorial waters, islands, and colonies). Modern territoriality involves engineering land *into the state* in a way that extends, through particularizing scientific practices, the depth and reach of state power." Carroll, *Science, Culture and Modern State Formation*, 161. In other cases, as John Brewer has persuasively shown, information gathering exercises were tied to an effective centralized "fiscal-military state" capable of generating income and managing debt through centralized institutions. John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[25] See Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, *Enlightenment's Frontier: The Scottish Highlands and the Origins of Environmentalism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 54-57.

In 1815, Walter Hamilton published *The East India Gazetteer*.[26] In it, he noted that the "plan usually followed is that of Brooke's, Crutwell's, and other Gazetteers..."[27] "To form a geographical basis," Hamilton wrote, he employed Arrowsmith's 1804 "six sheet map of Hindostan," (Figure 4.1) which exhibited "the most correct delineation of this part of Asia hitherto presented to the public..."[28] Thus, in addition to the general order of information already established by Brooke's and Crutwell's gazetteers, Hamilton asserted that his work was shaped by the most current maps available. This is a good example of the degree to which cartographical thinking increasingly shaped the organization of written descriptive information. In attempting to "class the whole" of Hindustan, Hamilton also acknowledged earlier works of geography, including Abul Fazl's *Ai'n-i-Akbāri*, which he acknowledged was precise in its definition of local boundaries, but "wrong in many instances" on the boundaries of the whole country.[29]

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[26] Walter Hamilton, *The East India Gazetteer; Containing Particular Descriptions of the Empires, Kingdoms, Principalities, Provinces, Cities, Towns, Districts, Fortresses, Harbours, Rivers, Lakes, &c. of Hindostan, and the Adjacent Countries, India beyond the Ganges, and the Eastern Archipelago; Together with Sketches of the Manners, Customs, Institutions, Agriculture, Commerce, Manufactures, Revenues, Population, Castes, Religion, History, &c. of Their Various Inhabitants* (London: J. Murray, 1815).

[27] Hamilton, x-xi.

[28] Hamilton, viii.

[29] Hamilton, xii-xiii. Here Hamilton is referring to Abul Fazl's relatively precise detailing of the rivers and streams that were frequently used in Mughal India as demarcators of the regional (*ṣūba*) and sub-regional (*sarkār*) administrative divisions, though not, as noted in the earlier passage on the metaphorical northern "ocean," with the northern Himalayan limits.

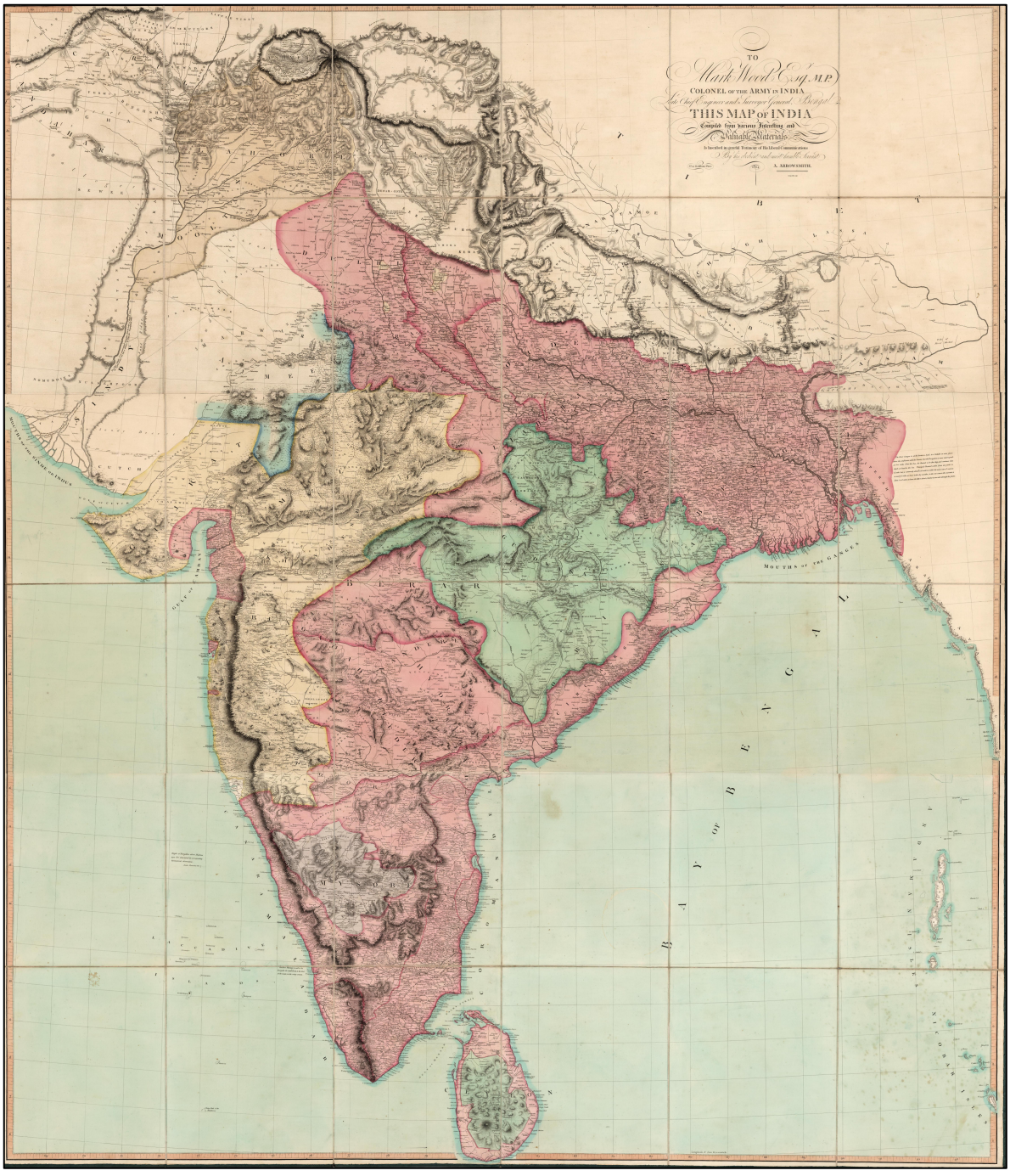


Figure 4.1. Aaron Arrowsmith's 1804 "six sheet map of Hindostan." Source: pahar.in

In India, where the British East India Company's military successes transformed it from a coastal, factory-based trading company into an imperial power during the century between the

Battle of Plassey (1757) and the Rebellion of 1857-9, the first task for colonial officials was often to survey and define the spaces they sought to control and govern. This also meant exploring and defining neighboring regions to better determine the limits of British territory. A number of early nineteenth century scholar-administrators wrote works that sought to bring together all the useful information that could be gained from a study of a particular neighboring region. Foremost among these were Francis Buchanan's *A Journey From Madras Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar* (1807) and *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal* (1819), Mountstuart Elphinstone's *Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* (1815), John Malcolm's *History of Persia* (1815), and James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han* (1829-1832). These works followed the long-practiced convention of beginning histories with a brief geographical description—a ubiquitous and commonsensical practice when one's subject is itself a geographical expression. Elphinstone's work was the result of information gathered during a diplomatic mission to the Afghan court of Shah Shujah Durrani in 1808-9.[30] Malcolm, who succeeded Elphinstone as Governor of Bombay and had undertaken a similarly ambitious diplomatic mission to Persia in 1801, drew upon troves of Persian documents collected while in India to complete his work. Translations of the documents Malcolm gathered formed a major portion of Hamilton's sources for *The East India Gazetteer*.[31] And Tod's work similarly drew on a vast array of materials collected while in various military and administrative postings. In these works geography was also emphasized as first-order information. Like Brooke before him, Tod

[30] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 128, has the dates as 1808-10.

[31] Hamilton, *The East India Gazetteer*, xi: "a very considerable portion of the most valuable information contained in this publication will be found to be entirely new, being extracted from various unpublished manuscripts, collected by Sir John Malcolm, while he filled important official and diplomatic situations in Hindostan and Persia, and communicated by him in the most handsome and liberal manner."

explicitly asserted the preeminent and foundational place of geography, writing in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*: "The basis of this work is the geography of the country, the historical and statistical portion being *consequent and subordinate thereto*."[32]

While Tod's and Malcolm's works devote a sparse few pages to a general setting of the scene, Elphinstone dedicated the first book of the first volume (some 84 pages) to a systematic detailing of geography. The travel narrative was relegated to Elphinstone's introduction, thus segregating the experiential narrative from the systematic and static—or statistical—accounting of his subject.[33] And unsurprisingly, Elphinstone began with borders. In addition to enclosing a calculable area, borderlines ostensibly also reflected the notion of discrete and unambiguous sovereignty. In his *Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, Elphinstone used the *khutba*—the weekly sermon in which a ruler's name is inserted into prayer—and the inscription of coins with rulers' names as the two best "tests" for determining where Afghan sovereignty extended.[34] He assumed, by this test, that the allegiance of any given community could be "fixed," like a point on map, ignoring the reality that coins, even more than allegiances, could move. These tests also suggested that Elphinstone might also be employing a looser notion of sovereignty, one that

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[32] James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, 2 vols. (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1914), vol. 1, 2. My emphasis.

[33] Examples of official and private *Tours* and *Journey*s are too numerous to need to enumerate. For one such example of an official tour, see Clements R. Markham, ed. *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet, and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa, edited, with notes, and introduction and lives of Mr Bogle and Mr Manning* (1876). For private examples, see Thomas Pennant's *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides* (1772), Samuel Johnson, *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775), James Boswell, *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson LL.D.* (1786), or Arthur Young's *Tour of Ireland* (1780).

[34] Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul, and Its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India; Comprising a View of the Afghaun Nation, and a History of the Dooraunee Monarchy*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1815), vol. 1, 112.

perhaps reflected the overlapping and fluctuating political configurations in South Asia at that time.

While Elphinstone used religious and numismatic tests to determine the range of Shah Shujah's rule, he looked to "natural divisions" to bound that sovereignty, suggesting that more mappable objects were better indicators of the physical limits of sovereignty. While this was, in a very general sense, in keeping with older practices like Abul Fazl's description of the actual and metaphorical "oceans" surrounding Hindustan, Elphinstone employed a greater degree of systematic detail by insisting on and describing the "natural" boundaries separating "Hindoostaun and [the Kingdom of] Caubul…"[35] These fixed lines followed, according to Elphinstone's description, the separating lines of watersheds—a concept that emerged in the nineteenth century later called the "water-parting principle," a topic discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation.

At the conclusion of his first chapter, which detailed mountains, rivers, and deserts, Elphinstone revealed that what he had done was in fact to define something new, a unified territory enclosed by ostensibly natural boundary lines. He wrote: "*The Afghauns have no general name for their country*; but that of Afghaunistaun, which was probably first employed in Persia, is frequently used in books, and is not unknown to the inhabitants of the country to which it applies. I shall, therefore, use it in future to express the country of which I have just described the limits."[36] Adopting the Persian descriptor "Afghaunistaun," Elphinstone insisted on precise and geographically determined borders as its limits.

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[35] Ibid., vol. 1, 116.

[36] Ibid., vol. 1, 125. My emphasis.

As Alexander Cunningham would later do for Ladakh, Elphinstone thus constructed borderlines around his object of study. The quote above, in particular, highlights a key point made by Ben Hopkins in his *Making of Modern Afghanistan*. Hopkins has persuasively shown that the geographic expression called "Afghanistan" was, in the early nineteenth century, largely a product of the British official mind.[37] Elsewhere, Hopkins has also noted that in the nineteenth century, colonial visions of territory imposed "Westphalian state forms" over alternative indigenous concepts of space.[38] The preoccupation with borders shown by Elphinstone, it is worth noting, was not restricted to Afghanistan, but was reflected in practices across the growing British Empire.[39]

As Afghanistan was to the East India Company before Elphinstone's *Account*, Ladakh was *terra incognita*. Hamilton's 1815 *East India Gazetteer* summed the region up as follows: "[Ladakh's] limits are wholly undefined, and the interior has been but imperfectly explored. … We are so little acquainted with the interior of this province, that it has never been accurately

[37] Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 11.

[38] B. D. Hopkins, "The Bounds of Identity: The Goldsmid Mission and the Delineation of the Perso–Afghan Border in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Global History* 2, no. 2 (July 2007): 233–54.

[39] Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 12. For more on this connection to Mountstuart Elphinstone and the "Elphinstonian episteme," see Kyle Gardner, "Elphinstone, Geography, and the Specter of Afghanistan in the Himalaya," in *Mountstuart Elphinstone in South Asia: Pioneer of British Colonial Rule* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2018).

ascertained what religion the natives profess; but from their geographical position, and other circumstances, it is probable they follow the doctrines of Buddha."[40]

The first colonial official to write extensively on Ladakh, as noted in Chapter One, was William Moorcroft, who spent two years there (September 1820 to September 1822).[41] During this time, Moorcroft and his travelling companion, George Trebeck, kept voluminous journals that would later be edited and published by the English orientalist Horace Hayman Wilson. Along with Alexander Cunningham's 1854 book, *Ladák, Physical, Statistical, and Historical*, Moorcroft and Trebeck's *Travels,* would form the bedrock of subsequent colonial understandings of Ladakh. Cunningham wrote admiringly that Moorcroft's "account of the country is marked by great shrewdness of observation, and by the most scrupulous accuracy. A more truthful chronicler than Moorcroft never lived."[42]

When Wilson later compiled the journals of Moorcroft and Trebeck in the 1840s, he placed Moorcroft's description of the boundaries and physical extent of Ladakh in the first descriptive section on Ladakh (as opposed to within Moorcroft's travel narrative), and organized it in the following order in the book's table of contents: "Description of Ladakh—Limits—

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[40] Hamilton, *The East India Gazetteer*, 482. In 1815 it was still assumed, as maps of the time indicate, that Ladakh was on the Ganges, not the Indus. The second *East India Gazetteer* entry for "Lahdack" references a town that is most likely Leh. "A town in the province of Lahdack, placed in the maps in Lat 35*N. Long. 78* 10' E. but as the geography of the province is as yet very uncertain, it is probable that when better explored a new position will be assigned to this place. Merchants travelling from Hindostan to Yarchand in Chinese Tartary rendezvous at this place, from whence they proceed in a body, travelling the greatest part of the way along the banks of the Indus, which they assert comes within two days journey of Lahdack. If true, this fact would materially alter the geography of this part of Asia, but the natives are generally so loose and inaccurate in their observations, that it cannot be depended on." Hamilton, *The East India Gazetteer*, 482-3. Those natives, not surprisingly, were right.

[41] Cunningham, *Ladák*, 7.

[42] Cunningham, *Ladák*, 7.

Extent—Surface—Rivers—[details on specific rivers]—[varieties of plants]—Animals—Minerals."[43] Though Moorcroft's observations on Ladakh's "Limits"—which he variously referred to as "borders," "boundaries," and "frontiers"—referenced specific locations on routes that he traversed or learned about from informants, he nevertheless introduced his detailed studies of the region with a description of a polity broadly bounded by natural and political borders[44]:

> Ladakh is bounded on the north-east by the mountains which divide it from the Chinese province of Khoten, and on the east and south-east by Rodokh and Chan-than, dependencies of Lassa: on the south by the British province of Bisahar, and by the hill states of Kulu and Chamba. The latter also extends along the south-west till it is met by Kashmir.... The north is bounded by the Karakoram mountains and Yarkand. / The precise extent of Ladakh can scarcely be stated without an actual survey; but our different excursions, and the information we collected, enabled us to form an estimate, which is, probably, not far wide of the truth. From north to south, or from the foot of the Karakoram mountains to the fort of Trankar in Piti [Spiti], the distance is rather more than two hundred miles; and from east to west, or from the La Ganskiel pass to that of Zoje La, it cannot be less than two hundred and fifty. The outline, however, is irregular, being contracted on the north-west and south-west, and the whole area may not much exceed thirty thousand square miles.[45]

We see here in Moorcroft's writings, the straightforward assumption that Ladakh was to be enclosed in borderlines and determined to be a territory of square miles bounded by similar territories ("Rodokh, Chan'than," etc.). Writing about the predecessors to Moorcroft in the

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[43] William Moorcroft and George Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara; from 1819 to 1825*, ed. Horace Hayman Wilson, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1841), vol. 1, x.

[44] Moorcroft and Trebeck, vol. 1, x. For example, in volume one Moorcroft notes: "Along the eastern frontier of Ladakh, in an almost semicircular line, is the province of Chan-than." (p. 360). On page 390, he refers to the "border of Chinese Turkistan" without giving any precise location. And on page 440, he notes that "the boundary of Ladakh was pointed out to us as extending from the angle of a hill about five miles to the east, to the low pass of La Ganskiel, on the road to Gardokh, about fourteen miles distant to the southward."

[45] Moorcroft and Trebeck, *Travels*, vol. 1, 258-9.

preface to Moorcroft's compiled journals, Horace Hayman Wilson employed a telling geographical image of information. "The embassy of Mr. Elphinstone to Kabul, in 1808…was the means of introducing us to much new knowledge of countries beyond the Indian Caucasus; and more recently, the travels of Lieut. Burnes…have completed *the line of information* from Kabul to Bokhara, and connected it with that obtained by Fraser and Connolly in Khorasan."

As noted in the second chapter, in 1846 the boundary commissioners Alexander Cunningham and Patrick Alexander Vans Agnew[46] were tasked with determining the boundary between the newly formed Jammu and Kashmir State and the East India Company's directly held western Himalayan territories in Kulu, Lahoul, and Tehri-Garhwal. In doing so, Cunningham noted, "...the British Government determined to remove the most common cause of all disputes in the East,—an unsettled boundary."[47]

Like Elphinstone's *Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, the organizational structure of Cunningham's *Ladak* suggested a basic assertion: information about place should precede information about people, their society, culture, history, and language(s).

Figure 4.2. Comparison of contents of Elphinstone's and Cunningham's texts

***Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* (1815)**	***Ladak, Physical, Statistical, Historical* (1854)**
Introduction	Introduction
Book 1: Geographical Description of Afghaunistaun	Geography [incl. "General Description" and "Boundaries and Extent"]
1: Situation and Boundaries of Afghaunistaun	Mountains
2: Mountains of Afghaunistaun	Rivers

[46] Vans Agnew, a young and successful EIC civil servant, was killed during the siege of Multan in April 1848, which triggered the Second Anglo-Sikh War.

[47] Cunningham, *Ladák*, 13.

Figure 4.2 (continued). Comparison of contents of Elphinstone's and Cunningham's texts	
3: Rivers of Afghaunistaun	Lakes and Springs
4: Natural and Political Divisions of Afghaunistaun	Roads, Passes, Bridges
5: Of the Climate of Afghaunistaun--Rain	Climate
6: Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals of Afghaunistaun	Productions
Book 2: General Account of the Inhabitants of Afghaunistan	Commerce
1: Introduction, origin, and Early History of the Afghauns	Government
2: Divisions and Government of the Afghaun Nation	People
3: Marriages, Condition of Women, Funerals, etc.	History
4: Education, Language, and Literature of the Afghauns	Religion
5: Religion, sects, moolahs, superstitions, etc.	Language
6: Hospitality, Predatory Habits, Etc.	Comparison of the Various Alpine Dialects, from the Indus to the Ghagra
7: Manners, Customs, and Character of the Afghauns	Magnetical Observations
8: Of the Inhabitants of Towns	Meteorological Observations
9: Of the Great	
10: Trade of Caubul	
11: Husbandry of Caubul	
12: Taujiks, Hindkees, and other inhabitants of Afghaunistaun	
Book 3:	
1: Particular Account of the Afghaun Tribes […]	

In both these texts we can see a consistent general ordering of geographical information, beginning with boundary lines before detailing the mountain systems, water systems, and climate within those lines. Now, it would be fair to ask: how can one write about "the Kingdom of Caubul" or "Ladak" without first describing what is meant by these places? But in fact it was far from obvious that these were, when Elphinstone or Cunningham appeared on the scene, fully bounded—or fixed—territories on the model of post-Westphalian (or, more accurately, post-

Congress of Vienna) European states. Although Elphinstone sought to define the extent of the territory of the Kingdom of Caubul, Cunningham and the other boundary commissioners were given a mandate to "lay down" the boundaries of Ladakh, thus explicitly acknowledging that whatever pre-existing markers of territorial limits were insufficient for the territorializing purposes of the growing imperial state.

When it came time for Cunningham to publish his findings, he drew heavily on Moorcroft. His introduction fixed Ladakh in time and space—asserting that the oldest mention of the region could be found in the writings of Ptolemy and briefly outlining the major mountain ranges bounding the region.[48] His first substantive section, on geography, largely followed Moorcroft's general description regarding the "boundaries and extent" of Ladakh:

> On the north it is divided by the Kárákoram mountains from the Chinese district of Kotan. To the east and south-east are the Chinese districts of Rudok and Chumurti; and to the south are the districts of Lahul and Spiti, now attached to British India, bur formerly belonging to Ladák. To the west lie Kashmir and Balti, the former separated by the western Himalaya, and the latter by an imaginary line drawn from the mouth of the Dras river to the sources of the Nubra river. / Its greatest extent is from north-west to south-east, from the head of the Dras river, in longitude 75* 30' to Chibra, on the Indus, in longitude 79* 10', a distance of 240 miles. Its greatest breadth is 290 miles, from the Kárákoram Pass, in north latitude 35* 25'. Its mean length is 200 miles, and its mean breadth 150 miles. Its whole extent is therefore only 30,000 square miles.[49]

While Cunningham's inclusion of lines of longitude and latitude and his frequent detailing of measured distances ("feet" is the most commonly used word in his book after removing "stop

[48] Cunningham, *Ladák*, 3.

[49] Cunningham, *Ladák*, 17-18.

words"[50]) suggests an added degree of precision that Moorcroft had earlier noted was lacking in the absence of any survey, Cunningham's similar figure for Ladakh's square mileage indicates either a continued reliance on Moorcroft's boundaries, or a similar means of calculation.[51] Cunningham then went on to enumerate the "natural divisions of the country" along the mountains and drainage basins of the Indus, reflecting his mandate to make the "water-partings" (the edges of abutting watersheds) the eastern and northern boundaries of the region. As shown in Table 1, only after Cunningham detailed the major constituent geographical features did he then proceed to discuss the people who inhabited the region, their material production, history, and language. Texts like Elphinstone's and Cunningham's were the privately published forebears of the official genre of gazetteer.

b. Gazetteers: Ordering Information

Decades after Hamilton, Elphinstone, Moorcroft, and Cunningham, the place of geography in the growing volume of official colonial publications became graphically—and consistently—illustrated by official gazetteers published by the British Government of India. If historians have long accepted that colonial knowledge was central to the history of British rule in India, this knowledge became more systematic after the reconstruction of British rule in 1858. As the British Raj became more security-conscious, it increasingly employed statistical and

[50] In Cunningham's *Ladák*, "feet" occurs roughly 704 times while "Ladak" occurs only 579 (coincidentally, the same number of times that "Ladakh" appears in the first volume of Moorcroft and Trebeck's *Travels*). The next most frequently used words are "river" and "mile" at 392 and 336 times, respectively. To calculate this I uploaded an OCR version of Cunningham's text to the data-scraping site: http://voyant-tools.org. "Stop words" are the most common words—typically definite and indefinite articles, prepositions, etc.—that can be removed by computing programs to search more effectively for keywords.

[51] …whether through the use of on-the-ground measurements, or the use of a map.

ethnographic information to better attempt to control the large swathes of people and territory of India. Nowhere was the strategy of organized information more apparent than in the official gazetteers that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Largely signifying a "geographical index or dictionary" in the eighteenth century, the term "gazetteer" took on a much more expansive meaning for the British in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly when the Government of India began to focus on the production of detailed district-level volumes. The bibliographer Henry Scholberg has offered a definition of this particular British colonial form of the genre: "A district gazetteer is a comprehensive description of a district or state of British India … including historical, archeological, political, economic, sociological, commercial and statistical data."[52] But missing from Scholberg's definition is the geographical element found in eighteenth-century examples and the works of Elphinstone, Cunningham and others.[53] This omission is surprising given that each district gazetteer begins with a detailed section devoted to geography. But Scholberg did acknowledge the variety of precursors to the official gazetteers. He even went so far as to single out Cunningham's *Ladák*:

> One of the finest examples of a book which was not intended to be a district gazetteer when it was written, but which falls beautifully into the genre of district gazetteers is Brevet Major Alexander Cunningham's *Ladák, Physical, Statistical, and Historical; with Notices of Surrounding Countries*. This is a 485-page work published in 1854 that, as its title implies, describes the district of Ladakh in the manner which was to be typical of district gazetteers of a later time.[54]

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[52] Henry Scholberg, *The District Gazetteers of British India: A Bibliography* (Zug, Switzerland: Inter Documentation Company, 1970), iv.

[53] "Gazetteer, n." OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/77237?rskey=sT5xMJ&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed September 09, 2016).

[54] Scholberg, *The District Gazetteers of British India*, 53.

Though perhaps more than a dozen works similar to Cunningham's *Ladak* were published privately from 1800 through the 1850s, the Government of India began to realize after the Rebellion of 1857 that it should invest in the systematic production of such guides, for both its directly and indirectly administered territories, as well for some of the neighboring regions such as Central Asia and Afghanistan. In 1869, the Viceroy of India Lord Mayo commissioned William Wilson Hunter "to visit the various provincial governments with a view to submit a comprehensive scheme for utilizing the information already collected; for prescribing the principles to be thenceforth adopted; and the consolidation into one work the whole of the materials…"[55] These were to be systematic manuals for administrators and (secondarily) for scholars. As Maureen L. P. Patterson has noted, "[u]ntil 1869 district accounts were haphazardly produced and were not uniform in format or coverage."[56] From the late 1870s onward, we a consistent presentation in both the district gazetteers and in the *Imperial Gazetteer*. Compliers and editors of district gazetteers and other reference works, like the Edwin T. Atkinson and the prolific Denzil Ibbetson, utilized a consistent form in their works for ease of access for those seeking to quickly reference information.[57] *Imperial Gazetteers* were issued to all major administrative posts along with a copy of the latest district or otherwise local gazetteer. For instance, among the list of books held by the British Joint Commissioners stationed at Leh in Ladakh, there was, after its publication in 1890, always a copy listed of the *Gazetteer of Kashmir*

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[55] Scholberg, *The District Gazetteers of British India*, 5-6.

[56] Maureen L. P. Patterson, *South Asian Civilizations: A Bibliographic Synthesis* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), xvii.

[57] e.g. Edwin T. Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces of India* (Allahabad: North-western Provinces' Govt. Press, 1882); Denzil Ibbetson, *Gazetteer of the Gújrát District, 1883-84, Compiled and Published under the Authority of the Punjab Government* (Lahore: Arya Press, 1884).

and Ladakh. In its self-consciously scholarly fashion, the *Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh* listed its sources in its introduction. This was typical of the regional and district gazetteers, which drew on a growing volume of ethnographic sources to provide support for the information it presented. Unsurprisingly in the case of the *Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh*, Cunningham's *Ladak* and Moorcroft's *Travels* were foremost in a long list of accounts used to compile the information presented in the gazetteer.[58] Following independence, the Republic of India continued to update and publish many of these manuals.

Hunter modeled his project on two notable predecessors: "When I started, I had two national enterprises in my mind: the *Ain-i-Akbari*, or statistical survey of India, conducted three hundred years ago by the Finance Minister of Akbar, the greatest of Mughal Emperors; and the military survey of Egypt, executed by France in the first quarter of the present century.[59] The former is a masterpiece of administrative detail, the latter a brilliant effort of organized research."[60] Hunter's invocation of these two works suggested both the grandeur of scale his 12-year undertaking was to pursue and the level of detail he sought to include. The early district gazetteers, many of which Hunter himself compiled, were to feed information to the *Imperial Gazetteer*.

As the principal resource for descriptive information, other official documents were meant to provide supplemental kinds of information to the gazetteers. A circular sent to all

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[58] Intelligence Branch, *Gazetteer of Kashmír and Ladák, Together with Routes in the Territories of the Maharaja of Jamú and Kashmír. Compiled (for Political and Military Reference) under the Direction of the Quarter Master General in India in the Intelligence Branch* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1890). It is worth noting that Elphinstone's *Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* was absent in these lists.

[59] *Description de L'Egypte, Ou Recueil des Observations et des Recherches Qui Ont Été Faites En Egypte Pendant l'Expédition de l'Armée Française*, 36 vols. (Paris, 1821).

[60] William Wilson Hunter, preface to *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. 1, xxix-xxx.

revenue officers in the Punjab from the Senior Secretary to the Financial Commissioner of the government of the Punjab noted, for instance, that "[t]he Final Settlement Report should not ordinarily contain historical or descriptive material, which properly belongs to the Gazetteer. It should be what its name implies, a report of the settlement operations just completed."[61] Nevertheless, as the circular went on to note, the Settlement Officer should have already submitted an "Assessment or Revenue Rate Report," which was to begin with "[a]n account of the Physical Geography of the tract." Thus, geographical information was seen as a necessary prerequisite for other organized forms of information. These forms—whether gazetteer or settlement report—were often produced by the same officials. The aforementioned circular noted that it was also the duty of the Settlement Officer "to draft a new edition of the *Gazetteer* of the district. *In doing so, he must in every respect conform to the plan of the Gazetteer already published, and the order in which the subjects are there arranged should under no circumstances be departed from, as uniformity in this respect is a valuable addition to the usefulness of the* Gazetteers." [62]

This official form largely followed the order of information found in earlier privately published texts like those of Cunningham and Elphinstone. Knowing exactly where certain kinds of facts were to be found was a key aspect of the utility of the gazetteer. Like other forms of official information, such as military statistics, the gazetteer was packaged in a particular

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[61] Himachal Pradesh State Archives-Shimla (hereafter HPSA-S), J. M. Douie to All Revenue Officers in the Punjab, 1890. Circular issuing instructions for "the preparation of Final Settlement Reports, and the revision and maintenance of District Gazetteers; and Appendix B in HP State Archives-Shimla, B. No. 63, S. No. 1077, Deputy Commissioner, Kangra, Head 40, file N. 40(1) "Rules for the preparation of district gazetteers," dated 8 May 1903. My emphasis.

[62] Ibid.

standardized form.[63] An administrator could pick up a copy of any gazetteer and know where to find information on a district's roads, trade, or spoken languages. But beyond this functional utility, the consistent ordering also reflected how different kinds of facts were meant to relate to one another. This "order of things" suggested that geography was an epistemic prerequisite to social, historical, economic, and political subjects. Foremost within this order were precise and complete borders and the "natural divisions" that supported them.

Figure 4.3. Initial contents and section descriptions of provincial and district gazetteers

Chapter 1: Descriptive[64]	
A. Physical Aspects	
	(a) Name in vernacular, with derivation if known; area.
	(b) Boundaries and general configuration, including natural divisions and hill system; scenery generally.
	(c) River system, and lakes
	(d) Brief sketch of Geology and Botany (Arrangements are being made for the writing of special articles on these subject [sic] by experts.)
	(e) Characteristic or noteworthy wild animals, etc.
B. Meteorology	
	(a) General account of climate in different parts; mean temperature where recorded.
	(b) General account of rainfall, with averages for chief natural divisions, noticing its relative variability in different parts of the district and its fluctuations in past years.
	(c) Notable cyclones, earthquakes, and floods.
C. History	A general knowledge of Indian history should be assumed on the part of the readers of the District articles, and the latter need only mention the various historic States of which the District has

[63] Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 4.

[64] These descriptions come from an appendix titled, "Sketch of contents of the different sections of the Provincial Gazetteer with notes, where necessary, regarding the special treatment of subjects in District Gazetteers." However, the sections themselves directly align with an earlier appendix, "Table of contents of District Gazetteers." I have not been able to find a similar description given for District Gazetteers, so I have utilized the Provincial Gazetteer descriptions with the assumption that since it exactly follows the contents of the District Gazetteers, the descriptions for those contents will be similar.

	formed part, the date of its coming under British rule, and any specially noteworthy events which have occurred within it. Interesting archaeological remains should also be noted.
D. Population	Distribution of population by natural or administrative divisions; number of towns and villages according to 1901 Census; population at last four censuses with explanations of striking variations; residential characteristics of towns and villages, *i.e.* the grouping of houses in the town and village areas; movement of population and migration; occupations.

Figure 4.3 (continued).

c. Settlement Reports, Route Books, Military Reports

It is worth noting that gazetteers were by no means the only manuals of governance to present a static order of information that began with, and depended on, geographical information. Other frequently produced and widely circulated official manuals included settlement reports, route books, and military reports. Each of these genres of official publications served specific purposes, be it revenue collection or moving military troops.

Although settlement reports varied across time and space in South Asia in terms of the land-tenure model adopted (zamindari, ryotwari, or mahalwari), their basic purpose was the same: to establish an accounting of agricultural land revenues to better determine taxes to be extracted. As with gazetteers, this process again required ascertaining a precise description of the region under examination. Table 3 illustrates the basic order of information given in terms of the Ladakh Settlement carried out by the government of Jammu and Kashmir at the behest of the British Government. Though carried out much later than many of the major land settlements in South Asia, its form does not diverge significantly from earlier settlement reports, though the earliest settlements (i.e. the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, 1793) were not compiled into specific reports, but rather formed parts of larger legislation (i.e. the Cornwallis Code of 1793)

that established the basic practice of settlement that would later produce the kinds of standardized settlement reports common by the second half of the nineteenth century.

Figure 4.4. Contents of Preliminary Report of Ladakh Settlement, 1908[65]

Chapter 1: Descriptive
Tract under Settlement
Boundaries
Natural divisions
Physical features
Area
Climate
Rain and Snow-fall
Inhabitants
Population
Chapter II: Short Revenue and Political History
Chapter III: Present Settlement
Chapter IV: General Conditions
Chapter V: Tenures and Tenancy Rules
Chapter VI: Matters Relating to Assessment
Chapter VII: Miscellaneous

Similarly, in the context of military intelligence, military reports and route books offered convenient, portable information to those concerned with security on and beyond the imperial frontier. As James Hevia has observed, "[w]ithin the imperial security apparatus, the military report was the essential form of summary for storing the military statistics of other states or well-developed territories."[66] The difference between the gazetteer and the military report, Hevia notes, concerns the range of information and its application. Gazetteers sought to present

[65] Jammu and Kashmir State Archive, Leh Branch (hereafter JKSA-L). Chaudhri Mohamad, *Preliminary Report of Ladakh Settlement* (Jammu: Ranbir Prakesh Press, 1908).

[66] Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 107-8. Hevia goes on to write that "[a]djacent to the military report were two other genres – the handbook, which was usually a detailed collection of factual information on a foreign army, and the Who's Who, which provided biographical information on foreign personages."

"virtually everything that was factually known about the particular locale." But the military report, in contrast, organized "detailed information that might be of importance for planning, mobilizing and executing a campaign." Hevia illustrates this with an example typical of the genre: the 1906 Military Report on Afghanistan.

> The volume begins with the main geographical features of Afghanistan and moves on to communications, fortresses and defenses, climate, resources, history (in this case, primarily British military adventures in Afghanistan), ethnology, administration, and the current military and political situation. By the 1890s, the structural order of the military report that can be seen in this one on Afghanistan, with only slight variations such as references to harbors and naval capabilities, was firmly in place. Each book was of a uniform size, shape, paper quality and type-face, and the small format made them easily portable.[67]

Like the route book, which instructed military leaders on the best means of moving troops to a particular location, the military report, the settlement report, and the gazetteer each reflected an ordering of information to be applied for military or civilian purposes. In each of these cases, the preeminent position of geographical information emphasized the basic epistemic assertion that place necessarily preceded people in the eyes of the imperial state. Like the gazetteer, these reference manuals for governance and security reflected both the concrete utility of having facts at hand and the more abstract epistemic assumptions of the state. Administrators could read these manuals for facts (the term "manual" itself signals the use of the book in-hand). Their contents also reflected the imperial state's attempt to "read" places and peoples and to situate them—trigonometrically, in case of geographical information—within a broader informational order. This ordering was a crucial prerequisite for viewing the world *geopolitically* (as a series of interconnected territories dependent on geographical features) and *geostrategically* (utilizing those geographical features to the advantage of the state).

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[67] Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 108.

d. Information Gathering: The Impact of Himalayan Snow

Before moving on to examining case studies that in various ways challenged the static territorial assumptions of the colonial state, it is worth examining the means by which some of this information was gathered and disseminated. Much of the information in the early official gazetteers was built on the work of scholar-administrators like Tod, Malcolm, Elphinstone, Cunningham, and Elias, and on the findings of explorers and scientists like Moorcroft, Strachey, and Thomson.[68] But as the colonial state grew, individual pieces of information—be it cartographical, economic, or meteorological—were more easily integrated through bureaucratic developments within the Government of India. Local administrators, like the British Joint Commissioners cited in Chapter Three, played an increasingly integrated role in gathering information and sending it to specific branches within the central government.

The assembly of data on snow throughout the Himalayas is, perhaps, one of the most striking examples of how, in a short period of time, information from local administrators was brought together (and regularly collected and revised) for the purposes of assembling a single meteorological image of India. The central government of India established the India Meteorological Department in 1875 in order to bring all meteorological work under a single, central department.[69] Henry Francis Blanford was appointed "Meteorological Reporter to the

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[68] The early role of these "colonial administrator-scholars" in shaping the development of historical writing in India has been noted by Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Birth of Academic Historical Writing in India," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 4: 1800-1945*. Edited by Stuart Macintyre, Juan Maiguashca, and Attila Pok. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). 520-536.

[69] http://www.imd.gov.in/pages/about_history.php.

Government of India," the first such official meteorologist in British India.[70] Of the significance of the Meteorological Department's founding, Blanford wrote: "the importance of which, in connection with Indian meteorology, was, as far as I am aware, hardly suspected before 1875 (when for the first time, the weather phenomena of the whole country were brought together, and investigated as a systematic whole)…"[71]

Mike Davis notes in his critical account of British famine policy and the global impact of El Niños that when the monsoons failed in 1876, there had already been calls for at least a decade (going back to the Orissa Famine Commission of 1866) to establish a body to collect and study "atmospheric pressure data from weather stations throughout the Empire."[72] Blanford quickly emerged as the expert on the subject. As Davis remarked, Blanford "virtually founded modern monsoon meteorology, and his 1877 book, *The Indian Meteorologist's Vade-Mecum*, 'became the most widely used textbook on tropical meteorology for the rest of the century.'"[73]

One of Blanford's earliest tasks was to write a report on the Madras famine of 1876. In the process, his attention "was forcibly drawn to the unusual persistence of dry north-west winds in North-Western and Western India." He observed that a "connection was traced between these

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[70] Ibid. Before his appointment he had worked for twenty years in the Geological Survey of India, studying coal deposits in Orissa, lecturing on geology at Presidency College, and curating the Museum of Geology in Calcutta.

[71] NAI, Foreign, A General E, December 1883, nos. 54-56. "State of the Snow on the Himalayas, 1882-1883."

[72] Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (New York and London: Verso, 2001), 217. Moreover, the British Empire already "had the rudiments of a world climate observation system linked by telegraph and undersea cables," and had benefited from the First Meteorological Congress in 1873, which standardized the chronicling of meteorological information, "making it easier to recognize and map large-scale events."

[73] Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, 428 n. 5: His cited source for the quote is: Gisela Kutzbach, "Concepts of Monsoon Physics in Historical Perspective," in Jay Fein and Pamela Stephens, eds., *Monsoons* (New York, 1987), 181.

winds and the anomalously high pressure and low temperature of the North-West Himalaya and the Upper Punjab and that their probable dependence on the late and copious snowfall of the spring of [1876]."[74] After embarking on a multi-year study of monsoon rains and snowfall in the mountains, Blanford concluded in 1879 that "[t]hese three years affording positive evidence of the coincidence of a copious and late snowfall with deficient and retarded monsoon rains, were followed by a remarkably dry and snowless winter and spring in 1878-79…." He concluded that it was "a matter of very high importance in the practical application of our meteorological system to the framing of forecasts of the rainy season, that very special steps be taken to obtain the fullest possible information on the extent and thickness of the snows…" In particular, he wished to gather information on the Himalayan snows' condition in spring, "the period during which their slow or rapid decrease is of more immediate importance to the prospects of the ensuing rains."[75]

To accomplish this, Blanford requested that "Political and District officers and other residents in Hill States" across the Himalaya submit information on snowfall, and in 1880 he began to receive their reports.[76] The surviving archival documents show that statistics on snowfall were submitted from a wide array of administrators, from the offices of the Commissioner of Kumaon and the Deputy Commissioner of Chamba, to the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh and his superior, the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir. Blanford also

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[74] NAI, Foreign, A General E, December 1883, nos. 54-56. "State of the Snow on the Himalayas, 1882-1883."

[75] Ibid.

[76] NAI, Foreign, General B, May 1879, nos. 127-128. **"**Information required by the Meteorological Reporter as to the exact thickness of the snows on the southern slopes of the Himalaya and on the ranges west of the Indus"; and NAI, Foreign, A Gen E, 5-6, June 1884. "Report on the state of the snow on the Himalayas for 1883-1884."

recommended that "monthly reports on the state of the snows, on the passes and the higher ranges of the interior, should be drawn up from information to be obtained from native traders and travellers and others, and communicated to this office."[77] After receiving these reports, Blanford was more confident in articulating theories about Indian meteorological patterns. "The information contributed by these gentlemen is very full and valuable," he wrote appreciatively, especially as it had "been collected in many cases only by diligent personal enquiry."[78]

In order that "these reports should receive that attention which the importance of the subject seems to demand," he wrote, it was "necessary that civil officers and others who are in a position to obtain and contribute this information, should be made aware of the objects which it is required to subserve, and that they should understand how and in what manner the snow-fields are conceived to influence the rainfall of the plains." "Only thus," Blanford stated, "will they become impressed with a full sense of the great administrative importance of the information required of them; and they will be led to obtain and forward information from the less accessible parts of the mountain tract with the requisite fulness [*sic*] and frequency."

To better educate these administrators and their assistants—like the BJC's Actinometrical Observer in Leh—Blanford sent them information on his "theory of dry winds and drought in India." His theory ran as follows:

> The observed facts are that a fall of snow on the hills is followed, as soon as the weather clears, by a considerable rise of pressure over the mountains, and frequently also over the north-western plains; and this rise is accompanied by a steady wind on the plains. …As representing the determining causes of famine, they are certainly far from exhaustive; for in periods of severe and prolonged drought, such as the two years, August 1877 to August 1878, there were causes in operation of far wider incidence than any which have their seat in the Himalaya.

[77] NAI, Foreign, A General E, December 1883, nos. 54-56. "State of the Snow on the Himalayas, 1882-1883."

[78] NAI, Foreign, A General E, June 1884, no. 5, "Meteorology," May 16, 1884. "Report on the state of the snow on the Himalayas for 1883-1884."

> But even throwing a partial light on the cause of drought, the theory appears to me to have such claim to consideration as to make more special study of Himalayan meteorology a matter of considerable moment.[79]

A year later, in 1884, Blanford again confirmed his theory of "an intimate connection between the Himalayan snows and the prevalence of westerly or north-westerly winds on the plains of Northern India…"[80]

But this meteorological phenomenon extended far beyond the Himalaya. Reports sent to Blanford's office from Mauritius, Colombo, Singapore, Batavia, Australia, New Zealand, and northern China confirmed that "the extreme high pressure system associated with the [1876] Madras drought was unprecedented in a half-century of Indian observations."[81] These reports also showed it to be a part of a much larger high-pressure anomaly. Blanford's hypothesis of "a barometric see-saw regulating rainfall over a vast swathe of the globe, although erroneously located along a Russian-Indian axis, was a seminal idea that would contribute to the eventual discovery of the Southern Oscillation."[82]

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[79] NAI, Foreign, A General E, December 1883, nos. 54-56. "State of the Snow on the Himalayas, 1882-1883."

[80] NAI, Foreign, A Gen E, June 1884, no. 5, May 16, 1884. "Report on the state of the snow on the Himalayas for 1883-1884." "Memorandum by the Meteorological Reporter to the Government of India, on the Himalayan snow-fall of the season 1883-84 up to the end of March."

[81] Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, 217-18.

[82] Ibid., 218. Davis further notes, "By 1876, however, when famine holocausts directly threatened the moral legitimations of empire, tropical science was rapidly being incorporated into colonial bureaucracies like Blanford's India Meteorological Department. Expanded resources for data collection and analysis were bought at the price of subservience to an ideology that contrasted British Progress to "tragic" Indian Nature. / From Lytton and Temple onward, as we have seen official discourse about famine revolved around the zealously defended dogma that climate was its primary and inexorable cause." (218-19) This is another example of the organizing of natural information to suggest a dependent force on society, history, economics, and politics.

Blanford's successor, Sir John Eliot, added more variables to this meteorological model, including "Indian Ocean trade winds, Nile floods, and rainfall in South Africa and southern Australia…"[83] As would later become clear, the variability of the Indian monsoon included the interaction of Eurasian weather patterns with "the dynamic convection systems of the tropical Pacific and Indian Oceans," what would later would be determined as La Niña events.[84]

After Blanford's reports and theory were submitted to his superiors in 1884, the Revenue and Agriculture Department ordered that this information should be published in a supplement to the *Gazette of India*, an annual official publication on the expenses and revenue of British India. It also included supplemental information such as notifications, appointments, and laws, as well as occasional reports on scientific, military, or otherwise useful subjects to administrators across India. Copies of Blanford's report were also directly forwarded to a wide array of local governors and administrators. It was noted in the margin of the Foreign Department memorandum that contained this order that his report had been forward to "Madras, Bombay, Bengal, N.-W. P. and Oudh, Punjab, Central Provinces, British Burmah, Assam, Coorg, Ajmere, [and the] Resident at Hyderabad."[85] Soon this material also found itself in revised district gazetteers in the descriptive subsection on meteorology.

The example of how Himalayan snowfall became connected to broader sub-continental meteorological trends illustrated how information supplied regularly from administrators scattered across the periphery of the Indian empire, like the British Joint Commissioner in

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[83] Ibid., 225-226

[84] (Davis, 216??). While reliable historical indexes on El Niño / La Niña cycles do not go back to the 1870s, it is highly probably that the patterns identified by Blanford reflected these broader global weather phenomena.

[85] NAI, Foreign, A General E, June 1884, nos. 5-6. "Report on the state of the snow on the Himalayas for 1883-1884."

Ladakh, was organized and re-distributed to its administrators through the colonial state bureaucracy, and in particular through the medium of official publications. This particular example also shows how the space of the Himalaya was unified through the collection of data—officer by officer, from west to east. Besides contributing to a particularly dramatic meteorological theory with global dimensions, at a more mundane level this data also found its way into district and imperial gazetteers, illustrating how the space of India could be read as a natural, interdependent system that enforced a sense of geographical unity.

II. Reading from the Ground Up: Sovereignty, Territory, and Tribute

The view of a district, province, princely state, or empire as a static territory with fixed borderlines, often attached to "natural" features and a historically cohesive population made sense to the British imperial state, though its disposition towards expansion, as Alfred Lyall, George Curzon, and other imperial administrators noted, meant that those borders frequently changed.[86] The model of organizing imperial space was primarily based on territory, a political concept that has received thoughtful treatment by several prominent scholars of European history and political theory. Stuart Elden's recent exploration of the emergence of the idea of territory within Western political thought provides a working definition to test in the imperial context. For Elden, the territorial notion of space is, broadly speaking, as "a bounded space under the control of a group of people, usually a state" that is historically produced.[87] The concept of territory is a conflation of a juridico-political idea with geographical space.[88] In a similar vein, territoriality,

[86] Curzon, *Frontiers*; Lyall, "Frontiers and Protectorates."

[87] Elden, *The Birth of Territory*, 322.

[88] Thanks to Daniel Haines for refining this point.

according to Charles Maier, constitutes "the properties, including power, provided by the control of bordered political space..."[89] Borders are thus the necessary prerequisite of territory and territorialization, the process of generating and defining territory.[90]

At the local level the establishment of clearly defined linear borders allowed for the key extractive activity of the state (imperial, or otherwise): taxation. As Owen Lattimore noted, walls—as physical manifestations of borders—work not just to keep so-called "barbarians" out, they also help keep taxpayers in.[91] But at the wider level precise borderlines also clearly symbolized the state's sovereignty, jurisdiction, and physical position relative to neighboring states. This clarity, it is worth noting, was not always in the interest of imperial administrators. As noted by numerous frontiers experts, including the viceroy George Curzon, there were multiple frontiers at which the empire ended.[92] Yet despite the sometimes ambiguous policy positions that came from the arrangement of its frontiers and the connected "buffer states" and "spheres of influence," by the end of the nineteenth century the imperial British state insisted on increasingly precise language, location, and techniques to "delimit and demarcate" its territorial

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[89] Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," 808.

[90] In a territorial model of political organization, the border is the beginning of both territory and sovereignty.

[91] A point James C. Scott also makes in the concluding chapter of his recent *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017).

[92] See, for instance, Henry Bathurst Hanna, *India's Scientific Frontier: Where Is It? What Is It?* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1895); Thomas H. Holdich, *The Indian Borderland, 1880-1900* (London: Methuen and Co., 1901); Holdich, *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making*.

boundaries.[93] The concepts of frontiers and boundaries became increasingly distinct. Whatever geopolitical aspirations might have existed for the spaces beyond the administrative boundary, it was crucial to have the empire's formal limits known, marked, and in accordance with a set of standardized practices.[94] Where this boundary was still uncertain, the central government repeatedly encouraged its local administrators to clarify those limits for the purposes of maps, gazetteers, and military reports, so as to better exercise judicial authority over its subjects and minimize the potential for conflicts with neighboring states.

By emphasizing borders as the first condition for legibility, the imperial state often came into conflict with populations that regularly transgressed them. In addition to nomadic groups, traders, and pilgrims, long-established political relationships throughout the Himalaya often challenged Westphalian notions of ostensibly sovereign and "perfectly equal" states. Pre-colonial customary relations between political actors like the *rgyal.po* of Ladakh and the Ganden Phodrang (dga'.ldan pho.brang) of Central Tibet were either dismissed by the British imperial state, or seen as threats that could undermine the jurisdictional power of the border. State-imposed borders were also undermined by long-running historical patterns of pastoralism and season-dependent trade. Foremost among the insights of Neeladri Bhattacharya, David Gilmartin, James C. Scott, and others on the dynamics between plains and hill societies is the deep threat posed to the state by peoples who regularly move, challenging legibility practices like census taking, taxation, and the regulation of a fixed population that were reflected in

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[93] Henry McMahon gave these two terms distinct technical meanings. "'Delimitation' I have taken to comprise the determination of a boundary line by treaty or otherwise, and its definition in written, verbal terms; 'demarcation' to comprise the actual laying down of a boundary line on the ground, and its definition by boundary pillars or other similar physical means." A. Henry McMahon, "International Boundaries," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 84, No. 4330 (November 15, 1935): 4.

[94] Lyall, "Frontiers and Protectorates."

manuals of governance like district gazetteers.[95] A legible population required a legible territory and, therefore, a legible border.

Even though the political structures of Ladakh were partially dependent on the extraction of labor and revenue from a static peasant base, the Ladakhi economy was also highly dependent on the influx of goods from short- and medium-distance trade and on the revenue gained from participating in segments of long-distance trans-Himalayan trade between Kashmir and the plains of India on one side and Tibet, Kashgar and Yarkand on the other. As Chapter One illustrated, the rulers of pre-colonial Ladakh had generally been comfortable with the movement of traders, pilgrims, and semi-nomadic pastoralists. These mobile peoples were, in many ways, the economic lifeblood of the region. Their traded goods were typically taxed at the border points established through treaties like the one signed between the rulers of Ladakh and central Tibet at Tingmosgang in 1684.[96] The revenue generated from this settlement was separate from the annual tithes paid to local monasteries determined through local assessments on the village level holdings of agriculturalist families. Individuals and families were responsible for paying these costs, often in kind, or with their own labor. Traders, nomads, and agriculturalists each paid different forms of tax. Consistency across the Ladakhi populace mattered little to the *rgyal.po*

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[95] Neeladri Bhattacharya, "Predicaments of Mobility: Peddlers and Itinerants in Nineteenth Century Northwestern India," in *Society and Circulation: Mobile People and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia, 1750-1950*, ed. Claude Markovits, Jacques Pouchepadass, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003). David Gilmartin, "Scientific Empire and Imperial Science: Colonialism and Irrigation Technology in the Indus Basin," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 4 (1994): 1127–49; David Gilmartin, *Blood and Water: The Indus River Basin in Modern History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015); Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*. In Scott's description of Zomia, what distinguishes the region is its relative statelessness, its relative equality, and the inability to effectively impose taxation, 19-20.

[96] See Chapter One.

and his ministers who gathered much of their own revenue through directly or indirectly participating in trade (the *rgyal.po* himself was known as the "Chief Trader of Ladakh"[97]).

Transcending Ladakh's minimally defined territorial limits were the religious and political relationships it maintained through a series of customary "tribute" missions that also functioned to promote long-distance trade in high-value items like tea, gold, *charas* (hashish), and *pashm*. But the presumed political relationships represented by these tribute missions provoked anxieties among frontier officials, as evidenced by Captain Henry Ramsay's attempts to abolish the Lopchak (the triennial Ladakhi tribute mission to Lhasa). The risk, for the British, was that a relationship of the sort that made sovereignty more ambiguous would erode, or erase, the political meaning of the border. What coherence or meaning could the borders inscribed on their maps and described in their gazetteers have, if they failed to sufficiently enclose a legible political entity? Further complicating the political ambiguity generated by the tribute missions, were examples of non-contiguous or poorly defined territory that cast doubt on the very shape of Ladakh. Like other regions with undefined borders, or in cases of princely states with territorial enclaves elsewhere, information about Ladakh became less authoritative when the territory itself faded into indeterminate, "nonstate" space.[98]

The following sections explore disputes over Ladakhi territory within Tibet, questions of tribute crossing British-imposed borders, grazing rights for semi-nomadic populations, taxation, and the land change caused by natural disasters. These examples offer an alternative to the top-down reading of the landscape presented in the gazetteers and official publications, one that

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[97] John Bray, "Ladakh's Lopchak Missions to Lhasa: Gift Exchange, Diplomatic Ritual, and the Politics of Ambiguity," in *Commerce and Communities: Social Status and the Exchange of Goods in Tibetan Societies*, ed. Jeannine Bischoff and Alice Travers (Berlin: EB-Verlag, forthcoming), 5.

[98] Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 10-11.

reveals pre-colonial spatial configurations that remained rooted in the Himalayan locale, below the level of state-imposed territorial legibility. In short, these case studies illustrate how moving peoples and changing landscapes produced challenges for a state modeled on a static and enclosed vision of territory.

a. The Lopchak (*lo.phyag*) and Chaba (*La.dwags gzhung.tshong*)

In 1889, the former British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh, Ney Elias, responded to a request from Henry Mortimer Durand, the Secretary of the Foreign Department, to provide context to concerns over apparent tribute missions between Ladakh and Tibet. No longer the chief British administrator in Ladakh, Elias had become an expert consulted on a wide array of frontier issues, ranging from Afghanistan to Siam.[99] "Briefly stated," Elias began his assessment,

> [The British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh] Captain Ramsay comes to the conclusion (1) that the [deposed] Raja of Ladakh pays tribute to the Lhassa authorities; (2) that the Wazir of Ladakh [the Dogra-appointed *wazīr-i-wazārat*] sends tribute to the Chinese Ambans at Lhassa; (3) that Lhassa refuses to recognise that Ladakh belongs now to Kashmir, but affects to consider the Ladakh Rajas to be in power as heretofore; and (4) that Lhassa treats the Raja with some civility and treats the Kashmir Wazir with insolence. Captain Ramsay says the periodical missions can be stopped, and recommends that they should be stopped; he also recommends that the Raja should be removed from Ladakh together with his whole family, that the Wazir should not be allowed to correspond with the Lhassa authorities or with the Chinese authorities in Turkistan, and that Government should "arrange with the Darbar for a British administration of Ladakh."[100]

[99] See Chapter Three of this dissertation for his time as British Joint Commissioner, and Chapter Five for his later boundary commission work; and for his biography more generally: Morgan, *Ney Elias*.

[100] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, September 1889, nos. 211-217. "Lhassa authorities still recognize the Ex-Raja of Ladakh as in power and ignore the Kashmir Wazir."

The tribute to which Henry Ramsay referred was the triennial Lopchak from Ladakh to Lhasa and the reciprocal annual *gzhung.tshong* also known as the Chaba (lit. "tea man") to Ladakhis because of the main Tibetan commodity traded on the mission.[101]

While irregular gift exchanges preceded the 1684 Treaty of Tingmosgang, the treaty formally established these missions between the *rgyal.po* of Ladakh and the Central Tibetan government. According to the *La.dwags rgyal.rabs* (the Royal Chronicles of Ladakh), the treaty signaled the formal establishment of regular customary relations between the ruling regimes of both Ladakh and Tibet.[102] The gifts brought on the Lopchak included: gold; saffron; calico; and soft cotton cloth.[103] The Ladakhi representatives gave these gifts to the treasurer of the Central Tibetan government along with smaller gifts for the heads of the major monasteries. In return, the Chaba brought Sichuanese tea and other goods from Lhasa. As John Bray has observed, the basic form of the mission changed little between 1684 and 1950, when the last *lo.phyag* is recorded.[104] The reciprocal missions benefited from *'u.lag* (*corvée* labor, or *begar*) for their transport along the Leh-Lhasa route and the *La.dvags rgyal.rabs* also notes that the mission included 200 animals besides riding horses and servants, suggesting that the commercial goals of the mission were more significant that the formal gift giving.[105]

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[101] In John Bray's forthcoming essay, Bray, "Lopchak."

[102] Ibid. The two regimes were rNam.rgyal dynasty of Ladakh and the Ganden Phodrang of Central Tibet.

[103] *La.dwags rgyal.rabs*, Vol. 2, 42. "Soft cotton cloth" is Francke's translation of *bab.sta*.

[104] Central Intelligence Agency, "Information Report, "Ladakh (Kashmir)-Tibet Trade/Proposed Organization of 1950 Lobchag Mission," November 7, 1952, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00047R000200130008-6.pdf.

[105] John Bray, "Ladakh's Lopchak Missions to Lhasa: Gift Exchange, Diplomatic Ritual, and the Politics of Ambiguity," in *Commerce and Communities: Social Status and the Exchange of Goods in Tibetan Societies*, ed. Jeannine Bischoff and Alice Travers (Berlin: EB-Verlag, forthcoming), 1-2; 6.

The *La.dvags rgyal.rabs* also recorded a similar reciprocal gift exchange with Kashmir involving the presentation by the *rgyal.po* of Ladakh to the ruler of Kashmir of eighteen piebald horses, eighteen pods of musk, and eighteen white yak tails.[106] In exchange, the *rgyal.po* was given a *jāgīr* (rent-free estate) at Naushahr, in the Kashmir Valley. It is likely that this gift exchange stopped with the Dogra invasion of Ladakh in 1834. In 1842 the Raja of Jammu, Gulab Singh, shored up his conquest of Ladakh by concluding a treaty signed by his representative and representatives of the Emperor of China, and the "Lama Guru of Lhasa" (the Dalai Lama).[107] The Lopchak was reaffirmed and continued under the watch of the newly appointed chief Dogra official in Ladakh, the *wazīr-i-wazārat*.[108]

Moorcroft and Cunningham both remarked on the Lopchak during their time in Ladakh. But it was only with the British Joint Commissioners Ney Elias and Henry Ramsay in the 1870s and 1880s that the implications of a tribute mission began to arouse anxieties at the top of the imperial bureaucratic order. When Durand wrote to Elias for advice, he was doing so in the context of other concerns across the Himalayan frontier, particularly in terms of British India's

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[106] Bray, "Lopchak," 7. Bray notes that "[t]wo of the sets of gifts—the musk and the yak tails—correspond to the presents offered by Deldan Namgyal to Aurangzeb two decades earlier."

[107] J&K State Archives, Jammu. "Treaty between Ladakh and Tibet: 1920, 276/R.P-4."

[108] The treaty reaffirmed that, "between the Darbar and Lhassa people (vide Ghulabnamah, page 264) ….no disregard will be shown to anything agreed upon in the presence of God; and we will have nothing to do with the countries bordering on the frontier of Ladak. We will carry on the trade in Shawl, Pasham and Tea as before, by way of Ladak; and if any one of the Sri Raja's enemies comes to our territories and says anything against the Raja, we will not listen to him, and will not allow him to remain in our country; and whatever traders come from Ladak shall experience no difficulty from our side. We will not act otherwise but in the same manner as it has been prescribed in this meeting regarding the fixing of the Ladak frontier and the keeping open of the road for the traffic in Shawl, Pasham and Tea. We will observe our pledge to God, Gaitri and Pasi. Wazir Mian Khusal Chu is witness. / Written on the 2nd day of Asuh 1899 / (about) July 1842." NAI, Foreign, Secret F, September 1889, nos. 211-217. "Lhassa authorities still recognize the Ex-Raja of Ladakh as in power and ignore the Kashmir Wazir." Captain H. Ramsay to Colonel Parry Nisbet, 23rd June 1889: report on the Lopchak.

relationship with Sikkim. There, in 1886, a small Tibetan militia had arrived in the vicinity of the Jelap Pass in response to reports of British road building. British troops responded with force in 1888, pushing the Tibetan soldiers across the Jelap Pass, the same route that Francis Younghusband's forces would take fifteen years later to invade Tibet.

Consulting with authorities like Elias across the Indo-Tibetan frontier-lands, the Foreign Department began to perceive a broader pattern in trans-frontier political relationships. "These papers," Durand wrote regarding the British Joint Commissioner's memorandum on the Lopchak, "come opportunely and show that Chinese and Tibetan pretensions in regard to Sikkim are not an isolated case, but part of a system."[109] Durand shared Ramsay's concerns with the Political Officer in Sikkim, A. W. Paul, who expressed fears of Tibetan inroads into the British protectorate of Sikkim. In response to Durand's request, Paul wrote that the Lopchak mission "appears common to several other States: as Captain Ramsay points out the word is Lo-phyag (pronounced Lo-cha or in Ladakhi Lob-cha). Juëschke translate it 'Embassy sent every year to the King to renew the oath of allegiance:' Csoma de Körös translates it 'Respects or homage paid every year by envoys to a superior lord.' The Bhutanese call their agent or vakil according to Lauva Ugyen Gyatsho Lo-lchak-pa (Lo-cha-pa) which is evidently the same word misspelt, as I can find no such word in the dictionary as 'Lchak'…."[110]

In reading the Ladakhi instance of tribute with Lhasa as part of a systemic series of relationships, Durand and others at the top of the Government of India began to see patterns in trans-frontier behavior. Not for the last time, the sense of political insecurity along the frontier

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[109] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, September 1889, nos. 211-217. "Lhassa authorities still recognize the Ex-Raja of Ladakh as in power and ignore the Kashmir Wazir." Durand to Viceroy.

[110] Ibid., "Darjiling," 14 August 1889, A.W. Paul, esq. to Sir Mortimer Durand. The translation errors here are bountiful.

inspired recommendations of taking direct control of the imperial periphery instead of relying on dependent states to do so.[111] Failing that step, however, he suggested greater oversight by the BJC. In August 1889, Durand forwarded the collected opinions of his frontier experts to the viceroy. On the matter of the Lopchak, he wrote. "I do not see how it is possible for any one to argue that the letters and presents in this case are purely complimentary and mean nothing. See particularly the answers of the Ambans. I have no doubt that the sending of them should be stopped, but I think we had better take no action until the Sikkim matter is settled."[112] On August 16, 1889, the viceroy wrote to the Secretary of State for India. "…There can, in our opinion, be no doubt that the Chinese and Tibetan pretensions in regard to Sikkim are part of a system, and that unless they are steadily resisted, we shall have much difficulty hereafter in dealing with the Himalayan States." But there were also signs that a British frontier in Ladakh was beginning to be recognized by the Government of Tibet in Lhasa. In a letter from the *munshi* (clerk) of the Ladakh Agency Office to Ramsay in December 1889, the unnamed *munshi* noted that he had heard from two prominent Ladakhi Traders, Hajis Haider Shah and Nasir Shah, that the leader of the Chaba had sent a report to Lhasa regarding state of affairs in Ladakh and that "the Kashmir State, at the suggestion of the British Government, [had], through the Wazir of Ladakh, placed a guard of sepoys on the frontier, and that [the leader of the Chaba] sends them the report in order

[111] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, September 1889, nos. 211-217. "Lhassa authorities still recognize the Ex-Raja of Ladakh as in power and ignore the Kashmir Wazir." Captain H. Ramsay to Colonel Parry Nisbet, 23rd June 1889: report on the Lopchak.

[112] Ibid.

that they may be aware of it."[113] Nevertheless, this possible recognition of a frontier did little to assuage the basic problem of the tribute missions.

Writing from Ladakh, Henry Ramsay continued to articulate his concern to his superiors, invoking his understanding of international law to further his case for alarm. "[I]t is incompatible with our dignity as a leading Power that the petty State of Lhassa should treat Ladak, which by right of conquest belongs to one of our Indian feudatory chiefs, as being politically subordinate to Lhassa. For the international law on this point, please see Wheaton, Chapter 2, page 52."[114] Ramsay was so concerned by the continued political implications of the tribute missions that he submitted his May 1890 monthly Diary directly to the Foreign Department in Shimla, breaking protocol by bypassing his superior officer in Srinagar.[115] Ramsay's fear was triggered by a report he had gathered from traders passing through Leh about the Leh-Yarkand road being closed as a result Tibetan concerns over Russian explorers traveling towards the "Leh-Lhasa frontier." His continued concerns, as well as his decision to abolishing a passport system to make it easier for peasants unable to pay a newly raised tax, [116] even triggered a formal letter from the Majaraja of

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[113] Report that the British Government has sent a guard of Kashmir sepoys to the Ladakh Frontier: Sec E, Dec, 182, page 115. 1890. No. 182: "*Extract from enclosure to Kashmir Special Branch Report No. 47, for week ending 7th December 1889*. / Extract from a letter from the Munshi of Ladakh Agency Office to the British Joint-Commissioner, Ladakh. November 25, 1889.

[114] Ibid.

[115] NAI, Foreign, Frontier Part B, July 1890, nos. 153-158. "Proposal of the British Joint Commissioner, Ladak, to put a stop to the trade between Ladak and Lhassa."

[116] See Chapter One. "Proposal of the British Joint Commissioner, Ladak, to put a stop to the trade between Ladak and Lhassa" Frontier Part B, 153-158, July 1890, no. 157.

Jammu and Kashmir to the Resident in Kashmir, complaining about Ramsay's "interference in the internal administration of Ladak."[117]

Against Ramsay's protests, Durand and the viceroy chose to let the matter drop. It resurfaced in 1899, when the new British Joint Commissioner, Captain Kennion, came to realize that the Jammu and Kashmir state government had started advancing money to the Lopchak mission as an official investment in the Leh-Lhasa trade. The prospect of a guaranteed 67 percent return on its investment appealed to the Kashmir Darbar, which had little concern over the appearance of the mission as a form of tribute paid to Tibet, or China. But like his predecessors, Kennion concluded that "The triennial Lapchak [was] ... a pernicious anomaly which should be abolished as soon as possible." He also noted the existence of numerous other commercial missions. "The Triennial Lapchak is not the only commercial mission of the kind between Ladakh and Tibet, though the important one. In addition there are ten annual missions between either Leh and Lhassa or Leh and Gartok, … all of which are entitled to a fixed amount of free carriage." But Kennion also saw a reason to keep these missions running, given the reluctance of

[117] Jammu and Kashmir State Archives-Jammu, Persian Records, "Copy of a letter no. 1508, dated Dec. 1890 from Late Raja Amar Singh Ji Bahadur to Col. W. F., Resident in Kashmir, complaining against the interference in the internal adm of Ladakg Capt. Ramsay, BJC Leh and his conduct in flouting the orders of the state council."

the Tibetan government to allow the British into their country.[118] In 1900, it was decided that Kennion should travel to Western Tibet with a letter from Viceroy Curzon in an attempt to communicate with the Government of Tibet. But he was rebuffed by the *gar.dpons* at Gartok, and returned to Leh. His rejection was added to the growing list of intolerable treatment by Tibet that would push the British to invade in 1903-04.[119]

From the perspective of the government of Jammu and Kashmir, with a guaranteed return on its investment, the missions did not seem to threaten their political standing vis-à-vis Tibet.[120] In February 1906 the Maharaja's officials released an order responding to renewed British threats to end the mission. "[I]t is not desirable," the letter read, "to discontinue the sending of the Lapchak mission to Lhassa nor is it advisable that the concessions hitherto allowed to the

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[118] This was, after all, still four years before Younghusband's invasion in December 1903. Kennion went on to write: "So long however as the Lhassa Government maintains with success the ancient close border system, I am of opinion that it would be premature to abolish these, the almost only means of intercourse between Ladakh and Lhassa; but the sooner a way can be found to break through the cast iron hedge the Lhassa theocracy has set about the country, the better for any one and especially for the people of Tibet itself." Like many "men on the spot" before him, Kennion appreciated the possibility of commercial growth, though this often oscillated with the security concerns of increased trans-frontier traffic. "A deputation of Hindu traders who recently waited on me stated in the course of conversation that if the road to Tibet was opened they would at once abandon the Yarkand trade, and start trading with this now forbidden land. There can be no question that for Indian teas especially, Tibet forms a vast market which will some day be opened; at present the forced sale of Chinese tea forms too important a source of profit to Lhassan officials all over the country[.] for them to do otherwise than put every obstacle in the way of the advent of the Indian article." NAI, Foreign Department. "Lapchak Mission. Information regarding the Kashmir Frontier." Frontier B, Nov. 1899. 141-146. Diary for 15th August to 15th September 1899.

[119] Bray, "Lopchak," 21; and Kennion's official report is in OIOC/L/P&S/7/135, No 11. For a more popular account written for a wider audience, see also Kennion (1932: 107–124). R. L. Kennion, *Sport and Life in the Further Himalaya* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1910), 241-261.

[120] NAI, Foreign, Frontier B, November 1899, nos. 141-146. "Lapchak Mission. Information regarding the Kashmir Frontier." Diary for 15th August to 15th September 1899.

Choba [*ja.pa*] Mission, within State territories should be discontinued."[121] However, the Darbar's statement noted a growing problem, the exploitation of the zamindars, landed peasants, in their obligation to provide corvée labor.[122] "This will be secured by directing that so much transport as is necessary to be supplied for the purposes of these two Missions … should be obtained as heretofore but that payment for such transport at the rates recommended by the Wazir-i-Wazarat should be made by the Darbar."[123]

On the Tibetan side, similar appeals by peasants aggrieved by the obligation to offer unpaid labor in assisting the missions reached the 13th Dalai in Lhasa. From 1930 until the last Lopchak in 1950, the Tibetan government "discontinued the practice of providing free transport, not only to the 'Lapchak' Mission, but also to their own officials travelling on duty."[124] The Political Officer in Sikkim wrote in 1933 that "His Holiness the Dalai Lama appears to have been so impressed with the hardships caused to the peasants by requisitions for free transport that he himself now uses his own private transport when travelling. Formerly free transport was always levied."

Like the Lopchak, Chaba, and other trade and tribute missions, it is also worth noting that the exchange of letters between the Nono of Spiti and the (deposed) *rgyal.po* of Ladakh also

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[121] NAI, Foreign, Frontier, June 1906, no. 100, Part B., in File No. 376-X (Sec) 1932. "Copy of His Highness the Maharaja's order dated 6th February 1906:" Supply to the Director-General of Commercial Intelligence of information regarding the leader of the Lapchak Mission and the trade in tourquoises between Ladakh and Lhassa. Proposed diversion of the _____ southwards."

[122] These zamindars are not to be confused with the large-scale landowners found in much of north India.

[123] Ibid.

[124] NAI, Foreign, File No. 376-X (Sec) 1932. "Letter from F. Williamson Political officer in Sikkim to deputy sec. foreign and political dept. dated 23rd January 1933." For the last Lopchak, see: Central Intelligence Agency, "Information Report, "Ladakh (Kashmir)-Tibet Trade/Proposed Organization of 1950 Lobchag Mission."

provoked concern for British administrators. Spiti was transferred to East India Company control in 1846 after the Dogras, who had taken it after their conquest of Ladakh a decade earlier.[125] In 1889, when he was raising alarms about the Lopchak, Captain Ramsay also brought this annual exchange of letters to the attention of his superiors in the Foreign Department. Ramsay's superior, the Resident in Kashmir, wrote to the Kashmir Darbar about this "Custom, considered objectionable, whereby an annual interchange of letters and presents passes between the Ruler of Spitti and the Wazir of Ladakh…"[126] After addressing his superiors, he received the order that the Punjab Government was requested to "order the Nono of Spiti to put a stop to the custom, and I am asked to thank the Durbar for the courtesy shown in the matter, at the same time however, to request that the Wazir of Ladakh may be required to renounce all intercourse of this kind with Spitti and to forbid the Raja of Ladakh to receive such letters and presents in future."

These concerns over the political meaning of the Lopchak and Chaba were never to be found in the pages of the *Gazetteer of Kashmír and Ladák*, which reduced the mission to a commercial event. On the "*The Lap Chuk*" the *Gazetteer* simply noted: "Under the treaty of 1842, a commercial caravan goes every third year from Ladák to Lhása, under the charge of an agent, who is a Kashmír official, and is known by the name of the "Lap Chuk." He takes and brings back presents and letters to and from the Ladák and Tibetán authorities."[127] A later

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[125] NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, September 1889, nos. 28-32. "Annual interchange of letters and presents between the Nono of Spiti and the Wazir and the Raja of Ladakh."

[126] Jammu and Kashmir State Archives (hereafter JKSA-J) Chief Secretariat / General Records / Index of Records Volume III (in three books: A to F, G to O and P to Z): Old English Records from 1868 AD to 1921 AD. "Copy of a letter No. 1106 dated 3rd September 1889, from the Resident in Kashmir, to the President of Council and Prime Minister to His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir." Discontinuance of the practice of interchange of letters and presents between the Ruler of Spitti and the Wazir of Ladakh: 1889, 30.

[127] Intelligence Branch, *Gazetteer of Kashmír and Ladák*, 120.

accounting in the alphabetical portion of the *Gazetteer* detailed the route taken by the mission, but no mention in the *Gazetteer* was made of the repeated and voluminous concerns that the Lopchak and other customary missions raised regarding a British dependent's relations with a neighboring political entity.

b. Other Questions of Tribute: The Problem of "Tribute Goats"

"Tribute," it is worth noting, can be a controversial term among historians. In modern Chinese historiography, for instance, it has been the subject of heated debates centered on questions of self-perception by the Qing state. In the "tribute system" articulated by the historian John Fairbank, China's foreign relations were conducted through an "asymmetric" and sino-centric model where the benevolent Qing emperor received gifts from the inferior states beyond China. This asymmetry is often encapsulated by the Qianlong Emperor's court's reluctance to entreat with the British embassy of George Macartney's in 1793. James Hevia's *Cherishing Men from Afar* (1995) challenged this model by revealing the ways in which Qing relations with their tributary states and foreign powers was more reflective of "imperial formations" and the performance of rulership, than any kind of internally originating policy of isolation, intransigence, or outright dismissal of all "barbarians." The Manchu rulers of the Qing dynasty were, after all, foreign conquerors overseeing a multiethnic empire. Their position at the "center" had to be constructed through careful strategies of governance and performance. These strategies included "spatial techniques" such as imperial tours of inspection, the erection of multi-lingual stelae, and the promotion of mapping territory.[128] As the example of the Macartney embassy to

[128] Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 409-461.

the court of the Qianlong Emperor illustrated to British observers in the nineteenth century, the perception of tributary relations could be read as an affront to the "perfect equality" between Westphalian sovereign states. British perceptions of a Chinese worldview shaped their own reciprocal view of China, replete with long-lasting tropes of "arrogance," "intransigence," and the need to "save face."[129]

In a similar vein of argument to those historians who rejected Fairbank's "tribute system," John Bray has argued that the success of the Lopchak (running as it did every three years for over two hundred and fifty years) was largely due to its ability to withstand multiple interpretations from its participants, while still adhering to a prescribed "guest ritual" and bi-directional gift giving, two key features noted by Hevia in his examination of tribute in the Qing context. But like Fairbank's model, the success of the Lopchak also rested on its ability to facilitate significant economic exchange irrespective of a strong institutional relation between Lhasa and Leh. The fact that the Lopchak was frequently carried out by members of Ladakh's principal Muslim trading community, the Arghons, is suggestive of the commercial value of the mission as much as it is of the easy intermingling of the region's Buddhist and Muslim communities.

While certain British administrators sought to minimize the Lopchak and Chaba *as* tribute missions with political meaning, they insisted upon upholding the clauses of treaties involving symbolic or nominal tribute offered *to them*. The case in point is Article 10 of the 1846 Treaty of Amritsar, which stated that "Maharaja Golab Sing acknowledges the supremacy of the British Government, and will in token of such supremacy present annually to the British Government one horse, twelve perfect shawl goats of approved breed (six male and six female),

[129] Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*.

and three pairs of Cashmere shawls."[130] These tokens also symbolized the object of greatest interest in the Ladakh trade, the precious *pashm* "shawl wool" used in the production of Kashmir's famed pashmina textiles. The annual receipt of the requisite "tribute shawls" was dutifully recorded by the Foreign Department, which passed along the shawls to Britain's monarch.[131] Occasionally there was official quibbling about the diminished quality of the shawls, but there was no debate about whether these symbols of allegiance were to be demanded. But the issue of the "twelve perfect shawl goats of approved breed" proved more difficult.

The archived records of the Foreign, Revenue, and Agricultural Departments all note that throughout the 1870s there were numerous attempts to transplant these goats to other parts of India and the empire in the hopes of cultivating pashmina elsewhere and reducing Jammu and Kashmir's monopoly on it. But climate proved to be a critical factor. Taken away from their high-altitude environment, the goats quickly died. Initially, officials tried sending them to neighboring Himalayan regions, but as one official noted, "[t]he goats do not thrive in Chamba, Kulu or Hazara, in fact in any part of the Northern Punjab."[132] Subsequent attempts were made to send them to Kumaon, but those too failed. Officials began to think of still farther destinations for the handful of goats being annually offered to them by the Kashmir Darbar. These unfortunate goats came from the herds of the transhumant *byang.pa*, who moved them from their

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[130] C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sunnuds Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, vol. 2 (Calcutta: Bengal Printing Company Limited, 1863), 377.

[131] See, for instance: NAI, Foreign, Part A, September 1860. "Receipt of tribute shawls from Cashmere"; NAI, Foreign, Political A, March 1870, nos. 100-103. "Despatch for the Cashmere Tribute Shawls for presentation to Her Majesty"; and NAI, Foreign, Internal, March 1908, nos. 93-97. "Kashmir" Tribute Shawl(s) for the year 1907," which included the remark that the "quality of the shawls received this year is inferior to the quality of the shawls received last year."

[132] NAI, Foreign, Political A, March 1882, nos. 79-81. "Question of the locality where the Kashmir Tribute Shawl Goats would thrive."

summer pastures on the Changthang plateau in eastern Ladakh to the *wazīr-i-wazārat* in Leh, who in turn sent them to the Government of Kashmir in Srinagar.

When the attempts in the Himalaya failed, the secretary of the Revenue Department, suggested that the goats might be "deported" to either Tasmania or New Zealand. He calculated the costs of passage by boat and suggested that February would be the ideal time of year for the goats to depart from Calcutta. But some officials rightly worried that this solution would not solve the problem annually. Revenue officials also wondered why they "should go out of [their] way to enable New Zealand and Tasmania to compete against Kashmir."[133] After the viceroy weighed in, the deportation experiment was "negatived." But in order to avoid breaking the terms of the treaty, several suggestions arose. The first was to annually decline them. But the viceroy rejected this, writing, "I do not think that we should give up this established tribute or decline to accept the goats. It does not the least signify from a political point of view what is done with them."[134]

The second suggestion came in 1883. The government of India decided that it would seek to modify the treaty to allow for pashm wool to be given in lieu of the goats. Ney Elias provided the crucial information for determining an equivalent amount of pashm. Elias calculated the average yield per goat to be 8-9 ounces of pashm (only the wool from the underbelly of the goat). Over a goat's average lifespan this amounted to roughly 3-3 1/3 pounds. The viceroy accepted the figures and the Maharaja's government soon agreed to modify the treaty.[135] Various

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[133] Ibid.

[134] NAI, Foreign, Political A, June 1882, nos. 136-139. "Breeding arrangements of the Kashmir shawl goats left to Punjab Government." From Revenue and Agricultural Department to Foreign Department, May 23, 1882.

[135] NAI, Foreign, A Political E, July 1883, nos. 229-230. "Correspondence with Kashmir regarding Treaty of 1846, Article X (pashm)."

indexes scattered throughout the National Archives of India show that the receipt of the tribute shawls continued until at least 1935, and there is even a record of an instance when Rs. 106 was recovered from an insurance company after the tribute shawls were "lost or damaged" aboard the *S.S. Canara* in 1911, a ship that would later be wrecked off Mauritius in 1914.[136] But after 1883, there was at least some relief for the small batch of goats that had annually been brought down from the Tibetan plateau to satisfy the British insistence on tribute. This symbolic transaction reflected a pressing and continual need for the British to assert sovereignty over its territory.

c. Men.ser

Returning to the 1684 Treaty of Tingmosgang, one of its more unusual features was a provision that granted rights to the Ladakhi *rgyal.po* for a settlement near the holy mountain and lake of Mt. Kailash and Lake Manasarovar in Western Tibet, which, following the Tibet-Ladakh-Mughal War (1679-84), was controlled by administrators sent by the Central Tibetan government. This village, called Men.ser,[137] was transferred after the formal annexation of Ladakh in 1842 to the Dogra Raja of Jammu, who shortly thereafter became the first Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. By then it was spoken of in terms a *jāgīr*, or deeded land.

The use of the term *jāgīr* by the Governments of Jammu and Kashmir and India is itself significant. Typically, a *jāgīr* was a land grant of an area extending beyond a single village that

[136] NAI, Foreign, Internal, June 1911, no. 24, Part B. "Recovery from the Insurance Company of R106-12-0 on account of contribution to general average paid on the insured consignment shipped per SS. Canara containing Tribute shawls." Also, for the notice of the ship's wreck: http://www.plimsoll.org/images/39031_tcm4-335153.pdf

[137] Also written in an alternative manuscript of the *La.dvags rgyal.rabs* as sMon.tsher and recorded in English records variously as Mensar, Min sar, Misar, and Misar Tarjum.

included a requirement of military service.[138] Most often a *jāgīr* was granted by a monarch to a feudatory prince. If this is the meaning intended by the term, it acknowledges that in this case the Tibetan government was making the Maharaja a feudatory prince. Elsewhere in the archives of the erstwhile princely state, ample documents detail the granting of *muafidār*s, the preferred term for land grants given by the Maharaja to inferior landlords. Min.ser, however, is consistently referred to as the "Maharaja's *jāgīr* in Tibet" (*tibat mein mahārāja ki jāgīr*; or *tibatī jāgīr*) in the *Tārīx-i-Jammuñ,* suggesting that it was understood to be granted by Tibet to the maharaja.[139] While these sorts of arrangements were not unknown across South Asia (or elsewhere[140]), the existence of this modest settlement complicated any notion of unambiguous sovereignty existing between Kashmir and Tibet, and, by extension, between the British Empire and the Qing Empire.

Moorcroft visited Men.ser while exploring western Tibet. He noted that the settlement consisted of "but one house made of bricks baked in the sun, and five tents of goat herds."[141] In 1882, the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, the direct superior to the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh, wrote to the then under-secretary to the Foreign Department, Henry Mortimer Durand. "Some time ago," he wrote, "I asked [Ney] Elias to try whether he could

[138] Though in parts of North India this type of arrangement was sometimes referred to as *umli* or *mukasa* when encompassing a single village or town.

[139] Khan, *Tārīḵh-i-Jammuñ*, 370-377 (??).

[140] The arrangement is not entirely dissimilar from the ways in which European enclaves sometimes functioned. Examples. Also, in a more contemporary sense, this arrangement might be likened to the granting of property for embassies to foreign powers within sovereign nations.

[141] William Moorcroft, "A Journey to Lake Manasarovara in Undes, a Province of Little Tibet," 1816.

ascertain anything about the Maharaja's *jagir* in Chinese territory."[142] Elias responded with a memorandum outlining the history of the subject.

"The whole of the country drained by the Indus beyond the present boundary of Ladak," Elias began, invoking the now standard use of the watershed as a boundary object, "and extending south-eastward … to the watershed of the Tan-pu or Brahmaputra—belonged originally to the Ladak Rajas." Elias then went on to recount a peculiar version of how it came to belong to Ladakh, likely conflating it with a Bhutanese territorial enclave nearby (Dar.chen, near Mount Kailash).[143] Instead of Ladakh's territorial loss of western Tibetan following the Tibet-Ladakh-Mughal War, Elias insisted that "Mipan Angpo" the head of the Drukpa Kagyu sect (who Elias wrongly assumed to be the "raja" of Ladakh) gave the provinces of Gartok and Rudok to the Dalai Lama as an act of piety after recovering from serious illness. He retained "for himself only some grazing grounds about two marches north-west of the Mansarowar Lake on the road to Gartok. These grazing grounds are known as Min-Sar and the spot is marked on the latest edition of the Surveyor-General's map of Turkistan as "Misar Tarjum." The distance from

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[142] NAI, Foreign, Secret, August 1882, no. 320. "Memorandum by Mr. Elias on relations of Maharaja of Kashmir with Thibet (Chinese)." From F. Henvey, Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, to H.M. Durand, Under-Secretary to Government of India, Foreign Department. September 25, 1880.

[143] "Both sets of enclaves share a common origin in that they date back to the period when the Kings of Ladakh controlled the whole of Western Tibet (Mnga' ris skor gsum). The link with Bhutan arises because of the Ladakhi royal family's association with the Drukpa Kagyupa ('Brug pa bka' rgyud pa) sect. This association dates back at least to the end of the sixteenth century: in 1577 King Jamyang Namgyal (Jams dbyang rnam rgyal, r. c.1595-1616) of Ladakh, who stood in a priest/patron relationship with the Drukpa leader Padma Karpo (Padma dkar po, 1527-1592), sponsored the building of a tantra school on his territory." John Bray, "Ladakhi and Bhutanese Enclaves in Tibet." page 2. Updated version of an article first published in *Recent Research on Ladakh 7* (Thierry Dodin and Heinz Räther, Eds. Ulmer Kulturanthropologische Schriften Band 8. Ulm: Abteilung Anthropologie, Universität Ulm, 1997), 89-104.

Leh by the direct, or winter, route which follows the valley of the Indus, is about 17 marches."[144] Elias painted a bleak image of this location's population. The inhabitants were, he wrote, poor, nomadic "Champas." "[T]here is only one house and the number of tents is estimated at about 40." The annual revenue drawn from it by the Maharaja's government was fixed by treaty at 6 Yaks, 60 sheep, 40 goats, and 50 rupees, and was typically collected by the Lopchak officials returning from Lhasa.

Elias's superior, the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, detailed the peculiar situation regarding the village's taxation. When the Lopchak mission passed through the village, it collected the *sa.khral*, or rent (lit. "land tax"), which was owed to Kashmir, but which was then given to the authorities at Lhasa as part of the Lopchak tribute mission. "Whatever the Kashmiris may think of the sah-tal [*sa.khral*] and presents, I have no doubt the Chinese regard them as tribute." Yet Elias also acknowledged a degree of ambiguity in the customary relations exhibited in the Lopchak. "The distinction between presents of ceremony or friendship on the one hand, and tribute as a sign of dependence or vassalage on the other, is frequently very loosely drawn by Asiatics, and the names of their taxes, duties, &c., do not always designate accurately the purpose for which they are levied."[145] For the British, the complexities of historical relationships that often included palimpsestic overlapping sovereignties were reduced to a racial trait and

[144] NAI, Foreign, Secret, August 1882, no. 320. "Memorandum by Mr. Elias on relations of Maharaja of Kashmir with Thibet (Chinese)." From F. Henvey, Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, to H.M. Durand, Under-Secretary to Government of India, Foreign Department. September 25, 1880.

[145] Ibid. Letter from Ney Elias in Leh, September 20, 1880.

definitional problem.[146] Government concerns over Men.ser continued until 1947, when the Indian government inherited the problem.[147]

As with Men.ser, other occasional problems arose that provoked uncertainty over sovereignty and territory. The first layer was the practical difficulty of accessing the territory to extract its revenue, however paltry. This inaccessibility forced administrators to grapple with the question of what, precisely, it meant to actually control this territory. The *Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladák* is quick to point out that it is held by the maharaja, but acknowledged the difficulty of access, owing to its location within Tibetan territory. "Under the treaty of 1842, which ended the expedition led by Guláb Singh's Zorawár Singh, against Ladák and Tibet, the district of Min Sar was made over by the Tibetán authorities to Guláb Singh and his heirs as a *jagír*." The *Gazetteer* noted that "[i]ts pecuniary value is insignificant. The small revenue is collected annually by a Kashmír official deputed by the Maharája's *wazir* at Léh. Mr. Elias states that Mr. Johnson, when wazir, tried to visit the *jagír*, but was prevented by the Chinese officials in Gartok." Yet British administrators frequently mentioned this "insignificant" *jāgīr*, suggesting that its value was symbolic, not fiscal. The tone of the Gazetteer only registers the faintest sense of political tension when it concludes that "[s]ome political significance attaches to the *jagír*, because there is reason to doubt whether the Maharája does not pay tribute on account of it to the Chinese."[148] Like the Lopchak, these small instances that challenged British notions of sovereign and

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[146] Thanks to Professor James Hevia for this phrasing.

[147] See, for instance, NAI, Foreign, Secret E, November 1900, nos. 55-57, p. 81. "Suggestions connected with the exercise of control over the Minsar *jagir* in Tibet owned by the Maharaja of Kashmir"; and John Bray, "Ladakhi and Bhutanese Enclaves in Tibet," in Thierry Dodin and Heinz Räther, eds., Recent Research on Ladakh 7 Ulmer Kulturanthropologische Schriften Band 8. (Ulm: Abteilung Anthropologie, Universität Ulm, 1997), 89-104.

[148] *Gazetteer of Kashmír and Ladák,* 120.

territorial congruency provoked anxieties at the highest levels of government and produced a second reading of Ladakh, one that failed in small but significant ways to conform to the rationalized form found in imperial manuals of governance.

d. Jurisdictional problems: Lha.rgyal and Dog.po Kar.po

Besides the complications that historical customary relations and non-contiguous territory posed to British definitions of Ladakh, a second major area concerned the basic understanding of borderlines and the problems posed to them by moving people.

On the third of August, 1918, the Resident in Kashmir wrote to the Foreign Secretary in the Foreign and Political Department.

> It would seem that one, Hlagyel [Lha.rgyal], a native of Pangong, Ladakh, went to Rudok in Tibet some years ago and there by honest means, as is alleged, accumulated a fortune consisting of 30 yaks, 2 ponies and a large flock of sheep and goats. With these he and his wives whom he had married at Lhassa, returned to Pangong and lived there peaceably until last year when he took his flocks to graze in a nala[149] named Dokpo Karpo in the Changchemo basin. While there, a party of Tibetans from Rudok came and forcibly carried him off across the Tibetan border together with his wives and flocks. / *There is no doubt that Dokpo Karpo, where the abduction took place, is well within the border of the Kashmir State, as shown on the survey maps.* It is equally certain that the man Hlagyel is a Kashmir subject. As to whether, in the course of his sojourn in Tibet, he also acquired Tibetan nationality there is no information forthcoming. / Whatever the status of Hlagyel in Tibet, however, there can be no justification for his forcible removal from State territory and it is to this that the Kashmir Darbar takes exception…[150]

The apparent abduction of Lha.rgyal generated a surprising degree of alarm within the Kashmir state government and the Government of India. It reflected a basic problem found

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[149] A nala is typically a watercourse, channel, or canal, sometimes dried up.

[150] NAI, Foreign, External, April 1920, nos. 213-227, Part B. "Agreement alleged to have been entered into with the representatives of the Ruok Jongpen by a British official in Ladakh governing the status of Ladakhis in Tibet." See also: IOR.R.2.1066.87A, File No. 310 of 1919. "Abduction of one Hlagyal of Ladakh by Tibetans. Ladakh-Tibet Frontier question." My emphasis.

across the northern and eastern reaches of Ladakh: the border, on the ground at least, did not exist. Although it was recorded on maps and described in detail in the *Gazetteer of Kashmír and Ladák*, for the traders and nomadic Changpa who regularly circulated through the region, there was no definite, linear marking of territory to determine where Ladakh ended and Tibet began. This was particularly true of the regions where the Changpa typically took their animals to graze, north of the well-trodden Leh-Lhasa route.

The Tibetans alleged that Lha.rgyal lived with wife, who was a subject of Ding.med in Rudok, which fell under Tibetan jurisdiction. He had failed to pay taxes while residing with his flocks there in the winter. This suggests that Tibetans considered him a *mak.pa*, that is a man who moves in with his wife, while she retains control over her family property rights—typically in an ancestral village. This practice is common across Ladakh where due to limited property, polyandry and matrilineal property control is common. The villagers in Ding.med apparently petitioned the *gar.dpon*s at Rudok to be "made a regular tax payer there."[151]

Meanwhile the British Joint Commissioner contacted his superior, the Resident in Kashmir, who responded to the issue by consulting his survey maps and bringing them to the Kashmir Darbar to discuss the location of the abduction, near a dried stream (Hindi/Urdu: *nālā*) known as Dog.po Kar.po ("white narrows"). The Resident asserted that the Government Survey maps showed that it was "well within the Kashmir State." Yet the maps consulted would not have contained any demarcated border in eastern Ladakh. This confusion, the Resident stated, was the result of earlier failed attempts to determine a boundary with Tibetan officials in Western Tibet. The *gar.dpon*s at Gartok mentioned a place referred to simply as "O-ith," but the *gar.dpon*s "frankly admitted that none of them had ever been there and knew nothing about the

[151] Ibid.

boundary line personally; the report submitted to the Lhassa Government to the effect that Dak-po-kar-po Nullah was within the Rudock District was purely founded on the statement made by the Goba (headman) as well as the people of U-Jang Parganah where the said Nullah situated." [152]

It soon turned out that each group questioned had a different understanding about where Tibetan control ended and Ladakhi control began. The people living around Pangong Lake (like the headman, or *mgo.ba*, just quoted) stated that there was a stream to the east of the lake that marked Tibetan (or at least Rudok's) control. Others suggested the cluster of mountains to the south east of the plains near Pangong lake. Others had still more conflicting accounts of the *sa.mtsham*, owing to a similar conflict 15 years earlier involving grazing rights near the nulla.[153] "Under these circumstances," the Resident concluded, "it has become very difficult for me to proceed with this case and to ascertain the real boundary near Dak-po Kar-po Nullah without

[152] NAI, Foreign, External Branch [double check], January 1922, Nos. 4-19. "Matters in dispute between the Kashmir Darbar and the Tibetan Government." Copy of a letter No. 16/A dated the 1st August 1921, from the British Trade Agent, Gartok, to the Superintendent, Hill States, Simla.

[153] Ibid.

finding out a pucca [true] boundary."[154] The Resident did not consider that asking people long accustomed to practicing transhumance to locate a borderline might have been a futile undertaking.

When, in August 1921, the British Trade Agent stationed at Gartok,[155] reporting to his superior, the Superintendent Hill States at Shimla acknowledged that he had heard of other

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[154] Ibid. The BJC continued: "The eastern bank of Pangong lake, which may be called a pucca and natural boundary, will serve this purpose. The stream which runs direct to west from the foot of Dak-po Kar-po Nullah and falls into the Pangong Lake dividing the Maidan of O-ith into two parts, is called by different names at different places but for facility I will call it only by the name of Niyag Vhho [sic] stream in future. / 8. O-ith is a small plot of land situated on the eastern bank of Pangong lake and the Niyog Chho stream dividing it into two parts runs in the middle of it and falls into the said lake at "A." This plot of land is full of rich grass, this is the reason that either party is anxious to keep their possession there lawfully or un-lawfully. / 9. The Pangong people fix their boundary line from "A" to "B," "C," "D," and "F" as on the enclosed sketch map. The portion of this line from "A" to "D" may be accepted to be true because it is a stream running from years immemorial but the portion from "D" to "F" seems an imaginary line because it cuts off many mountains and Nullahs which fall in the way, from their middle. Except this line there is no natural line like a khud or unbroken range of mountains which may be accepted as boundary. Therefore I disagree with their claim of boundary line from "C" to "D" and "F". / 10. The Goba and the people of U-Jang Purgunah of the Rudok district to Narth and crossing the water of Pangon lake meets to Niyog Chho stream which may be named as natural boundary at O-ith. It is not understood how this line again extended to Khurnuk Fort, the ruins of which are still visible on an unbroken range of mountains which run along with the Pangong lake water, about two miles up hills northward and thence turned to east meeting Niyog Chho stream at point "B". Had the Khurnuk Fort been the boundary there had been no disturbance about the ownership of O-ith Naidan [sic] which is nearly two miles away from the said fort. In my opinion the representatives of the Rudok people have exaggerated their claim in this case by fixing their boundary line from Khurnuk Fort. I have come to know from private enquiries also that real boundary begins from O-ith "A" and runs…. This line seems natural and acceptable."

[155] A posting that the British demanded following Younghusband's mission to "open" Tibet in 1903-4. "It was intended in 1913 that the appointment of British Trade Agent at Gartok should be whole-time (pro. 269 in S/E., August1913—265/69, cor. p. 11) but owing to the failure in erecting a house for him, due to the obstructiveness of the Garpons (between 1905 and 1923), he was permitted to make his winter quarters at Poo (ibid., Cor. p. 5) and later Simla (f. 165-X/23, serial no. 5)." "Disabilities suffered by Indian traders in Western Tibet." File No. 89-X (Secret) 1927. NAI.

abduction cases similar to that of Lha.rgyal. For instance, a letter from "from one Ganbo, a native of Ladakh territory," went as follows:[156]

> Sir, we beg to state that we are the Raiyet [*ra'īyat*] of Ruksho Goba [headman] of Ladakh territory.[157] Some 12 years ago we came to Tibet and settled at Dungbo (Daba District). The cause of our coming to Tibet was that one year on account of heavy snowfall there was a heavy toll of mortality amongst sheep and goats entrusted to us by the said Goba and the replacement of which (to complete number) became out of our power, so owing to his fear we left Ladakh for Dungbo where Daba Jangpon did not tax us for three years. The fourth year he levied tax on us making us his regular Raiyet with a promise that we may return to our country, if we please, after paying this tax for three years. Now nine years have gone [and] we are not allowed to go home. We have been requesting to the Daba Jangpon for his permission from the last three years but of no avail. I therefore request you to kindly cause my release from Daba Jangpon's possession to return to Ladakh with my wife Showang and two daughters Palmo and Sanam Dahna. signed Gunbo [Gön.bo] of Dungbo. [158]

Over subsequent years at least 59 cases also surfaced of Tibetans evading local taxes by fleeing to Ladakh. [159] IN 1927, E.B. Wakefield, the officer then in charge of the British Trade Agency at Gartok wrote of his attempt to find the border between Western Tibet and Ladakh. Part of the problem rested with faulty information provided by gazetteers and maps. "And now came the great disappointment: the trade route marked on the map between Deboche and Demchok, simply didn't exist!" [160] Wakefield was critical of the previous *gar.dpon* of Rudok,

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[156] NAI, Foreign, External Branch [double check], January 1922, Nos. 4-19. "Matters in dispute between the Kashmir Darbar and the Tibetan Government."

[157] That is, he held a small-hold tenancy (which he referred to by the Hindi/Urdu/Persian term *ra'īyat*) under the headman (mgo.ba) of the region of the Changthang (byang.thang) plateau northwest of Tso (lake) Moriri known variously as Rup.sho or Rup.shu, a high-altitude expansive region in which byang.pa often brought their herds during the summer months.

[158] NAI, Foreign, External Branch [double check], January 1922, Nos. 4-19. "Matters in dispute between the Kashmir Darbar and the Tibetan Government." Translation.

[159] NAI, External Affairs Department, File No. 27-X 1937 (Secret).

[160] NAI, Foreign, File No. 89-X (Secret) 1927. "Disabilities suffered by Indian traders in Western Tibet."

who was as a "blood-thirsty tyrant" owing to the absence of regular pay from Lhasa and a penchant for physically abusing travellers. But he had recently been recalled to Lhasa to face murder charges. The new *gar.dpon*, Wakefield noted appreciatively, "leaves Indian traders severely alone—he has even reduced the taxes on them from 10 per cent. to 2 per cent.: for he respects and is frightened of the British." The reason for this fear, it turned out, was that the *gar.dpon* "was educated at Rugby!!! being sent there in 1914 … with three other Tibetan boys of good family at the expense of his Government as an experiment."[161] The decision by the central Government of Tibet to station this aristocrat chosen for an "elite" and "modern" education at Rugby at a remote posting in Western Tibet was suggestive of the wariness the Tibetan Government toward Britain following the Younghusband mission.

Based on Wakefield and the BJC's correspondence, the Resident in Kashmir surmised that "without the boundary being settled, settlement of other questions will remain difficult."[162] His superiors in the Political Department proposed another boundary commission. "I think, with the Resident, that a settlement of the boundary might help matters," though they were hesitant to go to the trouble of a commission if all that was at stake were "grazing grounds."[163] Consulting the Assistant Surveyor General, they were told that "a case can be made out for *any* frontier here. …There is no settled boundary. The *Chang-pas* (Nomads) graze when and where they will. The area is vast and the Chang-pas very few. The rainfall is scanty and the Chang-pas must move to

[161] For more on this education experiment, see Kyle Gardner, "The Education Complex: Imperial Anxieties and the Case of Five Tibetans in England, 1913-1914." M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 2011.

[162] NAI, External Affairs Department, File No. 27-X 1937 (Secret), 19.

[163] Ibid., 28.

suitable grazing grounds. Political boundaries mean exactly nothing to them; if they were demarcated, they would still mean nothing…"[164]

Responding this this, the Resident in Kashmir wrote:

> I am inclined to think that until such time as a definite boundary is fixed it will be impossible to decide to which Government the inhabitants of the disputed area are subject…. The two questions of trade facilities and the return of subjects seem to me to be so intimately bound up with the boundary question that until this is fixed we shall be faced from time to time with disputes between the two Governments, of which equitable settlements will be well-nigh impossible. I therefore suggest that Government take into their serious consideration the problem of getting the boundary settled once and for all. [165]

Although debates continued into the 1930s about Dog.po Kar.po, the unsettled boundary, and the question of extradition treaties between Tibet and British India, no arrangement proved satisfactory to all parties concerned. Lha.rgyal and Gonbo were both eventually returned to Ladakh, Kashmir balked at the omission of an "independent" boundary commissioner to demarcate the borderline, and the *byang.pa* continued to graze their animals across the wide and arid expanse of the western Byang.thang plateau. Only in 1962 was an effective border imposed across this region at the conclusion of the Sino-Indian War: the revealingly named Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Conclusion

I began the chapter with quotations from two very different figures of late-nineteenth-century India. Both reflect the power of official, organized information. The Urdu poet Akbar Allahabadi's satirical couplet on the value of the annual *Gazette of India* in extracting money

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[164] Ibid. "Note by Major K. Mason, Assistant Surveyor General Dated the 13th January 1928," 22-23.

[165] Ibid., 66 (in pencil). Letter from the Resident in Kashmir, dated December 8, 1927.

from people reveals the authoritative function of official publications. Referenced not only by district commissioners or central administrators, the *Gazettes* were also resources for local elites as well as places in which to inscribe their social prominence. These official publications and manuals of governance gained immense power over time. Lists of notable families within the *Gazette of India* granted those families prestige, while the statistical details they presented were often produced as evidence in litigation over property boundaries, the legal status of various social groups, or the historical status of certain local families.[166] Information from these annually published *Gazettes* often found its way into the gazetteers, particularly the detailed district versions that included sections on the district's apparent ethnic and religious composition, local boundaries, and the history and political role of prominent families. The gazetteers, along with the *Gazette of India* and other widely circulated official publications profoundly shaped the territorial, social, and political understandings of colonial officials and local elites alike. Settlement reports and district gazetteers granted historical legitimacy and, at times, legal validity.

The second quotation came from the father of the *Imperial Gazetteer*, William Wilson Hunter. He acknowledged in the preface to the 1881 edition of the *Imperial Gazetteer* that the "true territorial unit of Indian history" was "indeed, much smaller than the British District."[167] "[H]e who would study the history of Oudh [Awadh]," he continued, "must search for it in the *parganá* or parish; [and] in other parts of India, the *zamíndárí* or estate is the historical unit …." This notion of a "true territorial unit" to history is intriguing. It suggested, perhaps, that a historical subject required a fixed spatial referent. But if an archetypal Indian *pargana* or

[166] Thanks to Professor C.M. Naim for bringing this practice to my attention.

[167] William Wilson Hunter, Preface to the 1881 edition of the *Imperial Gazetteer* (p. xviii).

zamindari were the "true" unit Hunter had in mind here, then there was also irony in his statement, since it conceded a degree of artificiality in the British district.[168] The district did not correlate directly to a historically sensible unit of space, but instead represented a rationalized space utilizing the careful manipulation of mountains and water systems to make boundary objects and boundary-making principles.

The model of territory presented in British imperial manuals of governance represented a fixed object delimited by borderlines. The precise work of surveyors, boundary commissioners, and settlement officers rendered lines onto the landscape and, more importantly, the maps and treaties in which sovereignty was increasingly vested. This model of territory demanded a particularly static vision of a population confined within it. This idea was not confined to British India, but was emerging across imperial territories and North America as part of the broader

[168] Like his contemporary Henry Maine, Hunter was probably envisioning an atavistic, primitive village.

territorialization of the globe in the modern period.[169] By the late nineteenth century, the genre reflected an emerging global form of knowledge that began with a legible border and systematic outline of a geographically sensible territory. This territory was presented as natural and rational, but also disciplined and sanitized—free from the complications that would challenge the meaning of the border.

And yet for colonial administrators like the British Joint Commissioners in Ladakh, a range of pre-existing relations and movements complicated the autonomy of the gazetteer's subject. Long-established customary arrangements between Ladakh and Tibet and other regions blurred the neat notion of sovereignty presumed to be recognized by the establishment of borders. Furthermore, the position of the enclave of Men.ser vis-à-vis the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, British India, Tibet, and China reflected the much wider problem for imperial powers in dealing with non-contiguous territory in an age when complete and legible

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[169] In fact, some of the earliest nineteenth century gazetteers that provided detailed information of the location of borders were produced in the USA at the state level. For instance, the prolific American gazetteer writer John Hayward began his 1849 *Gazetteer of New Hampshire* by introducing a revised structure for the volumes. "We have adopted a new arrangement in our work which, it is thought, will be found more convenient for reference than any in our former publications of the kind. After a brief geographical description, biographical sketches, etc., are given the *Boundaries* of the towns under a distinct head; the *First Settlers* and *First Ministers* come next, and are seen at a glance; then are given the *Manufactures* in the towns when practicable; and then some of the most important *Productions of the Soil*. The *Distances* come last, though not the least important item to the traveller." John Hayward, *A gazetteer of New Hampshire, containing descriptions of all the counties, towns, and districts in the state; also of its principal mountains, rivers, waterfalls, harbors, islands, and fashionable resorts. To which are added, statistical accounts of its agriculture, commerce and manufactures* (Boston: J.P. Jewett, 1849), 3. Previously, in an 1846 version of his *A gazetteer of Massachusetts* ... (Boston: J. Hayward, 1846) he had insisted on a purely alphabetical structure, noting that "In many particulars the plan of this work is new: the descriptions of the counties and towns comprise their location, natural characteristics, general appearance, &c.; but those items of information common to all, such as population, valuation, schools, dates of incorporation, &c. &c., are arranged alphabetically, in tabular form, thereby presenting many of the most important items, without crowing the whole together indiscriminately, and, as stated on page 320, in a 'mode best adapted for reference and comparison.'"

borders were becoming *de rigueur*. And examples like the abductions of Lha.rgyal and Gön.bo showed that these borderlines drawn on paper were often irrelevant to the lived experience of moving populations. People moved and were stopped at unpredictable moments across the seasons, and lands near rivers and streams were reconstructed or re-assessed depending on the changes made to them by floodwaters. These local challenges illustrated that the static top-down model of the region of Ladakh organized in official information was not reflected in the practical political and environmental realities on the ground. It was one thing to read the landscape for information to be added to gazetteers and other manuals of governance, it was quite another thing to read historically inscribed customary relations and seasonal movements of people and their livestock, as well as pre-existing, overlapping sovereignties that had not been eliminated.

What is perhaps most striking about Lha.rgyal's abduction, the tribute goats, and the Lopchak is that each of these rather insignificant problems should elicit such concern from the imperial state. Each of these situations produced hundreds of pages of official documentation, involved—at times—multiple Viceroys and Secretaries of State for India, and provoked repeated discussions about the need for direct control of Ladakh as a frontier region—or indeed bringing the whole of India's periphery under direct administration.[170] The prospect of a dependent state of the British Empire paying tribute to a foreign power, or the inability of the state to determine which individuals belonged to it due to the failure to know or enforce mapped borderlines, was deeply troubling to imperial administrators. It turns out that a motley assortment of nomads, traders, and goats proved to be quite significant symbols of the limits of imperial state legibility.

[170] As was recommended by various administrators on at least seven separate occasions (see Chapter Five, page 284, n. 20)

CHAPTER FIVE

Trans-Frontier: Boundary experts, security, and the birth of Geopolitics

Frontiers are indeed the razor's edge
on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations.[1]
—George Curzon (1907)

March 26, 1888. "Here I am on the border of habitation and to-morrow morning will put off for the howling desolate waste."[2] Thus began Andrew Dalgleish's last letter to his friend Dr. Suraj Bal, written just before the young trader and British informant set off across the "no man's land" of the Aksai Chin. Bal was the grandly titled *wazīr-i-wazārat*, the district administrator of the northwestern Himalayan region of Ladakh, a historical *entrepôt* that served as a gateway between the plains of India and Central Asia. Dalgleish had spent a decade and a half traversing the routes from India to Kashgar and Yarkand, working first for the short-lived Central Asian Trading Company and then as an independent trader and informant feeding the British imperial government commercial and political intelligence on Russian and Chinese activities in Central

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[1] George N. Curzon, *Frontiers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 7.

[2] NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, July 1888, No. 81. "Transcript copy of a letter, dated the 26th March 1888, from Mr. A Dalgleish, to Dr. Suraj Bal, Camp Shijok [Shyok] village." Dalgleish's letter continued: "…. The Nubra Tartars with their eighteen ponies are here with me. The six drivers with Tashi Sonam as their chief, are well chosen, and the ponies as good as can be expected at this time of the year. But they have come instead of being well stored for the journey, as one who thinks of going only to church, *i.e.,* with their coat only on their back. So I have had to outfit them and also their ponies and am now pleased to state that the little caravan is neat, and as perfect as can be made, in this part of the world. They wish to take the goods all the way to Yarkand and from there return to Leh with another caravan of goods; so that I will have no changing at Shahedullah and they will make some money out of the transaction. I will be kind to them and endeavor to get them goods from Yarkand to Leh and whatever they also may require. / And now farewell, my dear friend, with many thanks (not the thanks of that two-legged thing, a shopkeeper), but the thanks of a true heart for all your kind assistance, and believe me will kindest regards, &c. / *P.S.*—The sepoy who deserted has not turned up here; but there is a tall robust Panjabi with the Yarkand caravan. I have had a look at him, and I don't think he is else what he calls himself, *i.e.*, a fakir, *en route* to Turkistan to try his fortune there."

Asia.[3] He had lived in Yarkand for several years, married a Yarkandi woman,[4] learned Uyghur,[5] and, because of his diminutive stature, was sometimes referred to affectionately by officials of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir as "Chhota Sahib" (Little sir).[6]

On April 8, 1888, the young Scottish merchant was killed on the northern side of the Karakoram Pass. His apparent murderer was Daud Mohammed Khan, a trader from Afghanistan. Also involved, according to testimony given to British and Kashmiri officials by several Ladakhis in the caravan, were: Usman, a Yarkandi trader based in Andijan; Gulban, a Pathan trader; two elderly Andijanis and one Kashgari, all returning from the *Haj*; and Bakhsh, a Punjabi *fakīr*.[7] Daud Mohammed and Dalgleish had known each other for years and were friends according to Dalgleish's Kashmiri servant, Muhammad Jan. Daud Mohammed had recently fallen into debt with moneylenders in the Punjab and then again in Leh, Ladakh's capital, and Dalgleish had lent him money. They met two weeks earlier in northern Ladakh and, together

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[3] For the history of the short-lived Central Asian Trading Company, see Bir Good Gill, "The Venture of the Central Asian Trading Company in Eastern Turkistan, 1874-5," *Asian Affairs* 31, no. 2 (2000): 181–188. NAI, Foreign, Secret F, February 1883, Nos. 184-195. "Employment of Dalgleish (Mr. A) for one year as a news-agent during his trading journey to Yarkand. Rupees 4,000 placed at his disposal."

[4] A lock of whose hair was reported by the Russian Consul at Kashgar to be found among Dalgleish's possessions in Kashgar, which ended up, along with Dalgleish's gun and some articles of clothing "in the possession of a Chinaman." V. N. Petrovsky to Her Majesty's Consul at St. Petersburgh, 24th September / 6th October [calendar variations] 1888. NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, January 1889, No. 84.

[5] He also earned a good sum of money through his trade in high-value items like pashmina and other fabrics, silver, and precious stones—all items that had been crossing the Karakoram trade routes for centuries.

[6] NAI, Foreign, Political A, March 1878, Nos. 261-268. "Ladakh diaries from 17th November to 31st December."

[7] Captain H. Ramsay, British Joint Commissioner, Ladakh, to Trevor Chichele Plowden, Resident in Kashmir, May, 17, 1888. NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, July 1888, No. 93; and "Mr. Dalgleish's Murderer," *The Times of India*, June 28, 1890.

with a caravan of eighteen people drawn from a wide variety of locations, had reached the Karakoram Pass on April 8th, slowly shoveling their way across the pass through deepening snow and setting up camp on the north slope. Although the detailed testimony of Dalgleish's servant and three Ladakhi *kiraiyakash* (pony drivers)[8] does not reveal the reasons behind the attack, they agree that Daud Mohammed invited Dalgleish into his tent for tea, as they had done daily for a fortnight while on the road, and thirty minutes or so later Daud Mohammed shot Dalgleish at least once. Dalgleish managed to escape the tent, but not the sword that Daud Mohammed carried.

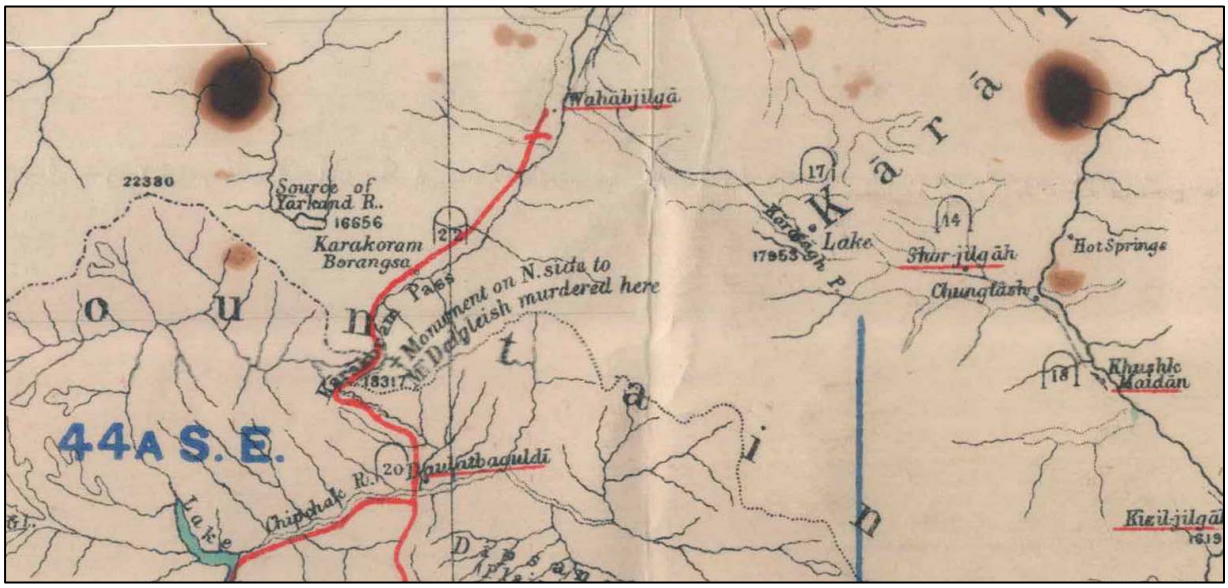


Figure 5.1. Detail of "Territories of the Maharaja of Jammoo and Kashmir" Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1903. Note "Monument on N. side to Mr. Dalgleish murdered here" is visible above the point marking the Karakoram Pass. Source: Pahar.in.

[8] *Kiraiyakash* were typically "Arghons," descendants of Kashmiri merchants settled across Ladakh who rented their guide services and labor, along with their horses, yaks, or mules for segments of the long-haul trade routes. Yaks were typically used only for the passes and footing could be treacherous, while ponies, horses, mules, and donkeys were utilized for longer segments of the journey and accordingly suffered much higher rates of mortality. Unexpected snowfall, crevasses, and the lack of pasturage could often kill whole caravan-loads of animals (and, much more rarely, the humans guiding them). The term is also etymologically a Persian portmanteau of "kiraya" or rent, and "kash" which comes from the infinitive "kashidan" (i.e. to pull), thus making the portmanteau meaning someone who charges a fee to "pull" or transport people. I am grateful to Naveena Naqvi for pointing out the Persian etymology.

After ordering one of his muleteers to strangle Dalgleish's dog next to its master's head (the dog had remained in Dalgleish's tent apparently due to frostbitten paws), Daud Mohammed impressed a number of the victim's hired Ladakhi pony drivers to accompany him one stage northwards toward Yarkand where he had the *kiraiyakash* "shorn of their pigtails" and cut off Muhammad Jan's beard, telling him that he "should not in future serve the English, and this is your mark." Then, in a moment of apparent grandeur, Daud Mohammed proclaimed himself "lord of the wilderness [*jangal*]." The Ladakhi *kiraiyakash* and Muhammad Jan were allowed to return to collect their employer's body and, after eighteen days on the Leh-Yarkand road, returned it to Leh for autopsy and burial. The postmortem examination conducted by Dr. Karl Marx, a Moravian missionary living in Ladakh, largely confirmed the testimony of the pony drivers and revealed that Dalgleish had been struck by two bullets, and fourteen to sixteen sword strokes. Dalgleish's Kashmiri servant and three Ladakhi *kiraiyakash* gave detailed and fairly consistent testimony to the British and Kashmiri officials in Leh. The Joint Commissioner, the British counterpart to the Dogra-appointed *wazīr-i-wazārat*, then contacted his superior, the British Resident at Srinagar, who in turn wrote to the Foreign Department in Shimla.[9] News of the murder and descriptions of the murderers were quickly telegraphed to Afghanistan, China, Persia, and Russia, along with a "dead or alive" reward of 5,000 rupees.[10]

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[9] The Dogras, an ethno-linguistic group primarily found in northern India and Pakistan gave their name to the Hindu Rajput dynasty founded by Gulab Singh in the early nineteenth century. Singh, a vassal of the Sikh Emperor Ranjit Singh, was made the first Maharaja of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir by the British as a result of the Treaties of Lahore and Amritsar in 1846.

[10] A figure that was determined by the Finance Department to be comparable to that offered for the capture of Twet Nga Lu, a Burmese resistance leader in the third and final Anglo-Burmese War (1885).

The motive for the murder was never conclusively determined. The British Resident in Kashmir gave a range of possible answers to his superior in Shimla, the Secretary of the Foreign Department:

> The simplest explanation that Dad Muhammad [sic] being himself in difficulties killed Mr. Dalgleish for the sake of his property is probably the true one. Against this supposition is the omission to search the deceased's person which would have placed Dad Muhammad in possession of Rs. 5,200, together with a gold ring; and also his conduct in letting the Bhots [Ladakhis] take back their ponies which compelled him to leave Mr. Dalgleish's property at Wahab Jilga until he could return with transport for it. Another explanation is revenge for some slight or quarrel, but there is no evidence to support this theory; on the contrary, Mr. Dalgleish appears to have been on excellent terms with Dad Muhammed. Or, again, there may have been a political motive for the crime, for it was pretty well known that Mr. Dalgleish was an emissary of the Government of India and combined the collection of political intelligence with his mercantile operations.[11]

One might add to this a few even more speculative motives: Could Daud Muhammed's actions have been anti-colonial, perhaps for recent British aggressions in Afghanistan? Was it motivated by religious difference, a case of a so-called "fanatic"?[12] Or, still less plausible, could Daud Muhammed's attack been caused by the effects of extreme altitude and cold temperatures? There simply is not enough documentation to venture to solve this century-old murder case, but its dramatic nature tempts speculation.

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[11] NAI, Foreign Department, Frontier A, July 1888, No. 92: Resident in Kashmir to H.M. Durand, Sec., Foreign Dept.

[12] The term "fanatic" referenced those individuals who were perceived by the British to hold "extreme" views, usually against the imperial state, derived from religious belief. On this North-West Frontier, where it was used most frequently, it typically referred to Muslim Pathans, but elsewhere in the imperial archive are numerous references to Hindu "fanatics." For the development of this trope see Zak Leonard, "Muslim Fanaticism as Ambiguous Trope: A Study in Polemical Mutation," in *Mountstuart Elphinstone in South Asia: Pioneer of British Colonial Rule* (London: Hurst Publishers, forthcoming).

Daud Mohammed was eventually caught by Russians in Samarkand in 1890, but apparently hanged himself in prison before he could be sent back to British India.[13] This disappointed the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh who had hoped to execute Daud Mohammed and his alleged accomplices "during the trade season, when all the Central Asian world [would be in Leh]."[14] Henry Mortimer Durand, the Secretary to the Foreign Department, had further hoped that the hanging could be done "on some conspicuous spot on the line of road" to act as a clear deterrent to those who would dare attack a British citizen.[15] The renowned British soldier, explorer, and evangelist of empire, Francis Younghusband, gravely commented that Dalgleish was one of the "true missionaries of all that is best in our civilization."[16] When Younghusband crossed the Karakoram Pass a year after Dalgliesh's murder, he observed that there, "on the dividing-line between India and Central Asia, in the very core of these lofty mountain

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[13] The author John Buchan would later write about the fate of Daud Mohammed Khan: "...Suddenly there came news from Samarkand that the Pathan [i.e. Daud Mohammed] had been caught there and was now in a Russian prison. Two of the emissaries who had gone in that direction had arrived in Samarkand, and had found Dad Mahomed sitting on a box in the bazaar. One of them stopped and engaged him in conversation, while the other went off to the Governor, who happened to be the famous General Kuropatkin. Kuropatkin, on opening Bower's letter, at once sent a party of Cossacks to the bazaar and had Dad Mahomed arrested. / It was arranged to send him to India, and preparations were made for an armed escort to bring him back over the Russian border; but news arrived that the criminal had cheated justice, for he had hung himself in his cell. *Nevertheless the power of British law was vindicated, and the story of the unrelenting pursuit throughout Central Asia had an immense moral effect in all that mountain country. The tale of it was repeated at camp-fires and bazaars everywhere between Persia and China, till the Great War, with its far wilder romances, came to dim its memory.*" John Buchan, *A Book of Escapes and Hurried Journeys* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1923). My emphasis.

[14] Ramsay to Plowden, June 10, 1888. NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, July 1888, Keep-with 1, p. 5. "Murder of Mr. Andrew Dalgleish, a British trader, beyond the Karakoram range, while *en route* from India to Chinese Turkistan."

[15] Ibid. Durand to Plowden.

[16] Francis E. Younghusband, *The Heart of a Continent: A Narrative of Travels in Manchuria, across the Gobi Desert, through the Himalayas, the Pamirs, and Chitral, 1884-1894*, 3rd ed. (New York: Scribner, 1896), 173.

ranges...had fallen the one solitary Englishman who had tried to make his home in Central Asia… treacherously murdered in a fit of fanaticism or temper by one who was a stranger like himself."[17] But the exact nature and extent of that "dividing-line between India and Central Asia" was still far from apparent to the imperial state.

Besides maintaining British prestige, the search for Dalgleish's killer provoked deeper anxieties about the British imperial state and its territory. Who had jurisdiction over the vicinity of the murder scene, the "howling desolate waste" of the Switzerland-sized plateau today generally referred to as the Aksai Chin?[18] China, Britain, Russia, or any of their protectorates did not effectively control the region north of the Karakoram Pass.[19] Although central to the world's highest major network of cultural and commercial exchange, it was effectively a "no man's land."[20] The solitary episode of Andrew Dalgleish's murder near the Karakoram Pass and the effects it had on the Government of India spoke to two central challenges facing colonial officials regarding the imperial frontier in the northwestern Himalaya, both centered on definition and control. Where should the northern border of India be? And how could it be controlled? By drawing the imperial government's attention to this "nonstate space" stretching

[17] Younghusband.

[18] Technically speaking, the region now generally referred to as the Aksai Chin includes two other distinct plateaux that historically have been referred to as the Lingshi Tang and the Chang Chenmo (great northern).

[19] The British having at that time claimed the Karakoram Pass as their northernmost boundary based on the water-parting principle that set the limits of the Indus watershed as their northern boundary. Several years later they would change their minds and suggest the northern base of the Karakoram Pass, and then return to the water-parting line at the pass in 1896, where it has more or less remained.

[20] NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, July 1888, No. 94.

across the north of India, Dalgleish's murder hastened efforts to establish a territorial border through the broad Himalaya and its neighboring mountain regions.[21]

When Andrew Dalgleish was murdered near the Karakoram Pass in 1888, the Government of India struggled to ascertain whether or not the scene of the crime was within their territorial jurisdiction.[22] Part of this problem was the result of intensified concerns about where the border should be situated—a problem illustrated by the repeated attempts to survey the region and establish a border founded on an evolving set of border-making principles. The trans-frontier groups that regularly moving along the Treaty Road from Ladakh to Yarkand, like those groups moving across the North-West Frontier, included traders, pilgrims, and nomads. Their movements were of increasing concern to the imperial state, which redoubled its efforts to define a borderline within the frontier through the work of boundary commissions much larger and more systematic than those of earlier decades.[23] These large-scale commissions in turn produced a growing array of frontier experts, a second kind of trans-frontier man. These men were part of a broader "military techno-elite" that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century.[24] The 1880s also witnessed the growth of restricted trans-frontier maps and the development of

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[21] The term "nonstate space" comes from James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 10-11.

[22] See the Preface to this dissertation for a description of this episode. The Foreign Department eventually decided that he was murdered "beyond British jurisdiction" though there was still uncertainty for several years afterwards as to whether the Karakoram Pass should be the frontier, or whether it should be placed 79 miles farther north at Shahidulla. See NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, July 1888, nos. 76-130. "Question of the powers of Administrator-General, Bengal to administer the estate of Dalgleish (Mr.), who was murdered beyond British jurisdiction, but whose property was brought to Leh."

[23] Detailed in Chapter Two with the boundary commissions of Alexander Cunningham in the northwestern Himalaya.

[24] Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 43.

bureaucratic procedures for securing and circulating trans-frontier information. For the frontier experts that emerged in the late nineteenth century, imperial security concerns, geographical science, and a sense of masculine adventure went hand in hand. Through the circulation of these frontier experts across the empire, and the concomitant circulation of their writings and debates in the Royal Geographical Society's *Geographical Journal*, a new way of looking at frontiers and borders emerged. This new mode of seeing, this chapter argues, helped produce a hybrid form of geography and imperial politics: geopolitics.

Coined in 1899 by Rudolf Kjellén, a conservative Swedish professor of political science, the term "geopolitics" signaled a new approach to international politics, one that emphasized territory, natural resources, and geographical information in forming and sustaining states.[25] This "science," Kjellen asserted, conceived of the state as "a geographical organism or as a phenomenon in space," not the abstract and legalistic political entity it had long been held to be.[26] Instead, geography dictated "laws" of politics. Kjellen's portmanteau reflected interconnected trends in geography and imperial state formation decades in the making. The articulation of these laws found an outlet in publications that had already become the venue for a wide range of geographical information. Foremost among those publications in English was *The Geographical Journal* of the Royal Geographical Society. The *Journal* provided a forum for recent discoveries, geological theories, evolving surveying technologies, new maps, and newly discovered routes across imperial frontiers. When Francis Younghusband took leave from India to return to Britain in 1892, for instance, he wrote to Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary of India, that with "the sanction of the India Office" he had given a lecture before the Geographical

[25] Agnew, *Geopolitics.*

[26] Brian Blouet, *Geopolitics and Globalization in the Twentieth Century*, 187, n. 2.

Society, which was subsequently published in the *Journal*'s immediate predecessor, the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*.[27] By the turn of the twentieth century the *Journal* was dominated by British imperial frontier experts who debated the geographical basis of political questions and problems associated with, among other subjects, surveying and border making. When Thomas Holdich, the pre-eminent British boundary expert, was president of the Royal Geographical Society (1916-18), his vice-presidents included the former viceroy George Curzon and Francis Younghusband (both of whom would also serve as presidents). And Henry McMahon, a veteran of numerous boundary commissions, a former Foreign Secretary of India, and the architect of the McMahon Line at the Shimla Conference, was one of the twenty-one Members of Council under Holdich. Together, these experts oversaw the fusion of geographical science and politics. A 1917 review in the *Journal* of Holdich's *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making* noted that for the author, "the first and greatest object of an international frontier [was] to ensure peace and good-will between contiguous people by *putting a definite edge to the national political horizon*, so as to limit unauthorized expansion and trespass."[28] Geography, in other words, had become politics by scientific means.

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[27] Francis Younghusband to Sir Mortimer Durand, dated Eastern Villas Road, South Sea, March 2, 1892. NAI, Foreign, General, July 1892, nos. 18-40, KW no. 2: "Posting of Lieutenant W. M. Cubitt as British Joint Commissioner at Leh and *ex-officio* Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir, *vice* Captain G. F. Chenevix-Trench." The letter concluded on a familiar note: "I was very glad to get a letter from your brother yesterday and to hear he was getting on well. They are immensely pleased here with the success of the Hunza operations." The resulting published paper was Francis E. Younghusband, "Journeys in the Pamirs and Adjacent Countries," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 14, no. 4 (April 1892): 205–34. The *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* was renamed *The Geographical Journal* in January 1893.

[28] Review of Thomas Holdich's *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making* (1916). "Frontiers in theory and practice," *The Geographical Journal* 49, No. 1 (January 1917): 58. Emphasis given by the anonymous author of the review.

As noted in the previous chapter, the growth of territory as a central and precise object of interest to the state reflected the importance of determining rationalized borders, while maintaining the looser senses of political influence implicit in the category of frontier. As the *sine qua non* of territory, borders became subjects of crucial importance to this new political "science." In this context, it is understandable why George Curzon stated grandly in 1907 that frontiers were "the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations."[29] Although Curzon's strange metaphor (discussed at the conclusion of the dissertation) raises questions about the exact role of frontiers in the "life" of a nation as much as it does the function and size of razors, it is instructive in at least one sense. Frontiers needed to be strong, legible, and controllable spaces. Information about them was increasingly contained with restricted maps and reference manuals for governance and military operations. The triangulated position of demarcated boundaries—the "definite edge to the national political horizon"—enabled the state to better see itself geopolitically *and* geostrategically.[30] Legible borders enabled the imperial state to see itself as one of the globe's interconnected territories, territories dictated by the apparent laws of geography. The task of imperial strategists was to utilize those geographical features to the advantage of the state.

This chapter re-examines border making, roads, and geographical epistemes in the context of this geopolitical turn in statecraft, from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth. The 1880s marked a turning point in imperial security and frontier policy. The jurisdictional uncertainties surrounding Andrew Dalgleish's murder in 1888, and the threat of trans-frontier men reflected two key challenges to rendering population and territory legible:

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[29] Curzon, *Frontiers*, 7.

[30] Review of Thomas Holdich's *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making* (1916). "Frontiers in theory and practice," *The Geographical Journal* 49, No. 1 (January 1917): 58.

foreign penetration and nonstate space. Amid the escalating tensions between Britain and Russia, the Aksai Chin could no longer function as an acceptable buffer, requiring instead the demarcation of precise borderlines and the "effective occupation" of the space beyond them. Surveying, border demarcation, and the regulation of roads all fell under an overarching rubric of imperial security. Through this transformation, geography became explicitly linked to the needs of the state. The wide circulation of frontier experts like Ney Elias, Mortimer Durand, Henry McMahon, and Thomas Holdich revealed how geography and imperial security became fused. Taken together, these developments in border-making practices, geography, imperial security, and the rise of frontier expertise reflected a new, geopolitical way of seeing space.

I. Beyond the frontier

In 1883, a series of memoranda began circulating around the Government of India's Foreign Department. So-called "trans-frontier men" were crossing into India from Afghanistan. They were entering the Punjab and were making their way to the princely state of Hyderabad in southern India. Unlike the Powindah merchants and other nomadic groups[31] who regularly crossed from Afghanistan to trade horses and goods throughout India, these men were moving

[31] Generally called *Kōchī* in Afghanistan. For a study of the complex movements of these "trans-frontier" groups on the North-West Frontier, see Neeladri Bhattacharya, "Predicaments of Mobility: Peddlers and Itinerants in Nineteenth Century Northwestern India," in *Society and Circulation: Mobile People and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia, 1750-1950*, ed. Claude Markovits, Jacques Pouchepadass, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), 163-214, 168.

south in search of work, or, as one British administrator suspected, "for a row."[32] The Nizam's government in Hyderabad asked the Foreign Department to restrict their movements, fearing instability from a glut of unemployed migrants. But British attempts to post observers at railheads and along major roads predictably failed to produce any results—in part because the British were not even sure how to distinguish these unwanted trans-frontier men from other trans-frontier groups that regularly traversed the Indo-Afghan borderland.[33] They were not buying train tickets and they were not crossing at the few towns with border checkpoints. The frontier, after all, was quite permeable—and often still not precisely defined by any complete borderline.

"To the centre of any empire," Manan Ahmed recently wrote, "the frontier is a site of anxiety, of potential harm, of barbarians who could be marching towards the gate."[34] In the case

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[32] NAI, Foreign, A Political I, June 1884, nos. 131-132. "Restrictions on the movements of trans-frontier men towards the Decan." The undersecretary to the Foreign Department, W. Lee-Warner, wrote in May 1884: "Eliminating traders, two classes of [trans-frontier men], pour into the Nizam's territory. Pathans, Rohillas, and others, who are on the look out for service or for a row, and whose trouble to ourselves would commence by taking part in plundering or dacoity expeditions in the Native States. The second class has been frequently troublesome to Bombay District Officers, and the Home Department has plenty of information about them. They call themselves usually Mekranis, or Khurasanis, and they come down from Biluchistan and southern Afghanistan. They are a sort of turbulent gypsy tribe… They move in gangs of some scores, invade British territory, and when met by strong measures, separate and dribble away into the Nizam's territories again. …These I expect are the men about whom Baroda was anxious… The Punjab Government at present watches the railway stations."

[33] Colonel A. H. Bamfield, Inspector-General of Police, Punjab, to Secretary, Government of Punjab, June 27, 1883. NAI, Foreign, A Political I, September 1883, nos. 183-185. "The District Superintendents of Police at Jhelum, Amritsar, Jullundur, and Umballa were accordingly directed to place men who could distinguish Central Asian pilgrims from Afghan vagrants at the railway stations, so that such persons might be brought in a conciliatory manner to the District Superintendents of Police and granted the necessary passport." "Trans-frontier men. Report by Inspector-General of Police as to measures adopted in the Punjab for restricting the movements of trans-frontier men."

[34] Ahmed, "Adam's Mirror: The Frontier in the Imperial Imagination."

of the northern frontier of India in the latter nineteenth century, the "gates" were mountain passes and the "barbarians" came in two forms: Russians expanding southward from Central Asia, and the "trans-frontier men" who inhabited and regularly moved across the regions the British insisted should be considered territorial boundaries. The first section of this chapter addresses the major imperial responses to these apparent threats in terms of border-making practices, first by exploring British concerns over trans-frontier penetration in the 1880s and 1890s and the strategies employed to establish boundary lines and eliminate "no-man's lands." It then examines how the late nineteenth-century Russian threat easily shifted into a Soviet threat in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, generating concerns that would be passed on to the post-Independence Government of India.

a. Invasion and Anxiety on the Periphery

Despite Thomas Holdich's assertion that the Himalayan range was "the finest natural combination of boundary and barrier that exists in the world," this boundary was crossed with great regularity in multiple directions by many different groups.[35] From Baloch and Afghan traders in the west, to merchants and monks crisscrossing the Indo-Tibetan frontier, and Haj-goers and traders from Central Asia, the mountainous edges of the subcontinent were home to people with a habit of moving. These regions were also home to many of the so-called "martial races": Dogras, Pathans, Kumaunis, Garhwalis, and Gurkhas.[36] Forming the top strata of the

[35] Holdich, *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making*. 280.

[36] See Heather Streets-Salter, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).; and Hevia *Imperial Security State*, 178-180, 204-208.

post-1857 colonial military-racial classificatory schema, these groups were seen as ideal army recruits in part because of the "vigorous" mountain climates from which they came.[37]

Movement across the mountainous periphery of India generated and exacerbated ongoing concerns within the British Government of India, whose own commercial and political designs on the lands beyond India oscillated with anxieties of unknown incursions into their empire. By the 1870s, with the growing threat of Russian encroachment, British officials redoubled their efforts to define India's borders as precisely as possible. This was due in part to the realization that trans-frontier people, like nomads more generally, were difficult to control, and that their continued movement reflected a general territorial vulnerability to invasion from beyond. These hypothetical invasions were beginning to be imagined and planned for by military strategists in the Intelligence Branch of the Indian Army, one of the world's earliest intelligence gathering organizations.[38]

Invasion fears were intensified by the fact that much of India's periphery was not directly ruled by the British Government of India, but composed of princely states with varying degrees of internal autonomy. The Resident at Hyderabad wrote regarding those unemployed Afghans causing concern in the 1880s, "…it is almost entirely owing to the presence of Native States within British India that trans-frontier men come across in inconvenient numbers, and that it is only within those Native States that the ordinary police and the ordinary laws of the land are unable to cope with them…"[39] Repeated proposals to create a thin strip of territory surrounding

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[37] This is in contrast to the degenerative effects of the plains.

[38] London War Office Intelligence Branch was founded in 1873 (Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 54), while the India Army Intelligence Branch, which emulated that of the War Office, was founded under the Quartermaster General in India in 1878.

[39] NAI, Foreign, A Political I, June 1884, nos. 131-132. "Restrictions on the movements of trans-frontier men towards the Decan."

all of India and directly controlled by the central government never materialized, but certain frontier areas—like Gilgit to the north of Kashmir—were temporarily administered by the central Government of India when the local rulers were deemed to be inefficient or untrustworthy. Plans to do the same with Ladakh, or the whole of Jammu and Kashmir, were proposed by several frontier administrators and experts on at least seven separate occasions, between 1880 and 1947.[40]

Frontier roads became the principal sites of imperial security concerns about trans-frontier movement. Conduits like the Treaty Road through Ladakh that had been improved in attempts to develop trade with Central Asia became, by the turn of the century, means of regulation and restriction of movement—whether for "undesirable" Central Asians, or Europeans like the bizarre Austro-Hungarian Haberhaver (See Chapter Three). In addition to greater oversight of the roads themselves, broader restrictions were put in place by the early twentieth century to address the problem of trans-frontier men. In 1901, for instance, the sale of "arms,

[40] (1) NAI, Foreign, Secret F, February 1888 nos. 198-206. "Proposed appointment of a secret commission to consider a future military frontier line to be held for the protection of India"; (2) NAI, Foreign, Secret F, September 1889, nos. 211-217. "Lhassa authorities still recognize the Ex-Raja of Ladakh as in power and ignore the Kashmir Wazir"; (3) NAI, Foreign, Secret E., May 1918, nos. 146-147. "Effect on the Indo-Tibet Frontier of the grant of Self-Government in India. Question of the creation of a non-self-governing belt of India to act as a buffer between self-governing India and Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Kashmir"; (4) NAI, Foreign and Political, No. 364-X. of 1924-27 (Secret). "Soviet propaganda, and measures to counteract Soviet activities in the North. Measures suggested for adoption in the Gilgit Agency and dealt with separately. … Taking over the independent territories lying between the Gilgit Agency and the North West Frontier Province and Chitral"; (5) NAI, External Affairs Department (predecessor to Ministry of External Affairs), 1940, No. 798-X. "Ladakh Affairs"; (6) NAI, External Affairs Department, No. 329 C.A. (Sec.) of 1944. "Payment to the Kashmir Government of a sum of Rs. 8,000/- on account of expenditure incurred on the entry of Kazaks into India. Question of lease of Ladakh Province from the Kashmir Government"; and (7) NAI, External Affairs Department, No. 258-C.A. (Secret), 1947. "Question of surrender by Jammu and Kashmir State to the Centre, the effective control and administration of its external frontier and taking over of the Ladakh Tehsil."

ammunition, and warlike stores" to trans-frontier people was prohibited.[41] And passports were issued to trans-frontier "tribesmen" beginning in 1914.[42] But the greatest threat these groups posed undoubtedly lay in their ability to generate fear in the Government of India and in the imperial British public more broadly.

Accounts of "outrages" had brought trans-frontier groups to the attention of the British and Indian metropolitan publics going back to before the Rebellion of 1857. An April 1920 editorial in the *Madras Mail*, republished in the Sunday *Times*, for instance, introduced one such event on "that most interesting part of India—the Frontier."[43] The author, a Member of Parliament, described the frontier as follows: "This is a long range of mountains which shuts off India from Tibet, Afghanistan and Persia, penetrated by gorges and passes that are inhabited by tribes of the greatest scoundrels now living on the face of the earth."

In language typical of such pieces, the author described in his "Call to Action" an incident in which a British officer's wife was abducted near Peshawar by a party of Afridi tribesmen who apparently tore her out of bed, forced her to march into the hills at dagger point, and subjected her to such treatment that was "not necessary to enlarge" upon. For this "blow to our prestige"—"the first outrage on an Englishwoman on the Frontier"—the author demanded an

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[41] NAI, Foreign, Secret F., February 1901, nos. 122-134, 127. "Proposed amendment of the rule in order to prohibit licensed dealers from selling Arms, Ammunition, and Warlike Stores to Trans-border men. Question whether "lead" should be mentioned in the proposed rule or not."

[42] NAI, Foreign, General, Secret, June 1914, no. 3. "Decision that Trans-Frontier tribesmen within the political jurisdiction of the Chief Commissioner, North-West Province, may be accorded treatment similar to that granted to subjects of Native States, who are entitled to receive passports in Form C as British projected persons, and that in doubtful cases certificates of identity should be issued."

[43] NAI, Foreign, Frontier, August 1920, no. 48, Part b. "Proposal to take action against an article on Frontier Policy, contributed to the (1) Sunday Times by (2) Hicks, Bt., M.P., Sir Joynson." Article entitled, "The North-West Frontier: A Call to Action," by Sir William Joynson Hicks, Bt., M.P. Published in the Sunday *Times* taken from the *Madras Mail*, April 6, 1920.

accounting of the incident from the Secretary of State for India, and recommended more roads be built to ensure faster retaliation against such groups and greater control over such regions. Three years later in Kohat, the kidnapping of Molly Ellis, which was preceded by the murder of her mother, garnered a similar degree of public alarm and resulted in British destruction of several villages after ransom had been paid and Molly returned.[44]

b. The Macartney-MacDonald Line and the Problem of No-Man's Lands

In the case of Ladakh and the northwestern Himalaya the major "outrage" had been Andrew Dalgleish's murder in 1888, later immortalized in a John Buchan short story in his *A Book of Escapes and Hurried Journeys* (1922). On the effect of the British pursuit of Dalgleish's killer, Buchan wrote that "the story of the unrelenting pursuit throughout Central Asia had an immense moral effect in all that mountain country. The tale of it was repeated at camp-fires and bazaars everywhere between Persia and China, till the Great War, with its far wilder romances, came to dim its memory."[45] But while this fantastical vision may have held for some segment of the British public, Dalgleish's murder reminded imperial administrators of another, more practical problem. While the northern boundary of India had, in theory, already been established as the limit of the Indus watershed, the Government of India had yet to effectively demarcate that line, or to gather any precise details about its location. In this sense, the northwestern Himalaya was increasingly the exception, rather than the rule. The Afghan and Pamir boundary

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[44] Victoria Schofield, *Afghan Frontier: Feuding and Fighting in Central Asia* (New York and London: Tauris Parke, 2003), 130-135. For a recent study on kidnapping on the North-West Frontier, see: Kate Imy, "Kidnapping and a 'Confirmed Sodomite': An Intimate Enemy on the Northwest Frontier of India, 1915-1925," *Twentieth Century British History* 28, no. 1 (March 2017): 29–56.

[45] Buchan, *A Book of Escapes and Hurried Journeys*, 291.

commissions, which included the prominent boundary experts Thomas Holdich and Robert Wahab (see below), were demarcated with great detail by the mid-1890s. The British were also undertaking a detailed demaracation of the Sino-Burmese boundary at this time. Yet the northwestern Himalayan boundaries were different. In part, this was due to the shear harshness of the environment, which prohibited extensive commissions from spending much time in the arid, high desert region. It was also due to the perception of the no-man's land beyond India. The government of India continued debating whether or not to coax the Chinese Government to occupy the regions north and east of the Karakoram Pass in order to block potential Russian advances. For those who wished to "induce the Chinese to occupy" this nonstate space, the strategy was complicated by Kashmiri claims to Shahidulla, a small settlement north of the Karakoram along the Treaty Road.[46]

In 1865, the small settlement of Shahidulla was briefly occupied by troops from Jammu and Kashmir, but was quickly abandoned and subsequently taken over by troops of Yaqub Beg. According to Ney Elias, when the Chinese retook Kashgaria they sent troops south to Shahidulla and taxed the Kirghiz nomads in the Karakash valley north of the settlement. In 1885, Pandit Radha Kishen, the *wazīr-i-wazārat* of Ladakh, heard of the discovery of a lapis lazuli mine in the Karakash valley and desired to send Kashmiri troops to retake it. Elias worried that allowing the *wazīr-i-wazārat* to retake Shahidulla might "incense the Chinese and give rise to an awkward frontier question."[47] The Government of India refused to allow Radha Kishen's request, and

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[46] W. J. Cuningham, Foreign Secretary to Colonel R. Parry Nisbet, Resident in Kashmir, August 21, 1890. NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, October 1890, nos. 141-170, page 97. Keep-With No. 2: "Report from Younghusband (Captain) regarding the state of affairs in Shahidulla and the northern frontier of Kashmir."

[47] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, November 1885, no. 12-14. "Application of the Indus System to the boundary between Ladak [sic] and Chinese Turkistan."

agreed with Elias that though a borderline had yet to be demarcated, Shahidulla clearly lay beyond the Indus watershed.

In December 1888, the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh, Captain Henry Ramsay, forwarded a memorandum to his superior, the Resident in Kashmir, Colonel Parry Nisbet.[48] The note, marked secret, reflected a change in considerations of the northern frontier of India. It brought together a range of frontier experts. Ney Elias was again consulted. The viceroy, Lord Dufferin, was also involved, as was Mortimer Durand, the Secretary to the Foreign Department, and his assistant, W. J. Cuningham. Parry Nisbet forwarded Ramsay's note to Durand, adding that the "recent development of Imperial policy and the measures taken within the last three or four years to secure against attack or surprise routes leading from Central Asia or Afghanistan to India make it, I think, undesirable longer to defer the settlement of this boundary."[49] Ramsay had been vocal in his anxieties about the existence of continued relations between Ladakh and Tibet, particularly in the form of the triennial Lopchak (*lo.phyag*) tribute mission and the reciprocal Chaba (*La.dwags gzhung.tshong*). Ramsay noted that the northern frontier of Ladakh had never been defined and that "while some authorities placed it at Shahidulla, others placed it at the crest of the Karakoram Pass, which is as much as 79 miles south of Shahidulla." By the time Ramsay weighed in it had been three years since Ney Elias' note on the northern frontier, and during that time Russian advances in Turkestan had generated increased anxiety in India. To add to this, Anglo-Russian tensions in Afghanistan had risen after the Panjdeh Incident in 1885, when a

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[48] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, March 1889, nos. 115-116. "Frontier between Ladakh and Chinese-Turkestan."

[49] The "development of Imperial policy" and "measures" referred to a increased awareness of Russian advances in Central Asia and Eastern Turkestan and the growing need to address the possibility of an Afghan invasion. From the time of Henry Rawlinson's *England and Russia in the East* (1875), there had been a growing group of "forward policy." Rawlinson was president of the Royal Geographical Society.

Russian incursion into Afghan territory threatened to provoke a diplomatic crisis and war.[50] The need for unambiguous demarcations of the northern boundary of India became increasingly apparent, as the "Forward Policy" advocated by Rawlinson, Sandeman, and others was beginning to generate more friction across the frontier, not less. This policy asserted that Britain ought to be forward in both the sense of aggressively claiming the furthest extent of controllable territory, and in seeking to establish favorable political conditions beyond its claimed border, usually in the form of "buffer states" or "spheres of influence." In the latter sense, at least, the British government of India came to see China, like Afghanistan, as a necessary bulwark against Russian advances.

While arranging the return of Andrew Dalgleish's papers to Calcutta, Henry Ramsay had come across a memo "on the Chinese position in Yarkand, in which Mr. Dalgleish wrote that the Chinese were very unwilling to extend their territory southwestwards."[51] It was only after "frequent and urgent recommendations made by [Dalgleish] to the Chinese authorities at Yarkand, that they had sent troops to occupy the fort at Sirikol," north of Shahidulla. Furthermore, Ramsay noted, the Chinese Government's "conduct in regard to Mr. Dalgleish's murder shows that the Yarkand authorities do not regard the Karakoram Pass as their frontier." This suggested that the Chinese failed to consider the immediate space north of the Karakoram Pass to be their territory, though, as Ramsay wrote, the "truth of the matter probably is that the Chinese do not know where their frontier is." Considering the history of unilateral boundary commissions in the northwestern Himalaya up to that point, Ramsay's conclusion held a good

[50] Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 96.

[51] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, March 1889, nos. 115-116. "Frontier between Ladakh and Chinese-Turkestan."

deal of unintended irony. "Indeed," he concluded, "how should [the Chinese know where the frontier is] for it requires two parties to demarcate a frontier."

Echoing Elias, Ramsay argued that for clear "geographical and ethnological reasons" the water parting that included the Karakoram Pass was the ideal borderline.[52] Further asserting that a proper demarcation should be taken up, he noted that if the Government of India continued to "permit affairs to remain in their present condition, we must accept the fact that there is a broad belt of 'no man's land' between Indian and Chinese territory."[53]

Although the matter continued to be "frequently under discussion," Viceroy Dufferin allowed Ramsay's concern about an immediate demarcation to be suspended in 1889, fearing that the question of demarcating a boundary with China around the Karakoram Pass would raise

[52] Expanding later on this point, Ramsay wrote: "The watershed of the Indus system is our natural frontier at any rate as far east as the Karakash river (beyond this point the geographical argument would remain in favour of this boundary, but the ethnological argument would be against it, as people, if any, found east of the Karakash would be Tibetans and not Kirghiz or Central Asian Muhammadans), and as the frontier would never be fixed south of this, and would very likely be fixed considerably to the north of it (especially if it was demarcated by a Commission, for it would be quite impossible to lay out a frontier along the tops of the mountains), we are in a position to enter upon the frontier delimitation negotiations, with the comfortable assurance that, though we can lose nothing thereby, we shall, in all probability, benefit to a considerable extent."

[53] Ramsay went on to say that if the frontier had been formally demarcated, "the Chinese could not, without loss of dignity to which they would not submit, allow the Russians to enter upon that country, and at the same time the Russians would be aware of this and would be less likely to take such a step. In the same way if the Chinese agreed to give over the "no man's land" to us, the mere fact of its having been declared to be British territory would suffice to prevent Russian encroachment."

concerns over the Afghan-Chinese frontier as well.[54] The viceroy noted that the map of the neighboring Pamir region produced by Francis Younghusband on an earlier covert mission was too vague to bring to the Chinese.[55] But despite the deferral of an immediate demarcation, discussions of strategies for getting the Chinese to occupy the no-man's land between the two empires continued. Having reaffirmed that the water-parting line including the Karakoram Pass should be part of the northern boundary of Ladakh, the British imperial government soon moved to push the Chinese to "effectively assert their claims to Shahidulla and the tract between the Kuen Lun and Karakoram Ranges," while prohibiting Kashmir from going beyond the Karakoram Pass.[56] The Secretary of State for India noted with caution, "while we welcomed the interest which [the Chinese Government displayed] in these remote places, we could not allow the ownership of them to be disposed of without reference to us and otherwise than by common consent."

The first major segment of the northern Indian frontier codified in treaty came with the agreement to demarcate the 1,500-mile boundary between India and Afghanistan in 1893, known

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[54] W. J. Cuningham, Foreign Secretary to Colonel R. Parry Nisbet, Resident in Kashmir, August 21, 1890. NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, October 1890, nos. 141-170, page 97. Keep-With No. 2: "Report from Younghusband (Captain) regarding the state of affairs in Shahidulla and the northern frontier of Kashmir." "The Government of India have lately had under consideration the question of the Northern Frontier of Kashmir. You will remember that Ramsay wrote a memorandum on the subject in 1888, and the matter has been frequently under discussion. The Government have now decided that, for the present at any rate, the limits of the Indus watershed should be considered as the boundary of the Kashmir territories to the north, and that the line of natural water-parting from a point near the Irshad Pass on the west to the recognised Tibet frontier on the east, should be regarded as the limit of our political jurisdiction."

[55] Ibid. Telegram from Her Majesty's Secretary of State, to Foreign Secretary, September 29, 1890.

[56] Secretary of State for India, to Deputy Secretary, Foreign Department, India. June 15, 1894. NAI, Foreign, Secret F, August 1894, nos. 26-33. "Chinese Boundary. Question of fixing the Chinese Boundary."

as the Durand Line after its chief architect and the British signatory. In an effort to extend this imperial perimeter still farther, the British Government decided in 1898 that it was no longer "impolitic to bring before the Chinese Government the question of the settlement of their boundaries with Kashmir, Hunza and Afghanistan."[57] William Cuningham, having recently taken charge of the Foreign Department, following Mortimer Durand, wrote to the Resident in Kashmir. "I recently had occasion to consult Younghusband on the question of the settlement with China of the boundaries of Hunza, Kashmir and Afghanistan." With the exception of two valley posts deemed strategic, this border would follow the water parting of the main range. After consulting with Henry McMahon, who had accompanied Durand on his 1892 mission to Kabul and was later posted to Gilgit as the Political Officer in 1897-98, this line was accepted.[58]

Cuningham also consulted Robert A. Wahab, who, like Thomas Holdich, had been a member of numerous surveys, including the Perso-Afghan Boundary Commission.[59] Cuningham wrote to Wahab, enclosing the latest map of Eastern Turkistan, one compiled by Henry Trotter in the 1870s and marked up by Francis Younghusband with a hypothetical borderline in red and blue dotted lines.[60] He wanted Wahab to produce a printed map based on Younghusband's

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[57] NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, November 1898, nos, 110-114. "Kashmir-Frontier. Memorandum by Sir John Ardagh, KCB, advocating the extension of British influence to regions beyond the northern frontier of India contiguous to Chinese Dominions for the purpose of frustrating a Russian advance on India via the Kilik Mintaka, Shimshal, Khunjerab, Mustagh, and Karakoram Passes."

[58] William Cuningham, Foreign Secretary, to A. C. Talbot, Resident in Kashmir, August 1, 1898. NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, November 1898, nos, 110-114.

[59] William Cuningham, Foreign Secretary, to Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. Wahab, September 4, 1898. NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, November 1898, nos, 110-114.

[60] India International Center (hereafter IIC), Himalayan Club Collection. Captain Henry Trotter, R.E. (Deputy-Superintendent, Great Trigonometrical Survey of India) *Account of the Survey Operations in connection with the Mission to Yarkand and Kashghar in 1873-74*. Extracted from the volume of reports submitted to the Government of India by Sir Douglas Forsyth, C.B., K.C.S.I., in charge of the mission (Calcutta: Printed at the Foreign Department Press, 1875).

revisions. But, he wrote, "it would be better *not* to indicate on it the true crests of the main ranges … for the map might be wanted for use in negotiations, and would be better for not indicating alternatives."[61] The map was forwarded to the Viceroy, who sent it to the Secretary of State for India. Consulting with John Ardagh, the Director of Military Intelligence in the War Office, it was determined that the water-parting of the Karakoram should be established in writing between the Chinese and Indian governments as the boundary between the two empires. In April 1898 the Secretary of State wrote to the Viceroy stating that they had concluded that "no strategical advantage would be gained by going beyond the natural frontier and across mountains where no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted."[62] What was needed, then, was, in the words of Viceroy Elgin, "an agreement with China describing the line in question by its better known topographical features, each power reciprocally engaging to respect the boundary thus defined."

To do this, the Foreign Office reached out to George Macartney, the consul-general at Kashgar who had been placed under the command of the Resident in Kashmir. Macartney had arrived in Kashgar as a Chinese interpreter on Younghusband's 1890 expedition, having been born and raised in Nanking, the child of a Scottish father and Chinese mother. After Younghusband left in 1891, Macartney stayed on as the sole British representative in Central Asia, though this was an informal role until 1910 when he was recognized by Russia and China

[61] William Cuningham, Foreign Secretary, to Lieutenant-Colonel R. A. Wahab, September 4, 1898. NAI, Foreign, Secret F., November 1898, nos, 110-114.

[62] Secretary of State, London, to Viceroy, Simla, July 13, 1898. NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier., November 1898, nos. 110-114. "Kashmir-Frontier. Memorandum by Sir John Ardagh, KCB, advocating the extension of British influence to regions beyond the northern frontier of India contiguous to Chinese Dominions for the purpose of frustrating a Russian advance on India via the Kilik Mintaka, Shimshal, Khunjerab, Mustagh, and Karakoram Passes."

as British consul-general.[63] In the early 1890s, going with very little instruction from the Government of India, Macartney began gathering information on the region around Kashgar and Yarkand, including a map provided by Hung Ta-Chen, a senior Chinese official in Kashgar in 1893 (Figure 5.1).[64] This map gave the Foreign Office its first glimpse of the Chinese understanding of its territorial limits in Xinjiang.

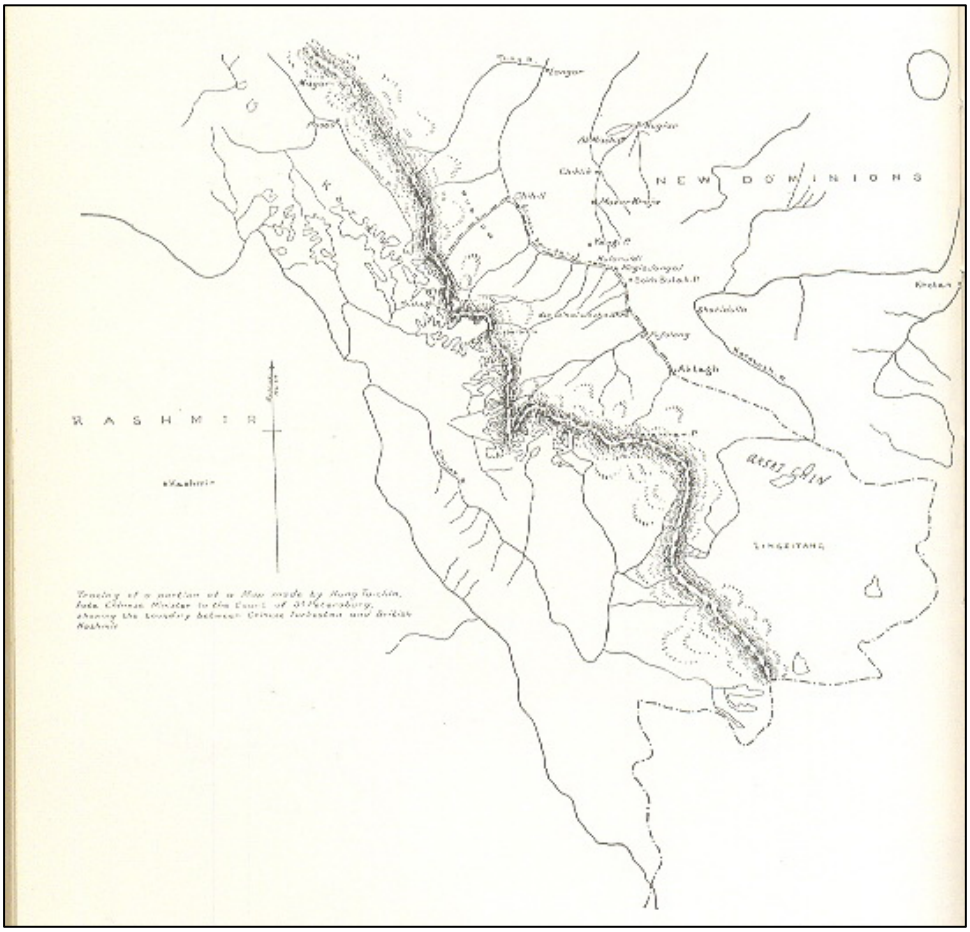


Figure 5.2. Hung Ta-Chen's map. Source: Dorothy Woodman's *Himalayan Frontiers* (1969)

[63] C. P. Skrine and P. Nightingale, *Macartney at Kashgar* (1973); Katherine Prior, 'Macartney, Sir George (1867–1945)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34665, accessed 20 July 2017].

[64] Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, 74-78.

The Foreign Office then contacted Claude MacDonald, the British minister to the Chinese government. MacDonald, in turn, communicated a description of a proposed "line of frontier," which was "so clearly denoted by geographical features that no difficulty [was] anticipated in its observance by the two Governments without the necessity for any demarcation on the spot."[65] To avoid the incongruity of Chinese claims to territory within the watershed—specifically China's "shadowy" claim to sovereignty over Hunza" (north of Gilgit)—the British were prepared to push the rulers of Hunza to waive their claims to the Taghdumbash valley and Raskam if the Chinese waived their claim to Hunza.[66] The Foreign Office concluded its letter to MacDonald by stating that the "line now proposed, which is shown on the enclosed map, would form a good and well defined boundary, and I have to request you to approach the Tsungli Yamen on the subject, with a view to obtaining a settlement of the question in the direction indicated by the Government of India."

[65] Foreign Office to Sir Claude MacDonald, December 14, 1898. NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, May 1899, no. 164, page 193. "Indo-Chinese. Minister in China asked to address Tsungli Yamen regarding the line decided upon as the Boundary(ies) between Kashmir and its Dependencies and Chinese territory. Hunza's right to collect numdahs, etc., from Kirghiz on the Taghdumbash."

[66] Foreign Secretary to Resident in Kashmir, July 28, 1899. NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, August 1899, no. 198, page 515. "Despatch addressed by Sir Claude MacDonald to the Tsungli Yamen regarding the Boundary(ies) between Chinese Turkistan, Afghanistan, Hunza, and Kashmir, and undertaking on behalf of the Indian Government to relinquish Hunza's claims to the Taghdumbash and Raskam if China will relinquish her claim to Hunza."

The resulting letter of March 14, 1899 to the Chinese government proposed the border configuration later known to as the Macartney-MacDonald Line.[67]

> Commencing on the Little Pamir, from the peak at which the Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission of 1895 ended their work, it runs south-east… From the Karakoram Pass the crests of the range run nearly east for about half a degree (100 *li*), and then turn south to a little below the 35th parallel of north latitude. Rounding then what in our maps is shown as the source of the Karakash, the line of hills to be followed runs north-east to a point east of Kizil Jilga, and from there in a south-easterly direction follows the Lak Tsung Range until that meets the spur running south from the K'un-lun range, which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80 [degrees] east longitude. / Your Highness and your Excellencies will see by examining this line that a large tract of country to the north of the great dividing range shown in Hung Chun's map as outside the Chinese boundary will be recognised as Chinese territory. / I beg your Highness and your Excellencies to consider the matter, and to favour me with an early reply.[68]

But there was no reply from the Chinese. However, while the Macartney-MacDonald Line satisfied British imperial concerns regarding the elimination of the no-man's land north of Ladakh, it failed to address the continued problem of trans-frontier men and the greater geopolitical threat from the north.

c. Soviet Penetration

By the early twentieth century, the threat of localized border transgressions was easily extrapolated to the realm of geostrategic concern, thanks in part to the growth of perceived transnational threats to the imperial order like Bolshevism and Pan-Islamism, as well as anti-

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[67] Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, July 27, 1899. NAI, Foreign, Secret E, September 1905, nos. 12-18, 15. "Definition of the boundary between Hunza and Chinese Turkestan as claimed by Sir C. Macdonald in 1899 and that which it is now recommended the Chinese Government should be invited to accept as part of the general settlement of all outstanding difficulties in Chinese Turkestan. Proposed modification of the latter so as to include the northern slope of the Kilik Pass for strategical reasons, rejected."

[68] Sir Claude M. MacDonald to the Tsung-li Yamên, March 14, 1899. Appendix 7 in Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, 366-367.

imperial nationalist movements. In 1925, after the threat of imperial Russia had been replaced by the threat of communist Russia, the Secretary of State for India received a telegram from India, which was "regarded with some anxiety."[69] It was thought that "the Soviet Government while by no means abandoning its earlier line of 'attack' on India from Afghanistan and the north-west [was] taking advantage of the opportunity afforded by the condition of affairs in China to obtain and consolidate a position from which to launch also an attack from the north."[70] The Secretary of State for India also noted that a "natural development of the policy that the Soviet Government appears to following in Hsin-Kiang and other parts of Central Asia," included extending its influence to Tibet. "To sum up," the Secretary of State concluded, "it appears that if the policy which the Soviet Government is reported to be following in Central Asia and in China is allowed to be carried through unhindered, there is no sector of India's land frontier that will not eventually be threatened, in greater or lesser degree, with the danger of the infiltration of Bolshevik influences."

In response, the deputy to the Secretary of the Foreign and Political Department noted that they had "secret and very reliable information that the Soviet Government, in certain eventualities, will endeavour to get into touch with our frontier tribes from the Pamirs with the

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[69] L.D. Wakely, Sec., Political Dept. India Office, London, 8 October 8, 1925. NAI, Foreign F. No. 364-X. of 1924-27 (Secret). "Soviet propaganda, and measures to counteract Soviet activities in the North. Measures suggested for adoption in the Gilgit Agency and dealt with separately. Increase in the subsidies of Mirs and Governors of the Gilgit Agency. Increase of the period of training of the Gilgit Scouts. Taking over the independent territories lying between the Gilgit Agency and the North West Frontier Province and Chitral. Employment of Intelligence Agents. Establishment of Aircraft landing grounds, in Gilgit. Telephone communications. Appointments of a Special Service Officer. Use of the Scouts Posts. Medical and education arrangements and defence scheme of the Gilgit Agency. Proposed increase in the Secret Service and darbar presents grant of the Gilgit Agency. Sanction of an increase in the Secret Service grant of the British Joint Commissioner in Leh."

[70] Ibid.

object of stirring up trouble…."[71] He went on to note that the establishment of posts along the Yarkand-Leh Treaty Road would be one good means of addressing these concerns, though it would require the collected opinions of the Consul General at Kashgar, the Resident in Kashmir, and the General Staff Branch.

R. R. Maconachie of the Army's General Staff replied that it was "doubtful whether the idea of a *detective cordon* along the Frontiers from Chitral to Burma [was] at all practical." But the Resident in Kashmir and his subordinate, the British Joint Commissioner were more positive toward measures to be taken to combat "the Russian menace." Sir John Wood, the Resident in Kashmir, wrote that he fully supported the recommendations that his subordinates in Ladakh, Gilgit, and Kashgar had made. The Resident noted that it had been the desire of the Soviets to "to turn Sinkiang into a Soviet Republic." "It is the logical thing for the Russians to do as it will link up Soviet Turkestan with the new Soviet Republic of outer Mongolia."

The Political Agent in Gilgit enumerated a list of specific steps to be taken. These included increasing the subsidies to the local mirs and governors, more training for the Gilgit Corps of Scouts, "[t]aking over the Independent Territory lying between Gilgit Agency, the North West Frontier Province and Chitral," granting the Political Agent "special powers to deal with foreigners and undesirable British Indian Subjects," establishing aircraft landing grounds and telephone communications, increasing the Secret Service and Darbar present grants, and, of course, improvements to the roads up Gilgit and the restriction of roads beyond it to the border.

Major Hinde, the BJC for Ladakh told his superior in Kashmir that while Soviet movements between Yarkand and the Karakoram would be monitored by the Consul General in

[71] NAI, Foreign F. No. 364-X. of 1924-27 (Secret). "Soviet propaganda, and measures to counteract Soviet activities in the North…."

Kashgar, regarding those south of the Karakoram Pass, "A glance at the map will show that for all practical purposes there is only one pass which is feasible for travellers and that is the one just North of Dipsang Plains."[72] "South of the Dipsang," he continued, "the Treaty High Road makes a turn to the East over the Sasser Pass" and offers travellers another route along the Shyok river that could allow travellers to bypass Leh and rejoin the Treaty Road at the Indus River five miles south of Leh at Spituk. "It is thus possible for travellers from Chinese Turkestan to avoid Leh by using the Shyok route whether they rejoin the Treary [sic] Road or not but *fortunately* this route is not open all the year."[73] Tellingly, the seasonal inaccessibility of this route was now a strength in the estimation of the British Joint Commissioner.

Regarding Soviet agents, Major Hinde also noted that they "would hardly attempt a journey from Yarkand to India on routes where most of the travellers are known unless they have accomplices to shield them and these accomplices would necessarily be traders or Hajis, probably the latter." "Therefore," he concluded, "we may expect to find agents travelling with a party of Hajis."

But coordinating the issue of Haji passports with the consul-general at Kashgar had already proved untenable for Hinde. Instead, he proposed (and the Resident in Kashmir concurred), that the "best and cheapest method of keeping a watch on the ingress of undesirables from Chinese Turkestan via Ladakh" was to have his assistant, the Special Charas Officer at Leh, build a network of informants in the villages through which a trans-frontier traveller was likely to pass. He proposed that his Secret Service grant, which was set at a mere Rs. 50, should be increased to Rs. 550. This, he argued, would allow him to give a small monthly allowance to six

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[72] British Joint Commissioner, Ladakh, to the First Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir, 26 February 1926. NAI, Foreign, F. No. 364-X. of 1924-27 (Secret).

[73] My emphasis.

headmen in villages along the main routes into Ladakh, for the six months out of the year that the passes were typically open.[74] These informants would report the "arrival and departure of any teavellers [sic] who in any way excite suspicion" to the Special Charas Officer in Leh, or to the "road daroghas"[75] at Kargil and Dras, or the trade moharrirs (clerks) at Panamik (which was open from June till November) and Tankse (open all the year round). The Special Charas Officer would then send a weekly report and telegraph important information. These recommendations were approved in May 1927.[76]

Last to weigh in on the issue of Soviet ingress to India was Mr. V. Short of the Intelligence Bureau.[77] Referring to the Soviets he wrote in March of 1926:

> From their present organization in Central Asia, with their advance base at Tashkent, they have three main lines of penetration. / (1) The Central Line through Afghan Turkistan. / (2) The Eastern Line through Chinese Turkistan. / (3) The Western Line through Persian Turkistan. / The Central Line is the old established route, and…is still very busy. There are, however, indications that the Eastern Line is now becoming more popular. The Russians have lately established Consulates in Chinese Turkistan, and are engaged in extending their trade agencies in that area; these will provide them with means of penetrating, via the Pamirs, into Gilgit and Chitral…. I now come to the last link in the chain and one which, although it does not concern us directly, may possibly give rise to some anxiety. I refer to Kashmir

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[74] These villages were: Panamik, Spitak, Durgub, Upshi, Pashkyum, and Dras.

[75] *dārōghah*: headman of an office, official in charge.

[76] Demi-Official from the British Joint Commissioner, Ladakh, to the First Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir, 26 February 1926. "Soviet propaganda, and measures to counteract Soviet activities in the North. Measures suggested for adoption in the Gilgit Agency and dealt with separately. Increase in the subsidies of Mirs and Governors of the Gilgit Agency. Increase of the period of training of the Gilgit Scouts. Taking over the independent territories lying between the Gilgit Agency and the North West Frontier Province and Chitral. Employment of Intelligence Agents. Establishment of Aircraft landing grounds, in Gilgit. Telephone communications. Appointments of a Special Service Officer. Use of the Scouts Posts. Medical and education arrangements and defence scheme of the Gilgit Agency. Proposed increase in the Secret Service and darbar presents grant of the Gilgit Agency. Sanction of an increase in the Secret Service grant of the British Joint Commissioner in Leh. F. No. 364-X. of 1924-27 (Secret).

[77] That is, the civilian intelligence service housed in the Home Department, which was distinct from the Indian Army's Intelligence Branch.

> State. The very position of this large state shows its importance, but the subject is very difficult.

Short's enumeration of routes—or "lines of penetration"—reflected a form of strategic thinking that developed out of a revolution in military organization and planning in the late nineteenth century, reflected in official documents like the Strategic Situation reports.[78] Not only had imperial policy shifted from addressing specific frontiers independently of each other, but an integrated frontier policy also allowed for a calculus of potential invasion routes and the probability of each being used. This information—supplied in route books and other manuals of governance and military control (see Chapter Four)—was combined with intelligence gathered from beyond and within India. Underscoring the threat of "Bolshevik propaganda" to India, Mr. Short also noted "relations have been found to exist between the Red International, the All-India Trade Union Congress, and the Labour Swaraj Party."

In 1935, the Government of India again brainstormed additional ways in which to "sterilize the working of Soviet spies and agents penetrating Gilgit, Chitral and Ladakh." It is unclear as to how much of the "work" attributed to these "spies" was simply the circulation of Russian goods along trade routes, but reports from Secret Service agents posted in Leh, Gilgit, and Chitral make reference to several individuals who spoke of Bolshevism, including a doctor

[78] See Hevia, *Imperial Security State*.

in Chitral whose father was allegedly Russian.[79] Unfortunately the Foreign Department files detailing "Anti-Soviet measures" in the 1930s are marked "destroyed" in the National Archives of India.[80] But if we are in any doubts about what was meant by the use of "sterilization," the memo's authors tell us by debating the varying merits of the terms "liquidate," "sterilize," and "neutralize."[81] "[T]he Germans have brought sterilization too much in the limelight from its meaning to be limited to our requirements," wrote the deputy Foreign Secretary in reference to eugenics and the rise of National Socialism in Germany. "I suggest neutralization."[82] Following Independence in 1947, the Government of India continued to register reports of possible Soviet inroads. And following the victory of the Chinese Communist Party over the Kuomintang, threats of Communist Chinese inroads in northern India were added to the list of frontier concerns (see Conclusion).

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[79] NAI, Foreign and Political, Secret. D.O. No. D.4126-X/35. August 1935. "Dear Lang, We have had a good deal of information lately regarding the penetration of Russian agents into Chitral, Gilgit, and Ladakh, and as the problem in its bearing on Chitral and Gilgit is really a common one, I am desired to address both the administrations concerned, and ask them to pass the word to the Chitral and Gilgit Agencies for endeavors to be made to neutralize the efforts of such agents. As is well-known every traveller in these remote valleys is marked, and cannot escape the notice of the local rulers. The Government of India consider that it is very definitely the business of H.H. the Mehtar of Chitral, and of the Chiefs in the Gilgit Agency (more particularly the Mir of Hunza) to make things unpleasant for spies, and to do everything possible to neutralize their efforts. They are not satisfied that the local rulers are giving the attention to this matter which it deserves. / Sd. O.K. Caroe. / Deputy Secretary. / To: A.J. Hopkinson, esq., Chief Secretary to Government N.W.F.P. and Lt. Col. L. E. Lang, Resident in Kashmir." AND Bolshevik penetration on the Northern Frontier of India. Information regarding Ghol if father a Russian, who is employed as a doctor in Chitral. Frontiers 471-F. of 1927 (Secret).

[80] NAI, F. No. 354-X of 1924-27. (Secret)Anti-Soviet measures. Soviet propaganda and measure to counteract Soviet activities in the North. Suggestion by the Secretary of State as to the measures to be adopted by the Government of India. Measures proposed for adoption in Afghanistan, the North West Frontier Province, Kashmir Frontier and Kashgar by the Political Agent Gilgit. Scheme for the policing of the North-West Frontier Province when necessity arose.

[81] The Deputy Foreign Secretary, Olaf Caroe, and the Resident in Kashmir.

[82] NAI, External Affairs, 342-X (Secret) of 1935. "Penetration of Soviet Agents into Chitral, Gilgit and Ladakh and measures taken to neutralize their efforts."

II. Boundary commissions and the emergence of frontier experts

The development of a coordinated strategic approach to managing information about and securing the frontiers of India was not just reflective of increased security concerns and changes in intelligence gathering. It was also the result of the work of a second set of trans-frontier men, the imperial frontier experts.[83] Their expertise was the result of years of technical surveying, participating in large-scale boundary commissions, and contributing to debates in the Royal Geographical Society and its publications. By the 1880s boundary commissions were no longer the small, solitary endeavors like those of Alexander Cunningham, Henry Strachey, and Thomas Thomson decades earlier. Instead, they had become highly technical and extensive undertakings involving at times hundreds of individuals demarcating and mapping a line across diverse terrains rationalized by a set of consistent border-making principles. These commissions comprised botanists and geologists, soldiers and draftsmen, porters and cooks, and lots and lots of animals. The key role, however, fell to the surveyors, who triangulated and mapped the location of the border and its surroundings. The detailed records they produced formed the basis of the imperial state's understanding of its territorial limits.

a. The Expansion of Boundary Commissions: Thomas Holdich and the Frontier Experts

Between Cunningham's two Ladakh Boundary Commissions in the late 1840s and the boundary commissions of the 1880s, surveying and boundary demarcation were dramatically

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[83] Alex McKay has referred to the "Frontier Cadre" to discuss the group of men who pushed for Tibetan policy. I use the category of frontier experts in a more general sense, reflecting the trans-imperial dimension of many of these figures. They were less concerned with policy on any one particular frontier than in making frontiers and borders more generally (and systematically). McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj: The Frontier Cadre, 1904-1947*.

transformed.[84] The scale of the work of the commissions revealed both the geographical range and the technological precision involved. These large-scale undertakings included surveyors, cartographers, botanists, geologists, and political advisors. No one man is more closely associated with this emerging science of border making than Thomas Hungerford Holdich (1843-1929). Holdich began his career in India as an assistant surveyor on the Bhutan Expedition (1865-66). His performance guaranteed him a permanent appointment in the Survey Department. His work with the department sent him to Abyssinia (1867-68) and numerous surveys along the North-West Frontier. As a survey officer with the southern Afghanistan Field Force during the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80), he became "[f]ascinated by the prospect of filling out the very incomplete maps of the region," and he "surveyed and gathered intelligence both during military operations and when engaged to lay out roads and railways through the border passes of Baluchistan and Afghanistan."[85] Subsequently, he served as a surveyor and cartographer on the Afghan Boundary Commission (1884-85) and the Pamir Boundary Commission (1885), which created the famous Russian buffer and salient known as the Wakhan Corridor. In 1887, Holdich earned the Royal Geographical Society's top prize, the Founder's Medal, for his surveys in Afghanistan.[86] By the time he left India "he was the supreme authority on all matters connected with frontier delimitation and demarcation."[87] He would adjudicate the boundary dispute between Argentina and Chile in 1902, and publish nearly a dozen books on the subject of

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[84] For an analysis of the Afghan Boundary Commission, see James Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 92-106; and the forthcoming thesis of Francesca Fuoli (SOAS).

[85] Elizabeth Baigent, 'Holdich, Sir Thomas Hungerford (1843–1929)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33932, accessed 21 July 2017].

[86]Kenneth Mason and H. L. Crosthwait, "Colonel Sir Thomas Hungerford Holdich, K. C. M. G., K. C. I. E., C. B.," *The Geographical Journal* 75, No. 3 (Mar., 1930): 212.

[87] Mason and Crosthwait, "Holdich," 209.

boundaries, frontiers, and border making. Throughout his career Holdich also published extensively in the *Geographical Journal* and became an active member of the Royal Geographical Society, serving on its governing council before serving as president himself from 1916-1918.



Figure 5.3. "A survey group in the Kurram, 1879." Photograph by Bourne and Shepherd, 2nd Afghan War. Thomas H. Holdich is center right amidst a team of surveyors. National Army Museum, London. NAM. 1955-04-42-18. Thanks to Professor James Hevia for a copy of the photograph.

Holdich, like Ney Elias, was a respected frontier expert whose advice was regularly sought by such senior administrators as Mortimer Durand, Henry McMahon, and George Curzon. When he reached the age limit and retired in 1898, Holdich was often consulted on border issues across the globe and wrote extensively on frontier and border-making problems in

the Americas and Africa, as well as in Asia and Europe.[88] Unlike Elias, who was typically called in to advise on political matters on the frontier, Holdich was more often consulted on the technical aspects of demarcation and the geographical principles upon which they rested—though he frequently enumerated the political and social benefits of effective frontiers in his official reports and his published work. In 1902, for instance, Holdich arbitrated a long-standing boundary dispute in Patagonia between Argentina and Chile. The 1881 treaty that marked out the boundary between these two countries had failed to address the location of the border in sufficient detail to account for several basins and extensive forests. Holdich spent several months in South America reviewing the available surveys and traveling the would-be borderland before he "established a boundary which is so far based on natural features, that it cannot be mistaken nor removed."[89] "Where possible," he wrote approvingly, "it follows lines of lofty mountains, which interpose themselves in silent majesty between the ephemeral disputes and discords of human political strife. … It is on the whole a strategic boundary."

Over time, Holdich developed and refined a classification system and hierarchy of natural and artificial boundaries. In a voluminous report on the Perso-Baluch Boundary Commission from 1896, Thomas Holdich offered his thoughts on "The best method of demarcation in uncivilized districts," in several "general principles." "The best and most recognizable natural boundary is," he wrote,

> a well-defined watershed; the higher and more inaccessible the better, but whether high or low, it is one which every trans-border savage recognizes *instructively* and which he feels to be *immoveable*. …When artificial methods are a necessity, the only alternative is to erect pillars at all important points and to fix their position

[88] For instance: T. H. Holdich, *Boundaries in Europe and the Near East* (London: Macmillan, 1918); "How are we to get maps of Africa?" *The Geographical Journal* 18 No. 6 (December 1901): 590-601; and *The Countries of the King's Award* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1904).

[89] Thomas Holdich, *The Countries of the King's Award*, 411.

> accurately by a survey process.[90] .... Unnecessary pillars should never by erected unless their safety can be secured, as the destruction of them may, and does, lead to the erroneous idea that the boundary itself has been impaired or destroyed. But apart from the temptation afforded to any casual trans-frontier outlaw to insult the British Government by the destruction of carefully erected boundary marks, there are natural causes which tend to destroy such artificial erections quite as surely as human vindictiveness or love of mischief. [91]

Holdich's articulation of these general principles of demarcation not only insisted that the particular terrain gave rise to the ideal natural boundary to stop a "trans-border savage," but he also acknowledged that the utility of these boundaries rested in their simultaneous existence on the land and on the survey map. Even in the case of a well-placed artificial marker, the map would ensure its durability. "Should the boundary marks themselves vanish," he concluded, "there should always remain a record of their position on the map, and a repetition of the same survey process will show precisely where the original site may have been."

The "immoveable" watershed and mountain range, acting in tandem with the restricted trans-frontier map provided the surest means of precisely identifying and defending imperial territory. The strength of a natural, scientifically determined border also complemented the work of men like Younghusband, ensuring that those states beyond would be "chastened" in their independence, and remain open to British influence.[92] An impermeable border was also an object

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[90] i.e. by trigonometrically fixing those points to a universal grid of latitude and longitude.

[91] Colonel Thomas Holdich, Commissioner, Perso-Baluch Frontier, to Foreign Secretary, Government of India. NAI, Foreign, Secret External, October 1896, no. 41. My emphasis.

[92] Thomas Holdich, *The Indian Borderland, 1880-1900* (London: Methuen, 1901), 49. Holdich is referring to a distinction between "British Baluchistan" and "'independent' Baluchistan," which includes "close political control where British interests are involved." Similar descriptions can be found in the discussions about Tibet's status vis-à-vis India.

that "every nomadic robber in the frontier [understood and was] perforce obliged to respect it as being quite beyond the limits of his powers of interference."[93]

At the core of this territorializing process was the expanded and systematized work of the boundary commission. The indexes of the Foreign Department in the National Archives of India reveal a burst of large-scale boundary commissions in the 1880s, comprising hundreds of surveyors, scientists, soldiers, porters, and animals. Holdich himself referenced this demarcation revolution in the preface to his *The Indian Borderland, 1880-1900* (1901) with particular reference to surveying on the North-West Frontier where he spent the majority of his time in India. "During the last twenty-five years," he began, "a great change has been effected in the measure of our information about the regions of farther India on the north-west. Twenty-five years ago all that we knew of frontier geography was narrowed to a few lines running westward from India and terminating in the cities of the Afghan and Baluch highlands."[94]

The process of demarcation began to follow standardized procedures, with a small number of experts being consulted on the finer points of the process. Ney Elias and Thomas Holdich, for instance, were called in to advise the Afghan Boundary Commission in 1885-88. Elias would later also be consulted on the Anglo-Siamese Commission (1889-90), as well as boundary disputes between Badakhshan province and the North-West Frontier, Burma and Yunnan (1887) Rajputana (1888), Tibet and Sikkim (1889), Burma and Siam (1889), and Khorassan and Seistan (1892, 1896).[95]

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[93] Colonel Thomas Holdich, Commissioner, Perso-Baluch Frontier, to Foreign Secretary, Government of India. NAI, Foreign, Secret External, October 1896, Nos. 15-53.

[94] Thomas Holdich, *The Indian Borderland, 1880-1900* (London: Methuen, 1901), vii.

[95] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, June 1887 nos. 57-61. "Decorations of CMG proposed for Elias (Mr. Ney) for his services in Turkistan and Badakhshan."



Figure 5.4. "Royal Engineers, near Headquarters Gate, 1879." Photograph by John Burke. National Army Museum, London. NAM. 1955-04-41-15. The archival description accompanying the photograph reads: During the Afghan conflict, the tasks of the Royal Engineers, Bengal Sappers and Miners, Bombay Sappers and Miners and Madras Sappers and Miners included road-making, building posts on the line of communication, bridge building across rivers, camp and fort construction, laying telegraph lines and surveying."

Holdich took boundary demarcation to a far more scientific level than the generations before him, writing extensively and systematically on methods and rationales for utilizing

"natural" and "artificial" boundaries.[96] By the 1890s, these geographically based considerations were being fused with "strategical" considerations, adding weight to the concept of the "Scientific Frontier." As illustrated in Chapter Two, the "scientific frontier," in the words of George Curzon, united "natural and strategical strength."[97] This strategic aspect included the kinds of military considerations that came from the Army General Staff and Intelligence Branch, and were collected in standardized manuals like route books. "From a military point of view," Holdich wrote,

> the ideal to be aimed at in determining a frontier in mountainous country is that the line chosen should follow some prominent geographical feature, preferably the main watershed of the mountain system, and also that, to facilitate effective occupation if necessary, the communications up to the frontier should be such as to afford reasonable access to the line selected. A lateral communication running parallel to and a short distance in rear of the frontier is also a considerable asset.[98]

Holdich asserted here that roads, and other infrastructures of communication (railways and telegraphs), should work in tandem with an ideal natural border, which followed the apparently unambiguous water-parting principle, to form a "scientific frontier."

By the end of the nineteenth century, military experts like the Director of Military Intelligence in the War Office were regularly weighing in on boundary commissions, often suggesting minor deviations in natural boundaries, such as watershed limits, when a particular strategic point was determined advantageous to the demarcated line. John Ardagh, who served as Director of Military Intelligence and would go on to serve in the leadership of the Royal Geographical Society, regularly weighed in on the boundary issues along the north of India.

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[96] For an extensive account of these categories, see Thomas Holdich, *Political Frontier and Boundary Making* (London, Macmillan and Co., 1916).

[97] See Curzon, *Frontiers*, 19; and Hanna, *India's Scientific Frontier*.

[98] NAI, Foreign, Secret E., September 1915, nos. 76-101. "India. Definition of Indo-Tibetan Boundaries."

Military considerations not only went hand in hand with geographical concerns, they fused together as a scientific ideal to be achieved through the application of a prescribed set of principles and implemented through a standard set of practices. The consultation of these experts reflected a growing ability to synthesize the opinions of a range of imperial experts into the evolving calculus of border making across the remote northern limits of India.

b. Other Trans-Frontier Men: The "boys with digestions" and the Pundits

While the majority of frontier experts were associated with the work of boundary commissions, some gained renown through exploration beyond the frontier. These were the "boys with digestions," as Kipling styled them: hyper-masculine paragons of the imperial British homosocial world.[99] Theirs was not simply a masculinity of physical strength and the occasional use of violence, it was also "a masculinist story" of solitary discipline and exploratory fantasy—as Robert H. MacDonald, Anne McClintock and others have noted.[100] The dominant trope, found in much popular fiction and non-fiction, of the young colonial officer "penetrating" the virgin lands beyond the frontier, or taming the lawless hills, is surely one that readily evokes sexual metaphors without taxing the imagination (see Figure 5.4 below).[101] For these men, as has been well documented by scholars, the two great theatres of empire in India were the North-West and

[99] Rudyard Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).162.

[100] Robert H. Macdonald, *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880-1918* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

[101] For an example of this genre, see the "Tales form the Outposts" series.

Indo-Tibetan frontiers.[102] The former offered the frequent opportunity at conquest and re-conquest while the latter stubbornly refused to "be opened" until Younghusband's mission in 1903-04. As embodied in Kipling's novel, *Kim* (1901), by the other-worldly figure of "the Lama," Tibet was a "forbidden," "mysterious," and "unknown" land. The continual failure of the Government of India to "open up" Tibet throughout the nineteenth century was often viewed by commentators as reflective of a "timid, wavering policy."[103]

Francis Younghusband was the consummate frontier man, having achieved fame through his daring traverses in the Karakoram and his travels across China and Central Asia. These travels formed the basis of what was perhaps his first popular memoir, *The Heart of a Continent* (1896).[104] In it, he recounted his journey from eastern China, across the Gobi Desert to the northwestern Himalaya. Reflecting the emerging geopolitical view of Asia (as both a "problem" and an object to be studied[105]), Younghusband's journey into the "heart" of Asia also implied the accumulation of expertise necessary to be a respected frontier man. Expertise was generated on the ground in Asia, not in London. Later, men like Younghusband would return to London and participate in the Royal Geographical Society, which circulated exploration reports, maps, and policy recommendations in the pages of its *Journal*. But despite the location of the Society and

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[102] The North-West Frontier, as Lewis Wurgaft and others have detailed, was the pre-eminent locus of these fantasies. As James Hevia has noted with regard to the main characters of Kipling's "The Man who would be King," "Kipling's stories are significant precisely because they formed Asia around such fantasies. Tales like this one fixed the continent as a space for unconventional men, where romantic adventure … lay just …over the next range of mountains." Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 9.

[103] NAI, Foreign, Secret External, May 1887, no. 82. "Despatch to Secretary of State containing a complete account of the circumstances connected with the proposed British Mission to Tibet." and "Extract from the "Englishman," dated 31st January 1887: "Public opinion strongly stirred by delay of Tibet Mission."

[104] Younghusband, *The Heart of a Continent*.

[105] See Hevia, *Imperial Security State*.

the circulation of its *Journal*, the locus of experience for frontier expertise was centered in the mountains of the "heart" of Asia.



Figure 5.5. An example of masculinist frontier fantasy. A page from Talbot Mundy's comic book *King of the Khyber Rifles* (1916). It reads: "Rumors that a Jihad* (*Holy war) of ten thousand

men was forming in Khinjan Caves, in India, sent Athelstan King, of the British Secret Service, up the Khyber Pass to keep an appointment with a woman—a woman who might be saint or she-devil, but a woman whose word in the hills was law. And in the hills there was no law, save that of the gun and the knife."

Eventually Younghusband would be rewarded for his "Tibet Frontier Commission" (also known as the invasion of Tibet) with the position of Resident in Kashmir.[106] Durand believed that any aspiring political officer needed time on the frontier to "enable his superiors to judge of the stuff of which he was made and would assist them in forming an estimate of his capacity for general or special employment."[107] According to Durand, men with "knowledge and brains" like Elias and Younghusband should not be left to work in "humdrum routine."[108] They were suited for work on the frontier, which, Durand also noted, was generally most suitable for young, unmarried men.[109]

There was also a third group of trans-frontier men, a hybrid of native and colonial: the Pundits. These were men—often from the hills but sometimes from Bengal and other parts of the plains—who were trained by the Survey of India to take part in covert intelligence gathering missions beyond the borders of India. Complicating the trope of "effeminate natives," these highly praised spies and surveyors were lauded for their bravery, and sometimes rewarded with

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[106]NAI, Foreign, External, December 1903, nos. 1-13, Part B.: Pro. No. 3: "Kashmir as a limitrophe State is interested in Tibet, and I think we might allow the Darbar to send a transport corps of 250 ponies with drivers complete. The draft is for Your Excellency's approval. / L.W. Dane, 8-9-1903/ Curzon, 8-9-1903." "Supply of Kashmir Ponies for the Tibet Frontier Commission."

[107] Captain Prideaux to Mortimer Durand, April 25, 1892. NAI, Foreign, General, July 1892, 18-40. Posting of Lieutenant W. M. Cubitt as British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh and *ex-officio* Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir, *vice* Captain G. F. Chenevix-Trench."

[108] NAI, Foreign, Secret E, May 1887, no. 119. "Note by Elias, Mr. Ney, C.I.E on Tibet and his views as to the best means of obtaining access to that country."

[109] Ibid.

medals and titles by the imperial state. As prized "human instruments," the Pundits generated critical trans-frontier information for the Survey of India and the imperial state.[110]

Perhaps one of the two most famous Pundits, Sarat Chandra Das, was the inspiration for Kipling's Hurree Chander Mukherjee, Kim's faithful servant.[111] He was also the author of one of the canonical Tibetan-English dictionaries and an extensive traveller in Tibet in the days before Younghusband's expedition forced it open.[112] On one such exploratory trip, Colman Macaulay, then the Finance Secretary of Bengal, commemorated each of the expedition's members in a poem he wrote. He evoked the dual language of effeminacy and masculinity by styling Das "A Hardy Son of Soft Bengal."[113]

The hagiographic quality of the lives of some of these surveyors is perhaps best encapsulated in a story recounted by Sir Henry McMahon before the Royal Society of Arts of a surveying party in Seistan. "It befell one of our survey parties under the charge of an old and very experienced Indian surveyor, who, *overcome by his zeal to fill up a blank in our map*, ventured too far into that dread tract, the Dasht-i-Margo (Desert of Death)—a desert …into which no one had ever been known to enter." The surveying party ran out of water and when they finally stumbled across a pool, it was salty, thus "hasten[ing] their end." Only one member

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[110] Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*.

[111] The most famous was Pundit Nain Singh Rawat.

[112] Derek Waller, *The Pundits: British Exploration of Tibet and Central Asia* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990).

[113] Sarat Chandra Das, *Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1893).The full stanza reads: "And Sarat Chandra, hardy son / Of soft Bengal, whose wonderous store / Of Buddhist and Tibetan lore/ A place in fame's bright page has won / Friend of the Tashu Lama [i.e. Panchen Lama]'s line / Whose eyes have seen, the gleaming shrine / Of holy Lhassa, came to show / The wonders of the land of snow."

of the team remained, "an Indian survey subordinate, named Saidu." "But even at this awful moment," McMahon continued,

> [Saidu] made duty his first care. He cut off from the surveyor's plane table the precious map for which so much had been risked, and knowing he could not long retain consciousness, he wrapped it round his waist in his waist-cloth and started off in the faint hope of surviving. For two days and nights, he said, he struggled on in a state of semi-consciousness, and woke up one night to find himself half lying in a pool of water. There a wandering Afghan found him and carried him on his back to the nearest habitation. Thus was a blank in the map filled up and its survey preserved. It cost us seven valuable lives. [114]

Despite the poet Rabindranath Tagore's assertion that "no one can give up his life for a map," McMahon's story suggests that in the patronizing colonial world of dutiful native surveyors and high-stakes mapping, there were those who would willingly die for the cause of imperial territorial legibility.[115]

III: Trans-frontier Information

The map, as Henry McMahon's recollection graphically detailed, was a critical tool for mastering the territory at the empire's edges. The zealotry of filling blank spaces on maps—whether by native surveyors like Saidu, or British experts like Holdich—reflected the intimate connections between imperial state formation, geography, and personal adventure. The complex process of determining boundaries was a major preoccupation of the Government of India's Foreign Department. The boundary commissions that collectively spent years determining these lines attested to the active process in shaping borders. Just as Joya Chatterji has noted that the

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[114] A. H. McMahon, "International Boundaries," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 84, No. 4330 (November 15, 1935): 2-16. Proceedings of the Royal Society of Arts, inaugural address by the incoming Chairman of the Council, Wednesday November 6th, 1935. pp. 11-12.

[115] Tagore quoted in Sumathi Ramaswamy, "Visualising India's Geo-Body: Globes, Maps, Bodyscapes," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 36, no. 1–2 (2002): 151.

language of Partition often drew on surgical metaphors, so the language of bordering frequently evoked images of making the territorial "geo-body" whole, through shaping, demarcating, mapping, and, ultimately, defending. [116] But while surgical metaphors suppose an ameliorative precision that never existed in the case of Partition, the process of defining the shape of the body produced an image that was often only "whole" on maps—with whole segments failing to meet the technical demands established by the Survey and Foreign Departments. Yet this incompleteness does not detract from the power of the territory as a body metaphor—be it a feminine, anthropomorphic Mother India or Britannia, or an unnamed "no-man's land" awaiting an explorer and surveyor. As Sumathi Ramaswamy, J.R. Hale, and Thongchai Winichakul have each shown in different ways, a political map can render the nation-space, or geo-body, uniquely visible.[117] In that sense the restriction of maps that occurred in the late nineteenth century reflected one of the more tangible shifts in the rhetoric of the border, selectively revealing or hiding its precise location as a means of controlling it.

As the specter of Russian advances in Central Asia provoked deepening anxieties in Calcutta (and later Delhi), Shimla, and London, trans-frontier surveys became covert, classified, and militarized. Reports on "trans-frontier" survey operations became considered "strictly confidential" by the late 1870s. In 1884, the Government of India ordered that notifications of boundary demarcations were not to appear in the *Gazette of India*.[118] That same year the Foreign Department determined that it would reserve to itself the right of distributing all "Trans-Frontier

[116] Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*.

[117] Ramaswamy, "Visualising India's Geo-Body: Globes, Maps, Bodyscapes."152.

[118] NAI, Foreign, A Political E, June 1884, nos. 201-222.

Reports." [119] By the turn of the century monthly secret Trans-Frontier Journals were being produced by the Foreign Department and restricted to the top secretaries of departments and the viceroy.[120] And a Secret Service emerged along with the Intelligence Branch and Army General Staff to better gather the information contained within these reports.

a. Trans-frontier Maps

Like trans-frontier information more broadly, maps underwent a dramatic change in the degree to which their geographical and political contents were restricted. By 1884, the Foreign Department required that all "Trans-Frontier Maps" first be vetted by their office before being published.[121] All of these maps became classed as "restricted" in 1885.[122] By 1888 the status of all "1 inch = 4 miles" trans-frontier maps was upgraded to "confidential."[123] When, in 1885, the Surveyor-General asked the Foreign Department for clarification on what was meant precisely

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[119] NAI, Foreign, A Pol E, August 1884, nos. 149-157. "Quartermaster-General in India supplied with Trans-frontier reports at request of Surveyor-General and in compliance with decision that this department will distribute all such reports."

[120] They varied somewhat in the regions covered, but highlighted commercial and political intelligence from: "Trans-Caspia and Russian Turkistan, Afghanistan, Chinese Turkistan, Chitral, North-West Frontier, and Baluchistan." See, for instance, NAI, Foreign, Secret F, May 1908, nos. 271-273, 291. "Trans-frontier Journals for April 1908."

[121] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, September 1884, nos. 554-556. "Surveyor-General to delay the publication of Trans-Frontier Maps until orders of the Foreign Department are passed on them."

[122] NAI Foreign, Secret F, November 1885, nos. 1-3. "Trans-frontier information. Publication of frontier maps containing only sketchy Survey(s) permitted"; and NAI, Foreign, Frontier B, April 1888, nos. 120-121. "Survey Department informed that the whole series of trans-frontier maps in the scale of 1 inch = 4 miles to be considered confidential."

[123] NAI, Foreign, Frontier B, April 1888, nos. 120-121. "Survey Department informed that the whole series of trans-frontier maps in the scale of 1 inch = 4 miles to be considered confidential." "We may tell the Survey Dept. at Calcutta what we told the Deputy Surveyor General at Dehra Dun, namely that all these transfrontier sheets on the scale of 1 inch = 4 miles should be treated as confidential. (12/4/88).

by "trans-frontier," the Foreign Department replied with a description suggesting some evident internal confusion that was not immediately resolved:

> In another letter the office of the Surveyor-General has asked whether *frontier* maps, as distinct from *trans-frontier* maps, should be issued without reference to this office. The principle to adhere to would seem to be that no trans-frontier maps, *i.e.*, maps which contain topographical information about countries beyond the British border, such as Afghanistan, Nipal, Tibet, etc., etc., should be issued without our authority; but that maps of provinces, etc., in India containing only strips of the trans-frontier are at the disposal of the public? [124]

Soon, the production of maps became more closely regulated with the standardization of colors and symbols to be used and a more precise determination.[125]

In 1893 the Foreign Department reported to the Secretary of State for India that a "yellow wash" should be used for all non-British territory across the subcontinent.[126] The Secretary of State, in response, suggested a more detailed set of colors: an orange wash would signify territories, such as Afghanistan, that were "within the sphere of British influence, but not under British protection or control." "This resulted in a discussion," one clerk wrote in summary, "which continued for six years, as to how to colour correctly the various territories comprised in the map of India." Initially, Chitral, Afghanistan "and any countries which are only within the British sphere of influence" were to be colored orange. But then, one Foreign Department official asked, what would be done with the tribal lands between British India and Afghanistan

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[124] NAI Foreign, Secret F, November 1885, nos. 1-3. "Trans-frontier information. Publication of frontier maps containing only sketchy Survey(s) permitted." From Surveyor-General, No. 825 S.-S., dated 9th September 1885.

[125] NAI, Foreign, Frontier, October 1893, nos. 344-345. "Revision of the map of India. Proposed distribution of colour washes and system of marking boundaries submitted for the approval of the Secretary of State."

[126] NAI, Foreign, Secret F, February 1908, nos. 40-51, 19. "History and definition of boundaries between Kashmir and Eastern Turkistan." And NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, June 1907, nos. 323-325.

that fell beyond the Kabul Agreement of 1893 which established the Durand Line? They were meant to be washed in yellow, to signify their tribal status within British, but the Amir of Afghanistan, it was feared, would expect them to be colored the same as his territories. With the still-ongoing work of the Afghan Boundary Commission, it was feared that any ambiguous territorial designations could cause trouble from the Amir. "The varying extent of our interests in, and connection with, frontier tribal country would clearly be often most difficult to define; conditions are liable to frequent change; and, if the different washes were used more freely than above suggested," one official noted. "In any case," another replied, "I venture to think that, until we have *demarcated* the Amir's frontier, we should on no account send him a copy of the map of India with frontiers marked on it. He would not understand or believe any explanation we could offer him."[127] The exasperated Secretary to the Foreign Department, W.J. Cuningham gave the final say. "I agree except that where the Durand line follows a range of mountains, like the Hindu Kush, the line may be sharp. To give the Amir a map with the Mohamand [sic] country tinted in indefinite graduated shades of orange and yellow is likely to raise trouble. … Defend me from more than one of these map cases at a time!"

In 1899 the Viceroy, George Curzon, settled the long-running color debate by ordering that no maps or external boundaries were to be colored or shown unless the borderlines had

[127] NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, June 1901, Nos. 59-67, 75. "Decision that no external boundaries should be shown on any maps unless it has been demarcated, and no external boundaries should be coloured, even though demarcated, unless it is also the boundary of an area which is directly under British administration."

already been demarcated by a boundary commission.[128] This resulted in a range of partially borderless maps (e.g. Figure 2.5 and Figure 5.2 below). But a standard set of colors did finally emerge: Natives States were to be colored yellow; "British India and country under British control" was to be pink; "Border tribes under British control" would be orange, though this was soon changed to burnt sienna ("No authority can be traced for the change, but the difficulty of mixing up a uniform shade of orange suggests an obvious reason."); Foreign possessions in India were colored green; and Afghanistan was to be pale blue.[129] By 1907 the Secretary of State for India had weighed in on the map-coloring question and approved the existing colors, going so far as to issue specific instructions on the colors used for Gazetteer maps and whether these regulations need extend to all general maps of India.

[128] NAI, Foreign, External, September 1900, no. 37, part b. "His Excellency the Viceroy's order that no map is to be coloured and no External boundary is to be shown in any way unless it has been actually demarcated"; NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, June 1901, nos. 59-67, 75. "Decision that no external boundaries should be shown on any maps unless it has been demarcated, and no external boundaries should be coloured, even though demarcated, unless it is also the boundary of an area which is directly under British administration"; NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, June 1907, nos. 323-325. "Direction for map colors and secret maps"; NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, October 1893, nos. 344-345; NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, June 1901, 59-67; and NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, Oct. 1901, nos. 1-2.

[129]NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, February 1908, nos. 40-51, 19. "History and definition of boundaries between Kashmir and Eastern Turkistan"; and NAI, Foreign, Secret Frontier, June 1907, nos. 323-325.

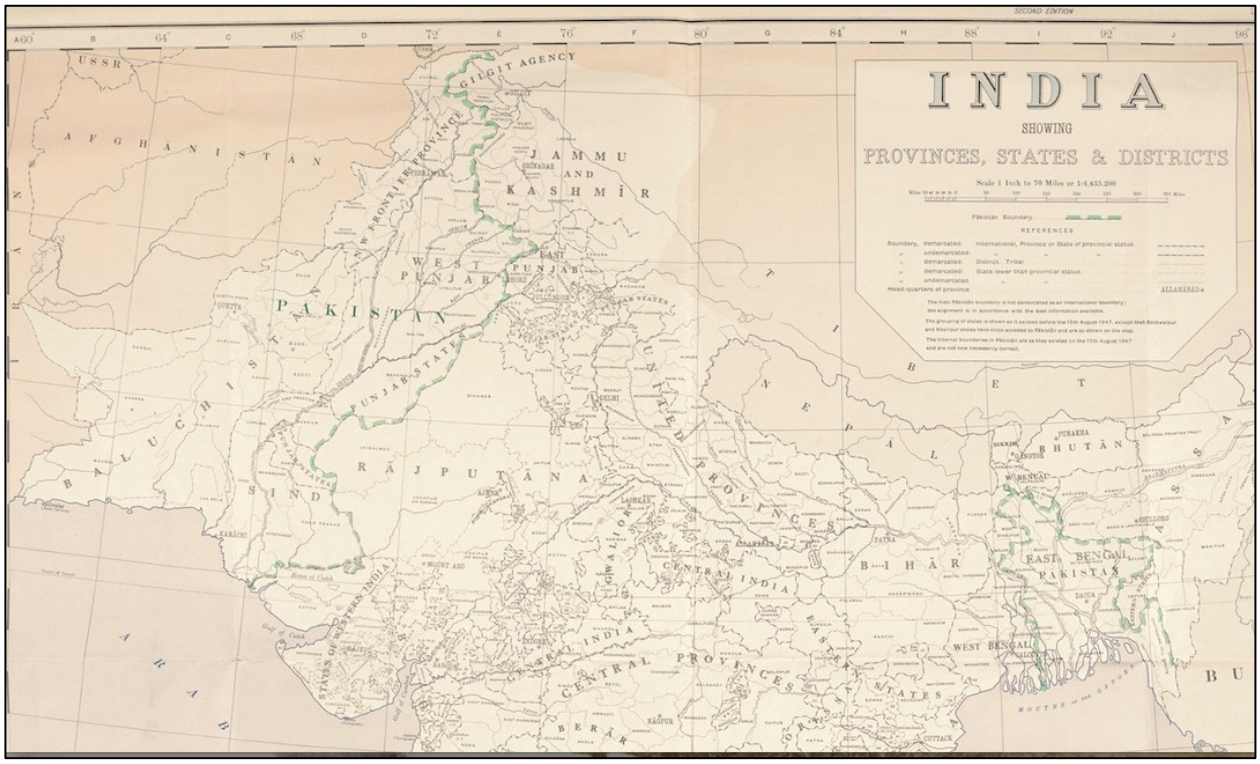


Figure 5.6. “India showing Provinces, States & Districts” Published under the direction of Brigadier G. F. Heaney, C.B.E., Surveyor General of India, 1947. Second Edition (First Edition 1938). Scale 1 inch to 70 Miles. IOR/X/9079/2

Maps became classified in three categories: "Public"[130]; "For Official Use Only"[131]; and "Secret."[132] For the latter two categories only a small number of officials were allowed access to them.[133] The Surveyor General also issued regulations for "the procedure for the submission to the Foreign Department or frontier officials concerned of frontier maps in the proof state for the insertion or verification of boundaries."[134]

By 1906 a set of "rules regarding the definition of boundaries on all maps of India and of adjacent countries," were approved by the Government of India.[135] In the future, "every map

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[130] "Maps in "Class A.—Public" may be obtained on indent or by purchase from the Officer in charge, Map Record and Issue Office, Survey of India."

[131] 4. Maps in "Class B—For Official use only" will ordinarily consist of all maps, on scales larger than 1/M, of country on the external side of the chain dotted line (-.-.-.-.-.) shown on the attached Index Map, but see rule 16 below. Maps on these scales printed prior to these regulations and classified as 'Public' will remain 'Public'. The engraved Atlas sheets on the ¼" scale will also continue to be 'Public'. / 5. Maps in "Class B.—For Official use only" will only be issued to Officers in the service of the British Government. Applications for such maps on the prescribed form obtainable from the Officer in charge. Map Record and Issue Office, Survey of India."

[132] "Maps in "Class C.—Secret" will only be issued to selected individuals. Applications for use of "Class C.—Secret" maps will be addressed to, and disposed of, by the Chief of the General Staff, Army Headquarters. In order to ensure the safe custody and limited issue of such maps, the Chief of the General Staff is authorised to issue such additional instructions as may from time to time be necessary. / 8. No alterations or additions to the list of "Class C.—Secret" maps may be made without the sanction of the Government of India in the Army Department."

[133] "A. Officials authorised to countersign indents for any map which is 'For Official use only'/ 1. Secretaries to the Government of India. / 2. Chief of the General Staff. / 3. General Officers Commanding Armies, Divisions and Brigades. / 4. Commandant, Staff College, Quetta. / 5. Surveyor-General (for use of the Survey Department). / 6. Director, Geological Survey of India (for use of the Geological Survey Department)."

[134] NAI, Foreign, Frontier, December 1905, nos. 41-42, 33. "Circular order issued by the Surveyor General in India regulating the procedure for the submission to the Foreign Department or frontier officials concerned of frontier maps in the proof state for the insertion or verification of boundaries. Question of symbols for showing surveyed and unsurveyed boundaries on maps whether demarcated or undemarcated."

[135] Colonel F. B. Longe, R. E., Surveyor-General of India, to Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Revenue and Agriculture, January 8, 1906. NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, September 1906, no. 108.

containing a frontier or trans-frontier boundary will be submitted to the Foreign Department for orders before publication." Second, "no portion of the external boundary of India shall be engraved or printed on any map unless it has been actually surveyed after demarcation." Third, "no boundary beyond the frontiers of India shall be engraved or printed on any of the general or standard maps published by the Survey of India unless it has been actually surveyed after demarcation." Fourth, "when the survey of any area in which such boundaries occur precedes demarcation, such boundaries will be shewn whenever possible on the plane table sections and be copied in blue on the original fair sheets." Finally,

> two copies of every Frontier or trans-frontier map containing a boundary which has been shewn on the plane table section but not on the engraved or zinc plate (under rules 2 and 3) will be supplied to the Foreign Department shewing the boundaries as given on the plane table section, for those orders as to the numbers of copies which will be required by that department. These will be coloured by hand or specially printed but such coloured copies will be issued to no one without the express orders of the Foreign Department, and no boundary symbol will be used.

Of particular concern were the symbols to be used for distinguishing among borders that were surveyed or unsurveyed, or demarcated or undemarcated. "No portion of the external boundary of India and no boundary beyond the frontier should be shown *on the printed standard maps,* which has not been authoritatively demarcated and been surveyed by the Survey Staff, any boundary which has not been so demarcated being left blank. On the standard maps, therefore, which are issued to the public, there would be no symbol for undemarcated external or trans-frontier boundaries...."[136]

But the supposed "frontier line of India" was still not consistently defined, despite the bureaucratic consensus on the circulation and restriction of maps, the colors representing the

[136] J. Wilson, Secretary of Revenue and Agriculture to Surveyor-General of India, August 14, 1906. NAI, Foreign, Frontier A, September 1906, no. 110.

political status of territories, and the requisite information needed to show borders.[137] The segments in the west that Holdich so extensively surveyed were clear, with two exceptions ("between Persia and the Chagal Agency of Baluchistan and between Afghanistan and the Dir-Chitral Agency of the North West Frontier Province"). With the Perso-Baluch segment in dispute, it was determined that though it had been demarcated, it must still be shown on "official maps as indefinite because re-examination has shown that the demarcation was based on inaccurate data." The Foreign Department noted approvingly that the Durand Agreement of 1893 had laid down a clear line that "chiefly follow[ed] watersheds." Similarly, "The eastern boundary between India and Indo-China and Siam is definite and has been demarcated through most of its length." The northern boundary of Kashmir, however, was another matter.

This would-be borderline was still considered to be "absolutely indefinite."[138] "It is not shown at all on uncoloured official maps of India," wrote an official in the Foreign Department, "and on coloured maps it is supposed to be shown by a yellow wash which "fades away imperceptibly" to the north." While acknowledging the attempts of the 1890s to induce China to claim up to the Karakoram Pass, this line, the official wrote, "cannot be regarded as either definite or authoritative. Part of the way it follows the watershed of the Karakoram Range but the north-eastern section is almost entirely arbitrary."[139]

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[137] NAI, Foreign, F. No. 422-F. 1922-1923. "Frontiers of India. Question by a member of the Inchcape Committee reg. the frontier line of India. Preparation of information showing acquisition of territories on various Boundaries since 1878."

[138] NAI, Foreign, F. No. 422-F. 1922-1923. "Frontiers of India. Question by a member of the Inchcape Committee reg. the frontier line of India. Preparation of information showing acquisition of territories on various Boundaries since 1878."

[139] NAI, Foreign, "Frontiers of India. Question by a member of the Inchcape Committee reg. the frontier line of India. Preparation of information showing acquisition of territories on various Boundaries since 1878." F. No. 422-F. 1922-1923.

Despite this indefiniteness along Ladakh's northern and eastern limits, the Foreign Department asserted that with one other exception the northern boundary of India—including "the Punjab, the United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim"—was "definite and for the most part … demarcated." "[N]orth of Assam," however, "the limits of British influence are indefinite." This segment of the eastern Himalaya had been delimited by a treaty and map, though it yet to be surveyed and demarcated on the ground. This mapped Himalayan border was know as the McMahon Line, and emerged out of talks between Chinese, Tibetan, and British leaders in 1913.

b. Shimla and the McMahon Line

At Shimla, between October 1913 and July 1914, plenipotentiaries of the newly formed Republic of China, the British Government of India and the Government of Tibet met to define the territorial limits and political status of Tibet. Tibet's ambiguous status vis-à-vis India and China and its undemarcated limits produced, according to Viceroy Hardinge, a situation "of constant anxiety."[140] Even before the Younghusband expedition violently opened Tibet to the British, frontier policy had divided imperial politics. For Curzon and those who subscribed to his "forward" policies in South Asia, Tibet represented both a logical extension of a general strategy involving loose political control over the Himalayan states (Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim) and a sensitive subject, considering Chinese claims to suzerainty over the mountainous region. By 1910, following an incursion by Zhao Erfeng, the British Government of India had become concerned that "China had come to the gates of India."[141] Following the Chinese Revolution of

[140] "Viceroy on Indian Affairs: British Foreign Policy," *The Times*, 18 September 18, 1913.

[141] Premen Addy, *Tibet on the Imperial Chessboard: The Making of British Policy Towards Lhasa, 1899-1925* (Calcutta and New Delhi: Academic Publishers, 1984), 212.

1911, the British decided that the solution to the "Tibetan Question"—defining Tibet in relation to China and British India—should be a condition of their recognition of the new Chinese government. The British made their diplomatic recognition of the new Chinese republic contingent upon China's recognition of Tibetan autonomy. On October 7, 1913, Yuan Shikai acknowledged this and the British, in turn, recognized the Republic of China on the same day.[142]

The Dalai Lama tactfully thanked the "Great British Government" for its kindness in deciding to hold a conference "between the British, Chinese and Tibetans regarding Chinese-Tibetan affairs."[143] Charles Bell noted the terms by which the Dalai Lama wished to define Tibet. He wanted "Tibet to manage her own internal affairs; To manage her own external affairs, consulting on important matters with the British; To have no Chinese High Commissioner, no other Chinese officials [Ambans], and no Chinese soldiers in Tibet; Tibet to include all the country eastward as far as Tachienlu."[144] The Dalai Lama, Bell recounted, had a capacious understanding of what constituted Tibet, considering it to include most of the intervening land between central Tibet and Mongolia.[145] The Chinese government, not surprisingly, wanted the opposite: a reassertion of its political control over Lhasa and the inclusion of Tibet within the boundaries of the Republic of China.

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[142] Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999)., 283; and Jerome Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972)., 142.

[143] IOR, L/P&S/10/400, Gould's translation of a letter from Dalai Lama to Basil Gould, July 10, 1913.

[144] Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*., 204. Dajianlu, i.e. Kangding.

[145] Thanks to Professor James Hevia for pointing this out. (Bell recounts this in *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, or in *Tibet: Past and Present*)

The British goals of the conference were two-fold; first, they desired to secure the maintenance of peace and order on the Indo-Tibetan border,[146] and second, they wanted to ensure that the controlling influence at Lhasa was not overtly hostile to India or the frontier states.[147] Some Chinese scholars have since noted that Britain clearly sought to make Tibet a British protectorate.[148]

On December nineteenth, after two months of talks, the British representative, Henry McMahon, decided that both the Tibetan and Chinese representatives should prepare cases to support their specific claims to territory and sovereignty. In a move that suggested that his stance as an equal arbiter was anything but, McMahon decided he would act as judge in determining which case was more compelling. The conference resumed on January 12, 1914 when Lonchen Shatra Paljor Dorje (*blon.chen bshad.sgra dpal.'byor rdo.rje*, the Prime Minister of Tibet) and

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[146] Alastair Lamb, *The McMahon Line: A Study in the Relations between India, China and Tibet, 1904 to 1914,* vol. 2, 2 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

[147] Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), 252-3; and extract from Viscount Morley's speech in the House of Lords, 17 October 1913 (Hansards Debates). McGranahan has examined three sets of contemporary materials on the conference and found them all to agree (note 18, p. 289: "The texts are as follows: (1) original documents in the India Office Library, London, especially in MSS Eur F 80/177, (2) the Tibetan text *shing.stag rgya.gar 'phags.pa'i.yul du.dbyin bod.rgya gsum chings.mol mdzad.lugs kun.gsal me.long* (The Mirror of Clear Reflection about the Simla Treaty between Britain, China, and Tibet in the Wood Tiger Year), and (3) an English text published in China: *The Boundary Question between China and Tibet: A Valuable Record of the Tripartite Conference between China, Britain, and Tibet held in India, 1913—1914*. Peking, 1940)."

[148] Wang Hui, for instance, writes: "Britain's position was that Tibet should become a British protectorate and stay on only nominally as a highly autonomous region under China—this so-called high degree of autonomy did not mean that Tibet should actually be autonomous, but was an indication of the authority of the British protectorate." Wang Hui, *The Politics of Imagining Asia* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2011), 158. While his political views of Tibet conform, in many ways, to the Communist Party's standard argument regarding Tibet's integral historical position within the Chinese state, Wang's articulation of British aspirations towards Tibet at the time of the Shimla conference is insightful.

Ivan Chen (Chen Yifan, the Special Commissioner for Foreign Affairs in Shanghai) presented their evidence.

The Tibetan case was substantial: over 90 original Tibetan documents including "inscriptions of boundary pillars, census reports, tax and revenue records, extracts from written histories, registers of legal cases, lists of official appointments, monastic records, bonds of allegiance between territories and the Tibetan Government, and correspondence between the Chinese and Tibetan governments regarding certain territories."[149] The Chinese side, on the other hand, presented a single general statement for their claim, which rested on "effective occupation" and "Qing Dynasty relations with Tibet reclaimed by the new Chinese Republic."[150] As Carole McGranahan observes, "the status quo was interpreted differently by each: "autonomous to the British, suzerain to the Chinese, and independent to the Tibetans."[151]

McMahon then presented the British position: a non-negotiable "compromise" that included the radical division of Tibet into two zones: "Inner Tibet" and "Outer Tibet," a bifurcation that had no historical precedent, but was based loosely on the traditional regional divisions of central Tibet (*dbus.gtsang*), and Kham (*khams*) and Amdo (*a.mdo*). As Political Officer in Sikkim and friend to the thirteenth Dalai Lama noted that in "Outer Tibet the Dalai Lama retained practically complete control. Inner Tibet was to a large extent opened to the

[149] Carole McGranahan, "Empire and the Status of Tibet: British, Chinese, and Tibetan Negotiations, 1913—1934," in *The History of Tibet, Vol. III: The Modern Period: 1895—1959, the Encounter with Modernity*, ed. Alex McKay (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 270-1.

[150] McGranahan, "Empire and the Status of Tibet," 271.

[151] McGranahan, "Empire and the Status of Tibet," 280.

Chinese, although the Dalai Lama retained full religious control, and the right of appointing the various local chiefs throughout the territory."[152]

After six months of discussions, a draft of the treaty was initialed by all three representatives and sent to their respective governments for final approval. Great Britain and Tibet approved the draft on July 3, 1914, but China did not.[153] As Charles Bell wrote:

> Two days after the Chinese, Tibetan and British plenipotentiaries had initialed the Convention, the Chinese Government telegraphed repudiating it. Tibet and Britain, however, recognised it as binding on themselves. China having repudiated the Convention, was of course entitled to none of the advantages, for instance, the opening to Chinese of Inner Tibet, which the Convention would have conferred upon her. […] In due course the British and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries signed the agreement in respect of the frontier, and that in respect of the trade regulations, thus making both a part of the Simla Convention.[154]

Just one month after the conclusion of the conference, Great Britain entered the First World War. Tibet had found—it believed—an ally in Great Britain and the Dalai Lama offered to send a thousand Tibetan soldiers to fight alongside the British.[155] The empire would prove, however, a fickle friend. The "Simla Agreements of 1914" and early British documents relating to Tibet's political, diplomatic, and trade status, have long be used in the fight over historical recognition of an independent Tibetan state.[156] Ironically, the McMahon Line, used by the British

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[152] Sir Charles Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, 204-206.

[153] McGranahan, "Empire and the Status of Tibet," 269.

[154] Sir Charles Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, 204-206.

[155] K. Dhondup, *The Water-Bird and Other Years: A History of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and After* (New Delhi: Rangwang Publishers, 1986), 54. The offer was not accepted.

[156] Until 2008 the British Government's position remained constant regarding China's suzerainty—but limited sovereignty—over Tibet. Britain was the sole state to maintain this view. Its position was revised, however, when, on 29 October 2008, it recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet by issuing a statement on its website. India's current claims to a part of its northeast territories, for example, is largely based on the same agreements—notes exchanged during the Shimla convention of 1914, which set the boundary between India and Tibet.

to craft its vision of a buffer region with China became the principal model on which the People's Republic of China created its Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) model.[157]

Progress at the Shimla Conference was principally slowed by the question of the boundary between Tibet and China, as well as the broader and ambiguous definition of Tibet's relationship to China. As a "perfectly equal" arbiter between the two other parties, Britain had the final say in drafting the treaty.[158] The ambiguity of the British position at the Shimla conference[159] reflected the simultaneous insistence on establishing a border to differentiate Tibet from British India and China, the desire to appease the security interests of India through establishing an effective buffer state, and the historical claims of the Qing Empire to effectively occupying Tibet.[160] The resulting 550-mile McMahon Line dividing northeastern India from Tibet asserted a cartographic objectivity while ignoring the extent of surveying still to be done on the ground.

Thanks to the combined survey work of multiple boundary commissions in the eastern Himalaya and Burma, McMahon's line rested on an emerging vision of the Himalayan watershed. Surveys completed in 1911 and 1912 in the North-East Frontier "so added to [the Government of India's] geographical knowledge" that it became possible for the first time to

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[157] McGranahan "Empire and the Status of Tibet," 288.

[158] The language of the Simla Agreements of 1914 is filled with the language of diplomatic equality: "settle by mutual agreement." For a discussion of "perfect equality" in British diplomacy, see James L. Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

[159] I.e. dividing Tibet into two regions (Outer and Inner) while "recognizing that Tibet is under the suzerainty of China," while also "recognizing the special interest of Great Britain in virtue of the geographical position of Tibet" and prohibiting China and Tibet from "enter[ing] into any negotiations or agreements regarding Tibet with one another."

[160] See, for these ambiguities, Articles 2, 3 and 5 of the Simla Agreements of 1914, in Goldstein, *History of Modern Tibet*, 833.

"make a general definition of the frontier line."[161] The surveyors began at the northernmost demarcated point of the Burma-Yunnan boundary and worked westward. With only two minor exceptions in Sikkim, the main watershed of the Himalaya formed the natural and strategic (i.e. scientific) frontier between India and Tibet. This was in keeping with Henry McMahon's demand at the Simla Conference that the line follow the limit of the watershed. As noted by Charles Bell, McMahon's "heart was set on having the boundary lines along high water-partings" instead of the border points already established.[162] Bell also observed that although at present the Indo-Tibetan frontier, "some 1,600 miles from Kashmir to beyond the north-eastern corner of Assam," was the "least troublesome" of India's frontiers, that situation could change with the granting of self-government.[163] Responding to a request from the Foreign Department regarding the impact of giving self-governance to the people of India, Bell noted that to avoid "constant friction" and "serious trouble" along the frontier, the government of India should implement and directly govern "a strip of land dividing [the border] from the self-governing communities of India." While never implemented, Bell's plan spoke to the continued anxieties regarding the indirectly ruled territories along the frontier. Such a critical element of the imperial state should not be left in the hands of local powers. The growing importance of the frontier as

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[161] NAI, Foreign, Secret E., September 1915, nos. 76-101. "India. Definition of Indo-Tibetan Boundaries."

[162] Charles Bell to the Political Officer in Sikkim, October 5, 1919. NAI, Foreign, Secret E., February 1920, keep-with no. 112. "Tibetan question. Chinese proposals for the final settlement of the Tibetan question. Acceptance of offer and decision that negotiations should be re-opened, with Chinese Government at Peking at which Tibet should not be represented."

[163] Charles Bell, P.O. Sikkim, to A.H. Grant, November 13, 1917. NAI, Foreign, Secret E., May 1918, nos. 146-147. "Effect on the Indo-Tibet Frontier of the grant of Self-Government in India. Question of the creation of a non-self-governing belt of India to act as a buffer between self-governing India and Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Kashmir."

"the razor's edge" determining "life or death to nations" revealed just how intimately tied politics and geography had become.[164]

IV. The Birth of Geopolitics

Taken together, the growing concerns over penetration from beyond the frontier by trans-frontier groups, the need to gather and restrict trans-frontier information, and the imperial preoccupation of determining the lines that would mark the imperial perimeter reflected a broader change in how geography and the state functioned together. By the turn of the twentieth century the imperial state came to see space in a new and particular mode, one where territory and the state were co-terminus entities and where the border was the *sine qua non* of the state's existence. This process of "re-visioning," as John Agnew has noted, had its roots in Renaissance European notions of the world as "a structured whole."[165] But it only emerged as a self-conscious science in the late nineteenth century. With his usual dramatic flourish, Thomas Holdich summed up this transformation. "Time was (and not so very long ago either) when the whole wide area of scientific knowledge embraced in the broad field of geography was narrowed to a ridiculous little educational streamlet which babbled of place-names and country products."[166] But by the time Holdich became a leading member of the RGS, the days of the babbling "educational streamlet" of geographical knowledge were over. Geography was not only a science, it had become a *political* science. The final section of the chapter briefly examines this

[164] Curzon, *Frontiers*, 7.

[165] Agnew, *Geopolitics*, 11-12.

[166] Thomas H. Holdich, "Some Aspects of Political Geography," *The Geographical Journal* 34, no. 6 (1909): 593.

development of geopolitics with a particular focus on the role played by the frontier experts of imperial India and the Royal Geographical Society.

a. The Royal Geographical Society and *The Geographical Journal*

The Royal Geographical Society (hereafter RGS) was founded in 1830 as the Geographical Society of London, "an institution to promote the 'advancement of geographical science.'"[167] Within the Society's *Proceedings*—renamed *The Geographical Journal* in 1893—explorers, scientists, and imperial administrators detailed and debated the territorialization of the globe. By the turn of the twentieth century its leaders were drawn largely from the ranks of imperial administrators, military commanders, and—more specifically—the frontier experts discussed earlier in this chapter. In addition to granting these individuals seats in the invitation-only leadership of the society, the RGS also recognized outstanding contributions to geography through its prestigious annual Gold Medal, which took the form of two prizes (the Founder's Medal and the Patron's Medal). By the end of the nineteenth century the awards of these top prizes were increasingly given for exploration and surveying in the Himalaya and Central Asia. Recipients of particular interest to the history of imperial exploration in the northwestern Himalaya and Central Asia included: Alexander Burnes (1835), Henry Strachey (1852), T. G. Montgomerie (1865), Thomas Thomson (1866), Robert Shaw (1872), Ney Elias (1873), (Pundit) Nain Singh[168] (1877), Henry Trotter (1878), Thomas Holdich (1887), Francis Younghusband

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[167]The Name changed to the Royal Geographical Society in 1859. http://www.rgs.org/aboutus/history.htm. As the Society's website tellingly glosses its relationship with empire and colonial exploitation: "The history of the Society was closely allied for many of its earlier years with 'colonial' exploration in Africa, the Indian subcontinent, the polar regions, and central Asia especially."

[168] The famous Pundit explorer Nain Singh is one of the very few non-Europeans (and the only non-white recipient in the nineteenth century) to receive the award.

(1890), Hamilton Bower (1894), George Curzon (1895), Sven Hedin (1898), Douglas Freshfield (1903[169]), H. H. Godwin-Austen (1910), Filippo Filippi (1915), Kenneth Mason (1927), Tom Longstaff (1928), F. Kingdon-Ward (1930), Owen Lattimore (1942), and Halford Mackinder (1945).

As the dates of the recipients above suggest, Himalayan and Central Asian exploration intensified in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This period coincided with a shift within the membership of the RGS to include a greater number of imperial administrators. But it also coincided with period often referred to as "high imperialism" or "new imperialism," when the dominant imperial powers sought to lay claim to all of the territory of the globe and eliminating non-state spaces like the no-man's land of the Askai Chin. This heightened territorialization by (mostly) European powers following the Berlin Conference in 1885 and the "Scramble" for Africa reflected the very practical convergence of colonial administration and the gathering of geographical information. "It is to the Imperial interest in African geography that I wish to draw particular attention, wrote Thomas Holdich in 1891 in describing the "application of Indian systems of geographical survey to Africa," "as it appears to me that any really satisfactory and comprehensive scheme of survey must depend, in the first instance, on State support."[170] He would later note that these last years of the nineteenth century witnessed a revolution in border making on imperial frontiers and within border-making technologies.[171]

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[169] Which was received for work in the Caucasus, though he also worked extensively on the Indo-Tibetan frontier.

[170] Thomas H. Holdich, "African Boundaries, and the Application of Indian Systems of Geographical Survey to Africa," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 13, no. 10 (October 1891): 597-598.

[171] Holdich, *The Indian Borderland, 1880-1900*., vii.

The pages of *The Geographical Journal* reflected this revolution. Perhaps no better indication of the increasingly intimate relationship between geography, empire, and territorial expansion can be seen than with *The Journal*'s numerous publications regarding Younghusband's invasion of Tibet in 1903-4. In "Notes from Tibet," the mountaineer Douglas Freshfield introduced his compilation of observations sent to him by members of the Tibet Mission by first acknowledging the patronage of the then Viceroy of India, George Curzon (who would later become the RGS's president in 1911). "Lord Curzon has recently forwarded to the Royal Geographical Society a set of thirteen photographs taken by Mr. Hayden, the geologist attached to the Tibetan Mission." Illustrating the close circulation between military expedition, scientific exploration, state patronage, and the compilation and dissemination of information, Freshfield's notes on the advances in geographical studies of Tibet were complemented by direct correspondence among Sarat Chandra Das, George Curzon, Captain W. F. O'Connor, and of course Younghusband himself. Here, studies of geology ran side-by-side with maps (those allowed to circulate), discussions of the "Military Aspect[s] of the Frontier," and, above all, "Roads to Tibet."[172] This combination of narrative of journey with geographical observations, description of routes, political information, botany, and cartography reflected the cumulative process through which geographical information was organized to gradually render frontier space more legible to the imperial state and to the "scientific community" that increasingly fell

[172] Douglas W. Freshfield, "The Roads to Tibet," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 1 (January 1904): 79–91; Douglas W. Freshfield, "Tibet. I. Notes from Tibet," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 3 (March 1904): 361–66; L. A. Waddell, "Map of Lhasa and Its Environs," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 3 (March 1904): 366; F. J. Needham and H. J. Elwes, "The Roads to Tibet," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 3 (March 1904): 397–400; A. W. Paul, "The Roads to Tibet," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (April 1904): 528–29. Emphasizing the dialogic nature of the *Journal*, the same issue included two brief responses to Douglas W. Freshfield's January article on "Roads to Tibet," noting earlier routes that had been explored in the 1880s.

within that state. As was the custom with the annual RGS Presidential Address, transcripts of conversations among prominent members of the society followed key articles. In these "roundtable" discussions, experts compared their experiences from the field as well as the finer points of methods used, or other factors at play. Above all, these discussions served to generate implicit policy positions based on the geographical topic under discussion. This was geopolitics at work.

b. Geopolitics: Geography becomes Security

The same year that geopolitical information from Younghusband's invasion was being disseminated, discussed, and debated across the RGS (and the British public), Halford Mackinder presented to the Royal Geographical Society (January 25, 1904) his influential paper, "The Geographical Pivot of History," which was subsequently published in *The Geographical Journal*.[173] Mackinder had been appointed Oxford's first Professor of Geography several years earlier. He articulated a relationship between geography and world ("universal") history through what would become known as his "Heartland Theory." Like many a geographer, he began his discussion with a map.

> In 400 years the outline of the map of the world has been completed with approximate accuracy. … In Europe, North America, South America, Africa, and Australia there is scarcely a region left for the pegging out of a claim of ownership, unless as the result of a war between civilized or half-civilized powers. Even in Asia we are probably witnessing the last moves of the game first played by the horsemen of Yermak the Cossack and the shipmen of Vasco da Gama.[174]

With the filling of the blank space on the world map, the time had finally come to make use of this geographical omniscience. "It appears to me, therefore," Mackinder observed,

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[173] Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History."

[174] Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," 421.

> that in the present decade we are for the first time in a position to attempt, with some degree of completeness, a correlation between the larger geographical and the larger historical generalizations. For the first time we can perceive something of the real proportion of features and events on the stage of the whole world, and may seek a formula which shall express certain aspects, at any rate, of geographical causation in universal history. If we are fortunate, that formula should have a practical value as setting into perspective some of the competing forces in current international politics.[175]

Overlooking the logical leap from correlation to causation, Makinder endeavored to describe "those physical features of the world" which he believed to be "most coercive of human action.... to exhibit human history as part of the life of the world organism." "Man and not nature initiates, he stated boldly, "but nature in large measure controls."

Mackinder then launched into an elaboration of the key role played throughout human history of the Eurasian steppe. This area, "inaccessible to ships, but in antiquity…open to the horse-riding nomads [and more recently train networks]," was "the pivot region of the world's politics." And this "heartland" was controlled by the Russian Empire. "There have been and are here, Mackinder concluded, "the conditions of a mobility of military and economic power of a far-reaching and yet limited character. Russia replaces the Mongol Empire. Her pressure on Finland, on Scandinavia, on Poland, on Turkey, on Persia, on India, and on China, replaces the centrifugal raids of the steppemen. In the world at large she occupies the central strategical position held by Germany in Europe."[176] World history, he asserted, was driven by the struggle between the heartland of Eurasia and the marginal regions and islands outside of it.

In the discussion that followed Mackinder's paper, the first to respond was Spencer Wilkinson, first Chichele Professor of Military History at Oxford. Like his American contemporary, Alfred Thayer Mahan, Wilkinson combined the study of history and geography to

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[175] Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," 422.

[176] Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," 434-436.

articulate theories about military strategy on land and at sea.[177] On the question of Mackinder's theory to policy, Wilkinson noted that he wished more ministers of the current government "would give more time to studying their policy from the point of view that you cannot move any one piece without considering all the squares on the board."[178] But he also worried that by focusing on the expansion of Russia within the Eurasian landmass, too little importance was given to the hegemonic status of Britain as a result of its sea power. Despite this objection, several points concerning the legacies of ancient Rome and Greece, and an unanswered observation by Thomas Holdich on the "impossible barrier" of Tibet, no one disputed the importance granted to geography as a determinant of human history. As shown in Chapter Four, placing geography before people and their history in gazetteers and other manuals of governance suggested a causal relation between geography and human societies. This was in keeping with

[177] For Wilkinson, see, for instance: *Essays toward the Improvement of the Volunteer Forces* (1886); *The Brain of an Army* (1890), *An account of the German general staff Imperial Defence* (1892), (with Sir Charles Dilke); *The Command of the Sea* (1894); "The Brain of the Navy" (1895); *The Nation's Awakening* (1896); *British Policy in South Africa* (1899); *War and Policy* (1900); *Hannibal's March through the Alps* (1911); *First Lessons in War* (1914); *The French Army before Napoleon* (1915); *The Defence of Piedmont, 1742–1748: A Prelude to the Study of Napoleon* (1927). For Mahan, his most famous work was undoubtedly: *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (1890). Other works included: *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793–1812* (1892); *The Life of Nelson: The Embodiment of the Sea Power of Great Britain* (1897); *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* (1897); *Lessons of the War with Spain, and Other Articles* (1899); *The Problem of Asia and Its Effect Upon International Policies* (1900*); Story of the War in South Africa 1899-1900* (1900); *Sea Power in Its Relation to the War of 1812* (2 vols.) (1905); *Naval Strategy: Compared and Contrasted with the Principles and Practice of Military Operations on Land* (1911); *Armaments and Arbitration; or, The Place of Force in the International Relations of States* (1912).

[178] Spencer Wilkinson, Thomas Holdich, Mr. Amery, Mr. Hogarth and H. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History: Discussion," *The Geographical Journal* 23, No. 4 (Apr., 1904): 438.

contemporaries of Mackinder, including Ellsworth Huntington, who articulated a clear theory of environmental determinism in history.[179]

Mackinder promoted this view through an edited series on *Regions of the World*. Thomas Holdich wrote the volume on *India* (1904) in Mackinder's series.[180] Mackinder's notion of global geographical "pivots" built off of the notion of the "Question of Asia," (or the "Problem of Asia") articulated by such strategists as the American naval theorist (and President of the AHA, 1902), Alfred Thayer Mahan. Unlike Mackinder, Mahan saw global dominance through the lens of sea power: the establishment of commercial networks during peacetime and the establishment of strategic military networks (including chokepoints, refueling stations, and canals) during wartime. But like Mackinder, Mahan believed that an understanding of geography (maritime or inland) was a necessary prerequisite to political dominance.

In a similar vein, borders and frontiers had also come to be spoken of in terms of strength and weakness. Ever since the late nineteenth century, the "scientific frontier" had been a cost-effective means of achieving political dominance and removing friction between states.[181] The detailed and prolific writings of Thomas Holdich took the concept even further by enumerating at length the natural and strategic features that produced "strong" or "weak" borders. In the pages of *The Geographical Journal*, Holdich developed these ideas, often in conversation with other

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[179] As was evident in Huntington's chapter entitled "Climate and History," in *Explorations in Turkestan* (1905). Huntington later developed this geographical determinism in his *Climate and Civilization* (1915). Tellingly, Huntington made extensive use of the writings of British frontier experts like the surveyor Thomas Holdich and the Viceroy of India and *Frontiers* author, George Curzon. Huntington cites Holdich, Curzon, and other British imperial frontier experts on, for instance, page 303.

[180] Thomas H. Holdich, *India*, The Regions of the World (London: Frowde, 1904).

[181] George N. Curzon, "The 'Scientific Frontier' an Accomplished Fact," *Nineteenth Century* 23, no. 136 (1888): 900–917.The cost efficiency is particularly emphasized in Hanna, *India's Scientific Frontier. Where is it? What is it?*

frontier experts, including his "old friends" Robert Wahab and Francis Younghusband.[182] While applauding Britain's arrival into the academic study of geography with Oxford's appointment of Mackinder and the establishment of geography department, Holdich was quick to remind readers of the *Journal* that "practical geography" was of still greater importance.[183] "A knowledge of geography," Holdich wrote, "most intimately affects matters naval and military."[184] This theory and practice of geography was indistinguishable from political concerns regarding imperial security. "The theory and practice of security," James Hevia writes, summing up the confluence of security, geography, statecraft, and the "problem of Asia,"

> constituted Asia as a problem, one that demanded and justified interventions of many kinds. If Asians could not solve the problem of Asia – and by definition they could not, because they were unable to recognize either the causes or the solutions to the problem – then white men with the appropriate technologies of knowledge would do so. As British politicians, colonial administrators and military officers organized a security regime based on command of information about territory and military statistics, they also convinced themselves that their interventions were for the good of the indigenous populations.[185]

The study of geography had become seamlessly integrated into the apparatus of state. It also formed one of the first explicit bridges between science, state, and the academy.

While the Swedish political scientist Rudolph Kjellén coined the term "geopolitics" in 1899, it built off the work of his German teacher, Friedrich Ratzel, who was in turn influenced

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[182] Holdich refers to his "old friend" Robert Wahab in: Thomas Holdich, Colonel Wahab, Colonel Maunsell, Mr. Bury, J. L. Myres, H. J.L. Beadnell and D. G. Hogarth, "Problems in Exploration: Discussion," *The Geographical Journal* 32, No. 6 (Dec., 1908): 563-570.

[183] Thomas H. Holdich, "The Use of Practical Geography Illustrated by Recent Frontier Operations," *The Geographical Journal* 13, no. 5 (May 1899): 465–77.

[184] Holdich.See also: Peter Lumsden, Lieut.-Colonel Leverson and H. J. Mackinder, "The Use of Practical Geography Illustrated by Recent Frontier Operations: Discussion," *The Geographical Journal* 13, No. 5 (May, 1899): 477-480.

[185] Hevia, *Imperial Security State*, 251.

by Mahan's most famous work, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (1890).[186] Ratzel and Kjellén's conservative *geopolitik* did more than invoke a deterministic relationship between natural and human histories. In Kjellén's articulation, put forth in *Der staat als Lebensform* [State as a Form of Life] (1916), the state was an organic entity that required a necessary *lebensraum* ["living space"] for its *volk*. The ideal autarkic *reich* would govern a territory that was sufficiently capacious for its racially homogenous *volk*, while cognizant of the strategic considerations of geography for bounding that *raum*. Karl Haushofer built on this "applied science" of geopolitics in the pages of his *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* [Journal for Geopolitics], founded in the mid 1920s. German *geopolitik* was picked up by Adolph Hitler and was incorporated into the propaganda of the Third Reich. Subsequently, academics were quick to distance themselves from the German branch.

But Geopolitics did not disappear after 1945. As John Agnew has argued, "American containment and domino-effect doctrines of the Cold War…had echoes of the older geopolitical models, such as Mackinder's 'Heartland' model, even though they lacked the formal grounding in the Big Picture that these models offered."[187] Other, more critical geopolitical approaches surfaced in the academy. Yves Lacoste's provocatively titled *La géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre* [Geography is, above all, used to make war] (1976), reflected the acknowledgement that geospatial information had become intimately entwined in the military concerns of global powers. According to Klaus Dodds, Lacoste was "one of the first to really consider how geopolitics was a form of political and strategic knowledge." And on the centenary of Mackinder's "The Geographical Pivot of History," historian Paul Kennedy observed that the

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[186] Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1890).

[187] John Agnew, *Geopolitics*, 27.

legacy of the "heartland theory" survived in Washington, D.C.: "Right now [2004] with hundreds of thousands of US troops in the Eurasian rimlands and with administration constantly explaining why it has to stay the course, it looks as if Washington is taking seriously Mackinder's injunction to ensure control of the geographical pivot of history."[188] Both Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski insisted that Mackinder's theory continued to affect post-Cold War international relations.[189] And more recently still, conservative scholars like Robert D. Kaplan, have breathed new life into geopolitics by arguing for its continued relevance and *The Revenge of Geography*.[190] Geography might be considered the "imperial science" of the nineteenth century, but it became political science in the twentieth. And at the center of this grand transformation in seeing political space was the idea of a strong and scientific borderline.

Conclusion: India's inheritance

To conclude, I would like to return to the more modest scale of Southern Asia and the end of British rule. Unlike the North-West Frontier with the Durand Line and the North-East Frontier with the McMahon Line, the post-independence northwestern Himalaya never inherited a single "line." Like the McMahon and Durand Lines, the general principle of following the water parting of the Indus watershed had long been accepted as the ideal borderline in mountainous terrain. But the arid Aksai Chin offered no clear mountain range upon which to impose such a line. As post-1947 surveys would later reveal, much of the Aksai Chin would

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[188] Klaus Dodds and James Sidaway, "Halford Mackinder and the 'Geographical Pivot of History': A Centennial Retrospective," *The Geographical Journal* 170, no. 4 (2004): 292–97: 292.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate* (New York: Random House, 2012).

actually drain its waters into the Tarim Basin—a self-contained, endorheic watershed—instead of the Indus. But by the time of the transfer of power to an independent India in 1947, Ladakh still had a number of lines of hypothetical borders. It had the Johnson Line of 1865 (Figure X), the product of a traverse survey by William H. Johnson, who likely sketched in (or had the Survey of India sketch in) a presumed crescent of mountains that were not actually surveyed. Then there was the Macartney-MacDonald Line suggested to the Qing Government in MacDonald's now-infamous memorandum, based in part of an earlier Chinese map (Figure 5.1) given to George Macartney in Kashgar. And then there were the maps with no lines at all (e.g. Figures 2.5, 2.5a, and 6.2). This last group of official documents—products of the standardization and restriction of imperial maps—reflected official acknowledgement of territorial illegibility. The requirements for boundary demarcation had exceeded the amount of information available about the mountainous northern periphery of India. This illegibility, and the official practices that accompanied it, were bequeathed to India at independence.

The northwestern Himalaya's continued borderless state also represented a profound irony to the geopolitical sensibilities of the frontier experts who spent so much time concerned with a region with neithr immediate military threat, nor a large commercial pay off. The region had been one of the key imperial laboratories for border making and the development of the geographical sciences. It was central to the concerns of frontier experts and geographers across the globe. But when 1947 arrived, this once central "crossroads of high Asia" had become a palimpsest of frontier configurations—configurations that reflected a consensus on the geopolitical significance of this mountainous, inhospitable space, but with no detailed survey to support the hypothetical borderline.

When the Radcliffe Commission took six weeks to draw the lines that would partition India, they dispensed with any of the rationalized border-making principles that such people as Holdich had taken such pains to develop.[191] Instead, the commissioners used district census records to determine, by religious majority, which districts would belong to the future India, and which to Pakistan. Mountbatten even went so far as to state that it was not in his, nor in Britain's, interest to leave India and Pakistan with defensible borders.[192] Post-independence friction along the newly demarcated borderlines was of no concern to the imperial administrators eager to leave a country they could no longer control.

In Ladakh, the transfer of power was notable only in its absence. In 1946, the last British Joint Commissioner left Leh at the end of another lackluster trading season (see Figure 3.4) and did not return the following summer. The Resident in Srinagar did not bother assigning someone to the posting when the transfer of power became apparent in early 1947. Under the dual layers of Dogra and British rule, Ladakh's political existence became tied to the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. The exceptional and "asymmetrical" features of the region that Ney Elias and many other frontier experts had earlier noted complicated an already complex problem. The Dogras were a Hindu dynasty ruling over the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley.[193] This princely

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[191] The history of the Partition of India has generated a vast body of work. Recent notable histories include: Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2007); Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[192] Chatterji, "The Fashioning of a Frontier: The Radcliffe Line and Bengal's Border Landscape, 1947-52."193.

[193] See Mridu Rai, *Hindu Ruler, Muslim Subject: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Chitralekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

state, in turn, had come to rule over the Buddhist-majority Ladakh. The uncertainty as to which state Jammu and Kashmir would accede was mirrored within the state itself by concerns in Ladakh. Would it join India or Pakistan? By the early 1950s, a third option also materialized: Tibet.

The dissertation's conclusion takes up the years between Independence in 1947 and the Sino-Indian War of 1962. The geopolitical significance of the region, coupled with the post-1947 disputed status of Kashmir, put Ladakh in a paradoxical position. It was simultaneously central to geopolitical tensions of enormous magnitude while rendered increasingly isolated as part of a still ambiguously defined territory. By becoming appended to the imperial-turned-national frontier, Ladakhis slowly became more aware of their isolated, peripheral position. More significantly, as postcolonial nationalism infused the young state's conception of itself, that nationalism became attached to the territory bequeathed to it. But the exact shape of that geo-body was still far from clear.

CONCLUSION

Lines of Control

In the high Himalayas, Gurkhas and Rajputs fled in disarray from the Chinese army;
and in the upper reaches of my mind, another army was also destroyed….[1]
—Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (1981)

A century after Governor General Hardinge had first requested "clear and well defined boundaries," the British still lacked a satisfactory border in the northwestern Himalaya. Following independence in 1947, this omission and uncertainty continued on maps and was reflected in intragovernmental communication that included, among other things, the circulation of questionnaires asking local officials for information about the border's exact location.[2] Maps that showed "trans-boundary" areas continued to be subjected to "secret" classifications and restricted circulation.[3] Maps of maps, like Figure 6.1 below, which represented a "red line" for these restricted maps, came to be used to determine the reproduction and circulation of border-area maps (a practice that continues today, much to the annoyance of scholars seeking to access historical maps of border areas). Those maps produced in the years immediately following independence continued to omit "undemarcated" borders.[4] This indeterminacy on official maps

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[1] In Rushdie's masterpiece, the disbanding of the Conference of Midnight's Children (those born on or close to midnight of August 15, 1947 when India gained independence) and the loss of the psychic connection between the novel's chief protagonist, Saleem Sinai, and his fellow Midnight's Childen coincided with the end of the Sino-Indian War. Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 290.

[2] NAI, Ministry of States, 1-K/51, "Defence of North-North East Border of Jammu and Kashmir [and] certain aspects of the administration of Ladakh."

[3] "Report regarding import of arms and ammunition into Ladakh." 14(11)-K/51; and "Restriction on the sale, publication and distribution of maps. Supply of restricted maps to Part 'B' States." 34-AE/51.

[4] One such map of India (c. 1950) showing an "undemarcated" border in Ladakh hangs in a dark corner of the National Archives of India's main reading room.

had long been a standard practice of the British government of India. For instance, a 1962 Commonwealth Relations Office memo on the "India-China Border Question" tellingly remarked that "Survey of India maps issued in 1865, 1903, 1917, 1929, 1936, and 1938 *do not show any boundary at all* in the western (i.e. Ladakh) sector."[5] These borderless maps, and those that employed colors and washes to illustrate the same omission (e.g. Figure 6.2 below), reflected the unwillingness to formally represent territorial ignorance on supposedly precise maps.

The Sino-Indian War of 1962 imposed the first effective borderline on the region, the "Line of Actual Control." It failed to follow the line put forth in the 1899 MacDonald memorandum, the 1865 Johnson Line, or, indeed, the watershed of the Indus River. Maps produced in India still fail to show this *de facto* border, instead maintaining an insistence on a version most closely resembling the 1865 Johnson Line. Legislation was unsuccessfully introduced in 2016 to criminalize maps failing to represent India's claimed border, and a year earlier the Indian government banned Al-Jazeera from the air for five days for showing maps that exclude India's claimed territories now occupied by Pakistan and China, a move the government labeled a "cartographic aggression" (Figure 6.3).[6]

With the struggle for, and eventual achievement of, independence in 1947 came an added layer of power to the complex of practices and ideas surrounding the frontier: nationalism. Geography, which had been transformed into a political science and produced a new way of seeing territory, was no longer just that. It also fueled the creation of the "geo-body" of the nation, one that for Indians had been violently amputated at birth by Partition and which needed

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[5] National Archives of the United Kingdom. DO 196/190, 1962, "India's Himalayan Frontier." My emphasis.

[6] Pandey, "India Bans Al Jazeera for 5 Days Over 'Incorrect' Kashmir Map."

defending at all costs.[7] Internally, the young government was occupied organizing into fourteen administrative units the 554 princely states that acceded to India.[8] Beyond this, calls for statehood along linguistic, national, or religious lines have continued to occupy Indian politics from 1947 to the present. Despite what contemporary maps and politicians assert, the shape and anatomy of India is still changing.

While 1947 signaled a clear watershed in Indian history, 1962 constituted another major milestone in the context of territorializing the geo-body of the independent Indian state. Partition and the subsequent wars over Kashmir, East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), and segments of the Sino-Indian borderlands generated a host of ongoing uncertainties over territory and violent border disputes.[9] Like Partition, the Sino-Indian War also marked a deep collective trauma for the new Indian state, and a sudden halt to the optimistic narratives of post-independence politics. This rupture is perhaps most elegantly represented in Rushdie's fictional *Midnight's Children* (1981) by the simultaneous defeat of the Indian Army across the Himalaya and the destruction of the "Conference" of all those psychically connected children born at the moment of India's independence (midnight, August 15, 1947).

This concluding chapter briefly details the major transitions and continuities experienced in Ladakh and the broader northwestern Himalaya from the 1940s up to the outbreak of the Sino-Indian War in 1962. It begins by refocusing on Ladakh and the rise of communalism in its post-independence politics, a result of Partition and the uncertain status of the erstwhile princely state

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[7] Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*.

[8] In fact, an entire ministry (The Ministry of States) was established to oversee this process. See V. P. Menon, *Integration of the Indian States* (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2014).

[9] This has included annexations, border disputes, and the production of territorial enclaves, counter-enclaves, and even a counter-counter-enclave. For the history of the India-Bangladesh enclaves, see: van Schendel, "Stateless in South Asia."

of Jammu and Kashmir. It then zooms out to briefly show how Ladakh became the center of a geopolitical rivalry between India and China, putting to work the century of geopolitical transformation of India's broader Himalayan periphery. In the context of geopolitical concerns vis-à-vis Pakistan and China, the government of India continued to see Ladakh as the British saw it, as a frontier region, now crucial to the defense of India and the balance of power in Asia. Nationalism magnified this need for a defensive perimeter. The territory of India was now synonymous with the idea of an independent nation of India—an idea that leaders like India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, struggled hard to cement through rhetoric of "unity in diversity." Finally, this chapter briefly summarizes the inheritance and continued application of the frontier complex in the postcolonial context.

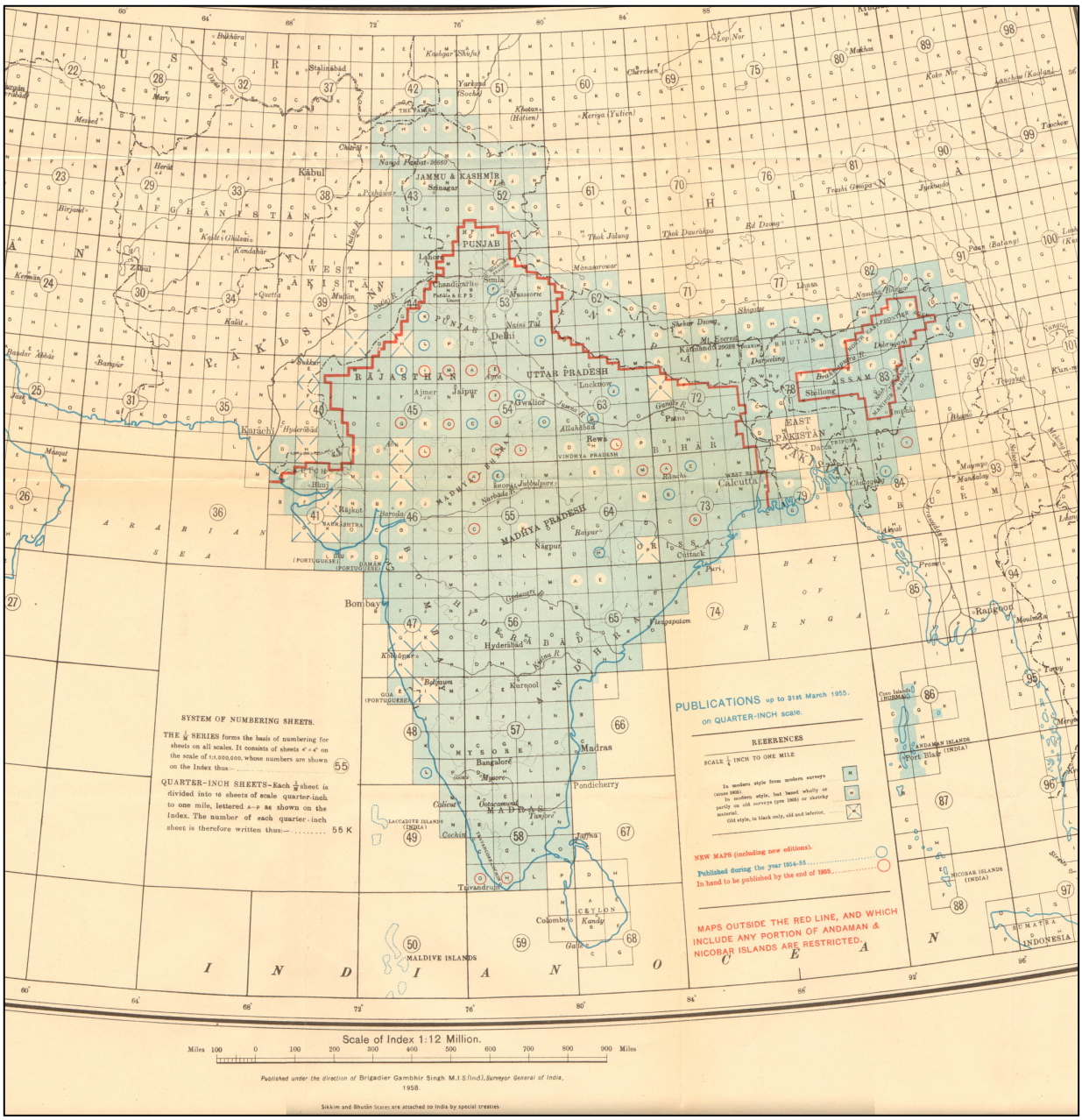


Figure 6.1. Quarter-inch maps index by the Survey of India, 1958. This is the only available version of a map showing the restricted "trans-border" map areas, although earlier versions were made.



Figure 6.2. Detail from “India showing Political Divisions in the New Republic.” Survey of India. 1950. Note the “boundary undefined” in the northeast of Jammu and Kashmir state. Author’s collection.

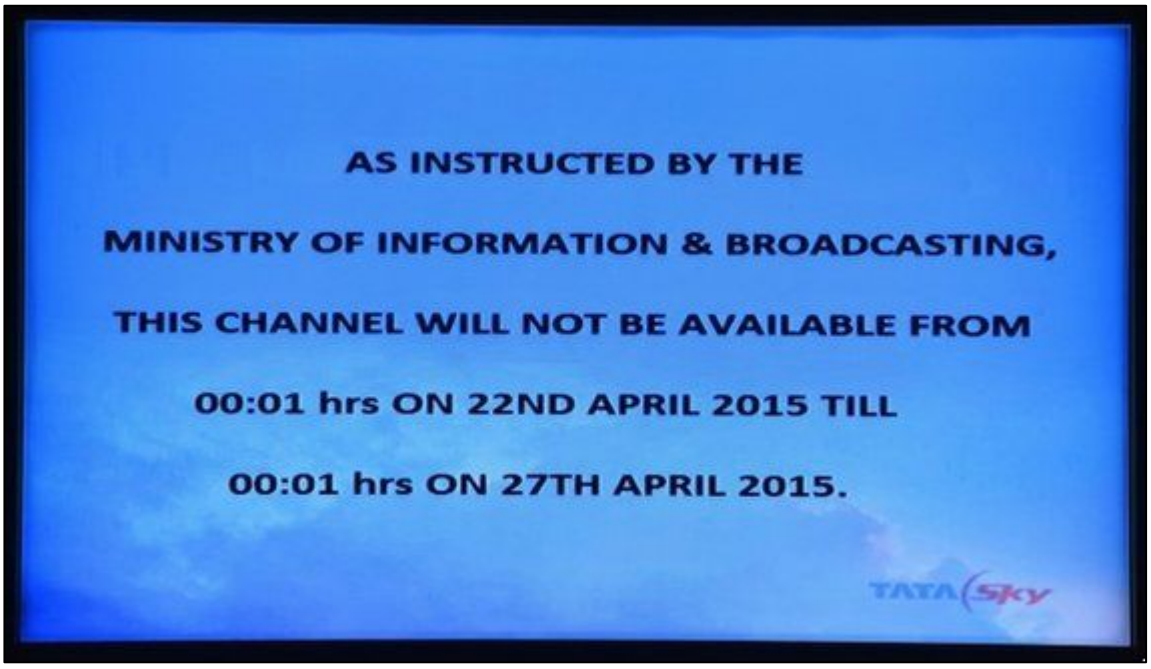


Figure 6.3. What television viewers saw on Al-Jazeera's channel in India from April 22-27, 2015. Source: APF.

I. Bakula Rinpoche, Sheikh Abdullah, and Jawaharlal Nehru: the dual specters of Communism and Communalism

Though it did not experience the horrific violence and mass population displacements of Partition, Ladakh was deeply impacted by the political fractures that followed independence. Among the most visible effects was the rapid materialization of communal divisions between Ladakh's Buddhist and Muslim populations.[10] Based on a series of once-secret Ministry of State documents on Ladakh at the National Archives of India in Delhi, it is possible to reconstruct these tensions, as well as a deeper, existential uncertainty regarding the region's future. The

[10] These tensions continue today. As I write this (September 2017), a petition from "the Buddhists of Ladakh" is making its way to Prime Minister Modi in an effort to stop a consensual "love marriage" between a Ladakhi Buddhist woman and a Ladakhi Buddhist man. The petitioners have used this as an instance of "love jihad," a recently coined term used predominantly by the Hindu right to describe the (often unfounded) pursuit of non-Muslim women by Muslim men who feign love in order to convert women to Islam.

articulation of multiple possible future political configurations for Ladakh is revealed through the correspondence between the emergent leader of Ladakh, Bakula Rinpoche, the head of the government in Jammu and Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, Jawaharlal Nehru, and officials in the Ministry of State.[11] Just as the central government of India feared the influence of the newly created Republic of Pakistan on the Muslim population of India (and particularly that of Kashmir), it also feared the influence of newly communist China on the Buddhist population of Ladakh. This was, in many ways, a continuation and expansion of British fears of "Bolshevik penetration" across the north of India in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.[12] The Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, a fractured version of the princely state that preceded Partition, wrestled with its suspended and divided status vis-à-vis India and Pakistan.[13] In the stalemate that followed the first Indo-Pakistani War (1947-48; also referred to as the First Kashmir War), internal divisions continued to grow across the state's political spectrum and within Sheikh Abdullah's newly dominant political party, the National Conference. The limited resources of the young Republic of India compounded these tensions, despite the concensus among those in the national government that Ladakh was located in an important, "strategic" position.[14] On top of all of this, we also see in the correspondence among these regional and national leaders numerous instances of growing communal tensions. Each of these points of conflict reflected a

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[11] That is, the ministry tasked with integrating the princely states.

[12] As was shown in Chapter Five. For continued fears of Soviet penetration of India via Ladakh in the 1940s, see: NAI, Ministry of External Affairs, 798-X, 1940. "Ladakh Affairs."

[13] This is a massive and complex history that has been ably told by many people. See: Chitralekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regiona Identity, and the Making of Kashmir* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003); and Mridu Rai, *Hindu Ruler, Muslim Subject: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).

[14] There are numerous newspaper and official sources to support this view. One example: "Strategic Position of Ladakh." *The Times of India* June 26, 1949, page 7.

very basic political question posed to Ladakhis: politically speaking, where did they belong? Though communal tensions would subside and flair up again in subsequent decades (particularly during the late 1980s and early 1990s), they were never so existentially crucial as they were in those first days of independence.

In February 1948, militants from Pakistan attacked the Skardu branch of the Wazārat of Ladakh. The *wazīr-i-wazārat* and "a number of other high State officials" were killed, and the state treasury was raided.[15] In the summer of the same year militant incursions into the remote Ladakhi region of Zangskar and up the Indus valley towards Leh were eventually routed by a combination of local militia, a battalion of Gurkhas marching up from Kullu, and soldiers arriving by air on a hastily constructed airfield near Leh. The plane was the first motorized vehicle to reach Ladakh (Figure 6.4) and gave rise to the (likely apocryphal) story that locals arrived to greet the plane with bails of hay, assuming that it was an auspicious "wind horse" (*rlung.rta*) and hungry after flying such a distance.

[15] NAI, Ministry of States, 12(79)-P, 1948. "Ladakh treasury attack. Question in the Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) by Dr. Bakhsji Tek Chand in respect of State officials who were attached and the State treasury which was looted in Ladakh."



Figure 6.4. Ladakhis and Indian Army soldiers posing next to an Indian Army DC-3 at the hastily constructed airfield near Leh in 1948. Photo courtesy of Nawang Tsering Shakspo.

Ladakh's indigenous leaders quickly became vocal about the neglect and mistreatment of their region by state officials. Foremost among these emerging leaders was the nineteenth Bakula Rinpoche, a reincarnate lama from one of the royal families of Ladakh (Matho). The nineteenth Bakula had recently returned from Tibet where he had completed the highest level of education possible in the Gelukpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, attaining the degree of Geshe Lharampa in the presence of the young fourteenth Dalai Lama in 1940 during enthronement ceremonies in Lhasa. In order to address a number of issues of governance in Ladakh—including a particularly rapacious state administrator and systemic neglect on issues ranging from education to roads—Bakula travelled to New Delhi in 1949 to meet with Jawaharlal Nehru. At the meeting, Nehru expressed his interest in visiting Ladakh, to which the Rinpoche later responded with a letter to

Nehru inviting him to come visit the "deserted State."[16] Nehru, his daughter, Indira, and Sheikh Abdullah flew to Ladakh in July of 1949, where Bakula Rinpoche greeted them with great fanfare (Figures 6.5 and 6.6).[17] Nehru, in turn, encouraged the young rinpoche to take an active roll in Ladakh's political life, encouragement that Bakula would take to heart in the years and decades to come.[18]

[16] NAI, External Affairs Department, "Exchange of message between Prince Pendup, Ladakh and Shir Gial Shas Bakula, Head Lama Tapuk Ganpa, Tehsil Leh, Ladakh and the Prime Minister of India." 13(16)-Pt., 1949. A translation of the brief letter ran as follows: "It is a matter of great pleasure that you are quite hale and hearty. / Due to the splendid achievements and adventures of Indian Military Officers, Col. Hari Chand etc. the enemy has been defeated and made to flee. The ryots have become fearless and happy and the State is in full bloom. We were very glad to know that you would come to this desert next year and we will thus get the opportunity of having your 'darshan'. We, therefore, request you to be kind enough to come to this deserted State without fail and see all the renowned and holy places. May God provide us this auspicious opportunity in the very near future and may the peace be established soon!"

[17] NAI, External Affairs Department, 1949. Indian Prime Minister Visit of Indian Prime Minister to Leh and arrangements for the presentation of two presents by the Indian Prime Minister to the two monastries [sic] in Ladakh. 8(19)-Pt.

[18] Bakula Rinpoche would serve in the state assembly from 1953 to 1967. He was a member of the fourth and fifth Lok Sabha from 1967 to 1977 and was Indian ambassador to Mongolia from 1989 to 2000. See Sonam Wangchuk Shakspo's self-published *Bakula Rinpoche: A Visionary Lama and Statesman* (New Delhi: Sonam Wangchuk Shakspo, 2008). Sonam was Bakula Rinpoche's private secretary for decades. He was kind enough to let me see the unpublished manuscript of Bakula's autobiography/biography. See also: Shakspo, *A Cultural History of Ladakh*. 83-95.



PANDIT NEHRU IN LADAKH

The Lama of Spituk, who is the Head Lama of Ladakh, welcomes Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on his arrival at Leh on July 4. The presentation of a shawl is the traditional gesture of welcome among the people of Ladakh. Standing at left is Brig. Atal. The plane which carried the Prime Minister flew over some of the world's highest mountain ranges and was fitted with oxygen apparatus and defreezing equipment.

Figure 6.5. A *Times of India* first page photo of Bakula Rinpoche offering a silk ceremonial scarf (*kha.btags*) to Jawaharlal Nehru upon his arrival at Leh on July 4, 1949. "Pandit Nehru in Ladakh." *The Times of India*. Jul 12, 1949, page 1.

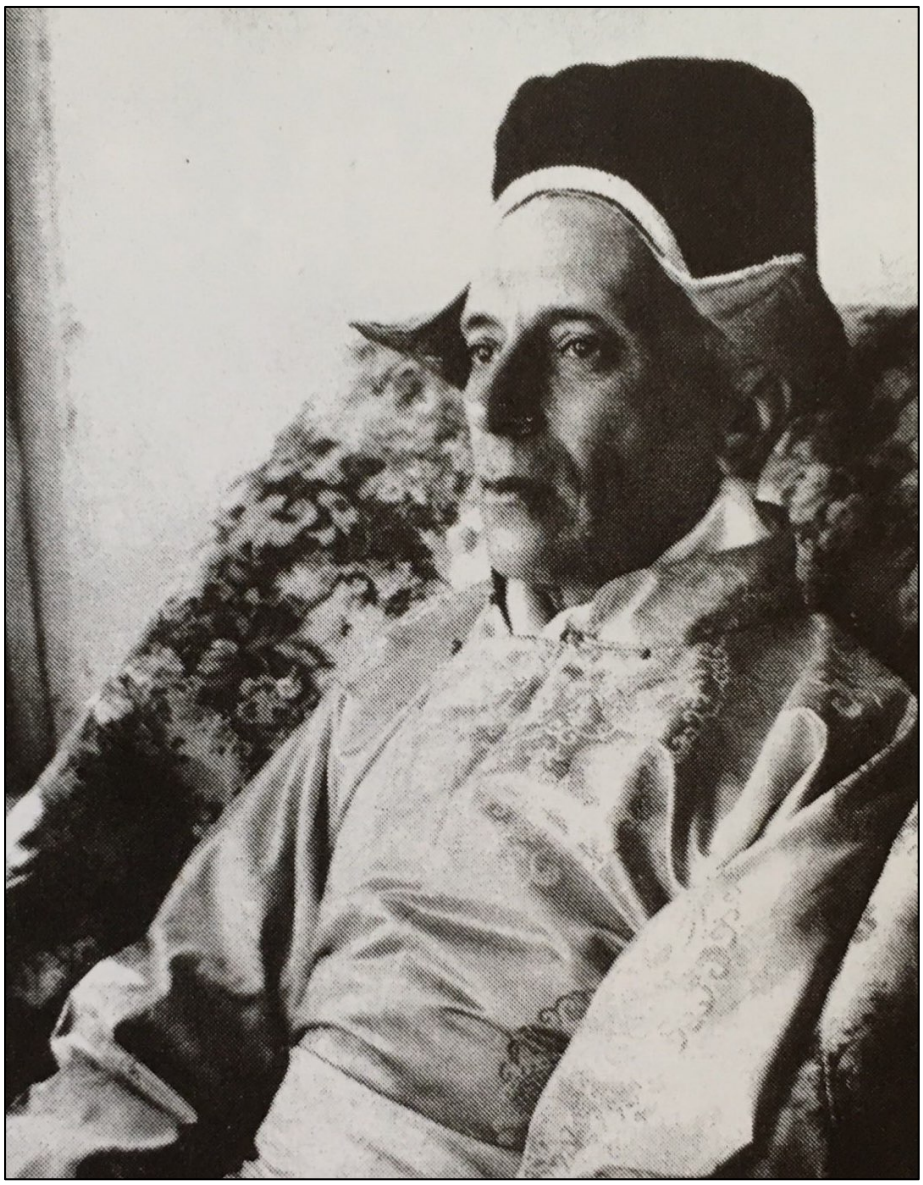


Figure 6.6. Jawaharlal Nehru in Ladakhi clothes. 1949. Source: Nawang Tsering Shakspo (copied from P.N. Sharma's "The Ladakh Affair").

In November of 1950, Bakula again visited Nehru in Delhi. He expressed dissatisfaction at the continued neglect of Ladakh by "the Sheikh administration" in Kashmir, as well as the imposition of a new ordinance that would have prohibited estates of more than 182 kanals of

land, a huge blow to the monasteries that were by far the largest landowners in Ladakh.[19] In response Nehru wrote to Sheikh Abdullah on December 1, 1950:

> My dear Shaikh Saheb, I have already [sic] written to you about Ladakh and the deputation of Lamas from there. … I have a growing feeling that it is of considerable importance how Ladakh is treated. *This is so not only because of Ladakh but because of the whole Kashmir problem, as well as because of developments in Tibet.* All kinds of complications might arise, if we are not careful. I would therefore earnestly request you to take this matter in hand yourself and try to remove all legitimate grievances. It is clear that these people are feeling repressed and frustrated and have a sensation of complete neglect by Government. That is a bad feeling. If this has spread or might spread generally to the Lamas in Ladakh, it will influence large numbers of people there. … As you will observe, *we are facing a very grave international situation and are possibly on the verge of a world war*. The future is dark from the point of view of this unhappy world of ours. In this state of affairs we have to carry all kinds of people with us to meet the dangers and perils that might arise.[20]

For Nehru, Ladakh was a small piece in a much larger geopolitical puzzle taking shape around India. Partition and war with Pakistan were followed by the victory of Mao's People's Liberation Army and their "peaceful liberation" of Tibet. The specter of communism that had so affected

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[19] NAI, Ministry of State (Kashmir), Secret, 19(16)-K52. Ganesan, Deputy Secretary to Govt. of India, Ministry of States, "Political Developments in Ladakh, dated 30 April 1952. "Buddhists in Ladakh; Representations from head Lama of Ladakh; General position re: Ladakh." The full list complaints, according to secret report commissioned by the Ministry States included: "(i) The lack of sympathy of the local officers with the feelings and sentiments of the inhabitants. There were complaints of oppression and corruption against both [the Administrator of the Frontier Districts and the local Tehsildar] and in the summer of 1950 some demonstrations were also held against them. It was also stated that they interfered with the military administration of the area. (ii) Neglect of the area in the matters of education, communication, provision of civil supplies, etc. / (iii) Land Reforms. The Lamas apprehended that if the land reforms of the Government were applied to Ladakh, this would undermine the very existence of the Gumpas around which their cultural and social life built up. / [And finally] (iv) The new laws relating to money lending also seem to have caused discontent." And NAI, Ministry of States, 1951, 1-K/51/. "Defence of North-North East Border of Jammu and Kashmir certain aspects of the administration of Ladakh."

[20] NAI, Ministry of States, 1951 No. 1(33)-K "Jammu and Kashmir. Representation from the head Lama of Ladakh against the application of the Kashmir Land Reforms Act in Ladakh. 2 Reports reg. dissatisfaction in Ladakh." My emphases.

British concerns regarding Soviet proximity to northern India had suddenly spread across nearly the entire length of India's land border (e.g. Figure 6.7).



Reds' Next Move Near India's Border

INFILTRATION INTO LADAKH BY WAY OF TIBET

By ROBERT TRUMBULL.

"The New York Times" and "The Times of India" Service.

NEW DELHI, December 11.

ONCE Tibet is invested by the Chinese Communists, and the Russians nail down their hold on the strategic western area for air bases near the Indian border, the next move of the world Communist expansionists, according to intelligence reports, will be to take in the Ladakh Buddhist Province of Kashmir and initiate large-scale infiltration into India. Ladakh adjoins Tibet.

A unique investigation, involving direct observation of the terrain in Western Tibet and the Himalayan region, that a Russian base would exploit, indicated also that there will be heavy infiltration into the Kingdom of Nepal, which partly separates India and Tibet.

In fact, numerous passes through mountains into Nepal might be the most convenient route for penetration into India. The Nepalese, mountain people who, like the Tibetans, are likely subjects for conversion to Communism—or any system that promises to improve their existence—would be indoctrinated on the way.

Like the Nepalese and many other peoples on the fringes of the Dalai Lama's realm, the inhabitants of Ladakh are of Tibetan stock, practise the same religion venerating the Dalai Lama and have a common way of life. There is a ready-made excuse for the Communists to take what they want of Ladakh in the disputability of the undefined border between the two countries. Ladakh is in fact often called "Little Tibet."

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Figure 6.7. Excerpt from an article by the Chicagoan Robert Trumbull, a foreign correspondent for *The New York Times* for over three decades, who chronicled some of the most significant events of the birth of independent India and Pakistan, including Partition, the first Kashmir War, and was present at Gandhi's death. Here, he writes of the "Red" menace to Ladakh and India, while also noting the threat posed by the Soviet Union. "Red's Next Move Near India's Border: Infiltration into Ladakh by way of Tibet." *The Times of India*. December 12, 1950, page 4. For more on Trumbull's fascinating life: http://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/13/obituaries/robert-trumbull-dies-at-80-reported-on-war-for-times.html.

Sheikh Abdullah responded that he would "give the matter his personal consideration."[21] But he was preoccupied with political infighting in Kashmir and apparently paid no heed to Nehru's request. The calls from prominent Ladakhi Buddhists to involve Ladakhis in the governance of the state grew louder and more explicitly addressed the emerging communalism in the region. A July 1951 letter from the "Buddhist inhabitants of Ladakh" to Jawaharlal Nehru addressed these growing fractures within the state explicitly. "Every single act of the [Kashmir] administration has reeked of the communal poison, but it bears the label of secular nationalism prominantly [sic] displayed. But though … nationalism, internationalism, and universalism run in our very blood, we are branded as communalists. To prove ourselves as nationalists, we are evidently expected to wipe ourselves out of existence, but we have not yet learned the nationalism which equates with utter self-immolation."[22] These leaders of the Ladakhi Buddhist community sought to highlight the divisive politics of Sheikh Abdullah's nascent government in Srinagar by simultaneously invoking Ladakh's nationalist inclination towards India, their internationalism as a historical crossroads of trade, and the "universalist" spirit of Buddhism.

In December of 1951, Bakula Rinpoche wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru to discuss Ladakh's future in relation to Kashmir:

> For better or worse we have decided to stay in India and we remain with Kashmir, subject to certain safeguards which have been specified separately in the memorandum addressed to Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah—as long as Kashmir stays in India. This abviously [sic] means that in case the rumoured plebescite [sic] is held for the whole state and not on a regional basis and the result is in favour of Pakistan, our connection with the State will terminate and we shall automatically merge without any intervening link with India. If, however, it becomes for any reason impossible for India to directly annexe [sic] our land, then, as the last course

[21] This is summarized in a letter from Ganesan to N. Gopalaswami Ayangar, dated April 1, 1952.

[22] NAI, Ministry of States, 1 (33)-K, 1950. "Buddhist Inhabitants of Ladakh" to Prime Minister of India, July 28, 1951.

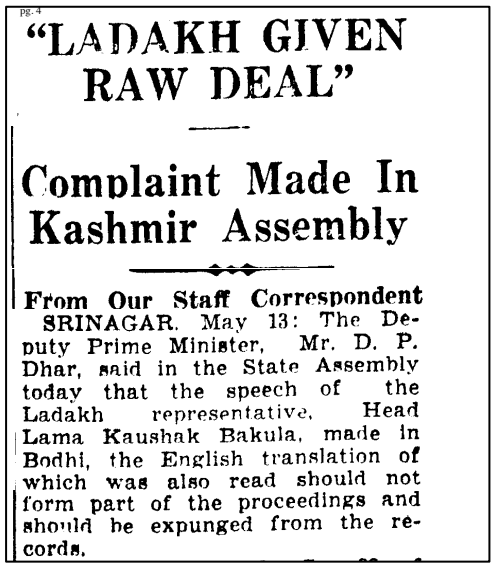
> open to them, *our people will seek political union with Tibet which in spite of our political connection with Jammu and Kashmir State for nearly the last 120 years has continued to be the great inspirer and controller of our spiritual life and which, whatever our political affiliations must be looked upon as our eternal and inalienable home.* / We fervently hope that India will not fail us at this critical juncture of our history.[23]

Ten days earlier, Bakula Rinpoche had sent a nearly identical letter to Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. In both letters, Rinpoche enumerated a series of demands made, he wrote, by the people of Ladakh, and aimed at redressing the budgetary neglect and poor administration that he would later highlight in a speech before the State Assembly on May 12, 1952 (Figure 6.8).[24] By raising the possibility of a Ladakhi reunion with Tibet, "the great inspirer and controller of [Ladakhi] spiritual life," Bakula simultaneously reinforced the growing communalism and intimated an uncertain future.

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[23] NAI, Ministry of State (Kashmir), Secret, 19(16)-K52. "Buddhists in Ladakh; Representations from head Lama of Ladakh; General position re: Ladakh." My emphasis.

[24] These included: (1) That Zanskar, a part of Kargil Tehsil, be transferred to Leh Tehsil, as should the villages of Darchiks and Garkon; (2) After this is done, the district should be divided into 15 constituencies at the rate of 5000 people each. In short, he proposed a Provincial Constituent Assembly that would act much like the state government acted in relation to the national government; (3) He also requested earmarked seats for higher education and technical training, hoping to better provide the necessary local services with local personnel; (4) "The local legislature would be the only authority competent to make Laws for the province and to control its administration and naturally Executive Council would be responsible to it. But no motion or Resolution affecting the religious or social system of any community inhabiting the Province would be brought before the Legislature unless so desired by the community concerned"; (5) "A governor deputed by the Centre would represent the Central Government and be the connecting link between the Province and the centre. He would exercise the same functions as the constitutional head of the State would do in the State."



"LADAKH GIVEN RAW DEAL"

Complaint Made In Kashmir Assembly

From Our Staff Correspondent

SRINAGAR, May 13: The Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. D. P. Dhar, said in the State Assembly today that the speech of the Ladakh representative, Head Lama Kaushak Bakula, made in Bodhi, the English translation of which was also read should not form part of the proceedings and should be expunged from the records.

Figure 6.8. Excerpt from "'Ladakh given raw deal': Complaint Made in Kashmir Assembly." *The Times of India*. May 14, 1952.

But, again, nothing materialized in response. Soon, letters from Bakula Rinpoche became stronger in tone, no doubt reflecting his exasperation at the continued neglect from the Central and State governments.[25] When Shri Gopalswamy Ayyangar, the Minister for States, visited Jammu in April 1952, he discussed "the problem of Ladakh" with Sheikh Abdullah and the other prominent members of the state government, as well as Bakula Rinpoche, "who acquainted him with the grievances of the Budhist [sic] population." Ayyangar went on to note that the state ministers were greatly embarrassed by the national publicity generated from Bakula Rinpoche's speech in the State Assembly in which the lama lambasted the draft of the year's budget for failing to contain a single item earmarked for Ladakh. The ministers event went so far as to say that "they would have no objection to the area being taken over by India." But in Ayyangar's

[25] NAI, Ministry of State (Kashmir), Secret, 19(16)-K52. Ganesan, Deputy Secretary to Govt. of India, Ministry of States, "Political Developments in Ladakh, dated 30 April 1952. "Buddhists in Ladakh; Representations from head Lama of Ladakh; General position re: Ladakh."

estimate, this solution was inadvisable. Instead, "the best course would be to appoint an officer deputed by the Govt. of India to be Administrator of the whole area; a system of local Advisory Councils such as was provided in the Constitution for the Assam Tribal Areas could also be set up."[26]

But as the months passed and inaction in Jammu and Kashmir continued, Kushok Bakula's language became even more exasperated. This tension is most visible in the documents detailing the growing animosity between the young reincarnate lama and the "*Sher-i-Kashmīr*" ("lion of Kashmir"), Sheikh Abdullah. In a July 23, 1952 "most confidential" note sent to the Minister of States, Bakula Rinpoche wrote of the Kashmir Government's "Sinister designs on Ladakh." In the note Rinpoche expressed a host of fears based on the rapidly forming sectarian[27] and communal divisions. Out of the context of the radical uncertainty of those post-Partition years these fears might sound paranoid, but we must also consider that Ladakhis of every sort could not be certain of the durability of their position appended to the periphery of India. It is worth quoting at length from a section entitled "Our Future," to give a sense of these fears.

> It is clear as crystal from all this that unless India intervenes immediately, Ladakh will be lost to it one way or the other. Let India grasp this fact clearly: the existence of the Buddhist community in Ladakh is the only factor which guarantees to it the possession of this important frontier. / We shall prefer to be wiped out of existence, but we shall not permit ourselves to be hurled into the blazing hell of Pakistan. *To prize our Buddhist culture above our very lives therefore, the thought of the advent of Communism into our land is a dreadful nightmare for us but if India casts us to the wolves we shall, as we have repeatedly declared, prefer being restored to our home Tibet even under Communist regime to being tied to the chariot-wheels of Pakistan*. Our culture, our ideals can live and thrive only under the direct sunshine of India's protection and not under its shadowy long-distance guardianship

[26] NAI, Ministry of State (Kashmir), Secret, 19(16)-K52. Ganesan, Deputy Secretary to Govt. of India, Ministry of States, "Political Developments in Ladakh, dated 30 April 1952. "Buddhists in Ladakh; Representations from head Lama of Ladakh; General position re: Ladakh."

[27] In addition to Buddhist-Muslim tensions, there were also tensions between the two dominant sects of Buddhists, the Gelukpas (of which Bakula Rinpoche was a high member) and the Drukpa Kagyus.

> exercised through the non-conducting medium of a virtually independent Islamic Kashmir. Our demand of internal autonomy is being thrown overboard. Shri Gopalaswamy Ayyanger [sic] had reassured me during my recent interview with him at Jammu, that India would depute an administrator to the District. But the Prime Minister of Kashmir has informed me that he has not agreed to this proposal and that India has not agreed to the direct merger of the District with itself. This is most unfortunate for us and gravely harmful to the interests of India itself. The need of the hour is the appointment of an Administrator by India. …To save the Frontier, India must save the Buddhists of Ladakh and to save the Buddhists of Ladakh it musttake [sic] over administrative control of the District without the loss of a moment.[28]

Whether these were Bakula's words or the rhetorical flourishes of an assistant or advisor, this alarmist tone had been building throughout his writings of the past two years.[29] Employing such damning descriptions of Pakistan, while dangling the threat of joining Tibet certainly caught the attention of national and state leaders. For Bakula, protecting the Buddhists of Ladakh was crucial to prevent the loss of "this important frontier." A District Commissioner was sent to Ladakh not long afterwards.

From the perspective of the Buddhists of Ladakh, it is not surprising that a kind of "reunion" with Tibet might be considered as a point of leverage in talks with the government of India. After all, in the early 1950s the communist regime in China had yet to perpetrate the violent suppression and policy changes that would kill, imprison, starve through famine, or otherwise "disappear" hundreds of thousands of Tibetans. Bakula Rinpoche would travel to Tibet in 1954-55 as part of an official Government of India visit when Nehru was vigorously promoting "*Hindī-Cīnī bhā'ī- bhā'ī*" (Indian-Chinese brotherhood) and the Panchsheel Treaty

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[28] NAI, Ministry of State (Kashmir), Secret, 19(16)-K52. Bakula Rinpoche to Jawaharlal Nehru. "Buddhists in Ladakh; Representations from head Lama of Ladakh; General position re: Ladakh." The italicized emphasis is mine, while the underlined emphasis at the conclusion is original to the text.

[29] Bakula Rinpoche spoke no Urdu at this time and was assisted in those very early years by numerous people, including his political assistant Sonam Wangyal, his personal secretaries Sonam Stobdan and Tashi Rabgyas, and his friend and political mentor Shridhar Kaul.

(see below). Ladakh was a crucial piece in this diplomacy and Nehru (who visited Ladakh again in 1952[30]), Bakula Rinpoche and much of the reading public of India were aware of this (Figure 6.9). The Minister of States underscored this by noting that as "a frontier tract contiguous to Communist-held Tibet," Ladakh was "important for strategic and security reasons."[31]



LADAKH—KASHMIR'S STRATEGIC FRONTIER PROVINCE

REGENT VISITS LAND OF LAMAS

YUVRAJ Karan Singh and the Yuvrani of Kashmir recently paid a visit to the district of Ladakh (including the Kargil area). On their arrival at the Leh airport, the highest in the world, they were welcomed by the inhabitants who (as seen above) enthusiastically piped, danced and sang to the accompaniment of tom toms.

In the picture inset at right is a typical peasant woman leaning contentedly against a stack of harvested wheat. In addition to wheat, the people grow barley, gram, buckwheat, trumba and pulses. They have, however, benefited hardly at all by the agrarian reforms launched by the Kashmir Government as large areas of land belong to the *gumpas*, Buddhist monasteries, which are being maintained on the produce of these lands.

Ladakh the last stronghold of Buddhism in India, has about 42,500 Buddhists, 38,000 Muslims, 150 Christians and a few Hindus. The Head Lama, Kushak Bakula, who also represents Ladakh in the constituent Assembly, has made a demand that Ladakh be granted provincial autonomy to enable her to become a federating unit of Kashmir State.

An aerial view of the city of Leh. Flourishing trade is carried on between Sinkiang and the rest of India through Ladakh, Leh, 11,000 feet up, is the principal market for Central Asian horses, carpets, "namdas," dried fruit and other commodities. This is the headquarters of the district as well as of the tehsil.

LADAKH, Kashmir's rugged mountainous frontier province, has the eyes of the world focussed on it. Bounded on the north by the Karakoram range, on the east by Tibet, on the south by the Himalayas and on the west by Pakistani-held Skardu (Baltistan), it is a strategic and vital nerve centre.

Now that Dr. Graham has again confessed his inability to find a solution to the vexed Kashmir problem, Ladakh again springs into prominence. Though apparently hemmed in completely and protected by a mountain chain, there are gaps—partly natural and partly man-made—which have enabled foreigners to enslave its people in the past. Some of the mountain passes are thought to be the highest caravan routes in the world.

Ladakh, which grows wheat at 11,000 to 15,000 feet above sea-level, had a bumper crop this year. The picture above shows newly-harvested wheat stacked around the Leh meteorological station.

Yuvraj Karan Singh snapped with the Buddhist Youth Association of Ladakh. By his side, in flowing robes, is the Head Lama, Kushak Bakula, President of the Association.

THE Yuvrani of Kashmir is seen in the picture above with members of the Ladakhi National Women's organisation which presented a warm address of welcome to her in Leh. This was not only the first visit of the Yuvraj and Yuvrani to Ladakh but the first time any ruling Prince of Kashmir has visited this remote district in the last 100 years.

The Head Lama, Kushak Bakula, familiarised the Prince with Ladakh's many problems and it is likely that the Yuvraj may pass on the information to members of the Kashmir Cabinet for action. Political circles are eagerly awaiting details of any views that may have been expressed by the Head Lama who is considered the biggest single influence in Ladakh.

Inset at left is a picture of the Yuvraj in a Ladakhi costume which was given to him by Kushak Bakula in return for a 400-year-old image of Lord Buddha which was presented to Spituk Gumpa. Ladakh's newest woman-[illegible] also made extensive gift offerings to Christian and Muslim institutions.

The Deputy High Commissioner of Leh (left), the ten-year-old Little Lama of Hemis, the Yuvraj and Kushak Bakula snapped at Hemis, 28 miles south of Leh, where the principal monastery of the Red Sect is situated. Most Ladakhis belong to the Red Sect. Every family, if it has many sons generally dedicates the youngest to the monastery.

Figure 6.9. "Ladakh—Kashmir's Strategic Frontier Province: Regent Visits Land of Lamas." *The*

[30] "Mr. Nehru Visits Ladakh." *The Times of India*. September 1, 1952, page 5.

[31] NAI, Ministry of State (Kashmir), Secret, 19(16)-K52. "Buddhists in Ladakh; Representations from head Lama of Ladakh; General position re: Ladakh."

Times of India. October 5, 1952, page 10.

In Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah kept in regular communication with the Minister for States. Both he and Gopalaswami Ayyangar articulated fears of communist infiltration in Ladakh.[32] Sheikh Abdullah worried that reports of Chinese mistreatment of the Ladakhi Muslim traders in Lhasa (the Lhasa Khache described in Chapter One) was a sign of things to come from China.

From 1949 to the beginning of 1953, correspondence censored by the Ministry of State and the Intelligence Bureau revealed an array of rumoured or actual Muslim-Buddhist problems. These ranged from Muslim boycotts of archery competitions in Leh, to their apparent destruction of Buddhist *ma.ni* walls. It is worth noting that in most of these letters these events were described in the language of rumor, not eyewitness accounts (e.g. "it is said that a group of Muslims…"). But there were also positive rumors, too. In a rather condescending letter sent from the English Missionary Norman Driver and censored by the Ministry of State, the missionary noted: "The Buddhists and Shia Mohammedans make an agreement about the future of Ladakh. [The agreement's] content is reported to be that if the Communists come and take over Ladakh then the Buddhists will protect the Shias from any harm. Should Ladakh go to Pakistan then the

[32] "The second phase of Mr. Ayyangar's career opened in 1937 as Dewan of Kashmir. His connection with Kashmir extended until his last days. Few persons in India were better qualified to speak authoritatively when the invasion of the State by Pakistan took place, raising an international problem. At Lake Success, Geneva, and elsewhere he expounded India's cause with a clarity and comprehension. Mr. Ayyangar had assumed office as Dewan during a difficult period. The attempt of the Kashmir Committee to overthrow the Maharaja had culminated in an uprising that took a communal turn. Sheikh Abdullah assumed leadership of the Muslim League (later National Conference) in 1932." from: http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/2003/02/10/stories/2003021001500800.htm From 1947-1948 Ayyangar served as Minister without Portfolio in the first cabinet under Jawaharlal Nehru. This was followed by his sojourn as Minister of Railways and Transport from 1948-1952, and finally, he served as Defence Minister from 1952-1953.

Shias will protect the Buddhists." Not all rumors reflected a purely antagonistic view of communal relations.

II. Geopolitics and Nationalism

The story of Ladakh's first post-independence years is often told—like the larger narrative of Indian independence—as the struggle among a handful of political actors in the vein of Carlyle's "Great Men" of history. By framing this political narrative as simply a rivalry between Sheikh Abdullah and Bakula Rinpoche, or even between federal, state, and regional political parties more broadly, historians still overlook the broader impact of Partition on Ladakh and the ascendant position of the region as one of great geopolitical importance. Following Partition and the Chinese invasion of Tibet, Ladakhis suddenly found their identities refracted through three distinct political categories: Pakistan, India, and China. This dramatic uncertainty in political—and spatial—thinking combined with longer and less noticeable trends that spanned the decades preceding independence, which further isolated the region and hassened its transformation into a would-be borderland.

Although trade through Ladakh with Central Asia saw a dramatic surge following the Russian Revolution of 1917, it had witnessed a steady decline since the late 1920s (see Figure 3.4). By 1940, British administrators were content to declare it dead. "The Central Asian trade today is dead and not likely to revive in present world conditions," wrote the Resident in Kashmir.[33] This produced a problem. "[D]ue to its remoteness," Ladakh was "difficult enough to observe." The Resident also feared that "with no contact at all it would remain a dangerous back

[33] NAI, External Affairs Department, 798-X, 1940. "Ladakh Affairs." Fraser (Resident)'s comments on Hailey's note.

door into India." This once again raised the question of whether the British government of India should take over direct control of Ladakh in order to more closely oversee the frontier. It also raised the question of the role of the British Joint Commissioners in Leh. As an administrator in the External Affairs Department noted, "The Central Asian trade, which is the fons et origo of the Treaty Road and the British Joint Commissioner arrangements, is, however, not at present a living issue, and it is difficult to forecast when it may revive."[34] Following independence, Bakula Rinpoche bemoaned the impact of the end of the Central Asian trade on Ladakh."Due to the discontinuance and stoppage of caravan from Sikyang [sic], he wrote, "wide spread [sic] unemployment had taken place, at the sametime [sic] the prices of article [sic] of daily consumption had gone very high." Furthermore, Bakula continued, "Large number [sic] of people from Ladakh had trade connections with Tibet, now due to the communists chines [sic] insertion in Tibet, it will be stopped also. In view of the rapid deterioration in economic conditions in Ladakh if no steps are being taken to give productive work a critical situation might develop."[35] Trade had dwindled as a result of expanded infrastructure in Soviet Central Asia and a decline in demand for Central Asian goods in northern India. Hashish (*caras*) was being produced in high volumes further south of Ladakh in Kulu. Tea from Assam in the northeast of India had resoundingly replaced Chinese "brick tea" across northern India. Numerous attempts to mine precious stones and metals had yielded few results. And pashmina had become less

[34] NAI, External Affairs Department, 798-X, 1940. W.R. Hay (external affairs) to Fraser (resident in Kashmir) dated 21st August 1940. "Ladakh Affairs."

[35] NAI, Ministry of States, 1951, 1-K/51. From Bakula, Head Lama of Ladakh, and Sonam Wangial, Representative for zamindars of Ladakh, to the Secretary for States Affairs. "Defence of North-North East Border of Jammu and Kashmir certain aspects of the administration of Ladakh."

fashionable.[36] The expansion of routes between Bengal and central Tibet and the enhanced infrastructure across India further reduced demand for the high-cost items that slowly made their way from Central Asia or across the western Tibetan Plateau. The decline in trade was also visible in the steady decline in the size of the triennial Lopchak and the annual Chaba. The last Lopchak mission to Lhasa departed Leh in 1950. It comprised only four traders.[37]

Continuing British policies of building information networks along the frontier, the Indian government further built up British military posts across the region, in what became referred to as India's "forward policy" (mirroring British "forward policy"). The post-1947 government also quickly took an interest in the major trans-frontier roads in the northwestern Himalaya. Along the route of the Hindustan-Tibet Road, police check posts and a wireless station were established in order to provide better security along the frontier "in view of recent developments in Tibet."[38] The communication afforded by the Hindustan-Tibet Road and the wireless stations connecting the border posts near the Shipki Pass into Tibet would help "prevent the infiltration of undesirable elements into India from the border of Tibet and China."[39] The terminus of the Hindustan-Tibet Road was still considered one of the "chief means of contact between India and Tibet," though it was also acknowledged that there were "many other tracks through which contact is made with Tibet…"

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[36] Zutshi, "Designed for Eternity."

[37] NAI, Ministry of States, 1951, No. 1(35)-K. "Arrival of the Choba Mission from Tibet to Leh." Central Intelligence Agency, Information Report, "Ladakh (Kashmir)-Tibet Trade/Proposed Organization of 1950 Lobchag Mission," November 7, 1952.

[38] NAI, Ministry of States, 17(34)-D, 1950. V.P. Menon from E.P. Moon, Chief Commissioner Himachal Pradesh. "Security measures on the Indo-Tibetan Border in Chini."

[39] NAI, Ministry of States, 17(34)-D, 1950. E.P. Moon to deputy sec. to Home Affairs. "Security measures on the Indo-Tibetan Border in Chini."

It is worth noting that not all of this trade needed to be highly regulated. The deputy secretary of Home Affairs noted that "the fact that trade has been going on for over 2,000 years over the long Indo-Tibetan border and of the inconvenience which is likely to be caused to Tibetans if they are required to obtain passports, it has been decided that a passport system between India and Tibet should not be strictly enforced." But a "system of permits for entry and stay and stay in India for Tibetans" would be introduced.[40]

Movement across the frontier in Ladakh, however, was excluded from this relaxation of regulations. The relaxed permit system would "not be applicable to Tibetans wishing to enter India via Ladakh." The entry "of such persons in Ladakh" would "create problems of maintenance and accommodation" and would "not be free from security risk…." It was therefore decided that "no person should at all be allowed to enter India by the Ladakh route." To accomplish this restriction of unwanted entries along the routes from Central Asia and Tibet, similar wireless posts were established in 1951 at Demchok, in eastern Ladakh on the route to Lhasa and Gartok, and at Shyok, in northern Ladakh along the old Treaty Road. The addition of two wireless operators, twelve constables, two sub-inspectors, and an inspector boosted these military posts, which had been established prior to independence along the two main routes across Ladakh.[41]

Most importantly, the government of India came to slowly perceive the continued borderlessness in the north that they had inherited. In 1950, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of States together took steps to redress the problem of borderless maps. The first step

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[40] Ibid. From Home Affairs to All State Governments and the Regional Commissioners, dated 26th December 1950. signed by Fateh Singh, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India. Secret.

[41] NAI, Ministry of States, 17(34)-D. Secret. Ministry of Home Affairs to Principal Secretary to the Government of J&K, 6 January 1951.

was to establish a committee "to survey the whole field of defence of the North and North Eastern border from Ladakh to the Indo-Burma border."[42] Local government officials across the Himalaya were tasked with uncovering "all administrative problems which have a bearing on the contentment and loyalty of the people inhabiting the border areas" as well as determining "the arrangements which may be necessary in regard to Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim." The committee comprised the Deputy Minister of Defence, top officials from the (renamed) Ministry of External Affairs, the Deputy Director of the Intelligence Bureau, and top military officials. The committee prepared "a questionnaire on the basis of their terms of reference for obtaining the views of and information from State Governments and other authorities concerned." First on this questionnaire, were a series of questions regarding the location of the "existing boundaries with Tibet and Burma."[43]

The questionnaire began with a series of basic border legibility requirements. "Where are the existing boundaries with Tibet and Burma?" "Is the boundary fixed by any agreement or is it customary?" "Is it defined or demarcated?" In the case of the questionnaire completed by Jammu and Kashmir officials for Ladakh, the answers ran as follows:

> Tibet is to the east of the Frontier District of Ladakh of the J&K State. The eastern boundary runs from Damchok in the south east-32.5 0 latitude and onwards to Changchenmo valley 34.5 0. Beyond that comes the Karakaram range. The regions of North above that are unexplored. The boundary is not fixed by any agreement nor is it defined or demarcated but the existing boundary, as it seems to be well understood on both sides. Under Art: 2 of the Treaty of 16th March, 1846, the eastern boundary was to be laid down by a commission to be appointed by the then British Government and the Ruler of the State and was to be defined in a separate Engagement after survey. This survey has not taken place. The boundary is therefore only customary. There is, however, a village inside Tibet known as

[42] NAI, Ministry of States, 1951, 1-K/51. Copy of a letter No. F.293/50/D.I., dated 18 December 1950, from the Government of India, Ministy of Defence. "Defence of North-North East Border of Jammu and Kashmir certain aspects of the administration of Ladakh."

[43] NAI, Ministry of States, 1951, 1-K/51. "Defence of North-North East Border of Jammu and Kashmir certain aspects of the administration of Ladakh."

> Mensar which is under the sovereignty of the J&K State. The revenue of this village amounts to about Rs. 278/12/- and this revenue is payable to the State. This place is 8 stages from Damchok, the farthest south eastern point of the Frontier.[44]

Besides glossing over the century of British attempts to establish a suitable boundary, from 1846 to independence, the official completing the form was ignorant of the region's much more recent past (i.e. the decade-long dispute over Dokpo Karpo in the 1920s and the problems of semi-nomads like Lha.rgyal who were claimed by western Tibetan officials as tax payers). In response to the second question, "Do you know of any boundary disputes?" The official replied simply that "[t]here have been no boundary disputes so far."[45] The questionnaire then continued with various other questions regarding the land, airfields near the border regions, the "inhabitants of the borders," whether they have "any affinities, with any tribes on the other side of the border," and whether they were "primitive races." The survey concluded with "What is the extent of communist influence, if any?" The official again noted simply that there was none.

Addressing this last concern, the Ministry of States and the Army General Staff devised strategies to "draw LADAKH closer" to India.[46] These included supporting the suggestions made by Bakula Rinpoche and organizing a center for religious education in Leh, thus obviating the need for Ladakhi Buddhist monks to go to Tibet for education. "The continuation of the religious education and the Lamas at LHASA is not desirable as the Communists are adept in indoctrinating personnel with their ideology." Furthermore, "the Lamas should be encouraged to visit their holy places in INDIA, as opposed to those in TIBET." Finally, the "construction of a

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] NAI, Ministry of States, 1952: 19(12) K/ 52. (Secret).Secret. Extract from Army Headquarters, General Staff Branch, note No. 4706/61/GSI(k)(i), dated the 3rd January 1952, regarding situation in Ladakh.

15-Cwt [hundredweight] road between LEH and KARGIL" would provide the military with a better means of moving personnel and materiel, as well as providing Ladakhis with smoother internal "communication." This strategy would help address the rumors that traders arriving from Western Tibet were "carrying out propaganda to enhance the reputation of the CHINESE Communists, who are now in effective occupation of TIBET."[47] This propaganda apparently included a text in Bodhi script of the coerced "Seventeen Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" signed in 1951 affirming Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

Conclusion: The (Postcolonial) Frontier Complex

By the late 1950s, optimism in India over the Panchsheel ("five virtues") Treaty and overtures of Sino-Indian brotherhood ("*Hindī-Cīnī bhā'ī- bhā'ī*") had faded.[48] The 1954 treaty that had asserted mutual respect between China and India on issues of territorial integrity and sovereignty wrongly assumed that both sides shared the same idea of those territories. That same year the Government of India revised its official maps that showed "undemarcated" or "undefined" borders in Ladakh to show a definite border, a composite line of the Johnson Line of 1865 and the 1899 Macartney-MacDonald Line based on no additional surveying or demarcation.[49] This was, in Jawaharlal Nehru's estimate, the simplest way of dealing with the continued borderlessness inherited from the British across much of the Himalaya. But when

[47] NAI, Ministry of States, 1952: 19(12) K/ 52 (Secret). "Secret/ No. 4706/61/GSI(k)(i). / General Staff Branch/ (Military Intelligence Directorate). / Subject: the religious education of the Ladakhis. Sd. Chand N Das, Brig. / D.M.I. / 15-4-52.

[48] Literally translated as "Indian-Chinese brother-brother," the term was used to refer to the Indian government's post-independence assertion of a longstanding historical connection and growing brotherhood between the two countries, underscored by the 1954 Panchsheel Treaty.

[49] Lamb, *The Sino-Indian Border in Ladakh*. 70.

Bakula Rinpoche visited western Tibet in the summer of 1957, he reported to the Indian government that the Chinese military had been constructing a road across the uninhabited Aksai Chin plateau, connecting Xinjiang and Tibet. Sino-Indian relations were made even worse when, in 1959, India received the Dalai Lama, who had fled an uprising in Lhasa and was subsequently followed into exile by nearly one hundred thousand Tibetans. And a series of incidents between Indian and Chinese soldiers and officials in the northwestern and northeastern Himalaya began to push Indian public opinion against China. In 1960, Nehru and his Chinese counterpart Zhou Enlai held meetings in an attempt to de-escalate tensions, but they ended when China and India failed to agree on the major watershed that defined the boundary in the western sector. Indian claims clung to the major watersheds of the Himalaya, while China's did not.[50] War broke out in October 1962.[51]

The Henderson Brooks-Bhagat Report written after the war noted that the Army General Staff had failed to apprise the government of the inability to effectively support a "forward policy" in Ladakh and the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA)—a policy largely inherited from the British.[52] This top-secret report, one that the Indian government still refuses to release,

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[50] See Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian, and Russian Rivalries*.

[51] It is well beyond the scope of this dissertation to do justice to the complex history leading up to the Sino-Indian War. See, for instance: Lamb, *The China-India Border: The Origins of the Disputed Boundaries*., *Asian Frontiers: Studies in a Continuing Problem* (New York, Washington, and London: Frederick A. Raeger, 1968), and *The Sino-Indian Border in Ladakh* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973); Fisher, Rose, and Huttenback, *Himalayan Battleground: Sino-Indian Rivalry in Ladakh*; Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian, and Russian Rivalries*; Maxwell, *India's China War*; John Lall, *Aksaichin and Sino-Indian Conflict* (Ahmedabad: Allied Publishers, 1989).

[52] The first volume of the report was recently published on the personal website of the Australian journalist Neville Maxwell, who had used much of the leaked document to write his 1970 book, *India's China War*.

suggested that the war was far from being a purely Chinese aggression. But the month-long war did end with a Chinese unilateral cease-fire and the establishment of the "Line of Actual Control" (LAC) that more or less exists today. China won the war on the ground, but it undoubtedly lost in the fight for world opinion.

Two months after the war's end, on Republic Day 1963, Lata Mangeshkar brought Nehru and many others to tears singing for the first time "Aye Mere Watan Ke Lōgõ" ("Oh, People of My Country"):

> When the Himalaya was injured and our freedom was threatened, they fought right to the end and then they laid down their bodies … some were Sikh, some Jath, and some Maratha, some were Gurkhas and some Madrasi. But each brave man who died on the border was an Indian, the blood shed on the mountains, that blood was Indian.[53]

The mountainous Himalayan border (*sarhad*) was made Indian by the spilling of blood on it. The border was now something for which one gave one's life. This national consecration of the frontline of India added to policies that sought to establish a fixed and inviolable sense of national territory. A year earlier, for instance, Nehru had "made it a crime to question the territorial integrity of India," as the Indian state continued to shore up its territory through the annexation of the Portuguese colony of Goa.[54]

The Sino-Indian War of 1962 marked the point at which, for the first time, a border was effectively established on the ground in the northwestern (and the northeastern) Himalaya. This "Line of Actual Control"—distinguished from the "Line of Control" (LOC) to the west, running

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[53] "*jab ghāyal huā himālaya, k̲hatre meñ paḍī āzādī, Jab tak thī sāñs laḍe woh, phir apnī lāsh bichha dī,… koī Sikh koī Jāṭ Maraṭha, koi Gurkha koī Madarāsī, sarhad par marnevāla har vīr thā bhāratvāsī/jo k̲hūn gīrā parvat par, wah k̲hūn thā Hindustānī*." My Translation.

[54] The quote is from Pankaj Mishra, "India at 70, and the Passing of Another Illusion," *The New York Times*, August 11, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/11/opinion/india-70-partition-pankaj-mishra.html?_r=0.

through Pakistan- and Indian-occupied Kashmir—has been a source of tension ever since. Recently (summer 2017), a months-long standoff at the Doklam plateau in the central Himalaya and a particularly violent clash between Chinese and Indian soldiers along the banks of Pangong Lake in Ladakh threatened to escalate into a full-scale border war between the two nuclear powers. Uncertain borderlines and the insistence on "territorial inviolability" are once again to blame. The power held by these spatial-political ideas radiates far beyond the sparsely populated and mountainous regions involved. The Himalaya continues to play a two-fold role, both as a defensive wall and a potentially dangerous conduit at the center of a decades-long Sino-Indian stand-off. Indian representations of the border dispute often paint China as the aggressor, even while acknowledging possibilities of reconciliation between the two counties.

Unlike the newly minted postcolonial "lines of control," the general acceptance of border points had long existed in the Himalaya. Typically located on established trade and pilgrimage routes, these points served as means for signaling seasonal customs duties to be paid, or *corvée* labor to be given. But a complete borderline through such mountainous country came into political play only when maps and geographically based logics began to hold greater authority as tools of territorial control. This authority can be seen in the evolving colonial concept of the ideal border: a concept based on "natural" principles, implemented by scientifically sound practices, and represented on increasingly classified maps, as well as in systematic manuals of governance such as the district-level gazetteers. But these principles and geographical practices ultimately produced more confusion than solutions. Each proposed line failed to aid in establishing a border until the unilateral Chinese ceasefire on November 21, 1962.

The vast space of the uninhabited and inhospitable corner of the northwestern Tibetan Plateau now generally referred to as the Akai Chin was thus anything but empty. It has become

an intimate part of the spatial self-conception of India, though it has become a specific *place* only to the unfortunate soldiers tasked with maintaining a presence there. In this sense, then, the region remains a utopia (literally: "no place"), a spatial idea off limits to all but a few military personnel, but highly visible in the geospatial imaginary of India.

Rendered on maps that no longer showed indeterminate borderlessness, the region that once formed the center of a vast cultural and commercial network was, by the end of 1962, a borderland by virtue of the imposition of a *de facto* borderline. Despite repeated attempts to articulate a scientific and precise rationale based on the Indus watershed, the "Line of Actual Control" fails to reflect any particular geographical principle. There was no linear path to producing this borderland, but instead a series of ideas of how peripheral political space ought to be organized through the natural features of the region. While these ideas proved rather futile in shaping the Line of Actual Control, they were potent in shaping a worldview that viewed international politics as a competition between abutting territories determined by, and dependent on, geography. It is one of the great ironies of the history of frontiers and border making that the mountainous laboratory that seemed to offer such a clear means of defining a "natural" frontier should instead consistently fail to yield a legible border. Holdich's "finest natural combination of boundary and barrier" had proven to be anything but.[55]

By placing mountainous, sparsely populated, and increasingly peripheral spaces like Ladakh and the North-East Frontier Agency on the frontline of government policy, the Indian government was following established imperial practices.

First, the government of India maintained the importance of the idea of the border as a *sine qua non* of territory. The border, with its security risks and threats of foreign penetration,

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[55] Holdich, *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making*. 280.

became a frontline. As the outline of the geo-body of the nascent independence state, the borders enclosing the territory claimed by India became quickly tied to swelling nationalism. Unlike the managed frontiers and borders of the British Empire—which tolerated a degree of ambiguity—the borders of the nation-state were essential constitutive elements of the nation-state. Borders became something to die for. The violation of the geo-body of India in its two remote Himalayan extremities in the Sino-Indian War had a deep impact on India's sense of nation. It is an often-repeated saying that when Nehru died in 1964, he died of a broken heart over India's humiliating defeat and loss of territory to China.

Second, the geopolitical calculus that brought Ladakh to Nehru's attention was the product of decades of practices surrounding transforming frontiers into borders. By the end of the nineteenth century, individual frontiers had become integrated—in policy rhetoric at least—into a single "frontier policy." Gazetteers continued to be one of the principle information tools of district- and state-level governance following indepdence. Border roads have become so explicitly tied to security concerns that they are exclusively managed by the Border Roads Organization, a branch of the Indian Ministry of Defense. And border maps are highly regulated. These practices rooted in the colonial era were bequeathed to India and have formed the basis of its approach to its borders for decades.

Since 1962, both India and China have invested huge military resources (e.g. Figure 6.10) in assuring that this desolate region once only crossed by traders and pilgrims is now occupied by thousands of soldiers facing off across a line whose only logic lies in an appeal to a vague colonial description from a series of equally vague maps. Today, taken as a fractured whole, Jammu and Kashmir State represents one of the most militarized spaces in the world—"the

vulnerable neck and head of India," as one political commentator recently put it.[56] This body metaphor is particularly telling considering the frequency with which maps are conflated with bodies.[57]



Figure 6.10. 1:500 scale Aksai Chin model in Ningxia, China. Google Earth.

At the regional level, the communalism that emerged in Ladakh after 1947—and which has grown at a far larger scale across the subcontinent in decades ever since—has become a cornerstone of Ladakhi politics. By 1990, this tension had boiled over into open rioting. Responding to this problem at the "National Convention on the Ladakh Issue in New Delhi" in March of that year, Thupstan Chhewang, the president of the Ladakhi Buddhist Association,

[56] Saba Naqvi, "One Point Five/Two: Jharkhand Has Been Mined, Jammu-Kashmir Is Still a Prospect," *Outlook*, January 12, 2015, 18.

[57] As Joya Chatterji has noted regarding Partition, surgical metaphors are often invoked to describe the territorial changes to the "geobody" of the anthropomorphic nation.

described the region in clear geopolitical terms, writing: "The State of Jammu and Kashmir, the territorial limits of which never formed a natural geopolitical entity in its real sense, still suffers from geopolitical crisis and disorder." Continuing, Chhewang invoked communalism, and the narrative of a fractured "crossroads of High Asia." "In the last fortytwo [sic] years of Independence we, the people of Ladakh, not only have suffered rampant Kashmiri political domination but also strained under [the] severe drive of separatism. Besides, the four major wars waged by both Pakistan and China, completely shattered our indigenous economic and social strength…."[58] Here, Thupstan Chhewang was introducing a potent revision to the post-independence history of the region. The long, slow erosion of Central Asian trade that preceded independence and the attempts by the colonial government to regulate and restrict trans-frontier movement were overlooked in favor of a more cataclysmic, contemporary, and patriotic narrative. Ladakh's isolation was the result of aggressive wars fought by China and Pakistan against India. The British imperial legacies undergirding those conflicts were ignored. The only imperial legacy still invoked by Ladakhi politicians was that of continued subjugation under a foreign conqueror. But that conqueror was not British. It has become, instead, the predominantly Kashmiri Muslim government that replaced the Hindu Dogra dynasty that had ruled over Ladakh, under the British, for a century prior to independence.

"In modern times," Thupstan Chhewang, elaborated, likening Ladakh to India and Kashmir to the British,

> when the whole subcontinent has passed through the process of decolonization to enjoy the fruits of national independence, we, the people of Ladakh and our land still continue to be left under the old concept of colonial administrative structure, which suited the imperial interests and feudal rulers, under the name of the pseudo-State of Jammu and Kashmir. Gandhiji and other Indian national leaders

[58] NMML, Thupstan Chhewang, President, Buddhist Association, "National Convention on the Ladakh Issue," New Delhi, March 18, 1990.

> emancipated the Indian masses from the oppressive alien domination, exploitation, feudal and colonial rule. But we, the people of Ladakh, with a distinct identity of our own have been pushed under an oppressive political domination of Kashmiris, and denied the fruits of freedom and national independence.

Adding to this continued perception of imperial political subjugation, Ladakh also remains a part of a spatial idea of India rooted in a colonial-era complex of ideas and practices. The circulation of its maps of border areas is restricted, if not outright prohibited. Frontier roads have been taken over by the military and are seen as key weapons in the frontier arsenal to combat Chinese road building in Tibet and Xinjiang. And in government and military rhetoric borders remain the "the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations."[59] But taking Curzon's rather strange metaphor seriously for a moment, it is worth asking whether anything can actually remain suspended on a razor. Rather, the razor-like aspect of a frontier or border perhaps rests on its ability to sever and divide, and, in so doing, to isolate space. The illusion of being able to impose a line of control remains, perhaps, one of the strongest weapons available in the political arsenal of the modern state.

[59] Curzon, *Frontiers*. 7.

ARCHIVES

India
Centre for Research on Ladakh (CRL)
Jammu & Kashmir State Archives—Jammu Branch (JKSA-J)
Jammu & Kashmir State Archives—Leh Branch (JKSA-L)
Jammu & Kashmir State Archives—Srinagar Branch (JKSA-S)
Himachal Pradesh State Archives—Shimla Branch (HPSA-S)
Himachal Pradesh University Library (HPU)
Himalayan Club Library, India International Centre Library, Delhi (HCL)
Indian Institute for Advanced Study Library, Shimla (IIAS)
National Archives of India (NAI)
Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi (NMML)

United Kingdom
India Office Records, British Library, London (IOR)
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United States
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Government, Policy, Customs, Manners, and Religion of the Inhabitants ; the Extent, Bounds, and Natural Productions of Each Country ; and the Trade, Manufactures, and Curiosities of the Cities and Towns ; Their Longitude, Latitude, Bearing and Distances in English Miles from Remarkable Places ; as Also, the Sieges They Have Undergone, and the Battles That Have Been Fought near Them, down to This Present Year : Including, an Authentic Account of the Counties, Cities and Market-Towns in England and Wales ; as Also the Villages with Fairs, the Days on Which They Are Kept according to the New Stile ; as Well as the Cattle, Goods and Merchandises That Are Sold Thereat. London: J. Newbery, 1762.

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