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PUSHING SOUTH:
TIBETAN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES
IN THE FAR EASTERN HIMALAYA, CA. 1900-1950

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INTRODUCTION

During the first half of the twentieth century, and probably long beforehand, Tibetan political and economic interests of various kinds were actively being extended southwards across the watershed of the far eastern Himalaya. This study briefly surveys the scope and nature of such activities to the south of the plateau, throughout the highland frontier region extending from Tawang in the west across to Pemakö in the east. In doing so I intend to explore the following thesis: For the period ca. 1900-1950, the Lhasa-based Ganden Phodang state bordered upon the fairly well-defined and carefully maintained northern frontiers of neighbouring states along the Himalaya, including Nepal, British and later independent India, Sikkim and Bhutan. However, the political reality on the ground in the highlands of the far eastern Himalaya was of a predominantly fragmented, stateless region controlled for the most part by a series of small, non-Buddhist, clan-based Tibeto-Burman-speaking communities, the so-called ‘tribes’ of the earlier literature. In contrast to other Tibetan frontier zones, this stateless region thus became perceived and treated by various Tibetan agents as a unique site for expansion, exploitation and adventurism. I aim to demonstrate that their forays to the south were supported by indigenous Tibetan cultural schemes of ethnic superiority as well as armed force.

It is significant that the entire far eastern Himalayan frontier was defined from 1914 onwards by the McMahon Line agreed between the British in India and the Ganden Phodrang. Most studies and commentary about the McMahon Line to date have dealt with the subject in terms of the history of the claims, politics and policies, and diplomatic posturing of the various governments involved. My primary focus in the present study is to offer a different and little known perspective: I investigate what actually happened on the ground along the Line between Tibetan agents and the local peoples they encountered *in situ*. Finally, the far eastern Himalaya is mainly known to Tibetan Studies through research on various Buddhist activities and holy places along the frontier. My intention herein is to focus in the first instance upon Tibetan economic and political activities, as well as cultural attitudes and social practices in the region. These have been much less well appreciated to date, although compared with Tibetan religion they have certainly had a far greater and more long-term impact upon both sides of the frontier zone.

THE FRONTIER AS PERIPHERY OF CIVILIZATION¹

Certain aspects of my subject have already been discussed by Alistair Lamb, although some of his points are not borne out by the materials I will present herein. For instance, in his book *The China-India Border*, Lamb characterized Tibetan interactions with the clan-based highland communities to the south—known generically as ‘Loba’ to Tibetans—as follows,

“The Tibetans, on the whole, tried as did the British to have as little to do with the *Lobas* as possible.”² On the contrary, I will demonstrate herein that Tibetans never hesitated to engage these highland populations when they had particular objectives to pursue. Tibetan interactions with the so-called Loba have thus spanned centuries and taken many forms. What Lamb and other writers have also failed to appreciate is that cultural distinctions articulate with social attitudes and practices. Tibetan classifications of ‘Lobanness’ were produced within their own schemes of ‘civilization’, and these were mapped ethnically and geographically upon their immediate neighbours along the far eastern Himalaya. It is this important cultural context that I will now briefly summarize.

Various Tibetan Buddhist schemes based upon concentric and hierarchical representations of the world space are already well-known, including the projection of political and ritual power upon the landscape in the form of *mandala*, and the use of networks of architectural structures and their subjugatory function.³ All such schemes share the notion that their centres are ideal realms of pure Buddhist civilization, while their peripheries are the boundaries around which civilizing power and its agents no longer hold a monopoly or cease to function altogether. The quality of being of the denizens of such schemes is indexed to ranked concentric zones, with those beings who inhabit the outer, periphery zone thus being viewed as the most benighted. In accord with these old and widespread Tibetan ways of viewing their own domain and what lay upon and beyond its borders, we find the non-Buddhist, pre-literate highland communities of the far eastern Himalaya consistently represented by Tibetans in highly pejorative terms. The generic Tibetan ethnonym for all such groups, *klo pa*, means ‘barbarian’, while both these peoples and their region are described as being ‘beyond the pale’ (*mtha’ ’khob*) and thus requiring ‘suppression’ (*non pa*) and ‘civilizing’ (*’dul ba*).

Furthermore, the physical environment of the warm and wet, thickly vegetated, and often precipitous southern flanks of the eastern Himalaya was a completely unfamiliar ecology in the experience of most high plateau dwellers. Nor were Tibetan life-ways and material culture adapted to it in any way. Thus, Tibetans often viewed this environment with awe and trepidation. They habitually associated it with poisonous snakes and various reptiles, tigers, biting insects, and other wildlife which might threaten human life and comfort, or which was, symbolically at least, negatively associated with certain potentially dangerous deities (e.g. snakes and reptiles with the *klu* deities). Following from this, the ‘Loba’ populations who lived in these places were considered closely associated with this apparently hostile wilderness. This association is in fact very old in Tibet,⁴ just as it has been a cliché in reports by my Tibetan informants about the ‘Loba’ during the past two decades. They invariably mention a few specific attributes of extreme difference which have been widely circulated by hearsay, including Loba consumption of insects, snakes, and frogs as food items, that the Loba live ‘naked’ (*gcer bu, sgren mo*),⁵ and that like animals they lack any moral system or compassion for other living beings and are thus untrustworthy and violent, will kill without compunction, sacrifice and butcher animals, and so forth. Such representations consistently equate the Loba with the wild, natural world, the opposite of the ‘civilized’ and ‘tame’ in Tibetan Buddhist schemes. The parallels between Tibetan notions of ‘Lobanness’ and earlier European portrayals of indigenous populations (‘savages’, ‘nature folk’, etc.) that were encountered in the New World, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region are of course striking. In both cases, and in the context of specific cosmologies, they often served as a basis for discourses and practices of superiority, exploitation, and domination.

TIBETAN SOCIAL PRACTICES AT THE FRONTIER

Tibetan notions of cultural and ethnic superiority towards their southern neighbours frequently informed specific types of activities and social relations throughout the far eastern Himalayan frontier zone. These contrasted markedly with Tibetan treatment of many other neighbouring populations bordering the Tibetan plateau elsewhere. We can give various examples of what amounted to a social *cordon sanitaire* that Tibetans imposed throughout the region.

The passage into Ganden Phodrang territory of neighbouring peoples identified as ‘Loba’ was strictly limited and controlled directly at the frontier itself. Mostly, visitors from the south on trading trips who were identified as ‘Loba’ could not freely travel further than one day’s march north across the frontier, and normally not beyond the first Tibetan frontier settlements they reached. They were specifically excluded from over-nighting in Tibetan homes or villages.⁶

Secondly, Tibetans maintained a strict marriage bar with their southern, non-Buddhist neighbours. Tibetan informants from border villages are always adamant that their communities never intermarried with ‘Loba’. While we do know that a very limited number of such marriages occurred, without exception the Tibetan partners involved were from the very lowest social and economic ranking, most often landless persons, runaways, and criminals, with no other marriage options. Among the non-Tibetan border populations to the south who had regular contacts with Tibet, there was in fact a general openness towards mixed marriages with Tibetans. However, these same populations also maintain oral narratives describing the impossibility of intermarriage between Tibetans and non-Tibetans.⁷

Furthermore, far eastern Himalayan highlanders were commonly traded as slaves (*khol po, nyo mi*) by Tibetans for use as domestic and agricultural labour in Tibetan households and villages. In doing so, Tibetan agents were participating in a wider cultural and economic pattern found in many neighbouring societies throughout the extended eastern Himalayan zone.⁸ At issue here is rather the manner in which Tibetans treated these ‘Loba’ slaves from their frontier region. Eye-witness accounts reveal that they were often treated in very negative ways, sometimes akin to domestic animals, or at best as a class of social outcasts.⁹

As the end of the ‘civilized world’, the southern borderland was also a zone where Tibetans who slipped in some way or other ‘beyond the pale’ of their own society were themselves sent by, or took refuge from, their state and its agents. Traitors and convicted criminals were banished there to a network of penal centres located in Tibetan frontier settlements.¹⁰ Persons such as bonded peasants or ‘human lease’ (*mi bogs*) holders who escaped their estate lords,¹¹ the heavily indebted, law-breakers, and drifters could all find sanctuary and anonymity at the very margins of the state and in its stateless neighbouring zone.¹²

Following the logic of the frontier as a limit of the state and the Buddhist ‘civilization’ it represented, for some Tibetans it was a zone of relative freedom from the constraining forces of the state and its ideology. The frontier provided an opening for new opportunities and spaces in which certain forms of adventurism, exploitation, and expansion could be freely practiced. While the remainder of this study concerns economic and political examples of such activities, it should not be overlooked that Tibetan religious interests in the region offer parallel examples. Proselytization, millenarian movements, the claims of ‘treasure revealers’, and the ‘opening’ of holy places by lamas were all ongoing processes at points along the frontier. The documented activities around Tsari and Pemakö, the two major Tibetan

Buddhist sanctuaries situated along the far eastern Himalayan frontier, testify amply to this.¹³ Meanwhile, it must also be acknowledged that such religious and ritual interventions by Tibetans were generally seen as unwelcome intrusions and actively resisted by local non-Tibetan populations in the region.¹⁴

TIBETAN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

I will now discuss several examples of what I referred to above as Tibetan adventurism, exploitation, and expansion in the far eastern Himalayan frontier zone. My discussion covers Tibetan activities in the territorial zone of clan-based, non-Buddhist highland communities living south of what was to become the McMahon Line, post-1914. This, by definition, excludes the districts of Tawang,¹⁵ Pachakshiri [i.e. modern Mechukha] and Mago,¹⁶ all of which lay south of the Line. According to the wording and implication of the 1914 agreement, these areas all enjoyed some form of exemption from the limitations on activities Tibetans could engage in south of the McMahon Line.¹⁷ The following three case studies are listed according to the names of the upland watersheds of the major river valleys within which they occurred. It was typically these larger trans-Himalayan river valleys south of the McMahon Line that supported significant highland communities, and which also provided the easiest conduits along which Tibetans could push southwards.

i. Upper Subansiri

Dasang Drandul Tsarong (1888-1959), commander-in-chief of the Tibetan army, entrepreneur, and 'favourite' of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, first visited the upper reaches of the Subansiri River (i.e. Chayul Chu in Tibet; Nyer Siko or Sinyik to the south) and its main tributary the Tsari Chu (Les Siko locally), between December 1919 and April 1920. The area of the two rivers into which Tsarong ventured for military and commercial reasons had for centuries defined a very significant territory for both Tibetans and neighbouring non-Tibetans. For one, these rivers encompassed the southern slopes of the famous Tibetan holy mountain of Dakpa Shelri at Tsari. The large-scale, 12-yearly circumambulation of Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims around the mountain known as the Rongkor Chenmo, had the character of a state ritual for the Ganden Phodrang. Pilgrims in this huge procession crossed the McMahon Line below the frontier village of Migyitün in Tsari district and followed the Tsari Chu southwards. They then turned back up the Subansiri westwards, crossing the McMahon Line once again to reach the first Tibetan frontier settlements in Chamé district. In doing so, they traversed non-Tibetan lands during this entire southern leg of the procession. This was the territory of the Mra¹⁸ (Tibetan: Morang Loba) clan, which ran downstream along the Tsari Chu valley and around its junction with the Subansiri at Geling Sinyik, and also of the neighbouring Na (Tibetan: Khalo, Lungtu Lopa) community of Taksing, which extended upstream along the Subansiri heading westwards towards Tibet. Payments in kind were regularly made to both the Mra and Na by the Ganden Phodrang in recognition of the periodic passage of tens of thousands of pilgrims via their territories, and also so that their assistance could be gained in helping the procession proceed smoothly. The Lodzong, a ritualized tribute payment of various Tibetan goods, was made immediately prior to each Rongkor Chenmo. Shares of the Lodzong were given to the Na and Mra, but also to members of other clan-based groups collectively called Tinglo or Tingba by Tibetans. These latter groups lived lower down the Subansiri River and in the upper Kamla River area, and they

regularly threatened to disrupt the pilgrimage unless they received a customary amount of Tibetan goods.¹⁹

A second point of great significance about the valleys of both the upper Subansiri and Tsari Chu is that they provided the only trans-Himalayan trade routes in the wider region which did not require crossing of a high altitude and seasonally snow-covered pass into Tibet. These routes allowed easier access for trade over a longer period of time each year. Accordingly, both the Mra and the Na attempted to maintain tight monopolies over trade passing through their respective valley territories.

While Tibetan relations with the Mra and Na had been cooperative and well-managed since 1945, prior to this they sometimes deteriorated into periods of either low-level or intense conflict. Such conflicts arose at times not only between Mra and Na and their immediate Tibetan neighbours living in the frontier villages, but also directly with Ganden Phodrang officials from outside the region. Relations between Tibetans and Subansiri highlanders had been poor in the run-up to Tsarong's arrival. He had, in fact, been specifically sent to Tsari by the Dalai Lama with orders to provide a defensive military escort for the 1920 Rongkor Chenmo, in case of attacks upon the event. 14 years prior to the visit, the Na population of the upper Subansiri valley around Lung had been decimated in a series of attacks by Chayul Tibetans and Ganden Phodrang troops. This 1906 war was ostensibly the result of a complex local trade dispute provoked by the Tibetans. The remnant Na then scattered to live as itinerant hunters and gatherers. One group of Na refugees became based somewhat lower down the Subansiri valley at Taksing, south of the McMahan Line, around the latter stages of the Rongkor Chenmo route, while a second Na group remained north of the McMahan Line in Tibet itself. Furthermore, in the years (date uncertain) prior to Tsarong's visit, Mra Pusing and his clansmen who were warriors from the Tapuk sub-clan of Mra, had a feud with the Migyitün Tibetans and were executed by them. This set in train a series of retaliatory killings of local Tibetans by Mra in the Tsari Chu over the following decades.

In winter 1919, Tsarong had travelled from Lhasa to Tsari with a force of 125 well-armed troops from the bodyguard battalion. During the preparations for the Rongkor Chenmo, Tsarong departed significantly from the customary practices for protection of the pilgrims.²⁰ Normally, large groups of pilgrims undertook the procession together in columns called *sho*, whose composition was determined by the region of the Tibetan world from which pilgrims hailed. The *sho* set off at fixed intervals, and were each headed by a leader who was assisted by well-armed fellow pilgrims to protect the group from attacks by the Subansiri peoples. A tax of one *tangka* coin was levied from every pilgrim and shared out between the various *sho* leaders who were responsible for security. In 1920, Tsarong and his troops took all of this security tax for themselves, considering that they alone with their modern weapons would be sufficient to protect the entire pilgrimage. Apparently for the same reason, Tsarong then withheld most of the Lodzong payment due to be distributed to the large numbers of Subansiri peoples who had come up that year to receive their regular share of Tibetan goods in return for non-molestation of the pilgrims. During the pilgrimage itself, Tsarong had a 'Loba' thief flogged and then shot dead by his troops, and this triggered a huge retaliatory raid by other Subansiri peoples who were already dissatisfied with the lack of Lodzong payments. Considerable numbers of pilgrims and their attackers are reported as having been killed or wounded in the ensuing fight, and a large group of Tibetan women were taken as prisoners. The debacle ended with the Subansiri peoples all withdrawing far down into the

heavily forested Subansiri gorges, where Tibetan troops could never safely follow them.²¹ However, the scene was set for future conflict involving Tsarong.

When the disastrous Rongkor was completed towards the end of March 1920, Tsarong and his troops stayed behind in Chamé for over a month with an entirely different purpose. Tsarong organized the planting of experimental tea gardens in the somewhat broader and more open Subansiri valley to the south of the McMahon Line. This area had been cleared of forest by Na, who burnt it periodically for swidden cultivation. Terraces were created at a site named Kepembe between the present-day Na settlements of Taksing and Lengbeng, and tea was planted over an area of several acres. Different reports mention that either “one Jagar (Indian)” or two “Indian Babus and their wives” had accompanied Tsarong to supervise the tea growing operations, which apparently lasted for several years before being abandoned.²² Na oral history relates that some Na who remained in Tibet had assisted Tsarong to establish his tea gardens, while those Na living around Taksing itself were resistant and eventually destroyed many of the tea plants by burning them. This may explain a report by the Chayul Dzongpön recorded in 1936 by Frank Ludlow when he passed through the area. The Dzongpön stated that during the late 1920s Tsarong returned to the area and “blew up a lot of Lobas with Lewis guns.²³ After this, he said, there was no further trouble [from the Na]”.²⁴ One month later, Ludlow visited Migyitün in Tsari district, and was also told by local informants that “some few years ago, Tibetan troops tied their Loba prisoners to trees, painted a bull’s eye on their chests and used them as targets in an archery contest.”²⁵ Such accounts of excessive violence against Subansiri peoples by Tsarong and his men concur with other reports of their conduct elsewhere in Tibet during the 1920s.²⁶

ii. Upper Siyom

The two main highland tributaries of the Siyom River, the westerly Yargyap Chu and the easterly Yomgong River, flow through the Pachakshiri (west) and Monigong (east) valleys respectively. Prior to 1952, Pachakshiri was a private Tibetan estate whose residents paid taxes to the Lhalu family via its agent the Gasha Depa, who was stationed at Molo. The local Tibetan Buddhist population, the Pachakshiriwa [i.e. modern Memba], were linked socially, culturally, and commercially to Tibet by way of the Lho La pass. Monigong was inhabited by the non-Buddhist and only slightly Tibetanized Bokar people who maintained trade relations with the Neyü Tibetans to the north across the Dom La (or Neyü La) pass. Monigong was not Tibetan territory and the Bokar were not Tibetan subjects. However, up until the mid-1950s, for the sake of maintaining trade relations and a positive alliance, the Bokar paid a small, annual tax to a minor local official to the north, the Nekha of Neyü, who was in his turn answerable to the Tsela Dzongpön.²⁷ Neither Pachakshiri nor Monigong had any resident Tibetan officials prior to their incorporation into the Indian state during the 1950s. The Ramo people, who are closely related to the Bokar, inhabited the southern parts of both river valleys. They were similarly non-Buddhist and non-Tibetanized, and completely independent. Prior to the 1950s, Ramo had a lower level of contact with Tibet than their Bokar neighbours. They paid no taxes to Tibetans and their northward trade was mainly mediated via the Bokar and the Pachakshiriwa. The Pailibo people who lived south of the Ramo, and who were almost identical to them, maintained no direct connections with Tibet.

The Bokar and Ramo were independent peoples with their own territories, however small groups from both populations lived either seasonally or permanently to the north in Tibetan territory.²⁸ Such emigration was mainly due to trade, or because they worked for Tibetans as labourers (not slaves), or as a result of taking refuge from disputes in their home areas.

Certain Bokar and Ramo narratives that describe earlier times, relate failed attempts by various Tibetan officials and lamas to impose Tibetan administration in their areas and to convert them to Buddhism. However, most of these sources are difficult or impossible to assess as historical data. The most credible incident concerns the Shoka Depa's attempt to open up new areas for taxation in Ramo and Pailibo territory during the late 1920s.²⁹

Shoka is a small village on the Tsangpo River situated between Lilung and Tsela Dzong. It was a place of no importance, and the Shoka Depa at the time, one Tamdin, would have been a very minor local official. The accounts have it that the Shoka Depa, at the instigation of the Gasha Depa, took a small escort of armed men, crossed the Lho La pass into Pachakshiri, and collected additional Pachakshiri men as guides, porters and bodyguards for an expedition down the Yargyap Chu. The basis of the expedition was a Tibetan document that apparently listed local place names in the territory of the Pangdu (or Padu) people. They had long ago lived in the same area that was colonized by the Ramo south of Pachakshiri and further downstream by the Pailibo around Tato. The Tibetan claim was ostensibly that Pangdu people had once agreed to pay taxes to the Ganden Phodrang. Now, much later, the Shoka Depa was trying to activate this claim. The Tibetan party moved slowly downstream through the Ramo territory, evaluating everything they saw, and asking via their Pachakshiri interpreters about land, population, and so on. The Ramo were secretly apprehensive about their intent. When Tamdin and his party reached Tato, near the junction of the rivers Yargyap and Yomgong, at a flat area up on the hillside called Tamenyenko ('Madder Plain'³⁰), they met with and were entertained by leading Pailibo, and offered food and local millet beer. The Ramo had already warned the Pailibo that the Tibetans might be trying to exercise some power over them. While Tamdin and his men had their guard down during the hospitality, Pailibo men overpowered the Tibetan escort. Tamdin was then killed on the spot by the Pailibo warrior Kotin Lipu. Disarmed and stripped of their belongings, the Tibetan bodyguards and their Pachakshiri porters and guides were sent back upstream the way they had come. In the early 1930s, following the reporting of the death of the Shoka Depa back in Tibet, a troop of Tibetan soldiers were dispatched from Molo, via Pachakshiri valley, to try and punish the Pailibo. As soon as they had crossed the pass back into Tibet, the Pailibo mounted a revenge attack upon the settlements of the Tibetans' allies, the Pachakshiriwa.³¹

This raid was the last known attempt by Tibetans to extend their activities in the upper Siyom beyond customary annual taxation of Pachakshiri and Monigong, which in both cases ended during the 1950s with the establishment of Indian administration. Since the Gasha Depa and Neyü Nekha were then both suddenly deprived of tax revenues, their tactic was to impose new toll payments on Pachakshiriwa and Bokar traders who entered Tibet annually in order to barter.³² We should note that, while Tsarong's activities in upper Subansiri were within 5 km of the McMahon Line (although at a much greater distance from Tibetan settlements), Tato, the southernmost point reached by the Shoka Depa, is some 45 km below the Line as the crow flies.

iii. Upper Siang

The Siang or Dihang River forms the main direct flow of the Tsangpo River from Tibet through the Himalayas and into the Brahmaputra River in Assam. Its upper valley along the McMahon Line lies at the southern border of the ill-defined region Tibetans identify as Pemakö. As a result of migrations and shifts in regional power prior to, and during, the early twentieth century, Pemakö and the upper Siang valley became an ethnically and politically complex frontier zone. There were small populations of so-called 'Memba' and 'Khamba',

whose pilgrim-cum-refugee ancestors began migrating into the region from Bhutan, Monyul, and eastern Tibet during the period around the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth century. There were Tibetan-speakers in Pemaḳō who migrated into the area from the neighbouring districts of Chimdro, Powo and Kongpo. Additionally, there were also various peoples whom the Tibetans referred to as ‘Loba’, mostly from northeast Adi groups, including Asing and Tangam (Tibetan: Lokarpo), Shimong (Tibetan: Lonakpo) and Minyong, as well as some Idu (Tibetan: Tana) from the upper Dibang valley system to the east. Some of these populations intermarried with or culturally influenced one other to various degrees.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, Tibetan-speaking rulers of the independent kingdom of Powo were able to extract certain minor taxes from ‘Memba’ and ‘Loba’ settlements along the Siang valley and neighbouring Yang Sang Chu, below the point at which the McMahon Line became drawn. It is important not to overemphasize the extent of Powo influence in the area at the time. During his 1913 visit, F.M. Bailey described the frontier zone between Powo influenced areas and non-Tibetan populations to the south as “undefined and...the frontier villages remained in a perpetual state of war.”³³ During the late 1920s, the Powo kingdom collapsed following military action against it by the Ganden Phodrang, and the death of the last Powo ruler, the Kanam Depa.³⁴ Events connected to both the death of the Kanam Depa³⁵ and the assumption of control over Pemaḳō by a new set of Tibetan agents in the wake of Powo defeat, began to significantly disrupt the region. Importantly, the new Tibetan Dzungpōns who began administering Pemaḳō during the 1930s were demanding increasingly higher levels of taxes in kind and corvée labour from the Pemaḳō Memba and their non-Tibetan neighbours. During 1937-8, parties of these oppressed Membas began appearing in Sadiya as refugees, as well as reports to British Political Officers stationed there of Tibetan tax collecting far down the Siang to Riga and Karko, about 60-70 km due south of the McMahon Line.³⁶ Additionally, a Tibetan document³⁷ dated 1931 was obtained by the British and confirmed oral reports that the Shimong and Karko areas had obtained assistance from Pemaḳō forces to defend themselves against other Adi groups in the long-running ‘Pangi War’ (1926-36), a conflict which had drawn in many Adi communities along the Siang. The price for this war assistance was possibly the basis for the Tibetan-led collection tours, with armed Pemaḳō Memba and Khamba escorts, coming down as far as Karko virtually every winter season.

These developments began to highly alarm the Government of Assam. British administrators now realized that leaving the upper Siang region unvisited and unadministered since 1913 had allowed Tibetan agents to operate unopposed and in their own style far to the south of the McMahon Line. As a response, annual winter tours from Sadiya by Political Officers and accompanying troops were made to the region from 1938 onwards. These tours were meant to inform local communities that they were under British rule and protection, and thus were not obliged to offer any taxes, corvée labour services or food and lodging to Tibetan or Memba collectors.³⁸ The tours also served to finally provide fine-grained intelligence about developments on the ground to higher levels of government and policy makers. By May 1940, J.P. Mills, then Secretary to the Governor of Assam, was reporting to the Secretary of the Government of India, External Affairs Department, about the exact identities and activities of Tibetan collectors in upper Siang. They discovered that, technically at least, Pemaḳō itself was under the control of a Tibetan official stationed at Chimdro, and he in turn was subordinate to Ganden Phodrang authorities at Chamdo. However,

[T]o the south of Pemako is the Memba country... This area is under the control of the Tsera [i.e. Sera] monastery near Lhasa. A monk, by name Lobsang Tenzing, comes down each cold weather and makes his headquarters in Mito [i.e. Me tog] Dzong... Every other year he goes down to the Abor country as far as Karko and Shimong with an armed escort, nominally to trade. The years he does not himself go down he sends armed Membas [under his agent Pema Jasa³⁹]... In March 1939 a Memba, by name Pema Jasa, came down the Siang as far as the Abor village of Bomdo and levied as tribute half of everything the people had in the way of cattle, other livestock, grain and even fish caught, from the 13 Memba villages from Yortong to Kopu on either side of the McMahon Line. If anyone refused to pay his children were taken away as slaves... Pema Jasa sent an envoy to Karko to find out whether, in view of the political Officer's visit in March 1939, the people of Karko were going to refuse to pay their usual tribute. They said the envoy told them that if they did so they would bring down an armed force of several hundred men. Karko in fear paid a mithun on the spot and signified that they would pay tribute as usual.⁴⁰

But the worst local effects of such Tibetan tax collection parties, which often numbered into the hundreds of men, were that they travelled with no food supplies of their own and demanded all their meals from local villagers, sometimes eating away the entire surplus food in a community which later led to seasonal starvation. In order to obtain compliance, they were instructed by Tibetan officials to threaten Siang communities with armed force, for which they carried guns and swords. They also threatened to close off all access to the north for salt trading by Siang peoples, since Tibet was the only source of salt for these and many surrounding highland regions.⁴¹

British officials were clearly incensed by such reports. Mills himself later publicly remarked that the Tibetans "...send down what they are pleased to call 'tax collectors,' who are really just bandits... it was our business to stop these marauders."⁴² Such indignation was not just due to the reports of the great persecutions which local people endured, people whom the British claimed to be their 'subjects'; it was fuelled as well by frustration at their own administrative impotency at the time. Clearly the political value and credibility of expensive annual tours to upper Siang was almost nil, for whenever they departed downstream Tibetan collectors would simply return and continue to act with impunity. From Political Officers and also administrators who had themselves formerly held field positions, there were suggestions and then pressure on the policy-makers for more vigorous measures. These included a more assertive style of dealing directly with Tibetan collectors in upper Siang, and the establishment of permanent posts manned by units of the Assam Rifles, all of which began to be implemented on the ground from 1943 onwards when the Government of India placed J.P. Mills in charge of an earnest, if much belated, British push to try and secure their authority right up to, and along the McMahon Line.⁴³

The upper Siang experience had also revealed to British policy-makers during the late 1930s and early 1940s the stark reality of local Tibetan attitudes (or lack of them) and practices in relation to the McMahon Line itself, and the uses Tibetan agents made of the 'administrative vacuum'⁴⁴ which had been allowed to develop. Again, J.P. Mill's report to government in May 1940 on upper Siang sums up exactly the message about this that the policy-makers in Shillong, Simla and London were having to digest at the time:

[T]he Tibetan Government have no clear idea as to the position of the McMahon Line and the International Frontier and leave matters concerning the collection of revenues and tribute to a great extent in the hands of local officials. The local tribes and local officials are probably hardly aware that an international boundary exists at all and regard Tibetan or British territory as extending as far as their respective power extends.⁴⁵

One cultural point not to be overlooked here is the nature of the local Tibetan administrative system in such frontier zones and the type of conduct it could encourage among Tibetan agents stationed there. Local representatives of the Ganden Phodrang, or of private and monastic estates, were normally given a three-year term of service in an outlying Dzong, or administrative post. They had a free hand to run affairs locally, provided they regularly delivered the customary tax take to the appointed offices of the Ganden Phodrang, their monastery or estate lord. Yet, obtaining such administrative positions in the first place often required substantial investment in terms of political ‘presents’, expensive participation in large public rituals and ceremonies staged by the state in Lhasa, and so on. As Hugh Richardson once observed of such officials, “...the taxes he collects are the recoupment of his expenditure on securing his post.”⁴⁶ Moreover, most officials intended to make a profit from their term of service in what were often considered remote ‘hardship posts’. For such reasons, incoming officials often increased taxes well in excess of the established rates, and new forms of extraction for private profit were implemented. In the eastern Himalayan borderlands, an added attraction for profiteering by Tibetan officials was the range and amount of rare and often highly valuable products that could be obtained through taxation or forced extraction. These included musk pods, bear’s gall, deer’s antlers and other *material medica*, wild animal pelts (frequently mentioned as part of Tibetan tax collections in upper Siang), as well as honey, chillies, and local cotton cloth, to name but a few.

The autonomy of local Tibetan administrators and private collectors stationed on the frontier, and their need for returns and desire for the potentially huge profits to be made during their postings, was the primary reason for the tenaciousness of their collection tours. These persisted throughout the 1940s and on into the 1950s, in spite of increasing British—and later independent Indian—resistance on the ground towards them. In February 1944, during the winter of 1944-5, and again in April 1945, Sera tax collectors dispatched by the Pemakö Depas Chambala and Pema Tenzin were thwarted from completing their tax take, and even had part of it confiscated by British Political Officers.⁴⁷ The Tibetan collectors complained to their superiors at Sera monastery in Lhasa, who in turn sent a strongly worded complaint letter to Surkhang Dzasa, Wangchug Tseten (1891?-1952), the Tibetan Foreign Minister at the time. Surkhang Dzasa duly passed this on to Arthur Hopkinson, the British representative in Lhasa, in November 1945.⁴⁸ However, in line with the prevailing operational attitude on such matters, the Sera complaint was studiously ignored.⁴⁹

There was another type of local Tibetan response. The Pemakö tax collectors set out with even larger parties into the upper Siang to try and more assertively achieve their aims. During February 1946, the new Pemakö Depa, Tashi Dondup, went down the Siang valley with three hundred heavily armed men to collect taxes from all the villages on both the right and left banks of the river, a total of 18 Memba, Khamba, Tangam, Shimong, Bomdo and Karko settlements comprising nearly 2,000 households, and representing an enormous potential tax take. They were however turned back, with considerable difficulty, by a Political Officer and his armed party.⁵⁰ During February 1947, two Tibetan officials accompanied by as many as 1,000 armed men again proceeded down the upper Siang in order to attempt their usual tax and provisions collections as far south as the Karko area. They dispatched messages ahead of them threatening reprisals against any village not cooperating. Assam government officials now telegraphed Delhi urgently, emphasizing that “villagers have appealed to Assistant Political Officer that if Deba [the Tibetan official] reaches them starvation this year inevitable.”⁵¹ There were three platoons of Assam Rifles stationed in the upper Siang at the time, and Delhi strongly recommended to the Government of Assam that, in addition to the

use of minimum force as a last resort, the Tibetans might also be repelled by an “air demonstration not (repeat not) involving offensive action over [the Tibetan] party at some effective point.”⁵² Once again, in 1947, the Tibetan collectors were thwarted,⁵³ although they returned in the years immediately following Indian independence when there was an administrative gap between the withdrawal of Government of Assam staff and installation of new Indian personnel.

CONCLUSIONS

From among various other possible examples we might have examined here, the three cases studies presented above reveal several telling points about Tibetan activities along the frontier zone of the far eastern Himalaya during the first half of the twentieth century.

Tibetan agents operating in this particular frontier zone sought to further their goals without hesitation in the use of threats, armed intimidation and violence. They also seemed to have had little or no empathy concerning the hardship and disruption their activities caused (or would potentially cause) for the non-Buddhist and non-Tibetanized highland populations with whom they interacted to the south. This contrasted markedly with the types of relations Tibetans practiced towards neighbours along many other parts of their extensive frontier zones during the same period. Two main factors can explain this difference. The first is that Tibetans acted according to attitudes of strong ethnic and cultural superiority derived from their consistently negative classifications of ‘Loba’ populations. Secondly, given the political condition of statelessness on the ground throughout the highlands of the far eastern Himalayas, Tibetan agents clearly considered that with sufficient forces of men and enough fire-power, they could act with impunity.

Alistair Lamb once asked the important question, “How did the Tibetans see the McMahon Line agreement?” The answer he gave was clear since in it he explicitly restricts the meaning of ‘the Tibetans’ in his question to be the ‘Lhasa Government’ and ‘Tibetan administration’.⁵⁴ In this brief survey, I have demonstrated that the ‘Tibetan’ agents I have cited cannot be simply equated with the Ganden Phodrang state, regardless of whether or not they were serving officers of that state. Pre-modern Tibetan administrative systems, whether of the Ganden Phodrang, or those of major monastic institutions or aristocratic houses, permitted, of necessity, considerable latitude to their representatives and operatives *in situ*. In practice, the geographical McMahon Line appears to have been completely beside the point for all of those Tibetans operating freely along the frontier zone.

I have referred to both economic and political activities in my title and discussion. In part, this is because in the exercise of Tibetan administration along the frontier zone under study, one cannot simply separate taxation—which is a political activity as much as an economic one—from individual economic interests and gains. Beyond this, my point has been to demonstrate that the motivations behind Tibetan ventures in the far eastern Himalaya were very directly concerned with exploitation and profit, rather than just the religious inspirations and the political-cum-diplomatic goals we find emphasized in the existing literature about this region.

GLOSSARY OF TIBETAN NAMES AND THEIR PROPER SPELLINGS

Chambala	byams pa lags
Chamdo	chab mdo
Chayul	bya yul
Chayul Chu	bya yul chu
Chimdro	spyan 'brug
Dakpa Shelri	dag pa shel ri
Dasang Drandul Tsarong	zla bzang dgra 'dul tsha rong
Dirang Dzong	rdi rang rdzong
Dom La	dung la
Drepung	'bras spungs
Dzayul	rdza yul
Dzong	rdzong
Dzongpön	rdzong dpon
Ganden Phodang	dga' ldan pho brang
Gasha Depa	sgar chags sde pa
Genbo	rgan po
Gyantse	rgyal rtse
Jamyang	'jam dbyangs
Kanam Depa	ka gnam sde pa
Kashag	bka' shag
Khalo	kha klo
Khamba	khams pa
Kongpo	kong po
Lhalu	lha klu
Lho La	lho la
Loba	klo pa
Lodzong	klo rdzong
Lokarpo	klo dkar po
Lonakpo	klo nag po
Loro	lo ro
Lungtu Lopa	klung tu klo pa
Mago	rma sgo (?)
Mechukha	sman chu kha
Memba	mon pa
Migyitün	mi khyim bdun
Monigong	ma ni sgang
Monyul	mon yul
Morang Loba	smad rong klo pa
Namgyal Rinchen	rnam rgyal rin chen
Nekha	gnas kha
Neyü	gnas yul
Neyü La	gnas yul la
Neyü Phu Chu	gnas yul phu chu
Pachakshiri	sbas chags shing ri
Pachakshiriwa	sbas chags shing ri ba
Pema Tenzin	pad ma bstan 'dzin
Pemakö	pad ma bkod
Pemakö depa	pad ma bkod sde pa
Powo	spo bo

Rampase	ram pa sras
Raprang	rab 'phrang
Rongkor Chenmo	rong skor chen mo
Samdrup Phodrang	bsam grub pho brang
Sangna Chöling	gsang sngags chos gling
Sera	se ra
Shoka	sho dga'
Shoka Depa	sho dga' sde pa
Surkhang Dzasa	zur khang dza sag
Taksing	stag shing
Tamdin	rta mgrin
Tashi Dondup	bkra shis don grub
Tawang	rta dbang
Tingba	gting ba
Tinglo	gting klo
Trönsib	sgron srib
Tsangpo	gtsang po
Tsari	tsa ri
Tsari Chu	tsa ri chu
Tsela Dzong	rtse bla rdzong
Tsela Dzongpön	rtse lha rdzong dpon
Tsona Dzong	mtsho sna rdzong
Wangchen Dundul	dbang chen bdud 'dul
Wangchug Tseten	dbang phyug tshe brtan
Yang Sang Chu	yang gsang chu
Yargyap Chu	yar rgyab chu

NOTES

- 1 Much of my data and commentary for this section and the next is based upon extensive oral history interviews (1988-2008) with former residents of the southern Tibetan frontier districts of Loro, Chamé, Tsari, Neyü and Kongpo who now live in exile, and interviews (2002-08) conducted with current residents of border zones in northern Arunachal Pradesh, especially Upper Subansiri, Mechukha, Tali, Monigong and Upper Dibang regions. Since 2006, my project *Between Tibetanization and Tribalization: Towards a New Anthropology of Tibeto-Burman-Speaking Highlanders in Arunachal Pradesh* has been funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Bonn.
- 2 Lamb 1964:127.
- 3 See, for examples, Aris 1979:chapt.1, Huber 1999, and relevant articles in Macdonald 1997.
- 4 The mid-sixteenth century *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* states of the time before the introduction of Buddhism, that "Tibet was filled with those who dwelt like wild animals in the forest and who behaved like Klo and Mon" (*nags na ri dwags lta bur gnas pa yi // klo dang mon ltar spyod pas bod yul gang //*); see Tsering Gyalbo, Hazod and Sørensen 2000:55, n. 54.
- 5 During the 1870s, Nem Singh reported that the Tibetans of Kongpo referred to the non-Tibetan regions to their south literally as 'Gimuchen', 'nakedness' (*sgren mo can*); Nem Singh and Harman 1915:210-11.
- 6 On Tsari in the 1940s-50s, see Huber 1999:211-12. On Ramo traders visiting eastern Kongpo in the 1950s, see Dhasmana 1979:169. Bailey 1914:18, 20 describes the situation in various districts along the frontier from Chayul to Kongpo during the early twentieth century, and the Aka-Monpa divide above Dirang (p.77).
- 7 For a Ramo example, see Dhasmana 1979:28. In Monigong during 2002, I recorded a narrative about a Bokar girl Lomum and a Tibetan girl Nyamum, two brides intended for mixed, arranged marriages who turn to stone when they meet atop the Dom La pass between Monigong and Tibet while en route to the homes of their respective future husbands; see also Haldipur 1957:33. In Limeking during 2005, I recorded a Mra narrative about the warrior Mra Pusing who falls in love with a Tibetan noblewoman, 'Cissera Taji', due to which the Tsari Tibetans kill Pusing before any marriage/elopement can take place.

- 8 See Huber 1999:217, 262, n. 33-36; Lazcano 1999.
- 9 Two persons from upper Subansiri kept as slaves at Sangna Chöling in Chayul district during the 1950s were forced to live in animal stalls and eat the same food as pigs. They only escaped this fate when freed by Chinese occupation forces in 1958-59 (interviews in Limeking Circle, Arunachal Pradesh, 2004-05). My informant S.M. Krishnatry, Indian commander at the Gyantse Trade Agency until 1953, observed such slaves in several Tibetan households in Gyantse where they were euphemistically called ‘servants’ (*g.yog po*), but were “obviously the most despised persons in the community, and made to live in small huts behind the houses” (interview in New Delhi, 2007).
- 10 The frontier village of Trönsib [Trön of the maps] near Chayul was a well-known penal centre where Tibetans charged with treason and serious criminal offences were sent; Ward 1936:388; Ward p.2r. June 24-p.2v. 25 June; Peng Wenbin 2002:68, n. 214; cf. Petech 1950:246. Further penal centres were located at Dirang Dzong in Monyul (see Mills 1950:157), and at Rima in Dzayul.
- 11 On *mi bogs* flight from Tibetan estates and lords, see Goldstein 1971 and 1989a, and Childs; In Press.
- 12 For example, of the border village of Raprang [= Douyu on Chinese maps] in Chamé, it is reported: “Douyu is a place to run away to, dodge creditors, flee from famine and lead a vagrant life. There are no families who lived for generations in this place...the present Tibetan residents escaped here from Gongbu [Kong po], Tabu [Dwags po], Rikeze [gZhi ka rtse], Zedang [rTse thang], Lhasa, and so on.” (Tsering Pema, a 67 year old Tibetan from Douyu, interviewed in 1977); Li Jian Shang, vol.1, 1987:188. On migrants into border settlements at Tsari, see Huber 1999:203, 261, n. 12.
- 13 See Huber 1999 and 1997, Sardar-Afkhami 1996, Ehrhard 1999a and 1999b.
- 14 See the references in note 13 above. Na oral history relates the killing of a man taken to be a Tibetan lama who went into retreat in a cave near Taksing during the 1930s; Shukla 1965:30; Chabé Chadar, interview, Darporijo 2004. The Bokar have a similar report of a Tibetan lama occupying a local cave near Monigong for meditation, who was killed by the people of Karo village to the south; Tabin Pujen, interview, Monigong 2002.
- 15 Tawang was both an administrative extension of Tsona Dzong and religious appendage of Drepung monastery before 1914, and continued *de facto* to be so until the 1950s due to the slow pace of the extension of British and then Indian control over the Monyul Corridor region; see Richardson 1945:62-4, 110-11 and Reid 1942:286-9, 294-300 on its status until the 1940s.
- 16 Pachakshiri at the headwaters of the Siyom River was a private estate held by the Lhalu family; see Bailey 1913:18, 60; Shing sdong 1988. The Mago pastoral estate east of Tawang was held by the house of Samdrup Phodrang; see Richardson 1945:112.
- 17 The ‘Exchange of Notes’ document of March 1914 appended to the McMahon Line agreement explicitly protected continued Tibetan rights over private estates south of the Line, such as Pachakshiri and Mago; see Richardson 1984 [1962]:282. The case of monastic revenues for Tawang district, which might have been considered as a religious estate of its parent monastery of Drepung, was therefore ambiguous.
- 18 On the Mra, see Huber; In Press.
- 19 On the Tsari Rongkor Chenmo and Lodzong rites, see Huber 1997 and 1999.
- 20 Normally, the Lhasa official appointed to oversee the Rongkor Chenmo organized security. In 1920 this was Rampase, Namgyal Rinchen (b. 1906) (Bell 1920:6; Petech 1973:158; *Who’s Who in Tibet* 1949:98), who was then a *zhol gnyer* and thus out-ranked by Tsarong.
- 21 The account of Rongkor Chenmo here is taken mainly from eye-witness reports by three Sikkimese pilgrims who attended the 1920 event; see Bell 1920. Tsarong’s presence and role at the 1920 Rongkor Chenmo are confirmed by Kennedy 1921, and Tsarong 2000:54-6. Tsarong’s personal interest in the area is confirmed by his possession (and likely commission) of the so-called ‘Tsari map’; see Huber 1992:9.
- 22 See Sailo 1957:55, who observed the site and collected eye-witness accounts in Feb. 1957. See also Shukla 1965:30.
- 23 Lewis guns for the Tibetan Army were first imported into Tibet from 1922 onwards; see Richardson 1945:29.
- 24 Ludlow 1936:62-3, entry of 22 April 1936. Ludlow was a Tibetan speaker himself and also travelled in 1936 with a competent interpreter.
- 25 Ludlow 1936:102, marginal note, entry of 27 May 1936.
- 26 For examples, see Goldstein 1989:123-4, n. 68 on summary amputations ordered by Tsarong, and Tsarong 2000:69 on the assassination of an Indian military instructor.
- 27 See Bailey 1914:18, 58-9 for the early twentieth century. Bokar collectors called Genbo gathered taxes locally and delivered them each November over the Dom La pass to the Neyü Nekha until 1955, when the Government of India stopped the practice. The Genbo Kojen (d.1983), father of my informant Tabin Pujen

- (interview, Monigong 2002) and a fluent Tibetan speaker (like many Bokar men of his generation), collected taxes for the last two Neyü Nekhas, Jamyang and Bulu. His collecting area of Sahaji (or Sirji) comprised all families within 13 settlements from Monigong up to the Tibetan border, from which an annual tax per household of half a *markey* measure (ca. 2kg) of butter, 1 wild animal hide, 1 *bo* measure (ca. 12-15 kg, Goldstein 1971a:8, n.10) of dried red chilli, and 1 *charpo* measure (ca. 10 kg) of dried madder vine was taken. Indian writers on frontier populations south of the McMahon Line in Arunachal Pradesh are usually silent on local taxation paid north to Tibet. Thus, the Bokar were only involved in ‘trade’ and ‘barter’ with Tibet according to Banerjee 1999:128-30 and Datta Choudhury 1995:64.
- 28 By the mid-1950s, there were 15 small Bokar hamlets in the Neyü Phu Chu across the Dom La pass; Haldipur 1957: ‘Political’ annex following p.52. These people are the ‘Lopas’ often depicted in recent Chinese publications about Tibet; see Cai Xiansheng 1981:142-7.
 - 29 I base my account on two narratives I recorded in 2002: one in Monigong (informant Tabin Pujen, ca. 65 years) and one in Mechukha (informant Cheda Goba, 80 years old). Dhasmana 1979:28-9 recorded a more problematic version: His portrayal of a local feud involving a series of brothers conforms exactly to the common myths of origin and social division found throughout the northern border region; the suggestion that a single Ramo refugee (‘Goni’ in the narrative) could instrumentalize a local Tibetan official to mobilize troops on his behalf is not credible. Finally, he estimates 1870 as a possible dating for the events. This is impossible. My informant Tabin Pujen stated his grandfather and father were both alive at the time, and Cheda Goba stated the events occurred not long after he was born. At Tato on 28 November 1956, the Political Officer R.N. Haldipur actually met the elderly Pailibo warrior Kotin Lipu—famous in the area (and the narratives) for killing the Shoka Depa, Tamdin; Haldipur 1957:17.
 - 30 Madder (*Rubia cordifolia*) is a vine used to obtain a deep red dye, and was a major trade item sent from areas south of the McMahon Line into Tibet for the dying of monks robes.
 - 31 Lambert 1946.
 - 32 Tibetan tax collectors were stopped from making extractions in Pachakshiri, and expelled, when Assam Rifles were first stationed there during January 1952; Rustomji 1952:1, 3. The Neyü Nekha, one ‘Ada Dewachu’, could collect no taxes after 1955; Haldipur 1957: ‘Political’ annex following p.52.
 - 33 Bailey 1914:2-3; Dundas 1913:37-8. Bailey’s caution and strong scepticism about Powa claims at the time to taxation and control of what were Ashing, Shimong and Karko areas well downstream on the Siang must be noted; see Bailey 1914:3, top paragraph on page.
 - 34 The Kanam Depa, Wangchen Dundul, crossed the McMahon Line to take refuge with the British in Sadiya for two and a half years before his death from illness in the Abor Hills after escaping from confinement. Lazcano 2005:59, and n. 81, does not refer to British documents on this subject; see Reid 1942:257-8 for extracts of these.
 - 35 During 1931-2, Tibetan and Pemakö Memba forces fought in a series of conflicts involving Shimong, Komkar and Karko villages, which were also related to the death of the Kanam Depa; Reid 1942:258-9.
 - 36 See Godfrey 1938; and the report by W.H. Calvert of 1937 in Reid 1942:260.
 - 37 Copies of a translation of the document (Letter No. 7(6)-p/38, from Basil Gould to Assistant Secretary of the Government of India, External Affairs Department, 27.6.1939) plus official analysis of it (Letter No. 2401-G.S., from the Secretary to the Governor of Assam to the Secretary of the Government of India, External Affairs Department, 7.8.1939) are to be found in file L/P&S/12/4213, India Office Collection, The British Library.
 - 38 Reid 1942:260-64.
 - 39 The same Pema Jasa was recorded as collecting taxes for the Tibetans in the area already in 1936, and still in 1945; James 1945:14.
 - 40 Letter No. 2237-G.S., Shillong, 24.5.1940; see ‘Proceedings’ section in Office to the Advisor of the Governor of Assam. 1944:1-2. Williams 1944:12-17 provides a detailed account of the Sera officials’ administrative organization of Pemakö during the early 1940s, and the identities of the office holders at the time.
 - 41 James 1945:14-15; Godfrey 1946a; Hrange 1999:31, who also cites the shooting of local livestock and confiscation of personal ornaments by Tibetan tax collectors in upper Siang.
 - 42 Mills 1950:156.
 - 43 Mills 1950.
 - 44 This was the expression, often accusatory in tone, that came to be used in later Indian documents; see, for example, Ministry of External Affairs 1956:1, 4.
 - 45 Letter No. 2237-G.S., Shillong, 24.5.1940; see ‘Proceedings’ section in Office to the Advisor of the Governor of Assam. 1944:1.

- 46 Richardson 1946:1.
 47 Williams 1944:12-17; James 1945:15; Godfrey 1946:1-3.
 48 Hopkinson 1945: see Enclosure 2, Note (interview with Surkhang Dzasa). In his report to government after his stay in Lhasa, Hopkinson 1948 described this document as an “outstandingly truculent letter denouncing our actions in the Assam tribal area (McMahon Area)”, which also “imputed breach of treaty and the like” and “indicated an unfriendly Tibetan attitude”.
 49 See Richardson 1946:2, who advised, “It is better that the Tibetans should recognise our strength in the McMahon areas by being driven to protest to us that we should admit their influence in those areas by protesting to them. I think therefore that so far as possible we should avoid formal reference to Tibetan actions in the Tribal area, and should ask that the local officers may continue their patient but firm and unheated treatment of intruding Tibetan officials.” This stance was not just diplomatically astute, it was based upon the repeated experience of British representatives at Lhasa in futile discussions with the Kashag concerning the McMahon Line, and also the recent Tibetan reaction against the 1938 Lightfoot expedition to Tawang, on which see Goldstein 1989:412-19, and Reid 1942:295-300.
 50 Godfrey 1946a.
 51 Telegraphs 1947: from Shillong to New Delhi, 23.2.1947.
 52 Telegraphs 1947: from New Delhi to Shillong, 10.1.1947.
 53 Goldstein 1989:419, n. 27.
 54 Lamb 1964:156-7.

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