Chapter VII

THE MAKING OF THE NORTHERN BOUNDARIES OF BRITISH INDIA
While the British Government was active in Kashmir, Pamir and Sinkiang, it was equally alive of the Russian threat to Kashmir and in turn to their possessions in India. Out of the fear of Russia, they tried to secure a strategically sound boundary line of Kashmir state. The state of Jammu and Kashmir including Ladakh and the dependency of Hunza was having the control over a wide range of territories. In the north-west corner of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the Mir of Hunza had the boundaries of his possessions including Tagdumbas, Khunjerab and Raskam as follows:

"The Northern watershed of the Tagdumbash Pamir from the Wakhjurui Pass through the Bayik peak to Tlijilga, about a mile above Dafdar, thence across the river to the Zankan nullah, thence through Mazad and over the range to Urok, a point on the Yarkand River between Sibjaida and Itakturuk. Thence it runs along the northern watershed of the Raskam Valley to the junction of the Bazar Dara river and the Yarkand river. From thence southwards over the mountains to the Mustagh river leaving Aghil Dewan and Aghil pass within Hunza limits." (1)

This boundary of Hunza was very carefully ascertained by 
McMahon, and he was of opinion that, "It appears to be well known 
to all the Kanjuts, and Hunza Wazir and others tell me they could 
easily at once point it out on the ground". (2) Ladakh under Tshedpal-mi-gyur-don-grub Namgyal (1790-1835) was having his control 
over, "the people who dwelt between the Zoji Pass, Landar, Shedula 
and Polong Darna. ..." (3) After the Dogra conquest and the creation 
of Jammu and Kashmir state, the Maharaja of Kashmir was having a 
guard house at Shahidulla. (4) The boundaries of Ladakh towards 
east were defined in the treaties of 1684 and 1842, first between 
Ladakh and Tibet and the second between Gulab Singh and Tibet. (5) 
These treaties were further confirmed by an agreement signed in 1858 
between Dewan Basti Ram on behalf of the Kashmir state and Mangyal 
Ishe on behalf of Tibet. (6) It is evident from this agreement that 
neither the Government of India was sovereign over Kashmir nor China 
was over Tibet. However the British Government after the treaty of

(2) Ibid.

(3) A.H. Francke, A History of Western Tibet: One of the Unknown 

(4) Major T.G. Montgomerie, Surveyor General of India to Col. J.T. 
Walker, Superintendent G.T. Survey of India, 1 October 1869, 
Foreign Political, March 1870, Nos. 110-124.

(5) Francke, n. 3, pp. 112-13; A.H. Francke, Antiquities of Indian 
Tibet (Calcutta, 1926), vol. II, pp. 115-17; C.U. Aitchison, 
Treaties, Engagements and Sanads (Calcutta, 1909), vol. II, 
p. 337; K.W. I, Foreign Secret F, September 1889. For the 
text of treaty see Appendix, Nos. II and III.

(6) Translation of the treaty of 1858, Foreign Frontier A, 
February 1900, No. 17, Enclosure No. II. For text see 
Appendix VI
Amritsar in 1846 tried to ascertain the boundaries of Jammu and Kashmir in the direction of Tibet, after dragging China into picture. (7) But without any results.

The Johnson Boundary

Towards Sinkiang the boundary was first ascertained by W.H. Johnson, who crossed into Khotan in 1864, without the permission of the Government of India. According to him the Kuen Lun range was "... boundary between the territories of the Maharaja and the province of Khotan." (8) In spite of this very clear report of Johnson several authorities had proposed variations in the boundary of Kashmir state at different times.

Forsyth Line 1874-75

Prior to the commercial treaty of 1870 with the Maharaja of Kashmir, neither the British Government had ascertained the boundaries of Kashmir state, nor they had the means to do so. Therefore the issue of boundary then was not that of Kashmir's

---


(8) Lt. Col. J.T. Walker to Under Secretary, Government of India; 23 May 1866, Foreign Political A, June 1866, Nos. 135-39, with report from Johnson; cf. Alastair Lamb, The China-India Border: The origin of the disputed boundaries (London, 1964), pp. 83-87. Before any other British officer went to area, Johnson reported the real facts objectively regarding the extent of Maharaja of Kashmir, but unfortunately Dr. Lamb says, "Johnson in a very real sense, was a political surveyor". p. 84.
boundaries, but the boundaries of Kashmir and the British Government. Petty encroachments of the Kashmir officials near Lingti River in Kangra district was the concern of the British Government. (9) Although the desire was great to settle the boundary near Lingti River, yet the Earl of Mayo was of opinion that it "... must not be forced on Maharaja". (10) The discussion in regard to Lingti border ended in 1872 when pillars were erected between the British and Kashmir borders. (11)

While these activities were on, the power complex in Central Asia was changing. Russia had taken over the most of the Khanates. Chinese rule in Central Asia was thrown into disorder by the rise of Yakub Beg Khusbegi. Kashmir was forced to give some concessions to the British activity in his state. Under such circumstances the British Government was keen to give the world some maps showing the boundaries of their possessions in India. The Survey of India, on the basis of the limited work done by their surveyors, and relying on the limited knowledge of Johnson and T.D. Forsyth produced certain maps of Turkistan without any authority

(9) T.R. Thornton, Secretary, Punjab Government to W.S. Seton-KERR, Secretary Government of India, 25 May 1869, Foreign Political A, June 1869, Nos. 294-297, and K.W.

(10) Ibid., K.W.

(11) Lepel Griffin, Secretary Punjab to C.U. Aitchison, Secretary Government of India, 9 April 1872; Aitchison to Griffin, 2 May 1872, Foreign Political A, May 1872, Nos. 11-12; Captain Mcwrele, Assistant Commissioner Kulu, to Deputy Commissioner Kangra; to Griffin; to Aitchison, 30 July 1872, Foreign Political A, January 1873, No. 203-6.
either from the ruler or the ruled of the area. (12) On certain discrepancies in the maps so produced, Baron Northbrook observed that the boundaries are "... not laid down authoritatively". He further warned the authorities that, "we should not do so without communicating to Maharaja of Kashmir". (13)

On the issue of the boundary in this area both the Indian and the Home Governments took keen interest. The missions to Yakub Beg headed by T.D. Forsyth were instructed by Calcutta to acquire the geographical knowledge of the area and to ascertain the boundaries of the possessions of Yakub Beg. The Home Government sounded the British Minister in Peking on this question, who informed the British Foreign Office:

So far our Indian frontier is concerned, it must be remembered that there will be between it and Eastern Turkistan, to speak generally the Kuen Lien mountains and the Himalaya, to say nothing of the large wild country of the Mohamadan cities just now ruled over by Yakoob Beg, which we loosely style Kashgaria. (14)

T.E. Gordon, an associate of Forsyth, after his return from the Yarkand Mission in 1874, reported about the politics of Sirikol,

(12) Walker to Aitchison, 16 July 1869; Montgomerie to Walker, 18 October 1869, Foreign Political A, March 1870, Nos. 110-124; Forsyth to Walker, 4 July 1873; Montgomerie to Aitchison, 4 August 1873; Walker to Montgomerie, 28 July 1873, Foreign Political A, September 1873, Nos. 304-8; Memorandum on Kashmir by Girdleston, 1871, Foreign Secret, March 1874, Nos. 172-173.

(13) K.W. Notes Northbrook, 12 July 1873, Foreign Political A, July 1873, Nos. 452-53.

(14) Her Majesty's Minister in Peking to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1 October 1872, Foreign Secret, February 1873, Nos. 31-45.
Pamir and Wakhan. (15) Forsyth, while making alarmist signal towards the march of Russia in the directions of India, ascertained the possessions of Yakub Beg.

... no claim is ascertained to any tract of country south of the Karakush River and on the Yarkand River they do not come higher up than Kufeelong. ... (16)

Forsyth would not rest contented only with his observations on the possessions of Yakub Beg. He suggested what should be the boundary of India north of Kashmir.

... for commerce sake I would put the boundary at Ak-Tagh, and in laying out supplies I practically made that point the limit. The line then would run from the Eastern Corner of the Kuen Lun longitude 81° down to Karakash river to Suget, across that pass to Ak-Tagh, Longitude 78.5 (approximately) latitude 35.59', hence down to Yarkand river to Kanjut. (17)

While the Forsyth mission was active in Yarkand, the Maharaja of Kashmir strengthened his post at Shahidulla, just below the Kuen Lun range. Mohammed Rasool a sepoy was despatched to assist in the transit of mails to and from Yarkand. (18)


(17) Ibid., para 41.

(18) Ladak Diary, 20 December 1873, Foreign Political, February 1874, Nos. 32-34.
When Second Anglo-Afghan conflict was on in 1878, the Chinese had taken possession of Sinkiang from Yakub Beg. The British were able to install a Political Agency at Gilgit in July 1877. The Russians were able to annex Kokand in 1876. The thought of the British Government was diverted towards the northern boundaries of Kashmir state. Lord Lytton in his policy statement, pointed out the desirability of some sort of demarcation of the political borders of the undefined area. "The line which may at first adopt as defining the sphere of our political influence, and should coincide generally with the geographical outline of the position, which, if need be, we may be ready to maintain actively." (19) He suggested that such points of contact should be selected before hand, though the natural boundary of India was formed by the convergence of the great mountain ranges of the Himalayas and of the Hindukush. After careful investigation from the political and strategical considerations he recommended that if:

... we extend and by degrees consolidate, our influence over this country, and 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. (20)

---

(19) Lytton to Crombrook, 28 February 1879, Foreign Secret, March 1879, No. 35.

(20) Ibid.
Ney Elias Proposal 1878

While Lytton was preparing for the war with Afghanistan and China was occupying Yarkand, the Maharaja of Kashmir was concerned about the defenceless position of Ladakh. He enquired the position in view of troubled state of affairs in Yarkand from the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh. Ney Elias suggested the strengthening of Kashmir garrison at Leh and Iskardu. And at the same time he communicated to the Government his views on the boundaries of Kashmir. The line which he suggested was based on the following considerations: 1) that the line should follow on the whole the natural waterparting between the two countries; 2) that it should place a natural barrier between the people and the possible enemy; 3) that it should be near the base of supplies; and 4) that it should be easy to demarcate. He suggested that if only the boundary marks were placed, it would serve the purpose. He observed:

... in the west the crest of the Mustagh or Baltoro pass might be demarcated as the first point, the summit of the glacier at the head of the Nubra valley as the second, (it is possible that a mark between Nos 1 and 2 might be required as it is said that a pass exists in that region) the summit of the Glacier at the head of Shayok Valley as the third, the crest of the Karakoram pass, where the main road to Yarkand crosses as the fourth, the crest of the two Chunglung passes at the crossing points of the alternative routes via Chang Chenmo as the fifth and sixth, and finally some point on the present Chinese Tibetan boundary to be afterwards decided on. (21)

In suggesting this line Elias ignored the Maharaja's claims on Shahidulla and the neighbouring territory. When after a few years the Wazir Wazarat of Ladakh tried to enforce the claims of Kashmir on its northern frontiers he repeated his old line and suggested not to occupy Shahidulla. (22)

Ramsay Line 1888

After almost a decade in 1887 Sir Mortimer Durand forcefully advocated the re-establishment of Gilgit Agency. In a policy statement he pointed out the unreliable nature of the cooperation of Turkey and Persia. He recommended that "... we ought to cultivate the friendship of China. ..." in order to check the Russian expansion in Central Asia. (23) In the interest of Imperial security he reluctantly remarked that the "Native States contribute very little towards the support of the Empire which has given them existence and order and wealth. ..." (24) He, therefore, advocated of the occupation of such points in advance of our border as are decided to be really necessary for the security of our military position," (25) whether the Russian Government was interested in

(22) K.W. Demi-officials from Ney Elias, 26 July 1885 and 5 August 1885, Foreign Secret F, November 1885, Nos. 12-14.

(23) Memorandum on "The present position in Central Asia and our Frontier Policy" by Durand, 21 May 1887, Foreign Secret F, October 1887, Nos. 286-91.

(24) Ibid.

(25) Ibid.
that area or not. His views were supported by Sir F. Roberts. (26)

Consequently the second Gilgit Agency was established in July 1889, after the deposition of Maharaja Pertap Singh on 8 March. The Kashmir borders were, however, never lost sight of by the British Government. Captain H.L. Ramsay, the British Joint Commissioner Ladakh laid stress on the settlement of the boundary between Ladakh and the Chinese Turkistan. He pointed out that "It is to our interest that Russia should be kept as great a distance as possible to the North West of the Hindukush and Mustagh-Karakoram ranges". (27) Thrice he reminded the Government of India for the boundary settlement, but his advocacy made no impact on the authorities. (28) The Earl of Dufferin dismissed the case with an observation that:

It seems to me that it would not be desirable to run the risk of a troublesome controversy with China in order to push a Kashmir post beyond Karakoram, with the object of forestalling Russia when she succeeds the Chinese in Yarkand. (29)

Not content with the attitude of the Government of India Ramsay submitted a Memorandum on 10 December 1888, in which he pointed out that the Chinese frontiers were bounded by a line

(26) Memorandum on 'The present position in Central Asia' by Sir F. Roberts, ibid.

(27) Ramsay to Plowden, 10 February 1888, Foreign Secret F, April 1888, No. 283.

(28) K.W., Foreign Secret F, September 1892, Nos. 1-5.

extending from Sirikol to Kugiar, Kiliian and Sanju, and that the "Yarkand authority do not regard Karakoram pass as their frontier". He recommended that the entire 'inhospitable lands' west of Shahidulla should be included into Kashmir borders. (30) To the east of Shahidulla Ramsay advocated that:

For geographical and ethnological reasons, the Karakoram would appear to be the natural boundary, so far as that part of the border is concerned. This amounts to saying that the watershed of the Indus system forms the frontier, but the Shyok is part of the Indus system, and the watershed of the Shyok is on the west of Lingzi Thang and Soda plains, both of which are supposed to belong to Ladakh, unless therefore we are prepared to one day find ourselves involved in a dispute regarding this large, though pecuniarily worthless, tract of country, it is advisable that here too the frontier should be defined. (31)

While Ramsay was earnestly insisting upon the definition of the northern boundary of Kashmir state, Hunza people made a raid on the people between Suget and Shahidulla. They carried off seven women, sixteen men and a large number of goats and yaks. (32) On the receipt of this news of the raid, Kashmir Darbar despatched twentythree soldiers to Shahidulla for providing an escort to the merchants. (33)


(31) Ibid., para 18.


(33) Ladak Diary, 6 October 1888, Foreign Frontier B, February 1889, No. 28-29.
Turdikul, the headman of the Shahidulla Kirgiz, after Hunza attack, went to Yarkand. He requested for help and protection to the Chinese Amban there, who told him that the Chinese frontiers extended only to the Kilian and Sanju passes, and if they came and settled within these borders, they would get protection. But so long they live at Shahidulla, China could do nothing. He advised Turdikul to apply for protection to Ladakh authorities. (34) After having a firm no from the Chinese, Musa Kirgiz came to Ladakh and requested for the British protection. (35) Shahidulla Kirgiz were considered by the British Government as Chinese subjects but the Chinese had declined. (36) The fact was that the Kirgiz of Shahidulla used to pay tax to the Chinese only when they visited Yarkand. (37) Since they had to visit that place for certain purchases and other requirements they had to pay the taxes. This was because of the fact that the distance between Shahidulla and Yarkand was less than that between the former and Leh. Thus on the representation of Musa, Ramsay recommended for the help, pointing to the fact that the Kirgiz were not Chinese subjects. (38) But

---


(38) Ramsay to Nisbet, 25 May 1889. Ibid.
it was hard to convince a pro-Chinese foreign Secretary, Sir Martimer Durand, about the fact that Karkash and Shahidulla belonged to Kashmir. (39) Ney Elias on whose advice Durand worked on this frontier was of the opinion that it was a "...mistake to meddle with the fort or 'defensible sarai' or in any way to raise a question regarding Shahidulla". Agreeing to the remarks of Elias, Durabd observed:

If we bring the Chinese on at this point we shall be in an illogical position. The waterparting ought to be our political boundary from Assam to Hunza. However, the Chinese do not recognise it. (40)

The entire advocacy of Ramsay in regard to boundary was thrown to dust and no action was taken. Captain Younghusband was asked to enquire the whole of the northern boundary of Kashmir afresh.

**Younghusband on the Northern Frontiers of Kashmir 1889**

In view of the appeal of Kirgiz and reported visit of a Chinese officer to Hunza, (41) the services of Captain F.B. Younghusband of First Dragoon Guards was requisitioned by the

---

(39) Ramsay to Nisbet, 16 July 1889; Nisbet to Durand, 8 June 1889; Foreign Secret F, July 1889, Nos. 203-30.

(40) K.W. Foreign Secret F, September 1889, Nos. 31-60.

(41) H.S. Barnes to Nisbet, 1 July 1889, Foreign Secret F, July 1889, No. 217.
Government of India. (42) Younghusband was instructed to proceed to Karkash valley in company of Musha Kirgiz from Leh, for ascertaining their requirements and the degree of dependence on China. He was in fact asked to explore the entire territory between Hunza and Shahidulla. Apart from the investigation of Shahidulla fort from defence point of view, he was warned that "... should any intimation be made to you respecting the sovereignty the Kirgiz desire to live under, you will be careful to use only the most guarded language in reply". (43)

Younghusband reached Shahidulla on 21 August 1889. First he met the Turdikul privately and the next day, he called a meeting of all the Kirgiz headmen. In their present Younghusband ascertained that Turdikul was considered as their chief. The headmen promised to obey Turdikul. In their presence Younghusband gave Turdikul a sum of Rupees five hundred for the repair of the fort of Shahidulla. (44) In regard to the Chinese boundary Younghusband made a highly probing enquiry and found:

In the former Chinese occupation the Kuen-Lun mountains (that is the branch of them over which the Kilian and Sanju passes) were always recognised as the frontier and the country to the south belonged to no one in particular. ... After the Chinese re-occupation of


(43) H.S. Barnes to Younghusband, 5 July 1889, Foreign Secret F, July 1889, No. 224.

(44) Younghusband to Durand, 26 August 1889, Foreign Secret F, October 1889, No. 164.
Yarkand (1878), no Chinese official or soldier has ever come across the Kilian or Sanju passes. ... (45)

Youngusband was told that when Ney Elias went to Yarkand in 1885, he left a map in which some watersheds were shown. This map was in possession of a Native with whose assistance Chinese were trying to know as to what lay beyond the Kuen Luen. (46) In spite of this clear declaration about the Chinese boundary by Youngusband, Ney Elias prevailed upon Lord Lansdowne to accept his view. Thereupon the Viceroy decided that

The country between Karakoram and Kuen Luen ranges, is, I understand, of no value, very inaccessible, and not likely to be coveted by Russia. We might, I should think, encourage the Chinese to take it, if they showed any inclination to do so. (47)

Not content with convincing the Viceroy, Ney Elias advocated his Indus watershed line to Colonel J.C. Ardagh. According to his view the land between the Karakoram and Kuen Luen was uninhabited. So long as Sairikul belonged to the Chinese and Wakhan to Afghans, there was no chance of occupation of the isolated lands between Kuen Luen and Karakoram by the Russians. In case Turkistan fell to Russia, then, "the Indus waterparting would form a more rational, a more simply defined and easily guarded frontier than an artificial

---

(45) Ibid., para 12.
(46) Ibid.
line further north. Finally if the British Government decided to occupy the area, they would have to open "regular negotiations with China (the most impracticable nation), and have a formal Delimitation Commission to determine an artificial frontier line. Therefore in the opinion of Elias:

The simplest solution of the matter, while China occupies Eastern Turkistan would be to influence the Chinese to claim all the country draining into the Tarim system i.e. up to the heads of the Indus water. This would require no negotiation and no Delimitation Commission.... (48)

Younghusband from Shahidulla moved towards Hunza and explored the entire region hitherto unexplored. He submitted his final report advocating a safe strategical boundary of the British India. (49) In the meantime it was reported that the Chinese had occupied Shahidulla. (50) But as a matter of fact the report was based on mere hearsay. Younghusband's report was carefully discussed in the Government. (51) The deliberations and the policy to be followed in regard to the northern borders of Kashmir state were communicated to the Home Government in London. Lord Lansdowne, though partly admitted the claims of Kashmir state on Shahidulla,


(49) Younghusband to Nisbet, 30 December 1889, and K.W. Foreign Secret F, February 1890, No. 79 and Nos. 59-84.

(50) Ramsay to Nisbet, 26 February 1890, Foreign Secret F, July 1890, No. 232.

but he could not reconcile himself to the responsibilities of holding it. To his mind the land between the Karakoram pass and Shahidulla was uninhabited and was not likely to be inhabited in future. He therefore observed that:

We should gain little by extending our responsibilities to the further side of great natural barrier like the Karakoram mountains, it is on the other evidently to our advantage that the tract of the country intervening between the Karakoram and Kuen Luen mountains should be definitely held by a friendly power like China. (52)

He therefore wished from the Secretary of State that

... the Chinese Government to be informed that we desire to see the frontiers of Chinese Turkistan conterminous to those of Afghanistan and Kashmir and its dependencies, and Chinese authority definitely asserted up to the Karakoram mountains and to the limits of Afghan territory on the Pamirs. ... (53)

A copy of this policy statement was sent to Sir John Walsham, the British Minister in Peking for his information, (54) and the British Resident in Kashmir was informed that he

... should regard the limit of the Indus watershed as the boundary of His Highness's territories towards the north, i.e. that the line of natural waterparting from a point near the Irsad pass on the west to the recognised Tibet frontier on the east should be also the limit of our political jurisdiction. (55)

(52) Lansdowne to Viscount Cross, 14 July 1890, Foreign Secret F, July 1890, No. 243.

(53) Ibid., para 6.


(55) Lansdowne to Cross, 14 July 1890, Foreign Secret F, July 1890, No. 243; W.J. Cunningham to Nisbet, 21 August 1890, K.W. 2, Foreign Secret F, October 1890, Nos. 141-179
This decision of the Government of India in regard to
Indus watershed as the northern boundary was not pleasing to
Captain Ramsay. His several protests and pointed references to
non-existence of Chinese authority beyond Kilián and Sanju passes
was deliberately ignored by the Government. (56) The Secretary of
States for India, Viscount Cross, observed that this "... will need
confidential and delicate handling, and will likely to be decided
here in London with the Chinese minister". (57) He enquired about
the definite line of boundary to be proposed to China. Lansdowne
could not propose one, as he himself was not aware of it. (58) In
Peking Walsham visited Tsungli Yamen on 12 September 1890 and
pressed for the appointment of the British Agent at Kashgar. Yamen
refused the request saying that there was very little traffic and
exchange of goods in that region, and observed that

... the New Dominions and India could scarcely be
considered conteminnious countries. A large belt of
country inhabited by Mohamadan tribes was wedged in
between the boundaries of the two Empires. (59)

Walsham again pressed Tsungli Yamen on 30 September 1891 for the
same but without any results. (60)

(56) Ramsay to Nisbet, 26 July 1890, Foreign Secret F, October
1890, No. 142; Ramsay to Nisbet, 31 July 1890, Ibid., No. 145;
Ramsay to Nisbet, 21 September 1890, Ibid., No. 168; Ramsay's
Memo on Younghusband's, 20 August 1890, Ibid., Nos. 159-60.

(57) Cross to Lansdowne, Telegram, 8 September 1890, Foreign
Secret F, October 1890, No. 151.

(58) Lansdowne to Cross, Telegram, 9 September 1890, Ibid., No. 152.

(59) Walsham to Salisbury, Foreign Secretary, 23 January 1892,
Foreign Frontier B, July 1892, Nos. 36-37.

(60) Ibid.
Younghusband in Chinese Turkistan 1890

While the British Government was busy inducing China at Peking and London to capture the lands between the Karakoram pass and Shahidulla, Captain Younghusband was deputed to Kashgar. He was instructed to proceed via Leh and Shahidulla to Yarkand, and then to the Pamir region. In consultation with the Chinese officials Younghusband was asked to ascertain the degree of Chinese claims and to

... impress upon the Chinese officials the necessity of strengthening and asserting their occupation, so that, if possible, there may be no grounds for alleging that any unclaimed strip intervenes between Afghan and Chinese territory. (61)

On the Kashmir frontier between Karakoram and Shahidulla his instructions were to "take opportunity of explaining to them our common interests in those regions and the friendly intentions of the Government of India." (62)

With these instructions Captain Younghusband reached Leh on 1 August, and reached Shahidulla via Suget on 20 August 1890. (63) From there he proceeded to Yarkand where he met P'ian Ta-jein, the Amban of Yarkand, on 5 September 1890. With the help of the maps

(61) Cunningham to Younghusband, 23 June 1890, Foreign Secret F, July 1890, No. 221.
(62) Ibid., para 4.
(63) Younghusband to Cunningham, 1, 17, 20 August 1890, Foreign Secret F, October 1890, Nos. 140-170.
Younghusband explained to him the geography of the entire region south of Kuen Luen and north of Karakoram ranges. He pointed out to Amban:

... the Viceroy of India had ever been of opinion that the best boundary between Kashmir and Yarkand was that formed by the watershed of the Karakoram range. ... (64)

On the contrary the Chinese regarded Kilian pass as their boundary. If it was so, Younghusband said, the Viceroy of India was prepared to occupy the intervening lands. P'an-Ta-jein seized the opportunity and stated in reply that the Chinese had ever considered the watershed, "... as a natural (or literally in Chinese) a Heaven made boundary, to be the frontier between Kashmir and Yarkand...." He assured Younghusband that China was prepared to protect the trade route up to that range. (65) The British game was now fairly complete.

**Chinese Activities on Kashmir Frontier**

After the deposition of Maharaja Pratap Singh, China in Sinkiang became apprehensive and alarmed by the British activities on the northern border of Kashmir. These apprehensions were confirmed when the British forces entered Hunza and Nagar in December 1891. (66) Russia on the other hand was equally alarmed on the

---

(64) Report on an interview between Captain Younghusband and P'an Ta-jein, the Amban of Yarkand, held on 5 September 1890, K.W. 3, Foreign Secret F, March 1891, Nos. 123-148.

(65) Ibid.

extension of the British territories near her borders. M. Petrovsky, Russian Consul-General in Kashgar, started instigating China against the British. (67) Instigated by the Russians and encouraged by the British the Chinese became active on the frontiers of Kashmir.

Prior to the meeting of Younghusband with the Amban in Yarkand the Chinese did not regard the territories beyond Kuen Luen as the part of their Empire. The map prepared by Hung Ta-chen, the Chinese minister of the court of St. Petersburg, represented the real Chinese boundary. In this map no portion anywhere in Yarkand river valley, Karakash river valley or at Shahidulla was mentioned as the Chinese territory. (68) But after meeting Younghusband, and with adequate preparations, the Chinese came down to Kuen Luen. In 1892 they entered Shahidulla and erected boundary marks at Karakoram Pass. (69) Next year they reached Aktagh, a place between Karakoram and Kuen Luen. (70) Two Chinese officials, Hai-Ta-Laoyieh and Li were deputed to survey the entire area. (71) Li surveyed


(69) Barr to Cunningham, 13 December 1893, Foreign Secret F, January 1894, No. 500.

(70) Macartney to Barr, 13 June 1893, Foreign Secret F, August 1898, No. 547.

(71) Macartney to Barr, 8 December 1893, Foreign Secret F, March 1894, No. 166.
the area between Karakoram and Luen Luen and Hai went to Pamir region of the Chinese territory. (72) Both of them surveyed the area thoroughly and presented the maps to Yamen. (73) When the survey operations were on, the traders were prevented from using the roads leading to Ladakh. (74) Hai-ta-Lao-yieh, the Chinese border expert, made searching queries from Macartney at Kashgar about the borders of the British Government, during the same time. (75) Not content with this, the Chinese Governor of the 'New Dominions' proposed to send a man to Ladakh on the pretext for making copies of the Chinese inscriptions which were supposed to be there. (76)

While the Chinese were active in the area between Karakoram and Luen Luen, the Kashmir State Council was not complacent about the state boundaries. The Chinese occupation of Shahidulla was discussed on 4 April 1892, (77) and a memorandum was presented to


(73) Macartney to Barr, 28 September 1893, Foreign Secret F, January 1894, No. 2.


(75) Macartney to Barr, 26 September 1894, Foreign Secret F, January 1895, No. 290.

(76) Barr to Cunningham, 20 March 1895, Foreign Frontier B, October 1895, Nos. 119-154.

Colonel W.F. Prideaux, British Resident in Srinagar, and his views were sought. (78) In accordance with the views of the Government of India the Resident stated, "I do not think I can recommend that the question of the occupation of Shahidulla Khoja by the Kashmir Darbar should be opened". (79) When the Chinese erected boundary pillars at Karakoram, Raja Amar Singh again approached the Government of India. (80) He was told "it does not seem desirable that the responsibilities of the Kashmir state already heavy should be increased by the assumption of control over the country beyond the Karakoram...." (81)

The British Government was not apprehensive of the Chinese activities which they themselves had encouraged to prevent Russian infiltration in that region. Mortimer Durand remarked, "The Kashmir State is now well in hand, and I should be inclined to explain to them that any attempt on their part to go beyond the watershed is a mistake." (82) But the attitude of Lansdowne was different. While agreeing with Durand he was of the opinion that no boundary pillars

(78) Vice-President State Council to Col. W.F. Prideaux, Resident in Kashmir, 15 April 1892, Foreign Secret F, September 1892, No. 2.

(79) Prideaux to Vice-President, 21 July 1892, Foreign Secret F, September 1892, No. 5; K.W. to Nos. 1-5.

(80) Amar Singh to Barr, 2 November 1892, Foreign Secret F, January 1893, Nos. 501-06.


(82) K.W. January 1893, Nos. 500-510, Durand, 28 December 1892.
should be allowed to be erected on the slope of the pass. Lansdowne expressed his opinion that "no boundary marks will be regarded as having any international value, unless they have been erected with the concurrence of both powers." (83)

The information about the Chinese activities was reported to the Secretary of State for India. He was asked to inform the Chinese Government, that their activities were closely watched and they will not be allowed to hold the land without "common consent". Lansdowne significantly observed:

*It would in our opinion be matter for congratulations, if the Chinese were to assert effectively their claims to Shahidulla and the tract between Kuen Lun and Karakoram ranges. We encouraged them to do so at the time of Captain Younghusband's mission in 1890.* (84)

N.R. O'Connor, the British Minister in Peking, was asked to represent the encroachments of China to Yamen. (85) He accordingly visited Tsungli Yamen on 12 June 1893. Yamen at first pleaded ignorance of the incidents, but promised to inquire. (86) After

(83) K.W. January 1893, Nos. 500-510, Lansdowne, 30 December 1892.
(84) Lansdowne to Kimberley, 13 January 1893, Foreign Secret F, January 1893, No. 509.
(85) India Office to Foreign Office, 15 February 1893, Foreign Secret F, June 1893, No. 58.
(86) O'Connor to Kimberley, 3 April 1894, Foreign Secret F, August 1894, No. 31.
necessary enquiries from the Amban at Kashgar, he asserted that, "The locality is without doubt within the territory of China and has no connection with India". (85) In his view, the Chinese activities were within their empire. Lord Elgin the successor of Lansdowne kept quiet on the outcome of O'Connor's representation to Yamen. He thought it "undesirable to make any objection to the attitude taken by the Chinese Government". (88) O'Connor was accordingly informed not to raise the issue any more. (89)

**Macartney's Neutral Zone Scheme**

In the meantime Macartney argued that in the event of Russian occupation of Sinkiang, the British position would be very difficult.

Kanjut, it may be remembered, used before our occupation of it to levy taxes as far as Dafden (? Dehā) on the Taghdumbash Pamir. A portion of Sirikul known as Pakpah and Shaksah was apparently once tributary to it. A stronghold at a place called Darwaza, situated near on the northern side of the Shinskal pass, seems still to be in the possession of the Kanjutis. This jurisdiction of the Maharaja of Kashmir used to extend to Shahidulla. (90)

---


(89) Earl of Kimberley, Secretary for Foreign Affairs to O'Connor, 30 August 1894, *Foreign Secret F*, January 1895, Nos. 554-56.

(90) K.W. *Foreign Secret F*, October 1895, Nos. 150-173.
Macartney suggested that these facts should be made known to Chinese. They might not admit territorial claims, but it would be sufficient to place them on record in a treaty, pointing out that the claims were waived, so long these territories remained in possession of China. In the event of their occupation by Russia, he suggested that the British could take up the issue and establish a 'neutral state, under the guarantee of both the powers. Such a state would occupy all the mountain regions between the crest of Karakoram and the Mustagh ranges on the one side, and on the other be limited by a line drawn from about Tachkurgan to Kugiar and thence by the skirts of the mountains until Polu on the Kuen Lun range. "Such places as the Taghdumbash Pamir, the Raskam district and Shahidulla would thus be comprised in a neutral zone". (91)

The neutral state proposal of Macartney was thoroughly discussed and the claims of Hunza and Kashmir were investigated. Their claims were found to be genuine. (92) They were admitted by the Chinese governor of Sinkiang. (93) Still the Foreign Secretary referred the matter to the Military Department with his observation that, "The less we know about the jagir, the less I think we will

(91) Ibid.
(92) Ibid.; G.S. Robertson, Political Agent Gilgit, D.O., 17 July 1895; Captain H. Daly to Talbott, 14 October 1896 and K.W. to Foreign Secret F, October 1896.
be compromised." (94) The Quartermaster General found several objections without any advantage in the proposal and he declared it strategically unsound. (95)

While the Neutral Zone proposal of Macartney was rejected, it was decided to take steps towards the settlement of the boundary between Kashmir and Sinkiang. Elgin pointed out to Lord George F. Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, that:

It might be stipulated that Taghumbash should revert to Hunza, if China abandons it. The recent Franco Chinese treaty may offer a favourable opportunity for demanding from China the settlement of her boundary with Afghanistan, Hunza and Kashmir, in such a manner as to definitely limit extensions by Russia towards Karakoram Mustagh if she succeeds China in Raskam and Sirikol. (96)

The recommendation of Elgin was forwarded to Marques Salisbury by Hamilton. (98) But in the opinion of Salisbury the condition of China then was not satisfactory for raising any boundary question. (98) Hence the matter was held over for future settlement.

(94) K.W. Foreign Secret F, October 1895, Nos. 150-173.
(95) K.W., ibid.
(96) Elgin to Hamilton, Telegram, 19 September 1895, Foreign Secret F, October 1895, No. 170, Despatch, No. 186 of 1895; K.W. to No. 150-173.
(97) Sir A. Golly, Under Secretary of States for India to Francis Bertie, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 18 October 1895, Foreign Secret F, June 1896, No. 176.
The Ardagh Line

In the meantime the Pamir demarcation was complete. (98) Chinese were defeated by Japan and Muslim population in Kansu province was in revolt against Chinese rule. (100) It was thought that the Chinese rule in Sinkiang was about to collapse and likely to be replaced by the Russians. Sir John Ardagh, Director Military Intelligence, pointed out in a memorandum that the boundary line determined by the Government of India, in the great mountain ranges north of Chitral, Hunza and Ladakh was defective. In a general sense it formed an acceptable defensible line, because it was easy to define, difficult to pass and fairly dividing the population. But the physical conditions of these mountains, their great extent, high altitude, general inaccessibility and sparse population were the great impediments in watching the actual watershed. Therefore from military point of view, a frontier following the highest watersheds was defective. The object of closing the passes of Kilik, Mintaka, Khunjerab, Shimshul, Mustagh and Karakoram, for an enemy will not be achieved, as he will get a safe halting ground in the valleys of Yarkand and Karakash rivers. Ardagh therefore suggested that the boundary of the British India should include the

... basins of the Danga Bash river and its affluents above Dehda, at the junction of the Ili Su and Karatchukar ... of the Yarkand river above the point where it breaks through the range of mountains marked

(99) Elgin to Hamilton, Despatch No. 186 of 1895, Foreign Secret F, October 1895, Nos. 150-173.

(100) Memorandum of Sir John Ardagh, 1897, Foreign Secret F, January 1898, No. 166. See text in Appendix No. XII.
by the Sargon and Ilbis Birkar passes at about
latitude 37° north and longitude 74°50' east...
and of the Karakash river above a point between
Shahidulla and Sanju or Grim pass. (101)

Ardagh argued his case by pointing out the inclusion of the fertile
river basins, and the claims laid by Kashmir state and Hunza to the
area. He was of the opinion that it was not likely that, "China in
her present state would offer much objection, or indeed, that her
influence extends to the south of the Kuen Lun." (102) Salisbury
suggested the desirability of acquiring an efficient control within
the frontiers which were considered as "essential to British
interests". (103)

Ardagh's memorandum was sent from London on 12 February 1897,
and was received in India on 1 March 1897. (104) It was discussed
by the authors of the MacDonald Line, W.J. Cunningham the Secretary
of Foreign Political Department, J.A. Douglas of Military Department
and Francis Younghusband, and was unanimously rejected. (105) Elgin

(101) Ibid.
(102) Ibid.
(103) Bertie to Godley, 26 January 1897, Foreign Secret F,
January 1898, No. 164.
(104) Dr. Alastair Lamb is not correct to say that "At the very
moment when MacDonald was presenting his note to the Tsungli
Yemen" Ardagh made his proposals. MacDonald presented his
note on 14 March 1899 while Ardagh submitted his memo in
January 1897, more than two years before. See The China-
India Border: The Origins of the Disputed Boundaries, by
Lamb, p. 105.
had to put his seal on it and pointed out that "No invader has ever approached India from this direction where nature has placed such formidable barriers." (106)

In the meantime, on the instigation of M. Petrovasky, China pointed out an error in the atlas in regard to Aksai Chin boundary to Macartney. (107) They also stopped Hunza cultivation of Raskam valley. (108) But in both these cases the British Government kept mum. Hunza was asked to obtain best possible terms from the Chinese without creating an impression that the British Government had any knowledge of it. (109) On Aksai Chin, for the first time, Captain Deasy was not allowed to travel through Polu on the pretext of road repairs. In fact M. Petrovasky told the Totai that the English had some secret intentions on the Aksai Chin territory, and threatened Huang Tajen that "the Russian Government would interfere". (110) However on representation to Tsungli Yamen by Ironside Deasy was allowed to travel in Aksai Chin. (111)


(107) Roberts to Talbot, 10 November 1896, Entry into Kashgar Diary of 2 October 1896, Foreign Secret F, January 1898, Nos. 161-62 and K.W.


(111) Kashgar Diary, 23 June 1899, ibid.
MacDonald Line 1899

In 1898 Salisbury enquired about the boundary line to be secured from China in the direction of Afghanistan, Hunza and Kashmir. (112) The boundary matter was again discussed by the officers of Elgin's Government in India. (113) The consensus was to press the claims of Hunza on Taghduymbash and Raskam, only for having a bargain with China. Lord Elgin was "prepared to renounce them in exchange for remuneration by Chinese of all claims over Hunza". (114) The line which was proposed by the Indian Government to be secured from the Chinese as boundary began at Pamir region, where the Pamir Boundary Commission of 1895 had completed the work. By and large it followed the crest of the main range of mountain and runs as follows:

... beginning at the North end at the Peak Povalo-Schweikoski, the line takes a south easterly direction, crossing the Karachi stream at Mintaka Aghazi, thence proceeding in the same direction till it joins, at the Karchanai Pass, the crest of the main ridge of the Mustagh range which it then follows passing by the Kunjeras pass and continuing southwards to the peak just north of the Shimshal pass. At this point the boundary leaves the crest and follows a spur running east approximately parallel to the road from the Shimshal to Hunza post at Darwaza. The line turning south through the Darwaza post, crosses the road from the Shimshal pass at that point and then ascends the nearest high spur and regains the main crests, which the boundary will again

(112) Hamilton to Elgin, Telegram, 13 July 1898, Foreign Secret F, November 1898, No. 110.

(113) K.W. to Foreign Secret F, November 1898, Nos. 110-114.

follow, passing the Mustagh, Gusherbrum and the
Saltoro passes to the Karakoram. From the Karakoram
pass the crests of the range run nearly east for about
half a degree 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 Kiziljilya and from there, in a south
easterly direction, follows the Lakh Tsung range until
that meets the spur running south from the Kuen Lun
range which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the
eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80°
east longitude. (115)

Sir C. MacDonald was asked to present this line to Tsungli
Yamen, (116) which he did on 14 March 1899. (117) Yamen promised to
reply after enquiries. (118) But in spite of several queries by the
British officers from Yamen, no reply was received. (119) Salisbury
in the meantime informed Sir C. Scott, "In view of the present state
of affairs in China, I approve your proposal to defer carrying out
these instructions until a favourable opportunity presents
itself." (120)

(115) Elgin to Hamilton, 27 October 1898, Foreign Secret F,
November 1898, No. 114. For text of the letter see
Appendix No. XIII.

(116) Salisbury to MacDonald, 14 December 1898, Foreign Secret F,
May 1899, No. 164.

(117) Box Ironside to Salisbury, April 1899, Foreign Secret F,
August 1899, No. 188. For text see Appendix XIV.

(118) Ibid.

(119) Box Ironside to Salisbury, 22 June 1899, Foreign Secret F,
September 1899, No. 211; Nos. 230.

(120) Salisbury to Scott, 23 July 1900, Foreign Secret F,
September 1900, No. 25.
In India Elgin was replaced by Curzon on 6 January 1899. China stopped interfering with people in the south of Kuen Lun mountains due to internal complications and disorders. After the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 the Russian fear was removed. Younghusband had already removed the exclusiveness of Tibet in 1904. Hunza began to cultivate Raskam lands as usual from 1914. (121)

It appears that in 1927 the British Government once again tried to withdraw Hunza's claims from Raskam and Pamirs. But the Maharaja of Kashmir asserted that the dominions of Kashmir were bounded to the north by the northern watershed of the Kuen Luen ranges. (122) The area remained under the control of Kashmir state when K.P.S. Menon of Foreign Office went to Hunza in the second half of 1944, on his way to Chunking observed that the extent of Kashmir state was beyond Mintaka pass. He says,

Hunza, the Mir told me, used to stretch as far as Daifdar beyond the Mintaka Pass - the present Nazir's grandfather really built a fort there - and until recently Hunza had the right not merely to graze their cattle in the Pamirs but to levy grazing fees from others who did. (123)

Soon after independence in 1947 in the wake of Pakistani aggression in Kashmir China got an opportunity under Communist regime, and occupied the area of Raksam and Tagdumbarh Pamirs up to the crest of

(123) K.P.S. Menon, Delhi-Chunking: A Travel Diary (Bombay, 1947), p. 29.
Karakoram mountains. This illegal occupation of Hunza lands by Chinese was confirmed in Sino-Pakistan boundary agreement of 1963.

The British experiment on boundary making of India, out of the fear of Russia cost India much. The legitimate claims of Kashmir had been ignored. A line based on military strategy was proposed. Though nothing came out of MacDonald proposals of 14 March 1899, yet the British Government gave a positive weapon in the hands of China to play with, at an opportune time. MacDonald proposals gained a strategic boundary for the British empire, but India lost its legitimate claims to an approximately 4,800 miles in between Karakoram and Kuen Lun ranges. China prior to instigation of Younghusband in 1890 never claimed any territory below Kuen Lun mountains in Sinkiang, nor they ever raised any issue in regard to Aksai Chin area. The claims of India on Aksai Chin are well founded. The area belonged to Ladakh prior to Dogra occupation and later it was a part of Jammu and Kashmir state and the British Empire. Francke, Johnson, Ramsay all have justified the Indian claims. The Maharajas of Kashmir never allowed their claims to the area lapse. Subsequent to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, the British policy towards borders varied according to the fears from Russia. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Russian fear subsided for a while, only to reoccur in 1927. Two decades preceding their departure from India in 1947, the British Government was more concerned with internal freedom movement than with the far flung borders. Dr. Alastair Lamb in his advocacy of China's claims has ignored the fact that India was in existence even prior to the
British occupation. Though it was divided in several small states, with their well known boundaries. (124)