

A DOCUMENT ON THE POLICY ON FOREIGNERS IN TIBET AFTER THE ANGLO-CHINESE CONVENTION OF 1906

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Introduction

On the order of Lord Curzon (1859-1925), the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, and with the approval of the British government in London, Colonel Francis Younghusband (1863-1942) started his infamous military expedition to Tibet in December 1903. Aware of the lack of Qing imperial power and influence in Tibet and driven by fears of possible Russian influence in Tibet, and thus a threat to British India, the mission sought to enforce direct negotiations with the authorities in Tibet about trade agreements. Although Younghusband had been instructed to insist on negotiations in a place close to the Sikkimese border, and not to enter deeply into Tibet, the refusal of the Dalai Lama to follow Qing orders to participate in negotiations with the British and the futility of the British demonstration of military power caused Younghusband to gradually move toward Lhasa, breaking down all Tibetan resistance on the way through his armed forces.¹

By the time Younghusband arrived in Lhasa in the summer of 1904, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama Thub bstan rgya mtsho (1876-1933) had fled to Urga in Mongolia. Thereupon the Qing government declared the Dalai Lama deposed. It would not be until the end of 1909, after a long stay abroad during which he also visited the imperial court in Beijing that the Dalai Lama would return to Lhasa.² At that time the authority of the *amban*, the imperial representative in Lhasa, was widely ignored by Tibetan officials. The British invaders looked instead for a Tibetan authority to start negotiations. In the absence of the Dalai Lama the abbot of dGa' ldan monastery acted as regent. The British brought him together with the representatives of the Tibetan council of ministers, the three monasteries Se ra, 'Bras spungs and dGa' ldan, and the Tibetan National Assembly to sign a treaty by which earlier conventions on the Sikkimese-Tibetan border were confirmed, the opening of trade marts were stipulated, the Tibetan government largely abstained from levying dues from the British-Tibetan trade, the payment of reparation for breaking earlier treaty obligations was fixed, the removal of any Tibetan fortification along the road from the southern border to rGyal rtse and Lhasa was determined, and finally—most important for the British side—no foreign powers should be allowed to exercise control over parts of the Tibetan territory or to intervene in Tibetan affairs or even to send their representatives to Tibet without British consent. The terms of the treaty were phrased in ten articles. Article Nine concerns the regulations for foreign powers, consisting of five provisions:

1 For a biography describing the various facets of Younghusband's character see French 1994. For comprehensive descriptions of Younghusband's expedition to Lhasa see for instance Allen 2004 and Mehra 2005.

2 Richardson 1984: 97.

The Government of Tibet engages that, without the previous consent of the British Government,—

- (a) No portion of Thibetan territory shall be ceded, sold, leased, mortgaged or otherwise given for occupation, to any Foreign Power;
- (b) No such Power shall be permitted to intervene in Thibetan affairs;
- (c) No Representative or agents of any Foreign Power shall be admitted to Thibet;
- (d) No concession for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining or other rights, shall be granted to any Foreign Power, or the subject of any Foreign Power. In the event of consent to such Concessions being granted, similar or equivalent Concessions shall be granted to the British Government;
- (e) No Thibetan revenues, whether in kind or in cash, shall be pledged or assigned to any Foreign Power, or to the subject of any foreign power.³

Neither in this article nor in the entire treaty was there any mention of Qing authority in Tibet. By contrast, the convention seemed to turn Tibet into a further British protectorate and exclude China as a foreign power from exerting any influence in Tibet. Thus, the Qing government was displeased with this purely Tibetan-British treaty and insisted towards the British on the acknowledgement of Tibet as a Chinese dependency. Seeing that the convention was of no value in the eyes of the Qing government, the British conducted—first in Calcutta and then in Beijing—new talks with Qing representatives to get the acceptance of the Qing government for the Lhasa convention of 1904.⁴

The result was the *Convention between Great Britain and China Respecting Tibet, April 27, 1906*. Article one confirms in principle the treaty of 1904. By adding now China as a signatory it puts also responsibility for the adherence to the convention on the Qing government:⁵

I. The Convention concluded on September 7, 1904, by Great Britain and Tibet, the texts of which in English and Chinese are attached to the present Convention as an annexe, is hereby confirmed, subject to the modification stated in the declaration appended thereto, and both of the High Contracting Parties engage to take at all times such steps as may be necessary to secure the due fulfillment of the terms specified therein.

In particular, the following two articles of a total of six clarified what had aroused Qing suspicions:

II. The Government of Great Britain engages not to annex Tibetan territory or to interfere in the administration of Tibet. The Government of China also undertakes not to permit any other foreign state to interfere with the territory or internal administration of Tibet.

III. The Concessions which are mentioned in Article 9 (d) of the Convention concluded on September 7th, 1904 by Great Britain and Tibet are denied to any state or to the subject of any state other than China, but it has been arranged with

3 For the entire text of the treaty see Bell 1924: 284-287, Richardson 1984: 268-271.

4 See Deepak 2005: 25-28; Lamb 1986: 249; Richardson 1984: 93.

5 See Lamb 1986: 266.

China that at the trade marts specified in Article 2 of the aforesaid Convention Great Britain shall be entitled to lay down telegraph lines connecting with India.⁶

From the Qing perspective, these amendments confirmed that China was not to be regarded as a foreign power in Tibet and that the government of China was the highest authority in Tibetan affairs.⁷ Richardson commented on the results of the treaty of 1906 that it nullified the advantages for the British gained two years before by the treaty of Lhasa. As stated by Richardson:

We had broken down Tibetan exclusion and stubbornness, and had encouraged the deposition of the Dalai Lama by the Chinese, only to withdraw from Lhasa and later, without consulting the Tibetans, to sign terms which acknowledged China's right to preserve the integrity of Tibet, without seeking to limit Chinese interference in Tibetan internal affairs to the suzerainty she had enjoyed before 1904. We ourselves were bound not to interfere in Tibetan internal administration; and the Tibetan Government, without a proper head and with shaken morale, continued to refer all questions to the Dalai Lama, deposed and an exile in China.⁸

In their efforts to keep the Russians out of Tibet, the British had finally helped the government of China to strengthen their influence in Tibet. By the convention of 1906 the Qing government saw its position confirmed that China has sovereignty over Tibet.⁹ This also encouraged the Qing government to reduce British influence in Lhasa and to continue military campaigns into Eastern Tibet which had started the year before and by which the entire area of East Tibet should be subjected to direct Chinese rule.¹⁰

According to Richardson the "Tibetans were neither consulted nor informed about the new Anglo-Chinese Convention."¹¹ Be this as it may, as will be shown below, at least afterwards Tibetan officials had to be informed, because they were the ones who had to implement some of its provisions into practice.

The Implementation of the Treaties' Provisions Affecting Foreign Powers

Soon after, the government of China began to avail itself of the treaties to control Tibet's relations with foreigners. But how have the corresponding directives of the government of China been implemented in Tibet? Who were the local Tibetan agents who executed this policy?

These questions are answered by an official document that is currently preserved in the Archives of the Tibetan Autonomous Region in Lhasa and that was originally in the archives of the Kun bde gling monastery in Lhasa. The document is a report of the *dza sag bla ma*

6 For the entire text of the treaty see Bell 1924: 287-289, Richardson 1984: 271-273.

7 See Deepak 2005: 27.

8 Richardson 1998: 537.

9 Richardson 1998: 537.

10 Bell 1924: 88f, 91, 94, 98; Teichman 2000: 11-13, 19-34; Shaumian 2000: 141-145.

11 Richardson 1984: 94.

(*jasak lama*)¹² or manager of Kun bde gling monastery to Zhang Yintang 張蔭堂, who acted as High Commissioner for Tibet stationed in Lhasa since autumn 1906¹³ and to *amban* Lianyu 聯豫, who had resided in Lhasa from 1905 until the very end of the Qing dynasty, first as assistant *amban*, and from 1906 as *amban*.¹⁴ The document below shows the red imprint of the *dza sag bla ma*'s seal. The *dza sag bla ma* was in charge of all administrative and financial affairs of the Kun bde gling *bla brang*, including its numerous estates scattered over various parts of Tibet. The *bla brang* was the household of the head of Kun bde gling monastery, the rTa tshag *rje drung qutuqtu*.

The report was submitted on May 6th, 1907 in reply to a previous letter. Following the customs of official correspondence, the content of the previous letter is summarized in the beginning. There we learn that the Qing government in Beijing had not only instructed the authorities of various Chinese provinces to prevent foreigners from traveling to Tibet, but had also channeled these instructions to Tibetan authorities, apparently including lower administrative levels in Tibet, such as the manager of the Kun bde gling *bla brang*. The government explicitly refers to the Anglo-Tibetan and the Anglo-Chinese conventions and their provisions concerning foreigners who tried to enter Tibetan territory. The actual purpose of the letter is to offer the *dza sag bla ma*'s assurance to adhere to the instructions received from Beijing and to take care that these directives will be applied in the estates belonging to the jurisdiction areas of the Kun bde gling *bla brang*, in particular in such areas north of Lhasa.

That which I, the *dza sag bla ma* and treasurer, report to the feet of both, the investigator of Tibetan matters and great minister Krang *rd'a rin* (Zhang *daren* 張大人), who wears the head ornament of the great emperor's orders, and the great *amban* Lan (Lianyu 聯豫), who was sent by the order (of the emperor) and who analyzes Tibetan affairs:

Recently an official letter was sent by road. Concerning its content, the Great Minister Zhang had said:

In the past foreigners again and again roamed around Tibetan territory. With regard to these, in the fifth topic of the ninth article of the attached treaty between Tibet and the foreigners¹⁵ which was once more signed in the thirty second throne year of Kang zhu (Guangxu 光緒, 1875–1908), on the 4th day of the 4th month,

12 On the introduction of that clerical rank by the Qing see Rawski 1998: 254f.

13 Bell 1924: 88. Lamb (1986: 274f) described officials like Zhang Yintang as “a new phenomenon in Tibet”. “They were representatives not of the Lhasa Ambans, who continued to operate in their traditional way the old patterns of Sino-Tibetan relationships, but of the central Chinese Government in Peking.” However, Zhang stayed in Lhasa only for the short period of nine months, starting from November 27th, 1906 (Ho 2008: 214, 215). By contrast, Shaumian (2000: 146) states that he resided in Lhasa until the end of 1906, and Kolmaš (1994: 465) lists him as assistant *amban* for the period from 1906 to 1908. Ho (2008: 216) states that on December 8th, 1906, Zhang had indeed been appointed assistant *amban*, but had asked the government already two days later to annul the appointment and that, therefore, “Lianyu assumed the role of both *amban* and assistant *amban*, and Zhang was allowed to remain a wildcard official whose job it was to tilt the balance of power in the Qing's government favor.”

14 Kolmaš 1994: 465. On the activities of both figures in Lhasa and the strained relationship between them see Chen 2003: 98-100, Shaumian 2000: 145f, Ho 2008.

15 See above. Apparently this remark does not refer to point 5 or *e*, but to point 3 or *c* of article IX of the arrangement concluded by Younghusband in Lhasa 1904.

or in accordance with the foreign calendar on the 27th day of the 4th months of 1906 in the court in Beijing, it is stated that it is not allowed for any foreign country—no matter which one—to appoint and send authorities or send substitute persons and that they then travel to Tibetan territory.

Therefore, with regard to this matter a telegram has been delivered to the various branches of the government dealing with the affairs of the outside (i.e. the dependencies):

For those who deal with the affairs of the provinces, it was said by decree: Whenever in the future someone of the foreign people appears who roams around the northwestern territories of China, as long as the subject Tibet is not mentioned in the whole travel document, the treaty applies in full.

In accordance with that telegram received on the 6th day of the month, the news has been sent to the various provinces that it is not allowed to give travel documents to roam around Tibetan territory. Similarly, the great minister and the [*amban*] Lan together have said by [their] orders to Tibetan officials:

Together with the requirement to send them back, it is necessary whenever foreigners appear who go off to roam around Tibetan territory, to prevent [them already beforehand from traveling].

Correspondingly, *the dza sag bla ma* has to give importance to it in the whole area (under Kun bde gling).

Correspondingly, [we] have [already] in the past requested that in the spirit of the order foreigners who arrive via Nag tshang,¹⁶ are completely sent back. Concerning the prevention of Europeans¹⁷ who arrive in Nag chu, the council of ministers has later given an official order to the two leaders of gZhis (ka) rtsed district. In conformity with this, an official order was [also] sent to the leaders and common people in the north who belong to this very (Kun bde gling) *bla brang*.

Moreover, now, in accordance with the content of the letter which we have received from the great *ambans* together, we will satisfactorily, with great insistence, and immediately apply the order that in whatever way foreigners arrive in areas belonging to [our] *bla brang*, they all have to be sent back or prevented [from entering the area].

[We] will ask as before for compassionate advice from both great *ambans* with regard to any kind of duties.

For that purpose it was submitted on the 24th day of the 3rd month of the fire sheep [year], the thirty third throne year of Kang zhu (May 6th, 1907).

16 Nag tshang was a nomadic area, located in the northern part of gTsang province (Tshe ring don grub et al. 1991, I: 69) and to the west of gNam ru and Nag chu.

17 By the loanword *phyi gling* the Tibetans denoted the Europeans, later also in particular the English. However, in the present context it refers to Europeans or Westerners in general. On the origin of the term see Petech 1976: 224f n. 19.

Conclusion

But how—one might ask—does the policy on foreigners in Tibet differ before and after the convention of 1906?

Already in the nineteenth century Tibet had been regarded as a closed country. Thus, British India had to make use of native explorers, the famous “pundits”, to secretly collect detailed information on the topography of the Transhimalaya.¹⁸ Also eastern and north-eastern access to Tibetan territory was persistently denied.¹⁹ This situation did not change until the time when Younghusband set out on his expedition to Lhasa. In 1897 the English explorer Henry Savage Landor harrowingly experienced the Tibetan officials’ persistent refusal to let any foreigner enter Tibetan territory.²⁰ And still in January 1904 the German traveler A. Genschow, who passed through Far Eastern Tibet on his way from China to India, was informed about the rigid Tibetan denial of entering the country and about the torture and threat of death which expected those who nevertheless tried to gain access.²¹

However, before 1906 it was the Tibetan government and not Tibet’s suzerain, the government of China, which insisted on the closure of Tibet. And in doing so, the Tibetan administration even repeatedly and consciously overrode imperial orders and Chinese official documents according to which foreign travelers were permitted to enter Tibet, thus demonstrating impressively the weakness of Chinese imperial authority over Tibet at that time.²²

One might assume that at least Tibetan institutions—such as the Kun bde gling *bla brang* in Lhasa—that traditionally had strong ties with the imperial court in Beijing were willing to cooperate with the Qing government in this regard. But the opposite is demonstrated by the case of a Hungarian traveler who tried to enter Tibet in 1879 with a Chinese passport. At that time the head of Kun bde gling *bla brang*, i.e. the rTa tshag *rje drung qutuqtu*, was standing as regent at the top of the Tibetan government. By ignoring that passport as well as the authority of the *amban*, he together with the Tibetan ministers decided to deny access to Tibet.²³ Thus, it seems that it had been a general accepted attitude in Tibet to close the country for the protection of its religion, and that this autonomous decision even ranked higher than all orders of the emperor.²⁴

After 1906, during the very last years of the Qing dynasty, also the government of China strictly pursued the policy to prevent foreigners from entering Tibet. To the government of China this policy was a tool to demonstrate Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. As the above document from the Kun bde gling *bla brang* proves, this policy was at that time nevertheless readily implemented by Tibetans.

18 See for example MacGregor 1970: 251-277.

19 Petech 1976.

20 Landor 1998: 358-428.

21 Genschow 1905: 299-302.

22 Petech (1976) has collected quite a few striking cases in this regard.

23 Petech 1976: 233-236.

24 Petech 1976: 228, 245, 246.

As later reports of foreign travelers testify, the Tibetan government and its officials adhered to this policy after the fall of the Qing dynasty and then again independently from any authority of the Chinese government. Still in 1944, when Peter Aufschnaiter and Heinrich Harrer escaped from India to Tibet, the officials in Tibet's provinces were following directives of the Tibetan government not to allow foreigners to enter the country and to travel to Lhasa. And after both travelers had finally nevertheless managed to reach Lhasa, the Tibetan government did in the beginning not intend to tolerate a long stay. Only after their skills had proved beneficial to the government, they were no longer requested to leave the country.²⁵ Thus it is evident that with instructing Tibetan officials to respect the restrictions on foreigners agreed upon by the treaties of 1904 and 1906, the Qing government was not aiming to enforce a policy which already since long had been pursued by the Tibetan government. The only purpose of the order sent to Tibetan officials was the demonstration of Chinese sovereignty in Tibet. The government of China merely wanted to be perceived by Tibet and the foreign countries as the highest authority in Tibetan affairs.

APPENDIX

ID 39²⁶

Note on transliteration conventions:

(...) mark denotes the full-length rendering of contradictions in the Tibetan text.

{...} mark denotes emendations.

1. gong ma chen po'i bka'i lung gi cod pan 'chang ba bod don zhib gcod blon chen krang rd'a rin dang/_ bkas mngags bod kyi bya ba'i dbye 'byed du bzhugs pa lan am ban
2. chen po (lhan rgyas) mchog gi zhabs drung du
3. phran dza sag bla ma phyag mdzod pa nas zhu ba/_ nye char
4. rgya lam brgyud wang shu²⁷ rtsal {stsal} dgongs/ blon chen krang nas sngon phan yang rin²⁸ mi rigs bod sar yang yang skor nyul de dag kang zhu'i khri bzhugs so gnyis pa zla 4 tshes 4 nyin dang/_ phyi lo chig stong dgu brgya dang drug zla 4 tshes 27 nyin pi cing rgyal khab tu
5. bskyar 'jog bgyis pa'i bod phyi'i 'ching yig zur 'khod don tshan dgu pa'i brjod don lnga par phyi rol rgyal khag ji 'dra yin rung tshang mas dpon rigs bskos mngags dang/_ mi tshab mngags te bod sar bskyod 'gro mi chog pa gsal gshis de don
6. phyi rgya'i las don mdzad po'i sbyor khang khag la lcags skud phul te zhing chen gyi las don mdzad por bka' khyab kyi rjes sor phyi rol mi rigs nas krung go'i nub byang sa char skor nyul bskyod mi nam byung la lam yig tshang ma'i nang bod

25 Brauen 1983: 33, 82, 83; Harrer 1955: 30, 79.

26 The ID no. refers to the *Digitized Tibetan Archives Material at Bonn University*.

27 *wang shu* is the transcription of the Chinese term *wenshu* 文书, "official correspondence".

28 *yang rin* is the transcription of Chinese *yangren* 洋人, "foreigner".

7. kyi brjod cha {bya} ma 'khod pa byung phyin 'ching yig dang mthun pa yong gnas zhes zhus par 'di zla'i tshes 6 nyin leags skud phebs gsal zhing chen khag la bod sar skor nyul du thon rgyu'i lam yig sprad mi chog pa'i gnas tshul btang ba dang
8. de mtshungs blon chen lan dang mnyam sbrel gyi bod dpon rigs la bkod khyab kyis bod sar skor nyul du bskyod mi'i yang rin nam byung la phyir slog dgos pa'i chab cig bkag 'geg dgos rgyu zhes phebs pa ltar dza sag bla ma nas rgya
9. khyab tshang mar brtsi 'jog dgos rgyu zhes phebs pa ltar sngon du nag tshang brgyud 'byor pa'i phyi rol mi rigs bka' don phyir slog thus {'thus} tshang zhus pa dang/_ de rjes nag chur 'byor pa'i phyi gling mi rigs bkag 'geg skor bka' shag
10. nas gzhis rtse rdzong sbrel la bka' rgya gnang 'dug pa dang phyogs mthun 'di kha bla brang khongs kyi byang rigs 'go dmangs thog bkod rgya btang zin pa ma zad/_ da lam am ban chen po (lhan rgyas) nas wang shu ji ltar gnang 'byor dgongs
11. don yang rin mi rigs bla khongs sa gnas ji 'drar 'byor rung phyir slog bkag 'geg thus {'thus} tshang dgos rgyu'i bkod khyab thus {'thus} nan 'phral du zhus chog par am ban chen po (lhan rgyas) nas byed sgo gang ci'i thad la sngar bzhin bka' slob
12. thugs rje che ba zhu rgyur/_ de'i ched kang zhu'i khri bzhugs so gsum pa/_ me lug zla 3 tshes 24 la phul/

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