WILEY

Chinese Frontiers of India: Discussion

Author(s): Francis Younghusband, Herbert Thirkell White and Claude White

Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Mar., 1912), pp. 218-223

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1778434>

Accessed: 13-06-2016 21:51 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Wiley, The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The Geographical Journal

of justice, and law, and order, of well-protected trade and agricultural prosperity, for the feuds and individualism and poverty that have marked the tribal belt in the past.

India has held out the hand of friendship on all sides, has tried to carry into her Chinese relations that broad reasonableness without which nothing can be accomplished. The Chinese should prove the best of neighbours for us, and there is, I think, every reason to welcome their administrative advance, so long as it continues in a spirit of neighbourliness and good accord, laying aside small prejudices and striving for the greater good of all the frontier peoples. These Chinese have an undoubted liking for us, be they tribesmen or the real sons of Han, for they know that they may expect from the English fair treatment and just dealings, and in travelling through many provinces of China I have never once been met by a discourteous word or an unfriendly action from the people.

As there is no dream of aggression from the direction of India, so I believe that there need be no danger to us in the recent Chinese advance, no yellow peril on the Indian borderland. Events, however, are moving apace, and we are reminded of Lord Curzon's warning that "Frontiers are the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of peace or war, of life or death to nations." It may be hoped that China will realize the value of British friendship in her future ambitions as in her past sorrows, and that she will be willing to meet us in a fair and reasonable spirit on the far-reaching Indian frontiers of Yun-nan and Tibet.

The PRESIDENT (before the paper): The reader of the paper to-night, Mr. Archibald Rose, is going to lecture to us about the frontiers of China and Great Britain in Asia. Mr. Archibald Rose has spent the last twelve years in the Consular Service of Great Britain and China. He was in the siege of the Peking Legations, from which he emerged, I am glad to say, unscathed. He subsequently travelled in Mongolia, and then marched across China from Peking to Sechuan in 1902. He spent two years there, in the course of which he travelled over a great deal of Western China, and came in touch with the frontier problems of China and her relations with her far-Western dependencies. For the last three years Mr. Rose has been stationed as Consul at Tengyueh, on the Burma-China frontier, at a time when the expansion of China in a westerly direction has brought her administrative border to the natural but largely undelimited line which is actually the north-eastern frontier of India. He has had many opportunities of moving about, and of establishing friendly relations with the tribesmen who are wedged into the corner where Tibet and China meet. He has just returned home to this country, having travelled by way of India and Central Asia. Finally, I may add that he received a C.I.E. among the recent honours that were bestowed at the Durbar.

The PRESIDENT (after the paper): I might feel tempted to follow our lecturer this evening in his description of the interesting countries which he has visited, as illustrated by the admirable slides that he threw upon the screen, and which recall incidents that are indelibly fixed in my own memory. But I prefer to say a few words to you on the vastly more important subject which has been raised by his paper, and which he has treated not only with knowledge, but with discretion.

The most remarkable politico-geographical fact of the modern world is the degree to which, in Asia, and much more in Africa, frontiers are growing together, and parts of the world which have hitherto been remote and regarded as unapproachable, are falling under the influence of this or that great Power. "No man's lands" are rapidly disappearing. Independence is giving way to protectorates and spheres of influence. Boundaries which a few years ago were fluctuating, or traditional, or in some cases non-existent, are becoming fixed, regular, and defined. Probably within the lifetime of most of us within this room there will scarcely be a portion of the globe over which the flag of some substantial Power will not fly. Hitherto this process has been in the main due to the advance of great European Powers. In Asia, they have been Great Britain, Russia, and France. But the lecturer this evening has taken us, so to speak, into another world, and has exhibited to us for the first time, at any rate during the past century, China as a growing, a pushing, an advancing, even an aggressive Power. Now although, as he pointed out to us, there may have been evidences of such an inclination on the part of China at times in her past history, broadly speaking this is a new phenomenon that he has described. It is one which it is desirable that we in this country who are interested in our Eastern possessions should regard with a watchful, although certainly not with a jealous eye. Mr. Rose, in his paper as he has read it, and still more in the form in which it will be published, has taken us round the Indian frontier and shown us the different points at which we are already or presently will be in actual touch with China. On the west there is the common frontier of the Pamirs. Then there is the frontier beyond the Karakoram. Proceeding eastwards, we come to the points where Chinese territory abuts very closely upon the states of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan. This brings us in contact with the Tibetan problem. Further east we come to the Chinese frontiers on the borders of Assam, and finally to the frontier of Burma and China in Yunnan. A few years ago over the whole of this stretch of territory there was a belt of petty states or wild tribesmen between these two great Powers. In the majority of places it still exists, but it is becoming contracted, and we have to face the fact that in a very short time it will in all probability disappear.

The two most conspicuous scenes of China's advance are in the first place Tibet, and secondly the Yunnan frontier. This is not the occasion on which it would be proper for me to make a speech about Tibet. But I greatly regret that China has been encouraged by our action or inaction to resume and tighten, I may even say to re-create, what was only a nominal suzerainty over Tibet; and I think it an unfortunate thing that when, owing to the success of Sir Francis Younghusband, the Tibetans had been left with so friendly a disposition towards ourselves, they should have been allowed once again to fall into a position of subjection, if not of servitude, to another Power. I pass on from that to the boundaries of Burma.

This is no new question, for during the whole time I was in India one of the minor problems that occupied my attention was the frontier question of China on the borders of Burma. Attempts at delimitation were proceeding throughout that period. There were, however, difficulties, because we had to deal with Chinese officials who were left to act much as they pleased—and who were usually aggressive and sometimes impossible. Again, troublesome incidents used to occur in the course of contact with the wild tribes, and I remember that two of our own officers were murdered. The Government of India always set before themselves that which I am sure they are pursuing at the present moment, namely, the desirability of fixing a boundary which should be identical with the physical watershed.

There is a third point on this frontier of which I will only say this, that I hope

that at no time will there be any misunderstanding about the fact that Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan are states which fall within the political frontier of India, and that in no circumstances whatsoever would any other Power be allowed to tamper with them.

In the concluding parts of his paper Mr. Rose spoke of the future that lies before us in those regions, and he employed terms with which I find myself in entire concurrence. I venture to lay down as a general proposition to guide us that it will be wise for our Government, wherever we can, to fix definite frontiers with China, and, as a necessary corollary, not to allow those frontiers when determined to be encroached upon or impaired. It does not necessarily follow, if you fix a frontier, that you need carry your administrative functions right up to it. It follows no more in the extreme north-east than in the extreme north-west, where, as you know, our administration in some cases stops far short of the boundary which is the line of political influence. Although I have often heard British and Indian Governments accused of aggressive designs, I have never yet myself met a Government which was anxious to extend its rule over turbulent mountain tribes, and I should say that all that we want in fixing a frontier is that it should be recognized and kept by the Power that is upon the other side, and that the tribes which lie upon our side, while recognizing our political influence, should refrain from intriguing across the border or from harrying those who are within our political boundary. Those are the general conditions that we endeavour to create upon the frontier, and I hope that a steady policy of delimitation will be pursued by those responsible during the years that lie before us.

I agree with the lecturer in saying there is no reason why there should be any quarrel between ourselves and the Chinese over these matters. The general temper of that people is affable. Their respect for the English is greater than that of any other foreign power. The surest way, however, to avoid a quarrel is to show decision and firmness in the early stages; to fix your frontier and make it quite clear that you will not allow it to be infringed.

Finally, Mr. Rose spoke in language of enthusiasm and also of some pathos about that band of young officers of whom he is one, and who have done and are doing such magnificent work on the borders of the Indian Empire. My spirit also thrills within me whenever I think of those men, and certainly I have never been more proud in my life than when in any capacity I have felt that I was leading or inspiring them to good work. Mr. Rose mentioned among them Mr. George Litton—a great loss to the Indian Empire—a man of fine character and eminent public service. I would go as far as to say that if I were asked at the present moment where is the finest work being done by Englishmen, I would not point to the British House of Commons, nor even to the cricket-field at Adelaide (although pretty good work is being done there), but I would look to the frontiers of the Indian Empire, and to the work that is being accomplished by Mr. Rose and people like him.

The last point that occurs to me is this—Can there be a greater mistake than to suppose that the work of exploration is over? Is it not quite clear, when you follow Mr. Rose's journeys, and still more when you study the map, that there are in those parts of Asia alone hundreds of thousands of square miles of interesting and unknown territory still waiting to be visited and explored? It is my conviction that there is enough work for travellers and explorers for the next hundred years to come. I believe myself that successive Presidents of the Geographical Society will, for the next fifty years at any rate, have the pleasure of handing our Medals to geographers whose services will be at least as great, if not perhaps as showy, as those who have received them in the past. And when these fifty years of

geographical exploration have come to an end, I think it will take the geographers of those days at least another hundred years to digest all that this country will have swallowed in the preceding century.

I will now ask Sir Francis Younghusband to say a few words, and before he rises may I take the opportunity of congratulating him on what I hope is a complete recovery from a very dangerous accident and a very serious operation.

Sir FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND : Mr. Rose, in the extremely interesting and valuable paper only a portion of which he has been able to read to us this evening, dwelt upon the great and impressive personality and vitality of the Chinese, and the whole of his paper was a practical illustration of the effects of the personality and vitality of this remarkable people. Wherever you see a Chinaman, you are always deeply impressed by the strength of his individuality. If you meet him on the far borders of his empire, in Turkestan, Mongolia, or Tibet, he is always precisely the same as he is at the heart of his empire, and with that strength of personality he impresses to a very remarkable extent those tribesmen and frontier people with whom he is brought in contact. The vitality of the race is equally remarkable. When I used to look at those thousands of Chinamen amongst whom I travelled, I was always noting to myself that there appeared to be a regular sea of latent possibilities in them. For years and years they remain perfectly calm, and not a ripple appears on the surface; yet you feel all the time that underneath this calm there are immense vital forces ready to break into operation at a moment's notice, and I think at the present time we are in the face of one of these convulsions which occasionally break forth from the Chinese millions. At these times they throw up some great personality, and in the case of Tibet in the few recent years we have seen that very remarkable man, Chao-erh-feng (who, I believe, has recently unfortunately been murdered), who certainly showed a very conspicuous ability, force of character, and energy, first in reasserting whatever Chinese influence there used to be over those semi-independent tribes between China and Tibet, and eventually in asserting a regular Chinese domination over Tibet itself.

Well, when there is on one side of this magnificent natural barrier of the Himalayas 400 millions of Chinese with all these latent possibilities in them, we on the other side who have in our charge 300 millions of another type of Asiatics must necessarily take the profoundest interest in that most conspicuous natural feature on the globe, the Himalayas, and the watershed which roughly forms the frontier, from where the three empires of Russia, China, and India meet for 3000 miles down to Burma. For myself personally I have always taken a very special interest in this frontier, firstly because I happen to have been born on it, and secondly because I have spent the best years of my life, first of all in exploring, and afterwards in conducting our relations with the various peoples who inhabit it on both sides. We have, I think, now acquired a very fair knowledge, from the political, military, and business point of view, of this frontier. We know pretty well the portions across which no human being can possibly pass; we know those other parts over which it is just possible to scramble; and we know those others, of which some very remarkable pictures were given by Mr. Rose, and where small forces can, with difficulty, pass along. We know also the caravan tracks. The barrier, though a great one, is not absolutely impregnable. From the Chinese side there has been from time to time incursions to the Indian side, and from the Indian side into the Chinese. But while we have this information on the military and political aspect, there is, as Lord Curzon has very justly remarked, a very great scope still for geographical exploration. Only last year Dr. Longstaff related to us how he had discovered a mountain which has proved to be 24,000 feet in height. All the tract

round the mountain, on the far side of the Karakoram range, at the source of the Oprang and Yarkand rivers, has still to be explored. There is also the great geographical problem of the junction of the Sangpo river and the Brahmaputra to be solved, and there is the further problem of the sources of the Salwin. For many years there is ample field for geographical exploration on the far frontiers of India.

Sir HERBERT THIRKELL WHITE: I am very glad to have your permission to say a few words this evening, for of the important part of the frontiers which Mr. Rose has so admirably described I have some recent knowledge. I was familiar with the Burmese frontier of China both before and after the establishment of the Consul-Generalship at Yunnan-fu and the Consulate at Tengyueh. And I gladly bear testimony to the great improvement that has been effected in our frontier relations, and to the loyal and capable assistance which we in Burma have always received from Mr. Rose and his distinguished predecessors, among whom I may mention Mr. Litton, whose premature death was a loss to the Empire, Mr. Wilton, Mr. Sly, and Mr. Ottewill. Although, of course, in no sense under the Government of India or the Government of Burma, advice and assistance have always been voluntarily and most readily given to us, and many measures of value to Burma have been initiated by the Consular officers. It is by their help that frontier disputes are now settled amicably at periodical meetings with Chinese officials. It was owing to their good offices that we were able to survey the projected line of railway from Bhamò to Tengyueh. And I venture to hazard the prophecy that this is the route by which some day Burma will be linked with China by rail. It is mainly due to the hearty co-operation with the Chinese frontier officers that our relations with the Chinese have of late years been exceedingly cordial and satisfactory. I am sure that this good tradition is being and will be maintained. Mr. Rose has given us a characteristically modest account of his journey to Pienma. It was a very hazardous and difficult journey, and it was of extreme value in connection with the settlement of our frontier on the north-east of Burma, which it is not desirable that I should more than mention. On the whole, during the twenty-six years that have elapsed since our occupation of Upper Burma we have found the Chinese good neighbours. Yunnanese particularly we welcome as settlers and traders. There is need, if I may discreetly say so, of constant and watchful care against attempts at encroachment, but so long as that care is duly exercised, so far as the Burmese portion is concerned the order and peace of our frontier will be maintained.

The PRESIDENT: We have here present one whom I think you would like to hear, Mr. Claude White, who is our greatest authority on that part of the Indian frontier which embraces Bhutan and Sikkim. He was in charge of our political dealings with those states at the time of the Tibetan campaign, and did more than anybody else to secure the happy relations that now unite us with the rulers of those states.

Mr. CLAUDE WHITE: I have not much to say on this subject. The only part of the frontier I know anything about is that of Sikkim and Bhutan, and in those two countries I had very few communications with Chinese officials, and had very little to do with the Chinese generally. As Lord Curzon said, these two countries must be, and always will be, I hope, quite distinct, and always be under the protection of the British Government, and not under that of China. I am also sorry that the Tibetans have been brought so much under the influence of the Chinese. Personally I should have liked to have seen them more independent, and, as Lord Curzon has said, more of a "buffer" state. The Bhutanese have taken up our side entirely, and there is no question of the Sikkimese. I believe the Chinese have made some

overtures to Bhutan and Nepal, which have been rejected by these states, and I am very glad they have been. The Chinese should not be allowed on the Indian side of the Himalayas.

The PRESIDENT: We will conclude with a vote of thanks to Mr. Rose for his excellent paper.

EXPLORATION IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS NORTH OF THE YELLOWHEAD PASS.*

By J. NORMAN COLLIE, Ph.D., LL.D., F.R.S., F.R.G.S., etc.

THE part of the Rocky mountains, that run north through what is now the Dominion of Canada, have only in the last twenty-five years been made accessible to the ordinary traveller. In 1886 the trans-continental railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway, was opened. Before that time it would have taken many months journeying across the prairie to reach even the outlying foothills, whilst from Vancouver on the Pacific it is impossible to say how long would have been spent fighting with the canyons of the West, that are filled often with the densest forest, and down which the waters of countless rivers run.

The history of this "Great Lone Land" is practically the history of the fur trade; of late years the prospector has wandered through many of the valleys leading up to the main chain, but still most of the country lying within 20 miles of the watershed is almost unknown. No human beings live there, Indians seldom penetrate into these mountain fastnesses, the land is deserted. It is not a country that appeals to the settler; narrow valleys filled with pine forests, with swamps or muskegs; rapid rivers, and not too much arable land; it would yield no crops, neither is there grass except in a few isolated spots. The snow, too, begins to lie in October, and it is not till the following May or June that it clears away.

The first man who crossed the continent in these latitudes was Sir Alexander Mackenzie in 1793; he crossed the mountains at the headwaters of the Peace river. From 1799–1814, Alexander Henry, one of the hunters of the North-West Company, kept a diary of his journeys in Western Canada; † in it one can find much information of the wild life of the pioneers of those days. During the same period David Thompson collected an immense amount of knowledge about the same districts. He discovered the source of the Columbia river; he was the first to cross the mountains by more than one pass; but his greatest achievement was "a Map of the North-West Territory of the Province of Canada." In 1809 Simon Fraser and Jules Quesnel explored the Fraser river to its mouth.

* Royal Geographical Society, January 29, 1912. Map, p. 312.

† 'The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry, Fur-trader of the North-West Company, and of David Thompson, Official Geographer of the Same Company.' Edited by Elliott Coues. 3 vols. 1897.