

From,

The British Trade Agent,

Gartok, Western Tibet.

To,

The Superintendent Hill States,

Simla.

No. 85

Dated, Gartok, the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1913.

Sir,

With reference to the Government of India letter No. 51 E.B. dated the 9<sup>th</sup> January 1913 sent with the Punjab Government endorsement No. 130 dated the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1913, I have the honour to submit the following report regarding the levy of a salt tax from the Bhutanese subjects in Western Tibet.

2. Before dealing with the salt tax it will be interesting to know how and when these possessions in Western Tibet came under the Bhutan Durbar. I have personally seen the Darchan Head Lama (Bhutanese) and his people and obtained every possible information on the subject. I also obtained the Garpons' views on the points. Therefore my findings should be considered as accurate.

3. It is said that many centuries ago the Raja of Ladakh Singia-Namgial had no male issue. Having heard that one Padma Karba Dongon Charigba Gese, a very big Lama in Bhutan could after such prayers to the Bhudhist Almighty God and the God being pleased with the Lama's prayers would grant the Raja a son. The Raja thereupon sent for the Lama, the latter could not accept the former's invitation himself but accredited his pupil to Leh. The pupil offered prayers and chanted

hymns by whose influence a male issue was born to the Raja. Being pleased the Raja granted the following Jagir to the Lama. One Gonpa with some people in Lahaul, one Gonpa with some people in Zankhar, one Gonpa with some people in Leh and certain Gonpas near Kailas with their people. Lahaul, Ladakh, Zankhar and Western Tibet was at that time under the Raja of Ladakh. I have seen the Katan (Sanad of muafi) by the Raja of Ladakh, it is still in the possession of the Head Lama of Darchen. It is written in Tibetan language and duly sealed by the Raja, by which the Lama was entitled to exercise full control upon the Gonpas and their people who were exempted from paying any other dues except to the Lama.

4. The Lama and his descendants exercised full powers during the sovereignty of the Ladakh Raja dynasty over these parts, but when the Western Tibet was conquered by the Lhasa Government, their possessions remained undisturbed. The story of the conquest is also very interesting and goes as follows. The fifth incarnation of the Dalai Lama dreamt one night that if certain lama in the Tashi Lunpo Gonpa be sent with sufficient forces to Western Tibet that country could be subjugated and made a Tibetan province. Thereupon the Lama of the Tashi Lunpo monastery by name Geldan Chhiang was summoned by the then Dalai Lama and the dream was disclosed to him. Galdan Chhiang, being an inhabitant of Sokpo country (at present under Russia Government) bowed to the Dalai Lama and started on his mission. He first of all went to his own country and collected as many as ten thousand fighters and then came to Western Tibet. The Raja of Gadakh was very powerful at that time and it was not easy for Geldan Chhiang to fight with the Raja of Ladakh. The Raja of Bashahr was also very powerful at that time. He also with forces came to Western Tibet for the purpose of having a bath in the Holy Lake of Mansarwar, (very probably his name was Raja Kehar Singh. He apparently came with forces to conquer the Western Tibet) where he met Geldan Chhiang and conspired

to have a joint attack upon the Raja of Ladakh. After a bloody battle the Raja of Ladakh was defeated and treaty was signed at Tashigang. Damchok was fixed as a boundary between Tibetan Government and the Raja of Ladakh. A friendly treaty was also signed between Bashahr State and Tibet, by that splendid treaty the Bashahries still have free trade rights in Tibet.

5. Geldan Chhiang not only signed treaties with the Raja of Ladakh and Bashahr but also recommended that the possessions under the Bhutanese Lama should remain the same as during the sovereignty of the Ladakh Raja. The Dalai Lama (5<sup>th</sup>) thereupon granted a splendid Katan to the Raja of Bhutan that his subject Lama in Western Tibet would exercise the same powers upon the Gonpas and their people as during the sovereignty of the Raja of Ladakh and they would enjoy immunity from all taxation. There is also another subsequent Katan from, the Dalai Lama which supports the former Katan.

6. In former time these possessions were controlled by a certain Gonpa in Bhutan but it is only a recent origin that the Maharaja of Bhutan took direct reign of the Gonpa and their people. A Lama is appointed for a certain period who remains at Darchen at the foot of the Mt. Kailas. The Lama exercises only religious duties while the Temporal powers are entrusted to a Chhagjud (Head steward). This official is also appointed by the Bhutan durbar for a certain period with the Lama and is the chief executive officer for these Bhutanese possessions. No fixed Revenue goes to the Bhutan Durbar but a sum of about Rs.400/- is casually sent, say after one or two years. No regular revenue is derived from the people. They give free beggar to any official of the Lama and tend cattle of the Gonpas without any compensation and do what service is required to the Gonpas. These possessions are as follows: -----

(I) In the Chaprang District – Sumar containing one Gonpa and 15 families.

Half village of Mayang containing some 8 Do.

Jangthang containing one Gonpa with three Lamas and some fields.

(II) In the Gartok District – Sirlip and Kozong containing one Gonpa and 20 families.

(III) In the Kailas District – Darchen and Rubang containing some 15 families and two Gonpas.

Niandi and Juntilphu containing 11 Lamas and two Gonpas.

Kanjak and Chhukio containing some 30 families.

Chhakra containing 6 families.

Karpon containing some 50 families.

(IV) In the Purang District – Ringong containing 12 families.

Dao Do. 7 families.

Khoo Do. 6 families.

Humle Do. 12 families.

Except in purang the people live on keeping sheep and goats, there is sufficient cultivation in Purang. The people do compare favourably with their brethren under the Lhasa Government as the latter have to pay larger free begar and other taxes. The people in the Kailas District bear doubtful characters as they are said to be dacoits or co-dacoits.

7. I have obtained the Garpons' views on the subject, the history of the salt tax is as follows. Some six years ago the Imperial Chinese Resident at Lhasa, Len Amban by name, issued a circular letter to all officials

and people of Tibet which the Garpons very courteously handed over to me. The letter runs as follows "owing to the increase of expenses on the military officers in Tibet it has become necessary to devise means to meet them by extra taxation. The salt which is so abundantly found in Tibet and which is so necessary to every one and which can be collected easily without any cost and the Tibetan Government derive no benefit from it. It has therefore been decided after full consultation with the Tibetan officials and after giving our full consideration to appoint tax collectors and to levy salt tax at the rate of Rs.-/8/- per Geneva (Chinese weight equivalent to about 2- maunds) from the sellers and not from the purchasers etc. etc. etc.." The letter is sealed by the Amban and the Thi-Rimpoche, then Regent of Lhasa.

8. The sellers are all Tibetans except these Bhutanese and some Ladakhies, who also take salt direct from the mines. The purchasers are all British Indian subjects. It eventually and indirectly affects our trade. As the better and cheaper Indian salt is finding its markets on the Indian border, therefore it was never strongly protested though references will be found in my letters Nos. 36 dated the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1912, 144 dated the 30<sup>th</sup> November 1912 (Para 5) and 59 dated the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1913. The tax is collected at the marts and not on the mines. Since then the tax has been collected from all the Tibetan sellers, the Bhutanese subjects paid only for three years and then they objected on the ground that they could not be forced to pay any tax as provided in the Katans. The whole tax thus collected from the Bhutanese subjects is said to be Rs. 3000/-. The Darchen Lama and his people ask for this sum to be refunded to them.

9. The Garpons accept the existence of the Katans but say that there are many other similar Katans with some Gonpas and leading people of Tibet which were ignored by the Tibetan Government without any reason and similarly the Katans with the Bhutanese were ignored by the Lhasa authorities. My conclusions thus are that the Lhasa authorities

had no right to with-draw the privileges thus granted to the Bhutanese subjects in Western Tibet under proper authority without negotiating with the Bhutan Durbar.

10. As this question will go up for the Dalai Lama's consideration, I therefore take this opportunity of objecting to this tax on salt and borax generally as against the Lhasa convention (article IV). The tax was an invention of the Chinese brain to meet the military expenses. As there are no Chinese military expenses now, therefore the Lhasa authorities have no justification for maintaining the tax. I am told that about Rs. 15000/- are thus collected in Western Tibet. This sum could beneficially be spent in Western Tibet in providing facilities to trade in the shape of maintaining Police at the marts etc. and in that case the authorities at Lhasa would have been considered justified in maintaining the tax but this is not the case and the sum thus collected goes to Lhasa for other purposes.

11. I am sorry I could not get the copies of the Katans (Sanads of muafi) but I am told by the Darchen Lama that they are being sent to the Maharaja of Bhutan.

I have etc.,

British Trade Agent.

(D. Ram.)

From

Lt: Colonel C.P. Egerton,  
Superintendent Hill States,

Simla.

To

The Hon'ble Mr. C.A. Barron, C.I.E., I.C.S.,  
Chief Secretary to Government, Punjab.

Lahore.

Dated Simla the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1913

Sir,

In reply to your endorsement No: 130.Pol: dated the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1913. I have the honour to submit for the information of Government a copy of a letter No: 85 dated the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1913 received from the British Trade Agent, Gartok reporting on the matter of the alleged levy by the Tibetan Authorities of a salt tax from Bhutanese subjects residing in the vicinity of Mount Kailas in Western Tibet.

I have etc...

Sd/ C.P. Egerton

Lt: Colonel

Superintendent Hill States.

No: 2700

Office of the Superintendent Hill States, Simla.

Dated Simla the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1913.

Copy with copy of enclosure forwarded to the Manager, Bashahr State,  
Kotgarh, for information.

Superintendent Hill States.



From,

Lala Devi Das,  
British Trade Agent,  
Gartok, Western Tibet.

The Superintendent Hill States.

Simla.

No. 119

Dated Gargunsa, the 10<sup>th</sup>. December 1913.

Sir.

I have the honour to submit my following General Annual Report on the administration of the Agency for the Government's consideration and information: -

2. GENERAL. – During the year under report I visited almost all the Trade Marts and Trade Centres from Rutok to Taklakot and kept myself quite informed of all the grievances of our traders viz, Ladakhies, Lahaulies, Bashahries, Garhwalies, Joharies, Darmies, Bivasies and Chaudasies who are the principal traders of Western Tibet. I can say confidently that I found no general grievance worthy of mentioning which is a hindrance in the trade or any new restriction imposed by the Tibetan Officials in the way of British Trade. Although I dealt with numerous petty complaints of our traders which were locally decided and removed by my interviewing the Local Authorities to the entire satisfaction of the parties concerned and the Officials in whose jurisdiction those complaints were made. The Tibetan Officials in

Western Tibet high and low are all traders and their income chiefly lie in interfering in our trade and it is very difficult for an Agent to remain popular with them while performing his duties honestly and consciously in checking them at every step and keeping their income low in not allowing them to impose restrictions in trade which are so generally associated with the Tibetan Officials. However by tact and influence I kept them in bounds and at the same time not losing my popularity with them, but my relations with the Tibetan people remained exceptionally cordial. The old prejudices against the foreign interferences are now dying and a keen desire is being felt among the Tibetans for the British intervention into the internal affairs of Tibet. The two vacancies in the post of Ponbo have this year been filled up. In the case of Namru, the post has been given to the grand-son of the deceased Ponbo (daughter) instead of a son of the deceased, as the grandson was the nominee of the deceased and the son also did not object to his nephew being appointed as Ponbo of Namru. The present Ponbo owns many ponies, yaks, sheep and goats and the Garpons were very jealous of his fortunes and they flogged him on a very trifling matter just before his appointment to his present post. In the case of Chhumur ti the post was given to one of the servants of the deceased but before he was so appointed the garpons saw that the property to be made over to him was great therefore they took a good share themselves out of the deceased's property and took the Chaprang Jongpon into their confidence by giving him also equal share in the bargain so that no complaint may reach Lhasa, in this way they each took away 20 ponies and other things, in this way 60 ponies (mares) were taken away from Chhumurti. The present Ponbo was left to prey upon the people and thus to collect his fortunes. The deceased Ponbo was a very richman, on his death Rs. 10,000/- were sent by the Garpons to the Dalai Lama when he was in Darjeeling and His Holiness very much appreciated the Garpons actions at that time. These are one of the causes which keep the people in poverty and thus the population is being decreased by dire starvation.

3. LAWLESSNESS. – The chief event of the year is the tragic murder of the Chhagjud of the Bhutan Durbar in Western Tibet. Some Darbies were looted near Kailas by the dacoits and Rs. 600/- were stolen. The matter was reported at once to the Garpons and they were asked to make enquiries into the case. They expressed their habitual helplessness in the matter. In reality the Garpons are quite unable to deal with the dacoits in Western Tibet and they cannot protect the property and lives of our traders even in the Marts. The promise of the Lhasa Authorities of maintaining the Police for the Marts and to protect the life and property of our traders will remain unfulfilled, therefore, in this respect I venture to suggest that the District Officers of the British India Northern Border Land be required to be more liberal in issuing licenses for fire Arms to the traders in their respective Districts. A Tibetan in Western Tibet when travelling is seen armed with gun, sword, spear and large knife. The British Indian Traders are not thus armed and therefore they very easily fall in the hands of dacoits.

4. DUES. – No new duty has been imposed upon the British Trade but the existing ones remained as before. The Tibetan Officials contend that according to Article 4 of the Lhasa Convention they are not required to abolish the existing dues, by that Article they are forbidden to levy new duties. This was fully discussed and reported by Mr. Collet last year and is still under consideration of the Government of India. Under this head I venture to point out that British Indian Trade with Tibet is still in infant stage any tax however lenient it may be, will jeopard it and the chances of its development will be gone for ever. The Tibetans are giving no facility in our trade, therefore they are not justified in imposing any duty on the trade either old or new.

5. TRADE ROUTES. – Last year I proposed that the existing paths between Gartok and Shipkee should be repaired by the local villagers by giving them some stipend, but unfortunately this moderate proposal was not sanctioned by the Government. I am still of opinion that without

good routes the trade will hardly develop. I presume that by the Simla Conference on the Tibetan affairs the Agency will have the privileges of constructing roads and building Rest Houses. Much depends of course upon the completion of the Hindustan Tibet Road when it will reach Shipkee the next thing then will be to extend it further towards Gartok. Though much difficulty will be experienced in constructing it along the Sutlej up to Nun, but if once completed it will no doubt prove a throughout year route between India and Tibet and will be one of those happy memories which resulted from the Indian connections with the Great Britain. It will then prove a real Hindustan Tibet Road. In Major Powell's report I find two alternative estimates from Namgia to Shipkee. In this respect I venture to suggest that the road along the Sutlej will prove of greater service than across the Shipkee pass which remains closed till June and July and even then it is very difficult to cross. As the remaining portion of the Hindustan Tibet Road will be constructed from the next year, this suggestion of mine will prove useful to the Public Works Department Authorities as I have ..... intimate knowledge of the Passes between India and Western Tibet.

6. IMPORT TRADE INTO INDIA. – Under this head, the trade in borax and salt is decreasing as pointed out last year. The trade in Wool and Pasham will slightly increase this year. Last winter the snow fell in due time which gave good grazing in the Summer and hence the increase in the number of sheep and goats and good out put in Wool and Pasham. The demand of wool is on the increase but nothing is being done by the Tibetans to meet it, therefore, the result is that the prices are going very high on account of hard competition between the traders. Much can be done in this trade in quality if not in quantity by introducing into Tibet the fine species of the Australian sheep. During the year the Garpons examined almost all gold mines in Western Tibet and they informed me that the gain in the gold mine is very little and they reported the same

fact to the Lhasa Authorities, therefore, in this trade also the chances of future development are very few.

7. EXPORT TRADE FROM INDIA. – Under this head I like to mention Indian Tea only. The Chinese Teas reached Western Tibet in a very small quantity this year. The Kamaun Tea fetched good prices. The Almora traders are quite alive to the situation thus caused and it is expected that Kamaun Tea will reach in greater quantity next year. The Kangra Tea Planters' Association did not send me any sample they made on the Tibetan fashion. Through the kind assistance of the Manager Bashahri State some dust and green tea reached Western Tibet. Though not being on the Tibetan fashion it was still sold though did not fetch good prices. I expect that Kangra Tea will also reach Western Tibet in greater quantity next year. The Bashahri Traders are very reluctant in this respect but if the Association will open their store at Rampur in April and May and advance the tea to the traders, the trade will no doubt develop in the very near future. I have succeeded in inducing the Tibetan Officials of not putting any tax on it.

8. OTHER INTERESTS. – The Bashahri and Ladakhi Traders keep ponies, yaks, sheep and goats in Tibet and they are increasing their flocks as it is very lucrative business. In the case of certain traders the sheep and goats are in thousands. If the traders will increase their animals in Tibet as they will doubtless increase, the result of this development will be a check in the always increasing high prices of wool. The Bashahr State is rightly encouraging their traders in this respect by advancing them money without interest.

9. AGENCY QUARTERS. – The Government of India in their letter No. 1422, E.B. dated the 27<sup>th</sup>. June 1913, expressed a hope that the Agency Quarters would have been built by the summer this year. When the above letter reached me I enquired about it from the Garpons. They informed me that some one was coming from Lhasa to build the

Quarters. But none has come up to this time and nothing has been done in this respect as yet and the Agent and his staff are left in the same deplorable condition under the unbearable and pitiable circumstances. The Government will now fully realize how much truth there lies in the assurances and promises of Tibetans and their attitude in the matter.

10. AGENT'S POWERS. – Under the Tibetan Trade Regulations the British Trade Agent has powers to decide cases in which the defendants or accused are British subjects. The Government of India in their letter No. P.O. 103, dated the 11<sup>th</sup>. December 1903, remarked that the Agent should not decide such cases unless he had been specially empowered to do so. This has caused much harm and the traders are still flogged by the Tibetan Officials even for trifling offences. To safeguard the interests of the traders and to save them from the clutches of the Tibetan Officials I venture to suggest that the time has come when the Government should consider this very important question. Though much depends upon the personality, influence and tact of the Agent but the Agent having powers under the Regulations will be quite different from the Agent having no powers especially in such a wild country as Western Tibet. The primary duties should remain with the Garpons, they should only be required to send up such cases as fall under the Regulations to the Agent for final approval. The Tibetan Laws will take many years before they will be similar to those of the British. Personally I am not in favour of the Agent's being empowered under the Regulations as it will increase his responsibilities but I submit this proposal in the interest of the .....