

From National Archives of India

Section Heading: Foreign & Political Department

[manuscript]

Sub: Rectification of Sikkim-Bhutan boundary

From: Surveyor General of India

Requests that the boundary in question be marked on the proof forwarded.

The history of the case can be concisely stated. In order to secure that Bhutan territory should not march with Sikkim territory, the Bhutan Govt was induced to cede to the British a mountain tract between the Teesta and Jaldhaka or Di chu rivers. By an extraordinary series of errors this tract was never claimed as British territory and the boundary of the Darjiling district instead of, as was intended, following the Di Chu river and including the ceded tract, was laid considerably further south, so that the object of interposing an arm of British territory between Sikkim and Bhutan was never attained.

2. The above was not the only error committed in this locality. The Survey of India map of 1885 shows that the watershed of the lower Di Chu was included in Bhutan, whereas the map of 1916 gives the whole of this watershed to Sikkim. The Survey Dept letter of 1904 to some extent explains how this change came about.

In 1904 it was recognized that Bhutan had justifiable claims to the tract in question. In 1912 a boundary dispute arose between Sikkim and Bhutan in this locality and it was settled by Mr. Gould in 1917.

Unfortunately, neither Mr. Gould's description of the boundary agreed upon nor his sketch map is sufficiently detailed to enable either the Surveyor general in this office to follow accurately the line accepted. His sketch map shows by black dotted lines the Sikkim-Bhutan boundary marked on the 1885 Survey of India map. That boundary to a great extent follows the watershed. Mr. Gould's boundary (red dotted lines) also appears to follow natural features, but these are not recognizable on the best maps we appear to possess, nor are line references to 'notches' on mountain sides very enlightening.

3. Perhaps we might forward the 1885 map to Mr. Bell and ask him to have Mr. Gould's boundary clearly marked on it (or on a better and larger map if he possess one) and at the same time to furnish a more detailed description of the line a draft is submitted accordingly after issue Surveyor general may see.

Signed

6-7-1917

For. & Pol. DEPARTMENT.
Frontier BRANCH

D.O. No. 758
Simla the 7th July 1917

To

C.A. Bell Esq., C.M.G.,
Political Officer in Sikkim,
Yatung, Tibet.

Will you kindly refer to your letter No. 164 P dated the 16th May 1917 regarding the realignment of the Sikkim-Bhutan boundary south of Gipmochi.

Neither Gould's description of the new boundary nor the sketch map illustrating it makes it quite clear how the line should run on our existing maps. The black dotted line on the sketch map appears to accord with the boundary between Bhutan and Sikkim as shown on maps prior to 1904 and from Gnathong to Richila appears to follow the watershed between the Di Chu and Ro..... Chu rivers (see sheet No. 7 N.W/3 enclosed – which please return with your reply). Though Gould's line differs from the old boundary through the major portion of its course, it would also appear from the sketch map to follow a watershed or at least a chain of peaks ----- A, B, C, D, E, F, G on the sketch map being presumably mountain tops with their respective elevations --- and our maps do not enable us to identify any such secondary watershed or chain of peaks. It is quite possible that the topography of our old maps is not accurate but in any case it would be convenient if you could furnish us (on loan if necessary) with a map on a large scale which gives more detail than the sketch map received with your letter under reference, and on which the relative positions of the old and the new boundaries might be shown. In view of the errors which have occurred in the past in connection with the boundaries in this vicinity, it is

desirable to be as accurate as possible with regard to this realignment and it would be convenient if you could also furnish a more detailed verbal description of the new line.

It is assumed that from A on the sketch map to Richila where the Darjiling boundary joins the old Sikkim-Bhutan boundary, the new and old boundaries are identical.

From Gould's suggestion that the horizontal line between Gipmochi and Lingtu La should be cut through the jungle where necessary, it is assumed that his boundary will be actually demarcated so far as possible; I shall be glad to know whether it would be the more correct to show it on our maps as a definitely demarcated boundary or as merely an approximate boundary.

Depy. Secry F.

Sikkim Agency Office;
Camp Yatung, Tibet;
The 30th July 1917.

Please refer to your demi-official letter No. 756-F., dated the 7th July 1917, regarding the realignment of the Sikkim-Bhutan boundary south of Gipmochi. It is difficult to say with any accuracy as to how the new line runs on the map. I am asking the State Engineer to visit the place with the Surveyor when the latter demarcates the award on the ground, and to furnish me with a large scale map of Sikkim showing the relative positions of the old and new boundaries with a verbal description of the new line. I will forward them to you as soon as I receive them from the State Engineer. Your map received with your letter under reply is returned herewith.

2. The State Surveyor of the Sikkim State is not a highly trained man, and the work would no doubt be much better done, if we could get a Surveyor from the Survey of India. Would this be possible? The best time for the survey would be between the 1st October and the 31st December.

Yours sincerely

Denys Bray, Esquire, C.I.E.,
Deputy Secretary to the Govt of India,
Foreign and Political Department,
Simla.

The Superintendent, Eastern Circle Colonel Crichton is able to spare a surveyor for this work, I am asking him to communicate direct with Mr. Bell and I am instructing him that the surveyor should not be actually sent until he hears further from me. Meanwhile I shall feel obliged if early orders can be sent to me whether there are any political objections to the survey in question.

D.O. No. 306-P
Sikkim Agency Officer,
Camp Yatung, Tibet,
The 15th September 1917.

My dear Neale,

Please refer to my demi-official letter No. 228-P., dated the 30th July 1917, to Bray on the subject of the realignment of the Sikkim-Bhutan boundary south of Gipmochi.

2. The Superintendent, Eastern Circle, Shillong, informs me that he will depute a surveyor as soon as his services are required. It is not yet possible to say how much the survey establishment will cost. I would enquire whether the Government of India will bear the cost of the survey establishment.

Major W.G. Neale,
Deputy Secretary to the Government of India,
Foreign and Political Deptt.,
Simla.

Mr Bell was asked, in our d/o letter No 1069-F dated the 27th August 1917, to obtain the consent of the Bhutan Durbar to the survey party entering Bhutan. This he has not yet done.

2. As regards the debit of the cost of the survey establishment please see page 8 of the notes in F.A. Septr'13 Nos 1-21. It will be seen that the Survey Department should bear the cost, but the Surveyor General may see first.

25-9-17.

Sikkim Agency Office;

Camp Yatung, Tibet;

The 29th September 1917.

My dear Neale,

Please refer to Bray's demi-official letter No. 1069-E. dated the 27th August 1917, regarding the Sikkim-Bhutan boundary, asking me to obtain the consent of the Bhutan Durbar to the survey party entering Bhutan.

2. I have obtained the consent of the Durbar. I see no political objection to the survey; it affords the best chance of settling this question.

Major W.G. Neale,

Deputy Secretary to the Government of India,

Foreign and Political Department,

Simla.

Political Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department.

In continuation of my un-official note No. 79 of the 21st August last, I write to say that the Superintendent, Eastern Circle, Survey of India informs me that the Political Officer, Sikkim, wishes the surveyor whom it is proposed to employ on the realignment of the Sikkim-Bhutan boundary south of Gipmochi, to be at his disposal by November 5th.

I shall feel obliged if early orders can be sent to me as to whether I may arrange for the dispatch of the surveyor.

Please see Mr Bell's d/o letter dated the 15th September and his telegram of the 29th idem. The Survey Department will bear the cost of the survey. Draft demi-official to Mr Bell put up.

2. The Bhutan Durbar have consented to the survey party entering Bhutan. The Political Officer, Sikkim, wishes the surveyor whom it is proposed to employ to be placed at his disposal by the 5th November. The surveyor General may be authorized unofficially to arrange for the dispatch of the surveyor. He may also be told that there is no political objection to the survey.