

I fully share Mr Bennett's concern that quantitative studies be interpreted scrupulously and accurately, and hope that the foregoing discussion will forewarn readers of *The China Quarterly* against assuming that the conclusions cited were meant to be taken as statistically demonstrated.

Tawang and "The Un-Negotiated Dispute"

If the various references in Mr Maxwell's article "China and India: the Un-Negotiated Dispute" (*The China Quarterly*, No. 43, July-September 1970) are put together, the author's views on Tawang emerge as follows: Thagla Ridge is held to be the correct boundary by India, since it is the highest ridge. The establishment of the Dhola post was in a sliver of territory two or three miles north of the line marked in the McMahon map. Indian administration was not extended to Tawang until 1961 and the Tawang Monastery was in the possession of Tibet before that year. When Indian administration was extended to Tawang in 1951, Tibet protested vigorously. In 1944 the Government of India (through Basil Gould, the Political Officer in Sikkim) offered to give up Tawang to Tibet. After the 1960 summit meeting between China and India, India insisted that all discussions should start with the acceptance of the fact that the valid boundary ran along Thagla Ridge, while China wanted adherence to the "genuine" McMahon Line.

Some background information is necessary for any appreciation of the above. Tawang is a part of the Mompa area of the present Kameng District of the North-East Frontier Agency. The adjoining areas of Tibet were administered till 1960 by the Dzungpons of Tsona. The Mompa tribe falls into three groups: the Northern Mompa in the Tawang Valley, the Central Mompa in Dirang Valley and the Southern Mompa in the Kalaktang Valley; all Buddhists and the majority belonging to the Gelukpa sect. The premier religious institution of the area is the Tawang Monastery, affiliated till some years ago to the Sera Monastery of Lhasa. No Mompa were Tibetan citizens. No Chinese official ever visited Tawang, prior to 1962. While the Mompa tribe was regarded by the Ahom kings as their vassal, the administration of the area was in the hands of the local chiefs. These chiefs and the Tawang Monastery entered into agreements with the East India Company, agreeing to obey the orders of the Company, and received an annual subvention from the Deputy Commissioner, Darang. The inter-village boundary between Tawang and the adjoining Tibetan villages is known. In Tawang, the 1962 Sino-Indian clashes started in the Namkha Valley, near which lies the trijunction of the India, China (Tibet) and Bhutan frontiers. The Indian frontier-posts here were at Kenze Mane and Dhola; while the boundary was held to be along the Thagla Ridge.

Now to take up the various references to Tawang in the article. Mr Maxwell quotes White Paper No. III to say that according to India,

the Thagla Ridge is the highest ridge here and the correct boundary. Although the point is not spelt out, the implication is that one cannot claim a boundary along a particular ridge merely because it is the highest ridge. This is misleading. As early as 1953, there was correspondence between the Assistant Political Officer, Tawang, and the Tsona authorities about where the inter-village boundary lay in the Namkha Valley. A suit was then filed in the Court of the Assistant Political Officer, Tawang, who decided that the boundary was along Thagla Ridge. On 14 August 1959, immediately after the Kenze Mane clash, I explained at length to the local Commander of the Chinese People's Liberation Army that we interpreted the McMahon Line Map as locating the boundary along the Thagla Ridge, and that this was also where the traditional inter-village boundary between Lebu (Tsona) and Pangchen (Tawang) was located. Further details of these aspects of the line were given during the 1960 official discussions. Thagla Ridge is the highest ridge here and is also the ridge where the Simla Agreement Map of 1914 locates the boundary. It is furthermore the traditional boundary between Tibetans and the Mompa.

The Simla Agreement Map of 1914 is on a scale of 1" = 8 miles and gives sufficient details in this area for it to be possible to work out which of the various parallel ridges in the western Nyamjang Valley is the correct boundary. Mr Maxwell gives no explanation about how he arrives at the conclusion that Dhola is two to three miles north of the correct location of the McMahon Line on the ground. The local Chinese Commander was asked by me on 14 August 1959 (as was the Chinese delegation in 1960) to let us know where they felt the Simla Agreement Map located the boundary; assuming that the Agreement was valid. However, the Chinese refused to disclose, even hypothetically, where they regarded the McMahon Line to be. This silence is maintained in the subsequent voluminous correspondence. The only explanation available of the view that the Simla Agreement Line is not along the Thagla Ridge, occurs in *Sino-Indian Boundary* (enlarged edition) (Peking, 1962). Here, it is said that the spherical co-ordinates as worked out from the Simla Agreement Map of 1914 do not tally with the spherical co-ordinates of the Thagla Ridge on modern maps. A knowledge of elementary map-reading will, of course, enable one to dismiss this objection offhand. Co-ordinates worked out from a postpointed location on a 1914 map based on route surveys cannot be transferred to a cadastral map of 1960-62.

Mr Maxwell also refers to the establishment of the Dhola outpost in the summer of 1962 as if, before that period, it was either Tibetan territory or no Indian administrative activity took place there. I have already referred above to the 1953 exchanges between the Tibetan authorities in Tsona and the Indian authorities in Tawang. During the 1962 correspondence, India maintained that the Namkha Valley (the sliver of territory immediately south of Thagla Ridge about which Mr

Maxwell is talking), had been the scene of Indian administrative activity prior to 1962.

Mr Maxwell also says that Tibet continued to be in possession of Tawang Monastery until 1951. The implication is perhaps that Tibet administered the Mompā area through the Tawang Monastery. Leaving aside the fact that it was the Sera Monastery, and not the Tibetan Government, which concerned itself with Tawang Monastery and according to the 1960 *Report* China herself does not claim either that the Mompā area in general or the Tawang Valley in particular was administered by the Monastery, the main point which Mr Maxwell ignores is that no evidence has been put forward to show that the Tawang Monastery was in the "possession" of the Tibetan Government, rather than merely affiliated for some purposes to a Tibetan monastery.

We are also told in the article that the Tibetan Government protested vigorously against extension of regular Indian administration to Tawang in 1951. The author has not said he has consulted Q. S. Tobden's papers and accepts as sufficient authority page C.R-107 of the 1960 *Report*. Pages 229-230 of the same *Report* flatly contradict the Chinese claim that the Tibetan Government vigorously protested to India about the seizure of its territory. If the data on pages 229-230 were taken into account, Mr Maxwell would probably change his view.

Very little of the Basil Gould correspondence has been released by the Government of India, or the Government of China. From what has been released, however, it is clear that the Gould offer was made at one stage during protracted negotiations dealing with a variety of items. Surely one cannot interpret such an offer made in secret negotiations, in return for other considerations, as implying doubt about the British title to Tawang. If debating points are to be scored, one could also argue that an offer to give up must imply prior possession and the offer is, in fact, a re-affirmation of the validity of the British position in Tawang.

According to Mr Maxwell, China desires that both sides should observe the McMahon Line as McMahon drew it, pending a settlement. This is incorrect. The reason for claiming that India wants China to accept the Thagla Ridge as the valid boundary before negotiations can start is not disclosed. One rather thought that it was the Chinese who were doing all the insisting. Furthermore, what the Chinese have actually said is that there is a "Line of Actual Control" (which may or may not coincide with the McMahon Line), and it is this Line that should be adhered to by both sides. Only a bold man could affirm that what the Chinese really mean by the "Line of Actual Control," prior to 1960 and 1962, is quite clear.

What I would like to point out by these comments is that the references to Tawang in Mr Maxwell's article do not seem to be backed up by factual data. As for the general conclusion drawn in the article, that is another story.

T. S. MURTY

Mr Maxwell replies:

The summary with which Mr Murty opens his comment is more or less faithful to the references in my paper to Tawang and the boundary in that sector. I must correct only his suggestion that I wrote that in 1944 the British Indian Government decided to "give up" Tawang to Tibet. The British had recognized ever since they reached Assam in the previous century that Tawang was Tibetan,¹ and their 1944 decision was, as I wrote, to *leave* Tawang in Tibet by modifying McMahon's boundary alignment.² (This is not a quibble. Later Mr Murty attempts to develop his argument on the strength of the phrase, "give up Tawang," which he had put into my mouth.)

The necessity for the "background information" which Mr Murty provides in his second paragraph is not clear, but perhaps it serves the purpose of re-obscurating the history of the Tawang Tract and thus repairing the now somewhat battered polemical posture of the Government which Mr Murty serves.

As Mr Murty says, the Indian Government maintained from the early 1950s that the north-eastern boundary at its western extremity ran along Thagla Ridge, rather than where McMahon's alignment put it on his original map, two or three miles to the south. He makes a real contribution with his disclosure that the exact alignment of the Sino-Indian boundary in this vexed and strategically important sector was defined by the Indian Assistant Political Officer, Tawang, in a ruling on a legal suit in 1953. In the settlement of international boundaries such precision and finality can usually only follow delimitation at the level of governments and then the labours of a joint boundary commission; but this being an Indian boundary, a somewhat different procedure was followed and, by the Indian Government at least, apparently considered sufficient.

In claiming that "the Simla Agreement Map of 1914 locates the boundary" on Thagla Ridge, Mr Murty repeats the false statement made by his Government in its note to China of 11 August 1959. Thagla Ridge is not identified in what he tendentiously calls "the Simla Agreement Map"; the map on which McMahon drew his line puts that (in this sector, adjacent to the India-China-Bhutan trijunction) at the latitude of 27° 44' 30" N – while in the same note India was maintaining that the line ran north of the point 27° 46' N.³ Mr Murty's patronizing patter about "elementary mapreading" and "cadastral map" is gamesmanship. The Chinese position was that, while they were prepared to treat the McMahon Line as the *de facto* boundary, it had to be the line as McMahon drew it – not as the Indians, for their own purposes, were seeking unilaterally to modify it. Since the McMahon Line had no

1. For convenience, unless otherwise stated, references are to my study of the Sino-Indian dispute, *India's China War* (London: Cape, 1970, and New York: Pantheon, 1971). Full citation will be found there. This reference is to p. 40.

2. pp. 61–62.

3. p. 293.

definition other than as a line on a map (there was no verbal description in McMahon's agreement with the Tibetans; no allusion to highest ridges; and of course there had been no demarcation), what other basis for the alignment could there be but the original map? And where that map, based on inadequate surveys, was vague in its depiction of topographical features (as it is in the Thagla area), how else could McMahon's Line be traced onto the ground than by following its cartographic co-ordinates?

The British offer to modify the boundary they were claiming, so as to leave Tawang in Tibet, derived from a suggestion made to the Viceroy in 1939 by H. J. Twynam, Acting Governor of Assam. He argued that the British case for a boundary on the McMahon alignment was weak in law, but that the Tibetans would be more likely to acquiesce if the McMahon Line were re-drawn so as to leave them Tawang. By 1944 the British must have decided to adopt Twynam's proposal, and accordingly, through Gould, they declared to the Tibetans their willingness to run the boundary "not to the north but to the south of Tawang."⁴

Mr Murty's point about "secret negotiations" is unintentionally ironical: the McMahon Line itself derives from negotiations which were elaborately and purposefully secret, while Gould's exchanges with the Tibetans seem to have been quite routine. The only remaining mystery about this question of Tawang surrounds the reasons which led the Government of independent India to override their predecessors' recent decision and, by implementing a boundary as McMahon had drawn it, to annex Tawang.

This annexation of Tawang, effected in February 1951, is shrouded by Mr Murty in the phrase "extension of regular Indian administration." The same wording is used in the Indian Government's argumentation in 1960, which he cites⁵ as a "flat contradiction" of my statement that Lhasa protested vigorously at India's occupation of Tawang. Mr Murty's dialectical methods are so typical of those used by his Government in its dispute with China, and by its apologists, that it is worth examining this point. This is the passage from the Indian officials' report of 1960 which is said to "flatly contradict" my statement that Lhasa protested:

It was claimed [by the Chinese side] that in answer to complaints from the Tsona Dzungpons that an Indian officer and troops had arrived at Tawang, the Tibetan Government had replied that they were negotiating with the Government of India to prevent any "forcible annexation" of the territory, and that in reply to the information conveyed by the Indian Trade Agent the Tibetan Government had protested that the area [*i.e.*, Tawang] did not belong to India and that the latter should withdraw their officers and troops. What in fact had occurred was that on 22 March 1951 the Indian Trade Agent at Yatung had explained to the Tibetan Foreign Bureau the significance of certain administrative measures that were being taken by the Government of India. He told them that in view of the close relations that existed between

4. pp. 57-58, 61-62.

5. *Report of the Officials of the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China* (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1961), pp. 229-230.

India and Tibet, the former had not till then considered it necessary to post any political officers on the border at Tawang; but it had now been decided by the Government of India to extend regular administration right up to the well-known frontier. The Indian side added that this correct statement of facts would be corroborated by the documents cited by the Chinese side if the whole text of the documents, and not merely parts of it, had been produced by the Chinese side. On 17 April 1951 the Indian Trade Agent at Yatung had reiterated this position and affirmed that what was involved was purely Indian territory and that no Tibetan territory had been occupied.⁶

Thus, far from contradicting my statement that the Tibetans protested, the cited passage implicitly confirms it. It adds to my account only the *justification* which the Indians advanced, in 1951 and again in 1960, for their move, with armed force, into Tawang: a justification based on the argument most often used by governments engaged in territorial annexation – that the territory concerned is theirs by right.

The Indian Government's early decision that its boundaries with China must not be made the subject of negotiation entailed elaboration of the argument that those boundaries were already "defined without the necessity of further or formal definition."⁷ This in turn necessitated a sustained and detailed exercise in historical falsification. New Delhi's is neither the first nor the last government to substantiate its policies with such an approach; and the zeal with which some Indians – scholars as well as officials, politicians and journalists – resist attempts to draw back the curtain of misrepresentation so ingeniously woven by their Government also has its counterparts in other countries and contexts. But such attempts at rebuttal-by-obfuscation as Mr Murty's should be recognized for what they are – exercises, not of scholarship, but of loyalty – and be read accordingly.

6. *Ibid.*

7. p. 127.