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An Analytical Study of the Tibetan Record of the Simla Conference (1913–1914): Shing stag rgya gar ' phags pa' i yul du dbyin bod rgya gsum chings mol mdzad lugs kun gsal me long

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An Analytical Study of the Tibetan Record of the Simla
Conference (1913–1914): *Shing stag rgya gar 'phags pa'i yul du
dbyin bod rgya gsum chings mol mdzad lugs kun gsal me long*

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1. Introduction

The Simla Conference of 1913–14, held in Simla, India, was a momentous event in which representatives of Tibet, China, and Britain discussed the political status of Tibet after the collapse of the Qing Empire in 1912. Although many scholars have examined the international circumstances around Tibet in the early twentieth century, the foreign policy of the Tibetan government has remained unclear, mainly because it is still very difficult to access Tibetan primary sources located in the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. However, in the private office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA) in Dharamshala, India, is a Tibetan record of the Simla Conference, *Shing stag rgya gar 'phags pa'i yul du dbyin bod rgya gsum chings mol mdzad lugs kun gsal me long* (The Clear Mirror of the Negotiation of the Convention between Britain, China, and Tibet in India in the Wood Tiger Year; hereafter referred to as the *Kun gsal me long*). Although some scholars, such as Shakabpa (1976), have examined the process of negotiation at the Simla Conference by using the *Kun gsal me long*, the value of the text itself as a historical source has not been fully clarified. One of the most important reasons for this problem is the absence of a comparative analysis of the *Kun gsal me long* and the British diplomatic documents that previous studies have used as primary sources for the Simla Conference.

The primary language of this tripartite conference was English, and furthermore, the proceedings of each tripartite meeting were written in English. Because *Kun gsal me long* was compiled after the conference by the Tibetan officials, we must investigate how the *Kun gsal me long* was created, what kind of records it includes, and how its contents differ from documents in the English archives. In this article, I will examine the features of the *Kun gsal me long* by comparing it with the official British records of

the Simla Conference. Based on this textual analysis, I would like to assert the value of the *Kun gsal me long* as a historical source and indicate new information that it contains, in order to create a clearer picture of Tibetan foreign policy.

2. Unsolved Problems Concerning Historical Materials in Researching the Simla Conference

The Simla Conference was held between Tibet, China, and Britain in Simla, India, from October 1913 to July 1914. The participants discussed the political status of Tibet and its physical borders after the collapse of the Qing Empire. However, after completing these complicated discussions, China refused to sign the convention, making the tripartite agreement a failure. Because of the important topics discussed at the Simla Conference, we must pay close attention to the historical materials in order to investigate effectively the process of the negotiations at this conference.

Many previous studies of the Simla Conference have been based upon English materials (Lamb 1966; Mehra 1974; Singh 1988). In particular, the India Office Records (IOR), held in the British Library in London, and the Foreign Office Records (FO), held in the National Archives in London, contain valuable primary sources concerning the Simla Conference. These studies clarified the process of the tripartite negotiation. In addition to these archival sources was widely published in Beijing in 1940, *The Boundary Question between China and Tibet: A Valuable Record of the Tripartite Conference between China, Britain and Tibet, Held in India, 1913–1914*, hereafter referred to as *BQ*, which also contains the main English proceedings of the Simla Conference.¹ This book is easily accessible, and many scholars have used it, such as Alastair Lamb (1966). The English materials mentioned above can give us firsthand information about what subjects were discussed at the Simla Conference, particularly concerning the British policy. Besides those, Feng Mingzhu (1996) used the Chinese archives held in the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, in Taipei. Feng used Chinese diplomatic documents in the archives to investigate the Chinese process of making foreign policy during the conference.

In contrast to this, the foreign policy of the Tibetan Government has not been fully clarified, because of the difficulty in accessing Tibetan primary sources. Currently, the

¹ The detailed process of the compilation and publication of *BQ* is not completely known. However, it seems that a part of *BQ* was most likely composed of documents possessed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China, and these documents were published in Taipei (see Waijiaobu 2006: 1–55).

archives of the Tibetan Autonomous Region are inaccessible; however, one remarkable text exists: the *Kun gsal me long*. This text's current location is the private office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and a copy is in the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamshala, India.² The authors were Bshad-sgra dpal-'byor rdo-rje (circa 1861–1919; see Petech 1973: 181–183), the Tibetan plenipotentiary at the Simla Conference, and his assistant at the conference, Khri-smon Nor-bu dbang-rgyal (1874–1945?; see Petech 1973: 96–97). According to the colophon of the *Kun gsal me long*, after the end of the conference, the thirteenth Dalai Lama ordered them to compile the process of negotiation of the Simla Conference “for future reference” (see 159a). The *Kun gsal me long* is composed of 159 folios and is written in *Dbu med* script. The main contents are a collection of documents on the conference arranged chronologically. The authors organized all of the documents into three chapters as discussed below. The exact date of completion is unknown, but Bshad-sgra died in 1919 before it was completed. Afterward, Khri-smon took over from Bshad-sgra and completed the work in the 1920s.³ I do not know how many texts were made, but according to some sources, the book was not published for the public, and only select officials and aristocrats in the government seemed to be granted access to it.⁴

Several scholars have focused on the *Kun gsal me long* as a historical source. W. D. Shakabpa, a high-ranking official of the Tibetan Government before fleeing the Tibetan mainland in 1959, is perhaps the first scholar to use the *Kun gsal me long* to explain the process of negotiation at the Simla Conference in his famous book, *Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs (Tibet: A Political History)*. Shakabpa received many kinds of historical materials, including the documents of the Simla Conference, from his uncle Khri-smon (Shakabpa 1976: 3–4). In addition to this, Carole McGranahan (2003) briefly mentioned the *Kun gsal me long* in a footnote of her article, which analyzed the diplomatic negotiations between Tibet, China, and Britain during the early twentieth century.

In contrast to these studies of the Simla Conference, Tashi Tsering (1985) used the *Kun gsal me long* to add a remarkable study about the local history in Kham, Eastern Tibet, during the late nineteenth century. The *Kun gsal me long* contains important

² I want to express my deep thanks to Tashi Tsering, the Director of AmnyeMachen Institute in Dharamshala, for providing me with a copy of the Tibetan text held in the private office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and much valuable information about the *Kun gsal me long*.

³ Khri-smon was stationed at the Kham from 1922 to 1926 as Mdo-smad spyi-khyap (Petech 1976: 97); therefore, it seems that he completed the compilation of the *Kun gsal me long* until before 1922. It will require further information.

⁴ Shakabpa 1976: 3–4; Bka' zur lcog steng thub bstan nor bzang 2007: 182–183, 192–193.

records concerning the control of the Lhasa government over Kham because of the claim of the plenipotentiary that Tibet held territorial rights over Kham at the Conference. Yudru Tsomu (2006) recently analyzed Kham history during nineteenth century in more detail, using various Tibetan and Chinese sources, including *Kun gsal me long*. Thus far, however, there is an absence of comparative analysis of the British diplomatic documents and the *Kun gsal me long*. Therefore, the differences between the *Kun gsal me long* and the English materials are not clear. Without this analysis it has been difficult to determine the true value of the *Kun gsal me long* as a historical source for the Simla Conference. In the next chapter, I will examine the features of the *Kun gsal me long* by carefully comparing it with the documents in the IOR, FO, and *BQ*.

3. The Comparative Analysis of the *Kun gsal me long* and the English Materials

First, I will briefly explain the structure of the *Kun gsal me long*. There are four chapters, organized according to the process of negotiation as shown below:

Chapter 1 (1a–97b): The documents concerning the tripartite negotiation.

Chapter 2 (100a–110b): The documents concerning the bilateral negotiation between Tibet and Britain.

Chapter 3 (112a–143b): The submitted petitions of the Tibetan plenipotentiary to the Conference through Charles Bell.

Chapter 4 (144a–159b): The unsubmitted petitions of the Tibetan plenipotentiary.

The table below shows the result of the comparative analysis of the *Kun gsal me long* and the English materials on the Simla Conference. In the table, I identify which parts of the *Kun gsal me long* are consistent with the English materials in the IOR, FO, and *BQ*. The parts of the *Kun gsal me long* that were not referenced as found in the English materials were left blank.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of the *Kun gsal me long* and the English Materials

<i>Kun gsal me long</i>		English materials		NOTES
FOLIO	Title / Main contents ^a	FO / IOR ^b	BQ ^c	
1a	Title: <i>Shing stag rgya gar 'phags pa'i yul du dbyin bod rgya gsum chings mol mdzad lugs kun gsal me long bzhugs so</i> (<i>The Clear Mirror of the Negotiation of the Convention between Britain, China, and Tibet in India in the Wood Tiger Year</i>).	/		
2a1-4b3	Preface and brief introduction about the background of the Simla Conference.			
4b3(lhan rgyas...)-5b3	A brief explanation of the beginning of the First Meeting.	FO535/16, no. 50097, Enclosure in No. 413. Proceedings of the First Meeting of the Tibet Conference held at Simla on October 13th, 1913.		This part of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> partly refers to the Proceedings in English.
5a3-8b3	The document submitted by letter from the Tibetan Plenipotentiary about the necessity of summarizing historical situation and context of the past and the present.	FO371/1613, no. 50097, AnnexIV, Statement of Tibetan Claims.	pp. 1-6, The Tibetan Claims (dated October 10th, 1913).	The English document is a translation of the Tibetan document.
8b4-12a4	The document submitted by the Chinese Plenipotentiary.	IOR/L/P&S/10/342, P4963, The Chinese Counter-Proposals to the Statement of Tibetan Claims (October 30th, 1913).	pp. 7-9, The Chinese Counter-Proposals (dated October, 30th, 1913).	This part of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> is a translation of the English document.
12a5-23b6	The counter-argument to the Chinese proposal by the Tibetan Plenipotentiary.			This Tibetan petition is not on record in either FO and IOR. Perhaps this is the letter from Lonchen Shatra to Bell that McMahon referred to in his Memorandum (IOR/L/P&S/10/343, P128, Tibet Conference, 24th December 1913.)
23b6-25a4	The Meeting of plenipotentials (sku tshab lhan tshogs), 21st of the 9th month in the Tibetan calendar.	IOR/L/P&S/10/342/P5014, Proceedings of the 2nd Meeting of the Tibet Conference held at Simla on the 18th November		This part of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> seems to be a summary of Proceedings in English.
25a4(phyi zla...)-25b1	A brief explanation about the Side Meeting (zur tshogs) on 19th December, 1913 and the preparation of documents by the Tibetan Plenipotentiary concerning boundary problem between Tibet and China.	IOR/L/P&S/10/343, P128, Informal Discussions, 19th December 1913.		This part of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> is briefly referred to the content of English document.
25b1-37b4	The Tibetan Statement on the boundary between China and Tibet, that quotes the documents providing the evidence of legitimacy (dag skyel yig rigs) of it.	IOR/MSS/EUR/F80/189, pp. 1-26; FO535/17 no. 6458, Enclosure 3 Tibetan Statement on Limit of Tibet.	pp. 23-50, Tibetan Statement of Limits on Tibet(Dated January 12th, 1914), Enclosure No. 1.	The list of these Tibetan documents can be found in 140b5-143b.
37b4-43a4	The Chinese statement on the boundary between China and Tibet, on the 12th January, 1914.	IOR/L/P&S/10/343, P1481, Proceedings of the 3rd Meeting held at Delhi on the 12th January 1914, Enclosure No.1 Chinese Statements on Limits of Tibet.	pp. 14-22, Chinese Statements on Limits of Tibet(Dated January 12th, 1914), Enclosure No. 1	This part of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> is a translation of the English document.
43a4-45a2	A brief explanation concerning the British Plenipotentiary's proposed the solution to the problem presented on 22nd of the 12th month in the Tibetan calendar, and 17th February in the Western calendar.	IOR/L/P&S/10/343, P1215, Proceedings of the 5th Meeting held at Delhi on the 11th March 1914.		43b2-45a1 in the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> is a translation of the beginning of the Proceedings of the 5th meeting in English. This part of the Proceedings briefly explains the 4th meeting on 17th February.
45a2(bod kyi ...)-47b4	The British proposal of reconciliation (bar 'dum shog lhe).	IOR/L/P&S/10/343, P893, Proceedings of the 4th Meeting of the Tibet Conference held at Delhi on the 17th February 1914, Annexure I. British statement on the limits of Tibet.	pp. 88-90, The British Plenipotentiary proposes solution of the problem (Dated February 17th, 1914), Annexure I. British statement on the limits of Tibet.	This part of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> is a translation of the English document.

47b4-49b4	The letter submitted by Shatra (bShad sgra) to Sir Charles Bell requesting a revision of the British Proposal.	IOR/L/P&S/10/343, P1215, Verbal statement by Lonchen Shatra: communicated on the March 1914, Handed to Mr. Ivan Chen on the 7th March 1914.	pp. 96-98, The Tibetan Plenipotentiary protests to the British Proposal (dated March 6th, 1914)	The English document seems to be a translation of the Tibetan letter.
49b4-56a3	The responses of Ivan Chen to the British proposal of reconciliation and the Tibetan statement on 11th of the First month in the Tibetan calendar.	L/P&S/10/343/P1215, Verbal statement by Mr. Ivan Chen: Communicated, 7th March 1914 Handed to the Tibetan Plenipotentiary, on the 8th		This part of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> is a translation of the English document.
56a3(de dag...)-56a4	A brief comment on the unsubmitted protest to the Chinese statement of March 7, 1914.			This unsubmitted letter can be found in its entirety in 145b-150b1.
56a4(bod zla...)-60a1	Sir Henry McMahon proposed a draft of the Tripartite Convention to Tibetan and Chinese Plenipotentiaries at the meeting(lhan rgyas chen mo) in 14th of the First month in the Tibetan calendar.	FO371/1929, no. 7952, Enclosure no. 1, Proposed Tripartite Convention, (Text as amended by Secretary of State's Telegram of the 14th February, 1914.)	pp. 91-95, Proposed Tripartite Convention,	Some articles contained within and the date of this draft of the Convention in the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> are inconsistent with those in the English documents. This requires further research.
60a1-61a5	Statement presented by the Chinese Plenipotentiary at the Meeting.	FO. 535/17 No. 101, Enclosure no. 2. Statement presented by the Chinese Plenipotentiary at the meeting of April 7, 1914.		This part of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> is a translation of the English document.
61a5(lan yig...)-63a2	The response (lan yig) to the Chinese statement about the British proposal written by the Tibetan Plenipotentiary.			This Tibetan petition cannot be found in either FO and IOR.
63a2-66a4	The three Plenipotentiaries initialed (sa yig) the draft of Convention,	IOR/L/P&S/10/344, P1913, Proceedings of the 7th Meeting held at the Foreign Office, Simla, on the 22nd and 27th, April 1914.	pp. 115-139, Proceedings of the meetings of the 7th meeting held at Simla (April 22nd and 27th, 1914).	The author explained the process of the meeting from the Tibetan standpoint by partly referring to the English documents.
66a4(de ltar...)-72a6	An explanation of the continuing negotiations that followed initialing of the Convention. Afterward, only Tibet and Britain signed (rtags 'dzugs) the Convention.	FO371/1931, no. 34211, Proceedings of the 8th Meeting of the Tibet Conference held at Simla on the 3rd July 1914.	pp. 145-150, Proceedings of the 8th meeting held at Simla(July 3rd, 1914).	The author explained the process of the meeting from the Tibetan standpoint by partly referring to the English documents.
72a6(dbyin ji'i...)-77a1	Convention between Britain, Tibet, and China (dbyin rgya bod gsum gyi ching yig)	FO93/105/2, Convention between the United Kingdom, China and Tibet, Simla, July 3, 1914.		FO93/105/2 is the original documents written in English, Chinese and Tibetan.
77a1(dbyin bod...)-77a5	Secret agreement between Britain and Tibet (dbyin bod gnyis nang don ching yig) on 10th of the Fifth month in the Wood Tiger year.	FO93/105/3, Declaration between the United Kingdom and Tibet, Simla, July 3, 1914.		FO93/105/3 is the original documents written in either English and Tibetan.
77a5(...zhe s 'khod)-79a6	China refused signature on the Convention.	FO371/1931, no. 34211, Proceedings of the 8th Meeting of the Tibet Conference held at Simla on the 3rd July 1914.	pp. 145-150, Proceedings of the 8th meeting held at Simla(July 3rd, 1914).	The author explained the process of the meeting from the Tibetan standpoint by partly referring to the English documents.
79b1-82b5	The letter to Henry McMahon from Shatra sent on 15th of the Fifth month in the Wood Tiger year.			This Tibetan petition cannot be found in either FO and IOR.
82b5(ching don...)-87b2	An explanation of the final stage of the Conference, The Tibetan plenipotentiary returns to Tibet.			
87b3-97a6	The list submitted to the British Government that demand to compensate tyrannies and destruction inside Tibet caused by Chinese officials and soldiers.			This Tibetan petition cannot be found in either FO and IOR.
100a	Chapter Title: shing stag dbyin bod gnyis sa mtshams dang tshong don skor bka' mol chings 'jog mdzad lugs dge (The good conduct of the negotiation and the agreement for boundary and trade between Britain and Tibet in the	/		
101a1-102a2	A brief explanation about the background of the negotiation between Tibet and Britain.			
102a-107a1	Trade Regulations between Britain and Tibet (dbyin bod bar tshong gi 'gro lugs dpyad mtshams).	FO93/105/4, Tibet, Trade Regulations, Simla, July 3 1914.		FO93/105/4 is the original documents written in either English and Tibetan.
107a1-108a6	The decision about the boundary between British India and Tibet (dbyin bod sa mtshams gcod lugs).			

108a6(phyi bod...)-109a5	The agreement between Britain and Tibet (phyi bod chings yig).	IOR/L/P&S/10/343, P1517, Exchange of notes between the British and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries, 24th March, 1914.		The letter to Henry McMahon from the Tibetan Plenipotentiary on 25th March 1914 cannot be found in the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> .
112a	Chapter Title: chu glang shing stag gnyis su rgya bod gzhi don skor ' bel sa heb bryud dbyin gzhung la bden rgyab zhu bskul yig thog nas gngang rigs dge(The good petitions by letters for a substantial assistance with peace between Tibet and China presented to the British Government through Sir Charles Bell in the Water Bull and Wood	/		
112b-132b3	A long petition written by the Tibetan Plenipotentiary in the Wood Tiger year.			This Tibetan petition cannot be found in either FO and IOR.
132b4-140b5	The documents presented in writing to Sir Charles Bell that provide evidence of Tibetan legitimacy in each district of mDo khams.			This part of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> is related to the contents of IOR/MSS/EUR/F80/
140b5-143b	The list of documents presented in writing to the British Plenipotentiary, the Secretary of Foreign Department in India, provides evidence of Tibetan legitimacy on boundary of Tibet.	IOR/MSS/EUR/F80/189: 27-32. List of documents submitted to the British Plenipotentiary as documentary evidence to prove the boundary of Tibet.	pp. 50-58, List of documents submitted to the British Plenipotentiary as documentary evidence to prove the boundary of Tibet.	
144a	Chapter Title: shing stag rgya gar 'phags pa'i yul du rgya bod chings mol skabs gsham gsal rnams gngang dgos ma byung yang zab gnad phyogs bsdu la brten slad lam du bkod pa dge(The good records for future reference, which did not need to be presented in the negotiation of convention between China and Tibet in India in the Wood Tiger Year, of [the issues] listed below on the basis of the collection of important documents).	/		
145b-150b1	Protest to the Chinese statement on 7th March 1914			These letters are briefly commented in the 56a3-56a4.
150b1-151b	Letter to the British Plenipotentiary that claims to revise the the British proposal of reconciliation after the end of the 5th Meeting held at Delhi on the 11th March 1914.			The relation between this part of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> and 49b4-56a3 is unclear. This requires further research.
152a1-159a2	The memorandum of a reply to be made to the Chinese opinion stated in the negotiation of peace between China and Tibet.			
159a2-b1	colophone			
<p>Notes:</p> <p>a. Refers to the content of each part or title of each document.</p> <p>b. FO: Foreign Office Records, IOR: India Office Records. The table cells adjacent to the Title and Chapter Titles of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> contain a slash to indicate that the English materials are not applicable. Blank table cells indicate that Tibtetan documents were not recorded in English translation.</p> <p>c. BQ: <i>The Boundary Question between China and Tibet: A Valuable Record of the Tripartite Conference between China, Britain and Tibet, Held in India, 1913-1914</i>, Peking, 1940. The table cells adjacent to the Title and Chapter Titles of the <i>Kun gsal me long</i> contain a slash to indicate that the English materials are not applicable. Blank table cells indicate that Tibtetan documents were not recorded in English translation.</p>				

Although this table is a work in progress and requires further investigation, I have attempted to clarify the process of the compilation of the *Kun gsal me long*. The next figure roughly illustrates the differences in creating the *Kun gsal me long* and the English materials.

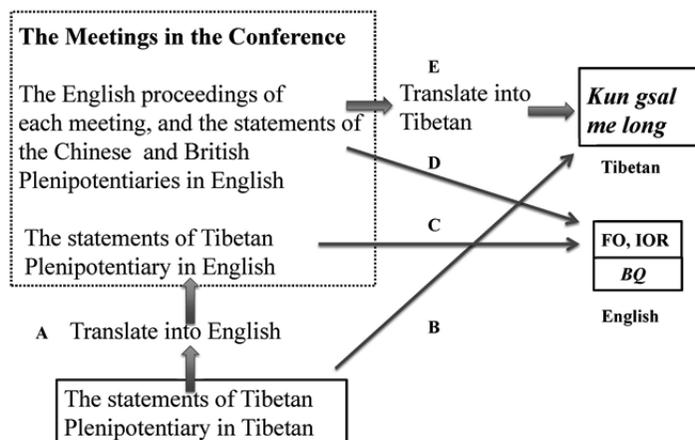


Figure 1: The Process of the Compilation of the *Kun gsal me long*

At each tripartite conference meeting, the Tibetan plenipotentiary wrote his statement in Tibetan. The statement was then translated into English before being formally submitted to the meeting (see fig. 1-A).⁵ The FO, IOR, and *BQ* contain primarily English translations of the Tibetan statements, the English proceedings, and the English statements of the Chinese and British plenipotentiaries (see figs. 1-C and 1-D). The *Kun gsal me long*, on the other hand, contains the Tibetan translations of the English language statements of the British and Chinese plenipotentiaries (see fig. 1-E). It also seems to contain the original Tibetan language statements of the Tibetan plenipotentiary (see fig. 1-B).

Based on the table and the figures, I categorized the documents in the *Kun gsal me long* into four groups:

Group 1: Pre-translation Tibetan Documents

At the Simla Conference, the Tibetan plenipotentiary translated his statements into English before they were formally submitted to the meetings. It is difficult to clarify in

⁵ In another case, Bshad-sgra, the Tibetan plenipotentiary, read his statement in Tibetan, and it was translated sentence by sentence by the translator, as were the informal discussions of 11 December 1913. IOR/L/P&S/10/343, P128, Informal Discussions, 11 December 1913.

detail how the Tibetan plenipotentiary translated his statements into English; however, I will undertake to explain the process based on several pieces of information.

According to *The Biography of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama*, written in Tibetan (hereafter referred to as *DL13*), one English translator and one Chinese translator accompanied the plenipotentiary to the Simla Conference (*DL13*: 128a). Unfortunately, there is no detailed personal information about either translator in *DL13*. On the side of British Government, Alfred Charles Bell (1870–1945) and Kazi Dawa Samdup (1868–1922) were the translators. Charles Bell, then the Sikkim Political Officer, had already learned the Tibetan language well enough to compile a dictionary and a grammar textbook while residing in Darjeeling at the beginning of the 1900s. Furthermore, Bell had established a relationship of mutual trust with the thirteenth Dalai Lama and Bshod-sgra, because he was responsible for taking care of them when they took refuge in Darjeeling from 1910 to 1912 after fleeing from the Chinese army, which had been sent to Lhasa from Sichuan province in February 1910. Therefore, he was appointed the assistant to the Tibetan plenipotentiary at the Simla Conference at the strong request of the thirteenth Dalai Lama.⁶ It seems, however, that Charles Bell merely approved the final translation of the Tibetan statements before submitting them to the tripartite meeting, and that the actual translator was Kazi Dawa Samdup. Kazi Dawa Samdup, from Sikkim province, was Charles Bell’s translator and subordinate.⁷ As a young man, Kazi Dawa Samdup mastered both English and Tibetan, and he served as Charles Bell’s interpreter and translator while the thirteenth Dalai Lama stayed in Darjeeling in 1910. Contained in the Charles Bell Collection are the final drafts of the translated statements of the Tibetan plenipotentiary with the signature, date, minor changes, and short comments such as “true translation” added by Kazi Dawa Samdup (IOR/MSS/EUR/F80/189: 26). Therefore, it seems that Kazi Dawa Samdup definitely did the practical translation in consultation with the Tibetan plenipotentiary.

If we carefully compare the statements of the Tibetan plenipotentiary in the *Kun gsal me long* to Kazi Dawa Samdup’s translation into English, we occasionally find differences in the two. For instance, “Tibetan Statement of Limits on Tibet,” dated January 12, 1914, in the IOR/MSS/EUR/F80/189: 1–26 is consistent with folio 25b1–

⁶ IOR/MSS/EUR/F80/5e6, from the thirteenth Dalai Lama to Harding, the Viceroy of India, on July 8, 1913.

⁷ After the Conference, Kazi Dawa Samdup compiled an English–Tibetan dictionary, translated the Tibetan Buddhist Texts into English, and in his last years served as Professor at Calcutta University (Kazi Dawa Samdup 2008).

37b4 in the *Kun gsal me long*.⁸ However, the English version in the IOR/MSS/EUR/F80/189: 1–2 contains, above the explanation of the Tibetan claim, a list of place names in Eastern Tibet that the Chinese plenipotentiary claimed as territory under the direct control of China. The Tibetan version in the *Kun gsal me long* does not contain this list (25b1–26a). Kazi Dawa Samdup presumably inserted the list of place names into the English version as additional information for arguing against the Chinese position in consulting with the Tibetan plenipotentiary. Otherwise, the authors of the *Kun gsal me long* deleted this information from the Tibetan original statement when they compiled it.

These kinds of differences between the *Kun gsal me long* and English versions do occur; therefore, when we examine the *Kun gsal me long*, we have to constantly consider the possibility that these original statements are not consistent with the statements submitted at the meetings. In addition, we have to pay attention to the possibility that the authors made changes to the pre-translation Tibetan statements when they compiled the *Kun gsal me long*.

Group 2: The Tibetan Translation of the English Documents at the Conference

In the *Kun gsal me long*, we can classify the Tibetan translation of the English documents into two categories.

1. *The translation of the English proceedings.* From October 1913 to July 1914, eight tripartite meetings were held at the conference. It was decided at the first meeting that English would be the official language of the proceedings.⁹ The British plenipotentiary, A. H. McMahon, and a secretary to the conference recorded, documented, and confirmed each proceeding. After every meeting, they gave a record of the proceedings to the Tibetan and Chinese plenipotentiaries. In the *Kun gsal me long* are found the Tibetan translations of the proceedings (see fig. 1-E). We must bear in mind, however, that not everything in the *Kun gsal me long* was translated faithfully from the original English proceedings; the original English proceedings were translated summarily or incompletely into Tibetan (see 2a1–4b3, 23b6–25a4). Furthermore, the authors of the *Kun gsal me long* often insisted on Tibetan foreign policy by partly referring to or quoting from the proceedings (see 63a4–72a6, 66a4–72a6). Although the

⁸ IOR/MSS/EUR/F80/189, pp. 1–26, contains the draft of this statement before submitting it to the meeting, which has the signature and the date by Kazi Dawa Samdup on same day.

⁹ FO535/16, no. 50097, Enclosure in No. 413. Proceedings of the First Meeting of the Tibet Conference held at Simla on October 13, 1913.

original English proceedings are the primary sources from which to understand the process of negotiation, the *Kun gsal me long* contains equally valuable information regarding the foreign policy of the Tibetan government and the thinking of the Tibetan plenipotentiary at the negotiations.

2. *The Tibetan translation of the statements of the Chinese and British plenipotentiaries.* Fig. 1-E indicates that the main English statements of the Chinese and British plenipotentiaries were translated in the *Kun gsal me long* (see 8b4–12a4, 37b4–43a4, 45a2–47b4, and so on). The authors did not mention how the English statements of the Chinese and British plenipotentiaries were translated and recorded in the *Kun gsal me long*. However, according to my reading, most of these statements were translated relatively faithfully from the original statements, in contrast to the English proceedings mentioned above. In other words, by comparing the *Kun gsal me long* with the English statements, we can begin to answer the following question: How did Tibetan officials literally and figuratively translate western diplomatic terms and concepts? How did they perceive and/or understand modern concepts and terms related to state-building and international relations at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as sovereignty, suzerainty, autonomy, independence, nations, territory, and so on? Owing to space constraints, a thorough explanation will have to wait, but in this article I hope to demonstrate that the *Kun gsal me long* is an extremely valuable source from which to research questions about modern Tibetan history that have gone unanswered because of a lack of materials.

Group 3: The Tibetan Documents that Cannot Be Found in the English Materials as English Translations

In group 1, I explained that the *Kun gsal me long* contains the pre-translation Tibetan statements. In addition to this, the *Kun gsal me long* contains valuable Tibetan documents that cannot be found in the British record as English translations. The table shows that some Tibetan documents were not recorded in the IOR, FO, and *BQ*, as indicated by empty cells. According to the authors' explanation, the Tibetan plenipotentiary withheld one long petition despite preparing it (see 56a3–56a4, 145b–150b1). Including this petition, the authors recorded three unsubmitted petitions in 144a–159b of the last chapter.

Besides those, several petitions in the *Kun gsal me long* have thus far not been found in the English materials as either English translations or original Tibetan documents, despite the authors' claims that they definitely submitted these to their

assistant Charles Bell. The contents of these petitions are of great significance to investigating how the Tibetan plenipotentiary thought about the political status of Tibet and the historical relationship between Tibet and China. For instance, “the counter-argument to the Chinese proposal,” the long petition to Charles Bell in 12a5–23b6, attempts to explain in detail why Tibet considered itself a historically independent country. Although further investigation of the archival English sources is required, one of the important features of the *Kun gsal me long* as a historical source is that it contains Tibetan language petitions that are not found in the English materials.

Please note, however, that the *Kun gsal me long* does not contain a very important group of historical Tibetan documents, which the Tibetan plenipotentiary prepared and submitted in order to show the historical evidence of effective control of the Tibetan government over the border area, including Kham between Tibet and China.¹⁰ The Tibetan plenipotentiary translated approximately ten of the total ninety documents into English with the assistance of Kazi Dawa Samdup and submitted those at the meeting. Therefore, these Tibetan historical materials can be found in the IOR, FO and *BQ* as English translations (see IOR/MSS/EUR/F80/170 and 180; *BQ*: 58-90). Nevertheless, the authors of the *Kun gsal me long* did not make a full record of the original ninety Tibetan items, only recording the list of documents (see 140b5–143b).¹¹

Group 4: The Agreements that Were Concluded at the Conference

Aside from the proceedings, statements, letters, and petitions, the *Kun gsal me long* also contains the all of the agreements that the Tibetan plenipotentiary signed, as follows:

1. The tripartite convention between the United Kingdom, China, and Tibet, July 3, 1914 (the Chinese plenipotentiary refused to sign), in 72a6–77a1.
2. The declaration between the United Kingdom and Tibet, July 3, 1914, in 77a1–77a5.
3. The trade regulation between Tibet and the United Kingdom, July 3, 1914, in 102a1–107b1.
4. The exchange of the notes between the British and Tibetan plenipotentiaries, March 24, 1914 in 108a6 (phyi bod...)–109a5.

¹⁰ Before the tripartite convention began, at Rgyal rtse, Charles Bell advised the Tibetan plenipotentiary to collect historical materials in order to negotiate with China concerning the boundary problem in Kham (Bell: 1992: 153).

¹¹ Further investigation is needed as to the whereabouts of the original ninety documents after the conference. These documents perhaps were inherited by Shakabpa from his uncle Khri-smon (Shakabpa 1976: 3–4).

By comparing agreements Nos. 1, 2, and 3 with the original texts in the file FO93/105 held in the National Archives of the United Kingdom, I confirmed that the authors recorded each agreement faithfully, although minor differences of spelling can be found between the two. As for the fourth agreement, it is the famous secret agreement of the new India–Tibet border in the Assam Himalaya area, known as “the McMahon Line,” which has been closely researched because of the current border dispute between India and China. Since both the IOR and FO only possess the English text, as far as I know, the Tibetan text in the *Kun gsal me long* is a valuable source for us to research how the Tibetan plenipotentiary concluded this agreement.

In addition to the four groups of documents mentioned above, the authors, Bshad-sgra and Khri-smon, wrote the preface (see 2a1–4b3) and inserted the original comments in several places at the beginning or the end of the document (for instance, see 101a1–102a2). In particular, the preface clearly expresses the authors’ understanding of the historical relationship with China as the Priest–Patron Relationship (*mchod-yon* in Tibetan), in order to insist that Tibet is to China as a priest is to his disciple, and that Tibet is not subject to the power of China. Therefore, the *Kun gsal me long* is not a simple collection of documents, and the following section elucidates the perspective and standpoint of the authors.

4. The Foreign Policy of the Tibetan Government in the Early Twentieth Century

First, we have to consider that the authors of the *Kun gsal me long* are the plenipotentiary and his assistant at the conference, and that this text was written for the benefit of the Tibetan government in order to show the entire process of the negotiation in Simla. If the authors were able to show a lot of documents and information about the conference, they inevitably encountered some important problems: How did they treat facts such as concessions to the Chinese or Britain during the negotiation in the *Kun gsal me long*?

At the beginning of the conference, the Tibetan plenipotentiaries claimed their independence and the integrating of all of the territories where the Tibetan people lived. At the final stage of the conference, however, they had made some concessions at the behest of the Britain in order to reach the agreement. After negotiating the tripartite convention proposed by Britain, the Tibetan plenipotentiary accepted the division of Tibet into Outer/Inner Tibet, and also recognized Chinese suzerainty over Tibet following the British proposal. Besides this, in the bilateral agreement between Tibet and Britain, the Tibetan plenipotentiary accepted the transfer of large-scale territory to

British India in March 1914. The Tibetan plenipotentiary must have reluctantly compromised on the political status of Tibet and the division of its territory. It seems that the authors, the Tibetan plenipotentiaries, had to explain that their concessions were unavoidable and explain the rightness of their diplomatic negotiation in the *Kun gsal me long*. The 66a4–66b4 indicates how the authors described the negotiation at the final stage of the conference as follows:

The Chinese Government did not accept this convention because it brings China a great loss of all the power over land and people. Hence, Ivan Chen continued to request the instruction of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Peking every day in idleness. Moreover, since the Chinese government strongly set forth reasons why he could not sign the convention to the British Government in London, too, the [two] governments continued to discuss mutually. Accordingly, [Ivan Chen] said that he could converse when [their discussion] was settled. Because those who are present here [as] negotiators of the three [parties] of the Great Britain, Tibet, and China are the plenipotentiaries of each country, a platform must be issued after they initialed [the convention to say] that [their initials] are identical to the great seal of each country. Exactly on the day we initialed [the convention], I also received strict orders from [my] country that [we] did not have any funds such as Derge and Nyarong to be given to the district of Inner Tibet [from Outer Tibet as autonomous region] and that [we] were not ready to take responsibility for the cause of destruction and the loss of the tax revenue [caused by the Chinese army]. However, I did not dare to make [these] claims, [for] it violates the [diplomatic] rule (*lam lugs*). It is very strange that the government in Peking dares to claim to the British Government in London although they understand this [rule].

After putting his initial (*sa-yig*) on the draft convention, the Chinese plenipotentiary, Ivan Chen, refused to affix his formal signature (*rtags-'dzugs*) on the final convention. Apparently, the Chinese government in Beijing attempted to negotiate with the British government in London without Tibetan participation in order to achieve a more advantageous agreement with Britain to replace the agreements at Simla. Meanwhile, Ivan Chen, in Simla, also continued to wait for the instruction of the Chinese government in Beijing every day in idleness. The authors strongly criticized

Ivan Chen for not taking responsibility as the plenipotentiary, and it was tantamount to a neglect of diplomatic “rule.”

In contrast to this, the authors emphasized that the Tibetan plenipotentiary respected the “rule.” That is why they could not make further demands of the British plenipotentiary after he initialed the draft of the convention, although he received orders from the Tibetan government in Lhasa to claim further territories of Eastern Tibet in the final convention. In other words, the authors attempts to justify the Tibetan plenipotentiary’s diplomatic negotiation in comparison with his Chinese counterpart.

In addition to the criticism to the Chinese plenipotentiary, the authors persistently insisted that the Tibetan plenipotentiary also had to maintain a close relationship with Britain at that time to secure their territory from the Chinese army. The 68b3–69b1 of the *Kun gsal me long* indicates how the Tibetan Government dealt with the crisis in Eastern Tibet during the Simla Conference. During the time of the Simla Conference, the Tibetan government was fighting a battle with the Chinese army in Eastern Tibet. The Tibetan government needed to exclude the Chinese army from there by concluding an advantageous convention in the Simla Conference. However, they could not reach the tripartite convention, because the Chinese plenipotentiary would not agree to sign. Therefore, the authors explained that the Tibetan government needed to import British guns and cannons to oppose the Chinese army. In other words, building the alliance with Britain against China was the most important principle of the diplomatic policy of the Tibetan government at that time.

5. Conclusion:

The *Kun gsal me long* not only contains the translated main English proceedings from the Simla Conference, but also many documents that cannot be found in the British official records. This is an important record for understanding the process of negotiation by the Tibetan plenipotentiary at the Simla Conference. Nevertheless, in using the *Kun gsal me long* as a historical source, one must be careful about its possible biases. We have to bear in mind that the *Kun gsal me long* was described, compiled, and justified from the author’s point of view. As such, it may offer some justification of the propriety of the Tibetan plenipotentiary’s diplomatic negotiation, as well as place more emphasis on the importance of British support, such as importing British guns and cannons, to protect Eastern Tibet from the Chinese army. However, this kind of bias is also one of the values of the *Kun gsal me long*, because it is a reflection of the most

important principle of the diplomatic policy of the Tibetan government in the early twentieth century: the alliance with Britain against China.

Thus far, some scholars have emphasized that the Simla Conference was one of the maneuvers of British imperialism to divide the Chinese “rightful territory,” including Tibet. However, the *Kun gsal me long* is a valuable Tibetan source that clearly proves that the Tibetan alliance with Britain was not just a maneuver by the British government. In fact, the Tibetan government itself chose this policy to support its struggle with China. As previously mentioned in this article, there are still many questions about the *Kun gsal me long* that will require further investigation; it is my hope that my present study sheds new light on this important material.

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