

Conquering Lands, Collecting Bodies: Perpetrators' Perspectives on the Younghusband Mission

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Abstract: In 1903, British Indian armed forces commanded by Colonel Francis Younghusband invaded Tibet on the orders of Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, despite the resistance of the home government in Britain. The invasion culminated in the coerced signing of the Treaty of Lhasa. Its stated purpose was to establish trade relations, but the officials of the Younghusband mission perpetrated violent massacres and looted monasteries, homes, and even dead bodies. This article focuses on published books about and unpublished letters from the mission, primarily the writings of Francis Younghusband and Captain Arthur Hadow, to analyse structural and individual factors that shaped the perpetrators' actions. Although existing scholarship has highlighted contradictions between official writings and unpublished letters, little attention has been given to the psychosocial implications of these confessions and omissions, to understand how the perpetrators of these massacres and lootings perceived and justified their own actions. The article argues that structural moral frameworks under colonialism abetted this violence by placing entire social groups outside legal and moral protections, valorising massacres as necessary and inevitable. On an individual level, this enabled officials to legitimise their crimes, mitigate feelings of guilt and empathy, deny responsibility and harm, and to justify their perpetration one of the many unjustifiable atrocities of European colonialism.

Keywords: Colonialism, British Empire, colonial perpetrators, colonial looting, Tibet, South Asia

The Younghusband Mission

On 11 December 1903, a force comprising around three thousand soldiers, seven thousand sherpas, porters, and camp followers, and four eminent journalists departed from Sikkim. Led by Francis Younghusband and Brigadier-General Macdonald, the official purpose of this mission was to establish trade relations between British India and Tibet, and to counter rumoured Russian influence.¹ It took eight months to reach Lhasa. In August 1904, it culminated in the signing of a treaty with the Tibetan government

1 Thejalhoukho, 'The Sikkim-Tibet Convention of 1890 and the Younghusband Mission of 1904', *China Report* 57.4 (2021), pp. 451–465 (p. 461).

to improve trade relations and increase the possibility of colonial patronage. The journey was extensively documented and many official narratives were published in its aftermath, including Younghusband's book, *India and Tibet*, Captain W. F. T. O'Connor's report, *The Present Condition and Government of Tibet*, and writer Landon Perceval's work, *The Opening of Tibet: An Account of Lhasa and the Country and People of Central Tibet and of the Progress of the Mission Sent There by the English Government in the Year 1903-4*. These sought to justify and legitimise the mission, often by criticising Tibetan authorities or offering retrospective justifications for any harm committed by the troops, and argued in favour of greater British involvement in Tibet in the future.²

Often, these claims made by official sources regarding the scale and intention behind atrocities during the mission starkly contrasted with the confessions laid out in personal writings, diaries, and letters by members of the expedition. For instance, while official sources described instances of violence and looting during the mission as unexpected and unavoidable, personal letters by officials like Captain Arthur Hadow made apparent the fact that fighting and looting were not only expected at the outset but even eagerly anticipated, with some members particularly being selected for the Younghusband mission due to their interest in looting.³ Hadow was an officer of the Norfolk Regiment assigned to lead a few armed escorts through parts of the mission. His letters to his parents, now archived at the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum along with the Tibetan objects he looted, also made apparent the fact that the massacre of Tibetans and the looting of artefacts, paintings, and religious items from homes, forts, monasteries, and bodies of Tibetan fighters continued throughout the mission.

Despite the extensive documentation of the invasion, the Younghusband mission has largely fallen out of the public's historical memory. This may be attributed partly to the prevailing fragility of Tibet's political context.⁴ However, historical and anthropological research about the Younghusband mission have sought to work through the dissonance between the narratives of official and unofficial sources, to uncover the exact events of the incursion. Charles Allen's *Duel in the Snow*, published in 2004, is a prime example of this. In 2012, art historian

2 Clare Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World: Art, Politics, and the Representation of Tibet* (University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 57.

3 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Gyantse, 21 May 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

4 Harris, p. 4.

Claire E Harris' book *The Museum on the Roof of the World* contextualised the Younghusband mission within the larger art and political history of Tibet, demonstrating how the nation and its people were objectified to be treated as museum collections. In the same year, *Inner Asia* published a special issue pertaining to the historiography of the mission.⁵ Other researchers including Parshotam Mehra and Michael Carrington have contributed to the understanding of alternative dimensions of the mission; the former analysed the concurrent media reportage of the mission, particularly the criticisms levied by Indian publications.⁶ The latter analysed looting during the mission and its implications on the ideological conception of the colonial empire.⁷

This article builds upon these works. In light of the established facts about what transpired during the mission, it particularly focuses on the dissonance between official and unofficial sources to understand the perspective of the perpetrators. Previous research has thoroughly analysed the Younghusband-Waddell collection, which include Tibetan books and manuscripts stolen by Laurence Waddell, a scholar accompanying the mission. This article shifts the focus onto Arthur Hadow's personal writings, alongside some of Younghusband's official and personal narratives. It contextualises their denial of responsibility, mitigation of guilt and empathy, and prevailing discomfort within the larger structural and moral frameworks of colonialism.

SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT:

SHIFTING NORMS AND COLONIAL COLLECTING

Diverse factors, shaped by political advancements and shifting norms over the course of the nineteenth century, had led to this invasion. In particular, two notable sociocultural developments shaped its motives, causes, and consequences: the first was the advent of wonder cabinets and museums, coinciding with advancements in photography, archaeology, history, and anthropology, all of which served to institutionalise colonial collecting.⁸ The second was the consequent increase in aware-

5 Hildegard Diemberger and Stephen Hugh-Jones, 'Special Issue: The Younghusband 'Mission' to Tibet', *Inner Asia* 14.1 (2012), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i24571658> [accessed 19 April 2026].

6 Parshotam Mehra, 'In the Eyes of Its Beholders: The Younghusband Expedition (1903-04) and Contemporary Media', *Modern Asian Studies* 39.3 (2005), pp. 725-739 (p. 729).

7 Michael Carrington, 'Officers, Gentlemen and Thieves: The Looting of Monasteries during the 1903/4 Younghusband Mission to Tibet', *Modern Asian Studies* 37(2003), pp. 81-109 (p. 95).

8 Carol Breckenridge, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31. 2 (1989), pp. 195-216 (p. 201).

ness and interest of Britain's local populace about the nation's colonial conquests, further hastened by print media across the globe, which would go on to publish extensively for and against interference in Tibet, before and during the mission.⁹ To understand these, it is imperative to situate the Younghusband mission in the larger sociocultural context of the time when Britain was consolidating its rule over South Asia.

Having established Calcutta as its capital in 1772, Britain had turned its attention to the tantalising prospect of exploring and even colonising Tibet, a nation that had long captured the western elite's imagination as 'exotic' due to its rich natural resources and material wealth.¹⁰ In 1774, the first Viceroy of India, Warren Hastings, tasked his private secretary, George Bogle, to travel to Tibet, establish good relationships with the Panchen Lama and through him, the Emperor of China, and negotiate trade relations.¹¹ During his travels, Hastings wrote to him with instructions about maintaining a diary, taking note of all his observations about 'the people, their manners, customs, buildings, cookery, the country, the climate or the road.'¹² He also asked Bogle to look out for 'curiosities,' which, according to him, could constitute natural productions, manufactures, paintings, or anything that would be suitable to a 'person of taste in England.'¹³ This indicated an early interest in the colonial acquisition in Tibet, while also highlighting the lack of distinction made between people of the colony, and their customs, belongings, religion, and country. As art historian Clare Harris argues, the people, the material artefacts, and the natural resources were all 'curiosities' in the eyes of British colonisers. Soon, the interest in the colonial collecting of 'curiosities' would gain prominence not only among the elites but also among the general public of Britain.

Before the nineteenth century, the British populace had lived a life that was largely culturally insular, disconnected even from their nation's own political activities in the colonies of America, Asia, Africa, and Australia.¹⁴ However, as anthropologist Carol Breckenridge has shown, this began to change from the early nineteenth century onwards when the entertainment industry was transformed by the growing popularity of panoramas, wonder cabinets, and museums.

9 Mehra, p. 729.

10 Harris, p. 28.

11 Ibid, p. 29.

12 Ibid, p. 29.

13 Ibid, p. 29.

14 Breckenridge, p. 199.

'The Storming of Seringapatam' was an early example of a panorama painting that deeply influenced this change in outlook. Painted in 1800 by Robert Ker Porter on a canvas with a semi-circular plane that was over two hundred feet long, it depicted the fourth Mysore war in which Tipu Sultan, one of the last Indian kings to staunchly oppose British colonialism, was defeated and killed. Displayed at Somerset House, a published review of the panorama noted that it would 'prove a gratifying promise to the perspective of military prowess, that the names and persons of the most distinguished of Valour's sons, will live to after ages in the glowing colours of the canvas.'¹⁵ In this manner, the panorama ensured that the jubilation of a decisive nationalist victory for Britain could now be experienced by its citizens dwelling in London, inspiring pride in military action, and confidence and renewed faith in the East India Company.

Panoramas were just the start in terms of bringing the colony to the people of Britain for their entertainment and education. Soon there was a drive to collect (or when the occasion arose, loot) materials, artefacts, images, and objects from colonies around the world to bring them to London, as demonstrated by Hastings' letter.¹⁶ Hosted in glass cabinets to be displayed for the entertainment of the local audience, these exhibits came to be known as 'wonder cabinets.' One of the most popular exhibits of all time in London was the 'Oriental Repository' that housed objects collected from Seringapatam when Tipu Sultan was defeated.¹⁷ Along with instilling national pride, these also served to objectify the colony in the minds of Europeans, and invariably, dehumanise its people. The Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 even included people from these colonies recreating 'village scenes' or acting as dancing girls, which served to categorise the 'native' people of the colonies as curiosities as well, to be displayed alongside material artefacts.¹⁸

This had a profound impact on the frequency, nature, and justification of colonial looting and violence by Europeans. Although looting had always accompanied Britain's military actions in its colonies, the nineteenth century transformed the value prescribed to it.¹⁹ The

15 Macquarie University Library, "Published Review (1801) Robert Ker Porter's Panorama: The Storming of Seringapatam," <https://www.mq.edu.au/macquarie-archive/seringapatam/other/panorama.html>

16 Breckenridge, p. 200.

17 Ibid, p. 199.

18 Ibid, p. 201.

19 Carrington, p. 81.

establishment of wonder cabinets and museums, and their role in encouraging the increased involvement of the public in Britain's colonial conquests was part of a larger inclination to 'civilise' or re-educate European citizens, described by Tony Bennett as 'the cultural governance of the populace.'²⁰ The image of museums as objective spaces for education was further reinforced by the development of archaeology, history, and anthropology as 'scientific' fields, leading to the institutionalisation and moral justification of looting as a necessary act for educational purposes.²¹ Naturally, this further fuelled the impulse for 'colonial collecting,' and a network of agents, correspondents, and dealers developed, from Europe to China. These collectors catered to the imagination of their clients, which included scholars, princes, bankers, and royal gardeners across England.²² This also gave way to collecting becoming a personal hobby.

At the same time, as materials and artefacts from colonies travelled to the metropole in London, more eyes on Britain's colonial conquests also led to increased scrutiny. Press reports about looting were used by liberal critics of the British empire, especially in the aftermath of the South African War where colonisers had burned, looted and sent civilians to concentration camps.²³ The Indian media, too, routinely reported assaults and theft by European civilians and soldiers on Indian shopkeepers.²⁴ The final straw was the plunder, looting, arson, and rape by British troops in the aftermath of the revolt of 1857.²⁵ Looting was criticised as 'uncivilised,' raising questions about the authority of the empire itself, which was supposed to be the harbinger of civilisation, morality, and enlightenment.²⁶ To that end, it became imperative to suppress or justify news about looting, which ultimately led to the severe censorship of news from the Younghusband mission.

The late nineteenth century therefore was at a juncture with two contrasting moral codes: on one hand, the empire was criticised for the rampant looting occurring in the colonies. On the other hand, colonial collection was viewed as important, necessary, and a sign of being part of an elite and educated class. This contradiction was also reflected in

20 Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (Routledge, 2013), p. 21.

21 Bennett, p. 35.

22 Breckenridge, p. 200.

23 Carrington, p. 82.

24 Ibid, p. 88.

25 Ibid, p. 83.

26 Ibid, p. 82.

legal frameworks. Britain passed the Treasure Trove Act of 1888 to allow the empire to acquire any object of archaeological interest and a year later, in 1889, it ratified the Hague Convention, which outlawed plunder during warfare. The changing norms surrounding military action and greater scrutiny towards looting ultimately shaped the moral justifications not only for the empire but also in the minds of individual perpetrators, such as those in the Younghusband mission.

POLITICAL FACTORS

Against this backdrop, British India began its attempts to establish negotiations with Tibet regarding borders and access to resources in the late nineteenth century. While its strategic location was a reason for this, Tibet's image as an exotic destination and a paradise for collectors was also a major driving factor behind Britain's interest.²⁷ A major hindrance for the negotiations was the lack of consensus among officers about the degree of control China exercised over Tibet. Political power in Tibet at that time was split between China, Tibet, and independent local polities, and it was difficult to ascertain the exact degree of power and influence each commanded.²⁸ Two opposing stances emerged within the British Indian government; while local British officers in Calcutta believed that China's impact was minimal and direct negotiations with Tibet were imperative, the government in Britain insisted on respecting China's suzerainty over Tibet, therefore blocking attempts at direct negotiations with Tibetan authorities.²⁹

This lack of consensus about Tibet's sovereignty had also been a major factor in the decades-long dispute over the border between Tibet and Sikkim in British India. Fifteen years prior to the Younghusband mission, in 1888, the British had attacked the Tibetan army in Sikkim. At that time, China had intervened on behalf of Tibet.³⁰ As a result, the Convention of 1890 had been signed between Great Britain and China. Although the convention attempted to demarcate borders and establish trade regulations between both nations, it was a failure since Tibet refused to assent to the treaty stating that 'it was signed by the British Government and the Chinese, and therefore they [Tibet] have nothing

27 Harris, p. 54.

28 Thejalhoukho, p. 454.

29 Ibid, p. 454.

30 Ibid, p. 453.

to do with it.³¹ Without Tibet's assent, it was unfeasible to implement it. Therefore, the border dispute prevailed, and both parties agreed that matters of trade, communications and pasturage would be momentarily tabled.³²

China's subsequent failure to secure Tibet's consent for a proposal that was to grant British subjects the right to buy land and export salt and tea to Tibet further revealed its lack of authority in Tibet, thereby strengthening the stance of local British officials in India that China's impact was minimal.³³ This led to growing support for direct confrontations with Tibetans, ignoring China's stance in the matter. However, the British government continued to advise the exercise of restraint against provoking China over the sensitive subject of its authority in Tibet. This stance of adopting a conciliatory approach towards China was also motivated by a second factor that would later be cited as a reason for the Younghusband mission: the perceived threat of Russia's advancement towards British India.³⁴ The government was reliant on China to act as a buffer between itself and Russia.

George Nathaniel Curzon's appointment as the Viceroy of India in 1899 was a watershed moment in British India's policy towards Tibet. Much to the chagrin of the government in Britain, he staunchly believed in doing away with China's involvement in Tibetan negotiations and swiftly acted upon this notion. Public opinion too had swayed in this direction, with media outlets like the *Daily News* reporting that 'Tibet [has]...committed the unpardonable crime of refusing the amorous overtures of the [British] Indian government' and the *Pall Mall* opining that 'Tibet is too full of gold and too important by position in Asia for us to leave it to another.'³⁵ In 1990, Curzon wrote to the Dalai Lama, asking him to send an official to India on behalf of the Tibetan Grand Council to advance commercial and political negotiations between the two countries.³⁶ The letter was returned with no response, generating outrage and leading to calls for military intervention. H. S. Barnes, the Secretary to the Government of India noted, 'if the Dalai

31 National Archives of India 1894b, 'Opening of the Trade-mart at Yatung', Secret-E, October: pp. 91-159.

32 Thejalkhoukho, p. 455.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 456.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 455.

35 Harris, pp. 49-50.

36 National Archives of India 1901a, 'Attempts to Open Direct Communications with Tibetan Authorities', Secret-E, August, pp. 18-28.

Lama won't respond to our overtures, there is, if we wish to improve matters, no alternative but force.³⁷

Curzon sent another letter to the Dalai Lama, directly threatening military intervention as the government's 'right'.³⁸ This demonstrated the sense of entitlement inherent to the colonial system that permitted it to apply a different set of moral and legal standards to themselves and the 'other', wherein the concept of Westphalian sovereignty was never extended to colonies and rules against plunder during warfare neglected to address colonial looting. Meanwhile, Tibet, in a strategic negotiation of its disadvantaged position, now argued that it could not engage in diplomacy with Britain lest it offend China.³⁹ In a bid to preserve its sovereignty, when Lhasa considered turning to Russia for support (although there was no evidence that this was followed through), Curzon used this as an argument to proceed with its military invasion.⁴⁰

Understanding Colonial Violence: Theoretical Framework

At the core of perpetrator studies is the fundamental understanding that people seek to justify their own actions, to maintain a positive self-image and resolve any cognitive dissonance between their morals and behaviour. To understand the perpetrators' perspective of the Younghusband mission, this paper draws its theoretical frameworks from Alex J Bellamy's work on the legitimacy of mass killings in colonial empires. He highlights that the need for justifications is further heightened among political actors and leaders since their reasoning is not only central to their self-image but also to the approval of their constituencies at home and abroad.⁴¹ For perpetrators of colonial violence, therefore, individual justifications for violence must be seen in conjunction with the larger logic of colonialism; the presence of the empire legitimised their actions just as much as their actions too legitimised the empire.

When individuals, particularly political leaders, experience a dissonance between their actions and normative frameworks of moral-

37 Thejalhoukho, p. 460.

38 1901a National Archives of India, pp. 18–28.

39 Thejalhoukho, p. 461.

40 Francis Younghusband, *India and Tibet* (J. Murray, 1910), p. 72.

41 Alex Bellamy, 'Mass Killing and the Politics of Legitimacy: Empire and the Ideology of Selective Extermination', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 58 (2012), pp. 159–180 (p. 160).

ity, they must develop a way of explaining their behaviour to claim an 'exception from moral rules.'⁴² Bellamy argues that although the explanations for any instance of mass killing may be uniquely contextual, with even individual perpetrators of a single case offering diverse justifications for their actions, in the past two centuries justifications for mass atrocities have typically followed three pathways. The first is denial wherein perpetrators may argue that evidence of massacres was fabricated, that the victims were not civilians, that the killing was not intentional, or that other groups were responsible for the killing.⁴³ The second approach invokes the principle of military necessity to justify killing civilians as part of normal military process or blaming civilians for supporting rebels, especially in operations that were framed as counter-insurgencies.⁴⁴

The third pathway, which is most pertinent to the Younghusband mission and other colonial interventions, relies on a framework that places whole groups outside of normal legal and moral protection from violence on account of some assigned traits such as race, ethnicity, or religion.⁴⁵ This was demonstrated during the Younghusband mission in the differential reactions of Arthur Hadow to attacks by the British on the Tibetans, and those by Tibetans on the British. While the former, which were much greater than the latter numerically, were always justified, legitimised, and quickly forgotten, an exceptional attack on two officers in Gyantse was met with shock and punishment:

Last Thursday morning, two of our medical officers were suddenly attacked by a Lama with a sword quite close to camp. One officer got a bad cut over the head and the other got a cut on the hand. The Tibetan was soon secured and he was publicly hung yesterday which I hope will be a lesson to the Tibetans...the Tibetans have been fined 5,000 rupees for the outrage.⁴⁶

Merely excluding a group from protection is not enough to justify mass killings on a larger scale; to justify the perpetration of violence completely, killing has to be ascribed a positive value. To that end, colonisers

⁴² Bellamy, p. 160.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁴⁶ Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Lhasa, 20 August 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

posited the notion that the massacres played a positive role in 'bringing civilisation' to the colonies or 'improving' them, or that the violence was even a spiritual necessity for the spread of Christianity.⁴⁷ While Bellamy uses this argument to explain massacres by colonial powers, it also provides a coherent explanation for the manner in which colonial looting was justified. For instance, looting after the revolt of 1857 had been justified as 'the only way in which natives could be punished for their outrages on [British] men, women, and children.'⁴⁸ When it was criticised as 'uncivilised,' the concept of colonial collecting was used to legitimise it as a positive act driven by the noble intention of building museum collections, educating the masses, and producing knowledge.

This line of argumentation mirrors Homi Bhabha's concept of stereotypes and their role in colonial discourse. Bhabha argues that the objective of colonial discourse was to 'construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.'⁴⁹ To that end, he noted that through repetition, the coloniser construed the colonised population as an 'othered' social reality that was the binary opposite of all that western civilisation stood for, and yet was entirely knowable and visible to the coloniser. This contradiction holds true for the case of Tibet, which Francis Younghusband described as 'a mysterious, secluded country in the remote hinterland of the Himalayas' and Arthur Hadow called 'an unexplored country,' despite the fact that these officials recognized its unique culture and sought after its material artefacts. Tibetans' 'exploration' of their own land was not considered adequate or legitimate since they were treated as part of the scenery to be explored, not as active participants of their own culture. The country could not be 'known' as long as it was still 'unknown' to Europeans. This also echoed Edward Said's argument that European discourses constructed colonies as 'the Orient,' a unified racial, geographical, political and cultural zone of the world which was used to produce a fixed, unchanging image of the colonised subject.⁵⁰

This logic was also used to justify the dissonance between Britain's ratification of the Hague Convention and its actions during the Younghusband mission; a 1914 British manual of military law stated that 'the rules of international law apply only to warfare between civ-

47 Bellamy, p. 165.

48 Carrington, p. 85.

49 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994), p. 101.

50 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 72

ilised nations [...] they do not apply in wars with uncivilised states and tribes where their place is taken by the discretion of the commander.⁵¹ Writing by the officials of the Younghusband mission demonstrate this framework, using stereotypes of Tibet and Tibetans to argue that they were to be excluded from norms of protection, even ascribing positive values to these actions. Their individual justifications for violence reflected the larger logic of colonialism, which sought to view, in Edward Said's words, the 'Orient' as the 'other.' Captain W. F. T. O'Connor's dehumanising claim that 'every Tibetan, high and low, is a curiosity who ought to be in a museum' was an example of this.⁵²

Perpetrators' Perspectives on the Younghusband Mission

LEGITIMISING THE YOUNGHUSBAND MISSION

The Younghusband mission was undertaken under the leadership of Francis Younghusband, at the behest of Curzon and despite the scepticism of the home government in Britain. Its members were contending not only with increased public criticisms of the empire's violence and looting but also with resistance from a part of its own government about the incursion. The need to justify and legitimise the mission was therefore crucial for everyone involved, from the individual perpetrators of the violence who were acting outside of accepted moral and legal frameworks, to the colonial leaders who had to establish the invasion's legitimacy as a political decision. Bellamy argues that an action can only be considered legitimate to the extent that it is reflected and understood within the framework of a community's shared norms and those justifications are validated by others.⁵³ To that end, the manner in which perpetrators legitimised their actions tended to align with the general norms and beliefs that upheld British society and the empire.

Certain pathways for justifying violence permeated throughout the accounts of the mission's members. Denying, minimising, or rationalising the violence was one way. Terming the invasion as a 'mission' was itself a way of denying its actual intent; the term shrouded the militant nature of the incursion, instead invoking the image of an important

51 British Manual of Military Law (1914), p. 235, para. 7.

52 Harris, p.1.

53 Bellamy, p. 162.

assignment or even a spiritually significant journey. Arthur Hadow joked about this in letters to his parents: 'It is not called an expedition at the moment but a mission as I expect the government does not want to attract too much attention to the move⁵⁴...so I supposed I am a missionary of sort! The first one in the family after all! Though my means of persuasion consists of 2 maxim guns and 12,000 rounds of ammunition!⁵⁵ He also wrote, 'I hope we may get some fightin...I am quite delighted with the whole thing and am much looking forward to it.'⁵⁶ As the letter demonstrates, there was no doubt in the minds of its members that the Younghusband mission was a military undertaking. Certainly, there was no doubt in the minds of its leaders who had, only recently, sent a letter to the Dalai Lama threatening the use of force.

Francis Younghusband's book, *India and Tibet*, utilised a range of such argumentation to justify every stage of the expedition. It began by repeatedly articulating the conviction that the mission was well thought-out, and all actions taken during its course were unavoidable. He constantly appealed to the image of British officials as rational and logical: 'the sedate gentlemen who compose the Government of India are not renowned for being carried away by bursts of excitement or enthusiasm, nor are they remarkable for impulsive, thoughtless action... Certainly, the initiation of anything forward and interfering was as little to be expected from them as from the most rigorous anti-Imperialist.'⁵⁷ Directly addressing concerns about intervening in Tibet, a nation far away from Britain, he wrote, 'There must have been some strong reason, for it was not merely a matter of permitting an adventurous explorer to try and reach the forbidden city.'⁵⁸ In reality, the large-scale looting, the public enthusiasm about punishing Tibet for the failure of negotiations, and the calculated inclusion of collectors and antiquarians on the team suggested otherwise.

The ability to legitimise an atrocity simply by arguing that one party was inherently more logical than the other was only possible due the use of stereotypes in colonial discourse, which as Homi Bhabha analyses, would create a binary between the colonised and the colo-

54 Arthur Hadow, Letter to father, Bareilly, 15 November 1903, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

55 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Bareilly, 16 November 1903, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

56 Ibid.

57 Younghusband, p. 1.

58 Ibid, p. 2.

niser. Younghusband depicted the colonisers as rational, passive, and courageous. In contrast, he frequently portrayed Tibetans as irrational, erratic, and cowardly. For instance, while describing a negotiation, the failure of which had resulted in a massacre by the British troops where six-hundred retreating Tibetans were killed, Younghusband wrote,

So far the conversation, in spite of occasional bursts from the monks, had been maintained with perfect good humour; but when I made a sign of moving, and said that I must be returning to Tuna, the monks, looking as black as devils, shouted out: 'No, you won't; you'll stop here.'⁵⁹

India and Tibet sought to establish the image of the enlightened and rational Englishmen, a notion that was fundamental to sustaining the legitimacy of an empire under fire for its repeated 'uncivilised' behaviour. By describing the monks as 'black as devils' and linking this to their seemingly unpredictable behaviour during the negotiation, Younghusband invoked ideas of racial supremacy and mistrust of people of colour, which were also notions that were fundamental to sustaining the British empire.

Another way in which Younghusband rationalised the mission and its atrocities was by repeatedly ascribing a certain passivity to Britain's actions, insisting that while the colonisers would rather never cause harm, circumstances had forced them to do so. This allowed him to avoid blame and accountability by arguing that whatever happened was inevitable; his central thesis was that the Mission to Lhasa of 1904 was the 'inevitable culmination of a long series of efforts to regularize and humanize the interactions between both countries to establish a business-like' relationship.⁶⁰ If the events were inevitable, then the British themselves could be viewed as victims of their circumstances, acting self-sacrificially or for the greater good:

[the British government] regretted the necessity for abandoning the passive attitude that had hitherto sufficed in the regulation of affairs on the frontier, and were compelled to recognize that circumstances had recently occurred which threw on them the obligation of placing our relations with the Government of Lhasa upon a more satisfactory footing.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Younghusband, p. 166.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶¹ Younghusband, p. 84.

Younghusband continued to use a language of inevitability and compulsion to justify atrocities committed at various points in the mission. He also downplayed his own awareness and participation in acts of violence. For instance, when he received a letter during the mission from the Indian government expressing concern about the news of looting by the troops, he responded with the claim that the Tibetans had permitted British officials to collect the manuscripts.⁶² However, in several letters exchanged with his wife, he boasted about soldiers bringing him looted objects, and sent a few to her via parcel, also informing her that he still had several larger items in his possession.⁶³ At this time, he was also receiving a barrage of correspondence from individuals, family members, and official committees or museums, with requests to bring back 'curios' or mementos for them to keep.⁶⁴

Another pathway for justifying and concretely legitimising the mission was to ascribe positive values to colonial violence. This was reflected most persuasively in a particular notion that was popularised by official writings about the mission: that the religious leaders of Tibet were primitive, obstinate, and stubborn, practised a degenerated form of Buddhism, and were oppressing the peasantry.⁶⁵ These sentiments permeated the writings of both Francis Younghusband and Arthur Hadow. Expressions of hatred towards Lamas, such as Younghusband's declaration that he would 'smash those selfish filthy lecherous Lamas'⁶⁶ were thus justified as a sentiment that was in the interest of the ordinary citizens' wellbeing. Hadow echoed this sentiment when he wrote, 'The Tibetans here appear quite friendly and anxious to trade. It is the monk faction at Lhasa which is the curse of the country.'⁶⁷ This logic paved the path for a sense of saviourism towards seemingly powerless and passive peasants, who needed the troop's protection from the malevolence of the monk faction. Narratives of saviourism permeated individual accounts, for instance, with Hadow writing about how money was distributed by the mission to 'the poor of Lhasa.'⁶⁸ One of

62 Carrington, p. 96.

63 Ibid, p. 98.

64 Ibid, p. 97.

65 Ibid, p. 94.

66 Harris, p. 56.

67 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Gyantse, 23 April 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

68 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Lhasa, 26 August 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

his letters also claimed that the Tibetans were 'taking advantage of the medical aid which has been given them here.'⁶⁹

EN ROUTE TO LHASA

On 10 November 1903, Arthur Hadow received orders to mobilise his troops for deployment to Sikkim.⁷⁰ Seventeen days later, he left West Bengal. While crossing the Jelep La Pass in Sikkim, the troops encountered a deputation of Chinese and Tibetan officials riding on mules who asked them to turn back around, offering to work towards a negotiation in the coming months.⁷¹ As the troops continued to advance, such non-violent interventions and appeals would be made several times by the Tibetans. It is possible that the Tibetans chose to refrain from violence either due to Buddhism's precepts against causing harm, or due to the Dalai Lama's prohibition against attacking the invaders, or simply because they misjudged Britain's intentions to inflict harm.⁷² However, contrary to the narrative presented by official sources of the mission, Charles Allen persuasively argues that the reason Tibetans refrained from attacking the invaders cannot solely be attributed to fear or a mismatch of military might. This is because although official narratives portrayed the members of the mission as strong, prepared, and impossible to defeat, unofficial sources reveal that their inability to cope with low temperatures and resultant illnesses, their unfamiliarity with the climate and terrain, and infighting among the leaders of the mission created situations of extreme vulnerability, which the Tibetans actively chose to refrain from taking advantage of and acting upon.⁷³

Ironically, Hadow seemed to interpret this commitment to non-violence as hostility, as frequently expressed in his letters.⁷⁴ When the mission did not assent to the intervention of the Tibetan and Chinese deputation, Hadow wrote, 'This will bring home to the Tibetans that

69 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Gyantse, 30 April 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

70 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Bareilly, 11 November 1903, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

71 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Renchengong, 13 December 1903, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

72 Charles Allen, *Duel in the Snows: The True Story of the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa* (John Murray, 2004), p. 84.

73 Allen, pp. 78–84.

74 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Thuna, 17 February 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

their country is not impregnable as they think and will bring them to their senses.⁷⁵ In his eyes, their non-violence was a challenge to the coloniser. By 14 December, the mission had reached Chumbi, from where some members marched to Phari Jong and conquered the abandoned fort. Official sources of the mission depicted this as a military victory, reporting: 'By a swift and secret swoop [Brigadier-General Macdonald] was able to seize this great mobilisation centre of the Tibetan troops, with its tons of gunpowder and bullets, without firing a single shot.'⁷⁶ However, the Tibetan troops had not abandoned the fort out of fear; they had simply been transferred north to stop an anticipated advance of the Younghusband mission from Khamba Jong.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, Hadow continued to express his disappointment at the lack of fighting.⁷⁸

The capture of the fort led to friction among members of the mission since Younghusband had previously assured the Tibetans that British troops would take no hostile action towards the fort insofar as they took none as well.⁷⁹ However, rather than acknowledging his failure to honour this agreement, he wrote in *India and Tibet* that the conquest had been necessary for 'safeguarding the road for the advance of the Mission, and guarding against the regrettable display of force with which the Tibetans had endeavoured to intimidate the Mission at Khamba Jong.'⁸⁰ This was another example of justifying violence that went against the acceptable frameworks of military action by framing it as necessary for a greater purpose.

MASSACRE OF CHUMIK SHENKO

On 31 March 1904, the Younghusband mission perpetrated a massacre while advancing from Camp Thuna to a village called Guru. Named after the hot spring close to the site of the violence, this came to be known as the massacre of Chumik Shenko. In *India and Tibet*, Younghusband writes: 'a terrible and ghastly business; but it was not fair for an English statesman to call it a massacre of unarmed men.'⁸¹ In the days leading

75 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Renchengong, 13 December 1903, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

76 Allen, p. 71.

77 Ibid, p. 71.

78 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp New Chumbi, 23 December 1903, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

79 Allen, p. 80.

80 Younghusband, p. 54.

81 Younghusband, p. 178.

up to this, in a letter to his mother, Arthur Hadow had mentioned that Tibetans had built walls on the hill to prevent their advance to Guru, which was supposed to be undertaken the next day. Describing the decided positioning of the troops to combat this, Hadow wrote, 'if there is any fighting I ought to get my share.'⁸² At several points during the march, Tibetan messengers, including the Lhasa General himself, approached Francis Younghusband asking him to cease their advance. He responded by declining and declaring that the troops would use force if they were blocked by the Tibetans.⁸³

When they reached the blockade put up by the Tibetans, the troops encircled the Tibetan position.⁸⁴ Younghusband issued the order that they would not fire until the Tibetans fired.⁸⁵ This was emphasised in every published account of the mission and heralded by all as a courageous and noble decision of choosing benevolence at the potential risk of incurring grave harm to oneself. Framing it in this manner allowed for them to further argue that the massacre was unavoidable and occurred against the will of the perpetrators. However, as Allen shows, this framing, apart from being a tool for justification, was not an accurate assessment of the situation. For one, the Tibetans had consistently maintained that they would not attack them, even reiterating this multiple times during their negotiations during the march to Guru.⁸⁶ Secondly, the troops had encircled them in such a manner that it was impossible for the Tibetans to suddenly attack.⁸⁷ Most importantly, the troops had already been prepared to massacre the Tibetans and were simply seeking a method to instigate this.

The latter was demonstrated by two things. Firstly, Hadow admitted that the General had issued an order to 'make as big a bag as possible' with regards to killing the Tibetans.⁸⁸ Secondly, when the Tibetans refused to initiate an attack, the Sikh sepoy were told to make a dummy attack in order to provoke the Tibetans to open fire.⁸⁹ As Younghusband admitted in a letter to his father, 'They charged with fixed bayo-

82 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Thuna, 29 March 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

83 Younghusband, p. 174.

84 Allen, p. 118.

85 Younghusband, p. 175.

86 Allen, p. 108.

87 Ibid, p. 115.

88 Arthur Hadow, Letter to father, Camp Thuna, 3 April 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

89 Allen, p. 113.

nets shouting loudly.⁹⁰ When the Tibetans still stood firm and refused to shoot, a second order was issued to physically disarm them. More sepoy surrounded the Tibetans and started tugging at their weapons and horses. At this point, the Lhasa General's gun went off and this was used retrospectively to argue that the Tibetans commenced the fighting. In most sources, this event is mentioned rather vaguely, omitting details about the provocation or the physical contact, focussing mainly on the fact that they did not fire until the Tibetans did. Younghusband claimed that the Lhasa General 'threw himself upon a sepoy, drew a revolver, and shot the sepoy in the jaw.'⁹¹ However, Henry Newman, a direct eyewitness, described the event differently: 'When the man holding the horse was pushed back, the rifle the Depon [the Lhasa General] was holding went off. The shot wounded the Sikh in the jaw. Now I do not know whether the shot went off by accident or whether it was a signal.'⁹²

Carnage followed. Most Tibetans were killed when they rushed towards the troops while the remainder stood huddled together, unable to run or shoot, being gunned down by the colonising force.⁹³ The Younghusband mission killed hundreds of Tibetans, including civilians they encountered in a subsequent pursuit, which continued for a distance of twelve miles, and most of Guru village was set on fire.⁹⁴ The pile of bodies at the battlefield was such a ghastly sight that most officials wrote about it in letters to their loved ones with some emotion of disgust and even remorse. Hadow wrote, 'I hope I shall never have to shoot down men walking away again. One would have thought that they would flee panic stricken but they did not.'⁹⁵ This was a crack in the otherwise calm composure of Hadow's writing. A man who had frequently expressed his desire to participate in killing Tibetans, who had displayed disappointment on several occasions when a potentially precarious situation had not translated to a fight, then coped with this cognitive dissonance by blaming the carnage on the Tibetans: 'It was

90 Ibid, p. 113.

91 Younghusband, p. 177.

92 Allen, p. 115.

93 Ibid, p. 117.

94 Ibid, p. 122.

95 Arthur Hadow, Letter to father, Camp Thuna, 3 April 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum .

rather a horrible affair as the slaughter was terrible but one cannot help this in war and the Tibetans brought it upon themselves.⁹⁶

Younghusband too assuaged his guilt on a personal level by increasingly blaming the situation on the Tibetans. On the night after the massacre, he wrote to his wife, saying, 'I have had an absolutely miserable day...It was a horrible sight, but I feel I did every single thing I could to prevent this.' Then on 1st April, he wrote to his father, 'it was a wretched affair — a pure massacre - brought on by the crass stupidity and childishness of the Tibetan general.' Three days later, he wrote, 'It was all the Tibetans' own fault and I am glad I twice restrained Macdonald from commencing firing...I did give them every chance up to the time the silly Lhasa general threw himself upon one of our sepoys & so commenced the fray. Then of course there was nothing for it but to begin firing.'⁹⁷ Repeating over and over his version of the events, it is clear that on some level, Younghusband experienced guilt. He later admitted in his book that after the massacre, the Tibetans at Lhasa had confronted him and reasoned that he would have known that the Lhasa General did not intend to fire.⁹⁸ To rationalise this, with each passing narration, he showed an increasing inclination towards blaming the victim. The notion that the troops were forced to enact violence, that the massacres were inevitable, therefore may have been more than just a way to propagate the political legitimacy of the mission. They may have also been a personal coping mechanism for its leader.

A few days later, when the troops were passing the site of the massacre again, Hadow reported with revulsion that the bodies had been robbed by members of the mission: 'It was a rather horrible sight as we went over the ground again as many bodies were still unburied, it being so difficult to do so in the frozen ground. Many had also been stripped by the camp followers.'⁹⁹ However, his acknowledgement that stripped dead bodies were a 'horrible sight' did not amount to any larger action on his part to refrain from engaging in the lootings at Gyantse. His normalisation of his own perpetration of looting revealed a dissonance in the way he experienced his own behaviour. It is therefore difficult to ascertain the sincerity of his remorse or revulsion.

96 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Thuna, 3 April 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

97 Allen, p. 126.

98 Younghusband, p. 177.

99 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Kalapange, 6 April 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

THE SIEGE OF GYANTSE

Brigadier-General Macdonald sought to exploit their military victory at Guru to advance before the Tibetans could recover.¹⁰⁰ Fighting ensued en route to Gyantse, near the Red Idol Gorge, leading to more killings by the mission. Only days after he had called the massacre a horrible affair, Hadow once again wrote to his mother expressing his disappointment at not participating in the active fighting.¹⁰¹ He then provided extensive details about the looting that preceded and followed the siege as the mission moved through Tibet. He wrote about looting a fort in a letter to his mother:

Everything which appeared worth having was taken and after some things had been set aside for the British Museum the remainder was divided amongst the officers. Three small images fell to my share of no particular value beyond being curiosities. After all this loot had been divided anyone was allowed to go into the fort and take what they liked (there being practically nothing left).¹⁰²

Unsatisfied by the loot left for him, Hadow went in search of a room that may have been overlooked by other members of the mission. When they found it untouched, he described it as 'an old curiosity shop with all sorts of rubbish.'¹⁰³ This demonstrated the epistemic violence inherent to colonial collecting; repeated exposure to wonder cabinets, exhibits, and other Britain-based outcomes of colonial looting meant that these objects had been decontextualised from their original purposes. Hadow, upon encountering a room full of objects that were owned, used, and possibly cherished by Tibetans, immediately thought of a curiosity shop. Hadow described many religious artefacts in the room, including images of deities and a chorten, all of which he looted. 'By the time we had finished rummaging the place was in chaotic confusion in which state we left it!'¹⁰⁴ Upon hearing about his looting, other officers too came in search of the room but Hadow had emptied it. He

¹⁰⁰ Allen, p. 129.

¹⁰¹ Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Gyantse, 18 April 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Gyantse, 18 April 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

also expressed the desire to loot objects from the regular temples but admitted that this was not permitted.¹⁰⁵

This question of permissibility of certain kinds of looting sheds light on the tensions that the mission was grappling with, between contrasting motivations of avoiding looting to uphold the image of the moral empire, aiding with colonial collection, and indulging in personal acquisition. The repeated mention of the British Museum in the letters revealed that the institution was invested in and greatly benefitting from the lootings of the mission. However, when it came to individual responsibility, a lot of the 'colonial collecting' was being carried not only in opposition to the normative moral and legal frameworks of the time but also in active opposition to the instructions given to members of the mission. Members including Younghusband and Hadow were exercising their agency, often even in opposition to official authority. Hadow wrote:

I was much afraid that if the authorities heard of what I got some of the things would be appropriated for the British Museum, so I have packed up the best of them and they are leaving tomorrow, There is a colonel in the Indian Medical Service who is 'Antiquarian' to the Force and whenever he sees anything nice he appropriates it, as he says, for the British Museum but we are very doubtful how much will eventually reach the said museum!¹⁰⁶

This excerpt was not the only instance of Hadow exercising his agency to collect artefacts for himself. When an armistice was declared for a few days, he wrote about going to a monastery, in his words, 'to do a little looting!'¹⁰⁷ He wrote,

I know by this time the best places to search so...I at once made for the cellars where we found some things hidden away. We only had to visit a few of the buildings so did not get very much and we then had to divide the things between the three of us. I got rather a nice gong which no doubt you will find useless when I am able to get it home.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Gyantse, 4 July 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Ultimately, when one of the leaders of the mission eventually prohibited looting, Hadow wrote to his parents about the arrangements he had made for a Lama to hide his loot and bring it to him later when the coast was clear.¹⁰⁹ Just as Hadow had once gone against the orders to continue shooting at retreating Tibetans during the massacre of Chumik Shenko, thereby exercising his agency in violation of official instruction, here too, he demonstrated his agency in deciding which instructions to abide by and which to circumvent. To that end, it is clear that the violence—both physical and cultural—was often inflicted by officials out of their own volition, unrelated to the stated goals of the expedition.

While the exact scale of looting is unknown, the sale of Tibetan artefacts following the Younghusband mission demonstrated that the act was neither incidental nor rare. In May of 1905, the Chief Staff Officer to the Tibet mission sold 169 Tibetan artefacts to the British Museum. By 1906, two other officials sold 39 more. One of them also eventually auctioned over 50 more artefacts.¹¹⁰ For the next three decades, the auction houses of London regularly sold items appropriated during the mission. Many items offered for sale were ‘rare’ or ‘of the finest specimens’ and were referenced as ‘secured from a monastery by an officer in the Younghusband expedition’ or ‘collected during the Younghusband expedition.’¹¹¹ Moreover, the plunder during the Younghusband mission played a major role in the creation and popularisation of ‘Tibetan art’ as a category recognised in the West. The looted artefacts contributed significantly to creating Britain’s national repository of Tibetan art.¹¹²

On the day that the fort of Gyantse was sieged, the British flag was hoisted on its highest battlement.¹¹³ While unpublished records noted the rampant killing and looting during the siege of Gyantse, Younghusband described the same events using statements such as, ‘on its arrival our force was ineffectually bombarded,’ and ‘I begged that the women and children should be taken out of the town.’¹¹⁴ Hadow’s account of accompanying Younghusband to survey the site presented no such remorse:

109 Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Gyantse, 11 July 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

110 Carrington, p. 109.

111 Ibid, p. 109.

112 Harris, p. 52.

113 Allen, p. 140.

114 Younghusband, p. 216.

The following day I went over with Colonel Younghusband to have a look at the place which was most interesting. There were lots of dead Tibetans lying about mostly killed by the shells which in many cases inflict fearful wounds. I saw one man with both legs blown clean off! After I had inspected the Yong I went down to do a little looting in the big monastery at the back of the Jong...It was great fun! All the doors were locked but we found a sledge hammer and then not a single door withstood me. I went through the 3 big buildings but the Tibetans had taken away or hidden most of their things.¹¹⁵

Hadow's description of the place as 'interesting' quickly followed a macabre description of the fearful wounds incurred by dead Tibetans. He seemingly expressed a mix of horror and fascination at the sight, before quickly shifting the topic to the subject of looting, which he then described as 'great fun.' He boasted of no door withstanding his efforts at pillaging. His acknowledgement that the Tibetans had taken or hidden most items demonstrated his clear awareness of their resistance to the pillaging, despite Younghusband's official claim to the Indian government that artefacts were given to the British of their own free will. Feelings of guilt and remorse are not mediated in this letter through a sense of duty towards the mission or a denial of responsibility or claim of 'following orders.' Instead, Hadow clearly demonstrated his exercise of agency and choice, stated that his motivation was to have fun, and wrote with immense clarity about the consequences and conditions of his looting.

Conclusion

The Younghusband mission reached Lhasa on 3 August 1904. On 7 September, the Government of Great Britain and the Government of Tibet signed the Lhasa Convention at the Potala Palace. The treaty forced Tibet to acknowledge the border defined by the Anglo-China Convention of 1890, permit the establishment of trade marts at Gyantse, Gartok, and Yatung, assign a Tibetan agent who was to be responsible for all communications between the British and Tibetans or Chinese, refrain from entering into any diplomatic relations with other foreign powers, and pay an indemnity to Britain. The treaty also allowed Britain

¹¹⁵ Arthur Hadow, Letter to mother, Camp Gyantse, 11 July 1904, Collection NHRM 5069, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum.

to occupy Chumbi valley till the indemnity was paid. The terms of the treaty revealed what all justifications may have sought to hide: that the incursion was never about trade or diplomacy. It was an attempt to colonise in every sense, from legitimising looting and justifying massacres to claiming territory and resources. An unintended byproduct of the treaty was that it recognised Tibetan authority. The Home Government, however, did not support its harsh provisions and reprimanded Younghusband since Britain was still unwilling to undermine China. An adhesion treaty was signed with China in 1906 and another with Russia in 1907 which ultimately aided China in colonising Tibet and explicitly claiming sovereignty.¹¹⁶

The Younghusband Mission was a stark example of how colonial violence was perpetrated, justified, and legitimized through both structural ideologies and individual agency of colonial officials. This article examined the writings of Francis Younghusband and Arthur Hadow to understand mechanisms that enabled the mission's atrocities: the dehumanisation of Tibetans, the ascription of a positive value to violence as an integral tool for national progress, and the objectification of land and people as resources to be exploited. Colonial moral frameworks placed Tibetans outside legal and moral protections, thereby justifying the perpetration of massacres and looting. Individually, officials like Arthur Hadow exercised agency in perpetrating violence and looting to a certain degree, often going against official orders when it came to their personal gain. At the same time, Hadow relied to an extent on the colonial structures and official instruction to mitigate his own sense of empathy. Using dehumanizing narratives, claims of necessity, and denial of responsibility, members of the mission minimised their guilt.

The mission's violence was not merely physical but also cultural and epistemological, as seen in the looting of artefacts and their recontextualization in British museums. The British Museum's Register of Antiquities for 1905 lists 169 items the museum purchased from a member of the mission. Fourteen prayer boxes are labelled 'taken from killed lamas.'¹¹⁷ Clearly contradicting the claims made in *India and Tibet*, this verifies that even monks were targeted and stripped by members of the mission. Similarly, the Liverpool Museum contains Tibetan religious artefacts that are stated to have been taken from Francis Younghusband's collection.¹¹⁸ To that end, these materials in the museums of Brit-

116 Thejalhoukho, p. 462.

117 Harris, p. 58.

118 Harris, p. 29.

ain, while corroborating the intentions and actions of the mission, also mark its continuation wherein objects looted from colonies continue to be part of the former coloniser's exhibits. These practices continue to reinforce colonial hierarchies, exhibiting an exotic image of Tibet, while suppressing the true scale of the mission's brutality. By analysing the perpetrators' perspectives, this paper revealed how colonial violence was both systemic and deeply personal, shaped by the interplay of structural ideologies and individual motivations.

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