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Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 18, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

On the 4th of July I was riding a small horse through a 14,500 foot pass overlooking the Tibetan grasslands to the West and the towering Snow Mountains to the Southeast. It was snowing (J), and the cold gale which swept through the pass made me feel naked in my khaki clothes. Only the loan of a heavy yak-hair raincoat kept me from being completely miserable. It was the strangest 4th of July that I have ever spent, and it was the climax of an exciting trip.

On June 20th Phil Valdes (a Yale classmate and old friend of mine who is now an American Vice-Consul in Chungking) and I set out from Chungking with a common objective - to learn what is going on in the province of Sikang. We arrived back in Chungking on July 12th after having covered over 850 miles by jeep, about 250 miles on foot, and about 80 miles on horseback. From Chungking we drove to Chengtu, capital city of Szechwan, in one day (a back-breaking drive which we divided in two on the return trip) and then on to Yaan in another day. The rough roads literally chewed up two of our tires, and at the end of both of these stretches we limped into our destination on three tires and a rim. From Yaan we went on foot the 120 miles or so to Kangting through the most spectacular mountain country that I have ever seen. About one-half of this five-day trip we rode in sedan chairs, but the rest, including all the steep parts, we walked. From Kangting we rode horses to the small Tibetan village of Nashi situated in a valley of the rolling Tibetan grasslands. The whole trip was an exciting expedition. The scenery in Sikang presents a spectacle which is thrilling, and every day of our trip it was a little different. Our only disappointment was the fact that clouds prevented us from catching even a fleeting glimpse of Minya Konka, China's highest mountain peak, but we saw other snow-covered peaks which were impressive. The whole region we passed through has a romantic, frontier, cops-and-robbers atmosphere. The Provincial Government insisted upon giving us a sizeable armed escort varying from one to two full platoons on the way out (but not, for some strange reason, on the way back). Fortunately, we didn't run into any bandit trouble ourselves, but we missed it by a mere two days at one spot. Beyond Kangting our Tibetan guide didn't feel it advisable to take Chinese guards, so instead we borrowed rifles and went with pockets full of ammunition. Again we avoided trouble, but we had one tense moment when we were approached by a Tibetan patrol and neither they nor ourselves was certain of the other's identity.

All along the way we stayed at small Chinese inns (except that beyond Kangting we spent one night in a Tibetan inn and another in a

Tibetan home) and ate whatever we could pick up. In Chinese areas we were occasionally able to get good Chinese meals, but at many stops potatoes, eggs, and local corn bread had to suffice, and once we had to borrow rice from our good-natured guards to eat anything at all. In Tibetan areas all travelers must carry their own provisions, and we ate "tsamba" (barley flour) and butter tea brought along by our guide.

In Sikang we met, and were entertained by, all the top-ranking officials (a pleasant lot of scoundrels), and we talked with innumerable people along the way. We were fortunate, also, in meeting a number of other well-informed people (including a few foreign missionaries, Catholic and Protestant) who were able to give us a good deal of background briefing - particularly on the Tibetan regions of the province. In this report I will try to tie together all the bits and pieces of information gathered during the trip (as well as from reading, translation of documents gathered in Sikang, and so on) into a general sort of picture of the region.

We also had an interesting time in Chengtu and made a side trip to the old and famous salt wells at Tseliuching, but I will confine this report to Sikang Province.

You will probably be struck by my failure to mention the civil war in the report. Sikang is virtually untouched by the fighting in other parts of China and is absorbed by problems of its own. While we were in the province a small group of soldiers was sent North (with speeches, bands, and flag-waving unusual for China) and several alleged Communists were arrested on the basis of information revealed by a confession made by a man in Chungking, but both of these events were very unusual. By and large, the civil war is even farther away from Sikang in a psychological sense than it is geographically - and geographically it is a long way off.

I plan to leave here on the first available boat or plane for Nanking via Hankow. From Nanking I will fly to Sinkiang Province according to the plan I outlined in a previous letter. My mail will be forwarded to me from Nanking as soon as I acquire a forwarding address, and I will write another letter in the not too distant future.

Sincerely yours,

A. Doak Barnett

A. Doak Barnett

NOTES ON THE SINO-TIBETAN BORDER PROVINCE OF SIKANG

The borderland between China and Tibet is a remote, little-known region containing some of the highest mountains and most rugged terrain in the world. It is a region of cultural conflict and fusion, and numerous peoples are intermixed in a heterogeneous population. It is a frontier where boundaries are vague. It is an area where political authority is often confused and political control shifts with the changing balance of military power between local groups and leaders. Some areas in this borderland are wild, inaccessible, and uninhabited. Other areas are a sort of no-man's-land where bandits make their headquarters between raids on communication lines and on the more settled regions. Many areas are the domain of independent tribes who recognize no outside authority and of semi-independent tribes who receive only a minimum of outside control.

The most important boundary line in the region is, of course, the one which divides China and Tibet. This is a line which is difficult to define, however. The majority of modern Chinese maps color all of Tibet as part of China, but this is wishful thinking on the part of Chinese cartographers, for Outer Tibet or Tibet Proper is not under Chinese control, and the previous recognition of Chinese sovereignty (originally in the form of annual tribute) no longer exists.

(Parenthetical note on modern foreign relations affecting Tibet: Chinese influence in Tibet has declined steadily since the Lhasa Convention of 1904 concluded by England's Col. F. Younghusband. Even before that time the Chinese Ambans in Tibet had become virtually powerless. The 1904 convention paid little deference to Chinese claims of sovereignty. It established a precedent for direct negotiations between England and Tibet and set forth the English claims to "special interests" in the country. In article nine of the convention Tibet engaged not to allow any foreign power to intervene in its affairs - a provision which gradually came to include China. Since 1904 English policy toward Tibet - which has been a corollary to England's position in India and concern over Indian security, particularly vis à vis Russia - has been based upon a desire either to maintain the status quo in Tibet or, if that was not possible, to allow no competitors to get ahead of England. In 1906 England and China signed an ambiguous convention in Peking which confirmed the validity of the Lhasa Convention but also contained an implicit English recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. An Anglo-Russian convention in 1907 also confirmed the Lhasa Convention, but it too contained a reference to and recognition of China's "suzerainty" over Tibet. In 1910, however, a period of more active English intervention began after the flight of the 13th Dalai Lama to India as a result of Chinese troops being sent into Tibet on a punitive expedition because of the Dalai Lama's "disobedience". England also sent troops into Tibet at that time. In 1911, after the Chinese garrison in Lhasa had revolted and looted the city, the Dalai Lama returned from exile, and England's power in Tibet was firmly established while Sino-Tibetan relations were ruptured.

In 1914, at a conference held in Simla under England's umpireship, China was asked to recognize the complete autonomy of Outer Tibet. China was unwilling to make this concession, but England and Tibet thereafter treated China to all intents and purposes as a foreign power coming under article nine of the 1904 convention in regard to Outer Tibet or Tibet Proper. In 1934, China sent a special commission to Lhasa for the inauguration of the present 14th Dalai Lama, and thereafter a Lhasa office, subsequently known as the Tibet Office of the Commission of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs, was set up. This reestablished a tenuous link between China and Tibet, but it was countered by the establishment of a British Mission (under the Sikkim Political Officer of the Indian Civil Service) in Tibet. English influence in Tibet remains predominant, but the English withdrawal from India may well bring about a change in England's Tibetan policy - related as it was to England's concern over India's security position.)

The boundary between Tibet Proper and China's southwestern provinces of Sikang and Chinghai as drawn on most conventional maps has no real significance. It is an arbitrary line which gives no clue to the actual relationships existing in the borderland. Sikang and Chinghai are relatively new provinces which less than twenty years ago were carved out of the region known as Inner Tibet, and their western boundaries are merely an indication of Chinese claims and little more. The real line of division between Tibet and China cuts across the provinces of Sikang and Chinghai. In reality there are two Sino-Tibetan "boundaries" running through these provinces; one is a line defining the extent of Chinese settlement and is therefore an ethnic and economic boundary; the other is a line defining the limits of Chinese authority and military control and is therefore a political boundary.

The province of Sikang is a recent political creation and was formed by an amalgamation of areas formerly a part of Tibet and of Szechwan Province. The Szechwan Province section was originally known as "Chwan Pien", or "Szechwan Border Region". The first of the steps which ultimately led to the creation of a separate province in the region was taken a few years before the end of the Manchu Dynasty. In 1905 Kuang Hsu appointed a high ranking officer to govern the border region covering parts of Szechwan and Yunnan. In 1911, during the twilight of the dynasty it was proposed that a province of Sikang be established, but no action was taken before the collapse of the dynasty. In the same year, after the founding of the Republic of China, an official named Yin was appointed to rule the area much as it had been ruled under the Manchus. After Yin, a succession of five other special governors were sent to administer this border region. Then in 1928 General Liu Wen-hui was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Szechwan-Sikang Frontier Defense Force. This was the beginning of a Sikang provincial regime which still exists today, and the establishment of the province is sometimes (erroneously) dated to that year even though it was not officially organized as a province until some years later.

The formation of Sikang as a province seems to have been due to two factors. One of these was the accelerated pace of Chinese migration and agricultural and commercial penetration into the fringes of the region. This had been going on for a long time, but about forty years ago the process was speeded up. This, plus a desire to stabilize and regularize administration in China's somewhat amorphous border regions, was one factor. Another factor, which was at least partially responsible for the timing of the establishment of Sikang, was the chaotic state of political affairs in Szechwan Province. On the Chinese side and from the Chinese point of view Sikang is in many respects a political appendage of Szechwan, and repercussions of local conflicts and struggles in Szechwan are a primary factor in determining the political situation in the adjacent border region.

General Liu Wen-hui was one of the major warlords in Szechwan during the 1911-1935 period when from 400 to 500 major battles were fought between local factions in that province. For a brief period he and his private 24th Army achieved predominance, and from the late 1920's until 1932 he was Governor of Szechwan. In the latter year, however, he was ousted from Szechwan after a military defeat at the hands of his powerful nephew Liu Hsiang. After this defeat Liu Wen-hui moved westward, and Sikang became the center of his power.

In 1935 a commission to set up Sikang as a province was established by the Central Government at Kiating. The appointment of Liu Wen-hui as head of this commission was similar to many appointments made in regions remote from the centers of power of the Central Government; it was a realistic recognition of a de facto local regime. Finally, in 1939, the Central Government formally announced the creation of Sikang and redemarcated the boundary between Szechwan and Sikang giving the latter two large districts, around the important towns of Yaan and Sichang, which had originally belonged to Szechwan.

Liu Wen-hui's political retreat to Sikang which took place in the period just prior to 1935 finally resulted in a regime which was, and remains today, a purely personal regime. Sikang was a poor second choice to Szechwan from Liu's point of view (it has about one-fifteenth of the population and only a fraction of the arable land and known resources of rich Szechwan), but he had no alternative in view of his military eclipse, first by Liu Hsiang and then later by the Central Government which extended its effective control westward.

When Liu moved into Sikang he was accompanied by his personal army, by a horde of relatives, and by the usual host of hangers-on who congregate as satellites and sycophants around a powerful local leader. These people took over control of the region, and today they rule in the name of General Liu.

At present there are really three capitals to the part of Sikang under Liu's control. Liu himself, who is Governor of Sikang, Pacification Commander of Sikang, and Commander of the 24th Division (the former 24th Army), maintains his headquarters in a magnificent mansion in Chengtu, capital of Szechwan. He has not given up his aspirations for regaining power in his old bailiwick, and consequently he spends very little time in his own isolated provincial capital, Kiating (Tatsienlu). He prefers to rule by remote control, through trusted deputies and through telegraphic instructions sent to them from his Chengtu mansion. Although he is a pleasant, mild-mannered man he rules with an iron will, and when the telegraph lines to Sikang vibrate with his instructions obedient vibrations take place at the other end.

Within Sikang itself Liu has two sub-capitals. One is the official provincial capital at Kiating where the organs of civil government are located. Liu's chief deputy there is a man named Chang Wei-ching who is Acting Governor as well as Provincial Commissioner of Civil Affairs. Chang, who once commanded a brigade in the 24th Army, has been Acting Governor since the official creation of the province in 1939 and as such has carried the main load of routine administration. Even though he originally was a military man he is one of the more able and respected leaders in the regime, and he has a fairly good reputation among the local people, which is somewhat surprising in view of the character of the regime as a whole. The civil government under Chang is organized along conventional lines according to national regulations and includes Commissions for Civil Affairs, Finance, Education, and Reconstruction; Bureaux of Social Affairs, Accounting, Statistics, and Personnel; a Secretariat; organizations for Police and Security Forces; Offices of Agricultural Development and Geological Survey; and various other committees and organizations. Also the province is divided into hsien and hsiang as in the rest of China. Routine relations and intercommunications are maintained with the Central Government. This, however, does not obscure the fact that it is in reality a semi-independent regime subject to very little Central Government control. The facade of normal relations often veils what is in reality a deep chasm of political rivalry in China. This is the case at present in regard to relations between Liu Wen-hui and the Central Government. There is no open struggle between them, but the Central Government disapproves of Liu because of his high-handed exercise of local autonomy. The real relations between the province and the Central Government are more clearly revealed by the personnel in the provincial regime than by the forms of organization and the superficial ties existing between Kiating and Nanking. In the Kiating administration and in the administrative divisions of the province down to and including the hsien almost every political post is held by a relative, an old crony, or a friend of Liu's, and the loyalty of these men is a personal loyalty to Liu Wen-hui.

Liu Wen-hui's other sub-capital in Sikang is the city of Yaan, close to the Szechwan border. Liu's three main deputies there are Liu Yuan-hsuan, Acting Commander of the 24th Division and a nephew of Liu Wen-hui, Yang Chia-chen, Chief of Staff of the 24th Division,

and Wang Ching-yu, Assistant Pacification Commander. All of these men have been loyal subordinates for many years.

In many respects Yaan is more important as a center of Liu's control in Sikang than the capital city, Kangting, for the local rule is primarily military, and Yaan is the center of Liu's military power. The fact that there is military rule is not too surprising. The region is a frontier and has the characteristics of a frontier. There are dissident minorities, "aboriginal" tribes, outlaws, and bandits. (An analogy with the early days in the western part of the U.S. would not be too far fetched.) There is gun-running, opium trading, and innumerable forms of illicit activity and lawlessness. The authorities participate in some of these activities, but the degree of law, order, and unity which does exist is maintained by military units.

The core of Liu Wen-hui's military power is his 24th Division. Formerly this organization was called the 24th Army and was Liu's personal army. A few years ago it was integrated into the National Army and was converted into a division, but it is still the same organization, and it is still a personal force. Theoretically, a reduction in its size was to have taken place at the time of the change from army to division, but it is doubtful if any such reduction took place. It is probably just as large and as powerful an army as it ever was.

The 24th Division (as well as Liu's other military organizations) is probably even more of an organization of family and friends than the civil government. Liu Wen-hui is Commander of the division, and his nephew Liu Yuan-hsuan is Acting Commander. According to the military authorities in Yaan the division has two brigades, each with three regiments, and one independent regiment. The 137th Brigade, with headquarters at Yaan, is commanded by Liu Yuan-tsung, another nephew of Liu Wen-hui. The 136th Brigade, with headquarters at Sichang, is commanded by Wu P'ei-ying, who is married to one of Liu Wen-hui's daughters. The independent regiment, located in the area called "kuan wai" (which I will define later) is commanded by Fu Teh-ch'uan who is not a relative of Liu but is an old-time cohort. As in the case of the civil government, other subordinate positions of importance are filled by other relatives and friends, particularly those from Liu Wen-hui's native hsien in Szechwan. There are an estimated two hundred officers (mostly staff men) sent from the Ministry of National Defense to keep an eye on things, but they do not have any basic control over the division.

The 24th Division troops which are commanded by the various members of Liu's family tree are mainly Szechwanese with a leavening of native Sikang people. Officially it is claimed that there are roughly 10,000 men in the division, but the actual number may be considerably higher. They are a well-armed and formidable fighting force. In striking contrast to troops one sees in some parts of

China the 24th Division's soldiers all are armed at least with modern bolt-action rifles, and they all carry belts full of ammunition. They are relatively well-disciplined and wear clean, neat uniforms. Liu's military supplies are plentiful because he has his own financial resources (which I will mention later) to purchase them. According to a responsible officer in the 24th Division every squad of sixteen men has fourteen rifles and an automatic weapon (what I saw confirmed this); every company has two mortars; every brigade has a special unit of artillery which includes both mortars and guns; and the division has a battalion of artillery (stationed, this man says, in Szechwan in a place between Yaan and Chengtu - a fact which is interesting if true.)

The 24th Division is a strong fighting force and is stationed mainly in the principal cities. Most of it, in fact, is concentrated in Yaan and Sichang. Military duties throughout the province are shared with other military organizations which have a somewhat different status. The Pacification Troops, the Security Troops, the Provincial Police, and the City Defense Command at Kangting are directly under the Provincial Government, and the Self-Defense Corps units and Hsien Police are under the hsien governments, but all of these units are also personal troops of Liu Wen-hui. They too are well-supplied with small arms. Their total strength is difficult to determine, but in aggregate they may contain a total number of men which approaches the total of troops in the 24th Division. The most important of these secondary forces are the Pacification Troops who bear the major responsibility of rooting out bandits and protecting the main lines of communications and transport. Small units of Pacification Troops are located in towns and villages all along the main roads and in key areas throughout the region of Liu's control, and on the most important political line of communications, Yaan to Kangting, they escort all persons of any importance.

In the higher chain of military command in China, Liu Wen-hui and his military forces are subordinate to the over-all Szechwan-Sikang-Yunnan-Kweichow command of General Chu Hsiao-liang in Chungking (Chu's headquarters was formerly the President's Chungking Headquarters but recently has been given a different title which members of its foreign relations staff translate as Pacification Command but which in Chinese is different from the title I have already referred to as Pacification Command), but relations between Liu and Chu are minimal and are, in fact, far from cordial. In the southern part of Sikang Province a unique and peculiar situation exists, and a delicate balance of power is maintained. The Garrison Commander there is General Huo Kuo-kuang, a Central Government man sent directly by General Chu. He has his own troops which are estimated to be approximately equal to those of Liu's subordinates in that area. The result is that Liu's and Huo's forces check and balance each other, and final authority is divided. Southern Sikang, with its center at Sichang, is, therefore, a special region under joint Central Government-Provincial military control. Furthermore, communications between Sichang in the South and Yaan and Kangting in the North are

poor, and the natural orientation of the Sichang region (from the point of view of trade and other intercourse) is toward areas in Szechwan directly east of Sichang.

Liu Wen-hui's military and civilian representatives in theory govern all of Sikang Province as it appears on conventional maps (see political boundary of Sikang on the attached map). Actually, however, although their power is complete in the areas effectively under their control it is very limited in a geographical sense.

Although military power, and therefore ultimate authority, is divided in the region around Sichang, as has been pointed out already, the civil administration in that region is controlled by Liu Wen-hui. The most secure and unquestioned areas of his control, however, are the regions immediately around Yaan and Kangting and the areas linking them. All of these regions are areas of Chinese colonization which have been assimilated into China culturally as well as politically. They form a very narrow fringe on the eastern side of the province. Even in this eastern fringe, however, the Chinese population, and Chinese control, is for the most part confined to towns along the few communication routes. The towns are compressed into tiny valleys almost smothered by the surrounding mountains, and the routes creep along the sides of cliffs at the bottom of deep gorges where one has to look up to get a glimpse of the sky. Some Chinese farmers, woodcutters, prospectors and the like have spread out into the mountains away from the more settled regions, but they are a minority. Most of the mountains in this wild region (which contains on its western edge Minya Konka - about 24,900 feet - the highest mountain in China) are inhabited, if at all, by non-Chinese groups who have their own languages, customs, and economic and social forms of organization, and most of these groups are ruled by their own kings or tribal chiefs. In the areas next to Chinese settlements these "aborigines" are usually compelled to submit to a degree of control or supervision. They do so only reluctantly, however, and in many areas the tribes have a deep hatred of the Chinese which periodically flares into open conflict.

Beyond this eastern fringe, where Chinese and tribal groups are intermixed, is the vast expanse of the Tibetan plateau, the "top of the world". The Chinese in Sikang have a term which they constantly use to refer to these Tibetan areas - "kuan wai". The term is difficult to translate. The word "wai" means "outside" or "beyond". The word "kuan" in this case means "customs". "Outside the customs barrier" might be a translation which is literally correct, but it fails to convey the full significance of the term. It is true that customs levies on goods coming into China from Tibet are collected just inside of "kuan wai" (at Kangting), but when the Chinese use the term "kuan wai" they mean something much broader than "outside the customs barrier"; they mean "beyond the border", "out in Tibetan country", or "out in the hinterland". No boundary defining "kuan wai" appears on any maps, but all local people know what the term

means and which places are "kuan wai" and which are not. Actually, if drawn as a boundary on the map (see boundary of "kuan wai" on the attached map; this line was traced for me by Acting Governor Chang) the line indicating "kuan wai" is a rough geographical, ethnic, and economic boundary dividing China and Tibet in the Sikang region. West of this line the population is Tibetan. Important centers such as Lihua, Kantse, Paan, and Dege contain sizeable groups of Chinese; there are Chinese officials and garrison troops; and Chinese traders move through the countryside; but the bulk of the population is Tibetan. Also, the line generally follows the beginning of the Tibetan grasslands. The terrain of these grasslands is expansive and rolling. The hills, which rise from valleys well over 10,000 feet to rounded tops 15,000 feet and higher, would be called mountains anywhere else, but they do contrast sharply with the mountains to the East. Instead of being precipitous, rugged, and forested, most of them are rolling and treeless and are covered with a smooth surface of short grass, which looks as if it has been newly cut, and with a breathtaking profusion of wild flowers. In this region the Tibetan economy prevails, and Yaks graze on the hillsides and barley grows in the valleys.

Not too long ago this line would also have represented a sort of political boundary. East of the line Chinese administration prevailed; West of it special border administrations were set up. At present, however, the regular forms of Chinese administration have been extended as far West as the Yangtze River, which in Sikang is called the Chin Sha, or Gold Sand, River. (The headwaters of the Brahmaputra, Salween, Mekong, and Yangtze all course through Sikang, in a constricted area between some of the high mountains rising from the Tibetan plateau, and flow toward their respective outlets which are thousands of miles apart.) Chinese administration has naturally undergone modifications, however, to fit into the Tibetan situation. For example, Tibetan hsiang which are often composed primarily of pao made up of groups of roving, nomadic herdsmen are very different from Chinese hsiang made up of settled agriculturalists. In fact, in most cases political organization on the lower levels in this region remains pretty much in its old Tibetan forms and is called by new Chinese names.

Tibetan economic and social organization is a mixture of agricultural and pastoral elements. A large part of the population is nomadic and raises yaks, western-type cattle, and a mixture of the two. These nomads are organized into definite groups, and the grasslands are divided into areas within which each group moves from place to place. There are also some permanent settlements, however. The most important of these are the lamaseries, but there are also widely-separated farming villages, for contrary to common misconception there is a good deal of farming in Tibet. The staple of the Tibetan diet is "tsamba", an uninspiring flour of ground, baked barley, and butter tea. Yak butter, yak milk, yak cheese, some yak meat (yaks also provide clothing, housing in the form of tents, transport, fuel in the form of dried dung, etc, ad infinitum), tea, and barley are the main items in the Tibetan diet, and the barley (plus a few other

relatively unimportant grains) is grown in the valleys of the grasslands. These farming villages and other permanent settlements, which are usually nothing more than a few flat-roofed stone buildings grouped together over a wide area, are the centers of the political administration organized by the Chinese. In this administration every hsien magistrate is a Chinese appointed by the Provincial Government, but all hsiang chiefs and other local leaders below the hsien level are Tibetan leaders chosen by their own groups. At each hsien city and in each hsiang, however, there is a small garrison force of Chinese troops. These are troops sent into the area by the Chinese authorities and have no connection with the local Tibetan self-defense units which are composed of mounted militia who periodically patrol the grasslands area in which they are located. The Chinese civil administration, therefore, does not go very deep into the local government of the region, but the Chinese military forces are more obtrusive in the lives of the Tibetans. Frequent friction, and occasionally open trouble, results between the Chinese troops and the local people - one recurring cause being Chinese military requisition of food and other supplies without fair compensation.

The political situation between the limits of "kuan wai" and the Yangtze River is, therefore, one in which a Chinese civil administration of a rather loose character and a dispersed Chinese garrison force is superimposed upon a predominantly Tibetan population. Chinese authority stops completely at the Yangtze River, however. Paan and Dege are the last outposts of Chinese control. Beyond this river boundary (see the attached map) which forms a North-South line bisecting Sikang into two almost exactly equal parts there is no Chinese control and virtually no Chinese influence. Beyond the Yangtze River the country is Tibetan in every respect. Tibetans can freely cross this line going westward, but Chinese and other foreigners cannot. The only Chinese who are regularly allowed to cross are traders with long-established connections in Lhasa or other Tibetan centers. It is estimated that at present there may be about one hundred Chinese who are in this privileged position. Just west of the Yangtze is the important Tibetan trading center of Chamdo (Changtu, in Chinese) where Tibetan customs duties are imposed and collected on imports brought in from China by the shortest (but not the easiest) route. Politically, the whole region west of the river is entirely Tibetan, and the rule is one in which lamaseries, local princes, and envoys from Lhasa all play an important role.

All of these various regions which are lumped together on maps as the province of Sikang contain a population which the Provincial Government in Kangting estimates to be 3,510,586. Of this total 1,650,000 is a vague estimate of the population in "areas not yet classified into Hsien, Political Guidance Areas, or Special Administrative Areas"; the rest are divided among 48 Hsien, 4 Special Administrative Areas, and 14 Political Guidance Areas (the latter entirely in the Lolo regions around Sichang). One set of official

statistics defines four main areas of population: Ya (around Yaan), Ning (around Sichang), Kang (around Kangting and as far west as the Yangtze River), and Ho Hsi (west of the Yangtze). The population figures for these areas gives a hint to the distribution throughout the province; almost a million in the Sichang area, slightly under one-half a million in the small Yaan region, under one-quarter of a million in the large Kang region stretching to the Yangtze, and only slightly over one quarter of a million in the huge area (almost one-half of the province) west of the Yangtze. Statistics for the Tibetan regions of Ho Hsi and Kang obviously are little more than guesses, however, and a good proportion of the unidentified 1,650,000 people is probably in those regions, but the statistics nonetheless give a general indication of the fact that the population density is greatest in the small valleys on the eastern fringe of the province and that the population is spread more thinly over the vast Tibetan grasslands. The total population figure of about three and one-half millions is probably approximately correct, for it agrees roughly with unofficial estimates. This population is spread over a tremendous territory which provincial statistics state is 500,784 square kilometers in area - 263,784 of which are said to be mapped and surveyed - and Sikang is therefore one of China's least populated regions.

The racial classification of the population of the province, as it is given in provincial statistics, is also interesting as an indication of the heterogeneity of the population, although the figures themselves are incomplete and not entirely reliable. A July, 1948, estimate states that there are 1,101,183 Han (or Chinese) people in the province. The remainder of the classified population is broken down into fifteen racial (many of them are actually cultural) groups including the Tibetans, Black Lolos, White Lolos, Miaos, ChiaJung, and Mohammedans, as well as various other peoples. The statistics are far from being complete, however, and one has to rely upon unofficial estimates to obtain a general over-all picture of the racial composition of the population. Actually, there are only three groups which are numerically important - the Han Chinese, the Tibetans, and the Lolos - and all the others are very small minorities. Fairly reliable estimates of the size of the three main groups state that there are slightly over a million Han Chinese, concentrated in the Sichang, Yaan, and Kangting regions, slightly over a million Lolos, concentrated in the mountain regions around Sichang, and slightly under a million Tibetans, spread out west of Kangting. Some people claim that the Tibetan population of Sikang, although not as large as that of either the Chinese or the Tibetans, is greater than the Tibetan population in Tibet Proper where the people are very much dispersed except for a few areas such as the one around Lhasa. (I have seen some population figures for Tibet which are considerably over a million, however, and any estimates for that country probably are guesses.)

The general attitude of the Chinese population in Sikang toward the other racial groups is patronizing and condescending. The average Chinese refers to most of the other people indiscriminately as "mantzu" or "yi" people, both of which are derogatory terms. Even the title

"Lolo" is a derogatory title used only by the Chinese and resented by the tribesmen to whom it is applied.

The official attitude of the Government is that non-Chinese groups should be civilized, and the official policy is one of assimilation with the main emphasis on education. The Chinese have no doubt about the superiority of the Chinese way of life, and most of them believe that a little Chinese education given to the other groups will solve all of the problems arising out of the existence of racial and cultural minority groups. "In fifteen or twenty years we will have educated them so that people will forget even the names of the minority groups", the Assistant Pacification Commander of the province said to me in a burst of enthusiasm. There is no indication that his enthusiasm is justified, however, for the minorities resent the Chinese intrusion into their lives and have no desire to be Sinicized. They want autonomy, which the Chinese are unwilling to grant. The American-educated Provincial Commissioner of Education in Sikang admits that the official policy encounters almost insuperable obstacles. In the case of the Tibetans, for example, there is passive resistance to the Government's education policy. All school classes in Tibetan areas as elsewhere are conducted in Chinese. There are a few Chinese-educated Tibetan teachers, a few teachers of mixed Chinese-Tibetan blood, but by far the majority of the teachers are Chinese. Although all of these Chinese teachers must speak Tibetan the Tibetan language is not used in the classroom, and the Tibetans don't like to be schooled in a foreign language. (The only native Tibetan schools are the seminaries in the lamasaries.) According to Tibetans themselves, however, their main objection is not to the language, actually, but to the simple fact that they are forced to send their children to school. They feel that a formal education is a useless waste of time and of no conceivable use to them. As a result, the Tibetan attitude toward education is analagous (as one Tibetan pointed out to me) to the attitude of the Chinese themselves toward conscription; education is looked upon as an onerous obligation to be avoided if possible. The practice of paying substitutes to go to school in place of one's own children is said to be prevalent (!), and it is reported that few Tibetan children stay in school for more than short periods of time. (Educational institutions in Sikang include about 1200 primary schools, 50 middle schools, a normal college at Kangting, and a technical college at Sichang. The Commissioner of Education says, however, that only one of the institutions above the primary level is located west of Kangting - that one is a normal middle school.)

Although the education issue, the actions of Chinese garrison forces, and other problems create frequent friction between the Chinese and other racial groups, race relations are not entirely hostile by any means. In Kangting Chinese and Tibetans get along quite well, and there is a good deal of intermarriage, while in the Sichang region there is intermarriage between Chinese and Lolos, and in both of these

areas there are groups of non-Chinese who have been Sinicized.

Furthermore, Liu Wen-hui's policy definitely seems to be one of getting along with the Tibetans and Lolos. Outside of his own group of followers Liu has very few friends or allies, and he evidently wants to keep on as good terms as possible with the major groups in his own province. In June of this year, for example, Liu held a serious conference in Chengtu with a group of ten Lolo tribal chieftans at which an attempt was made to discuss and solve outstanding current problems. (Valdes and I were fortunate in being able to sit in on this extremely interesting conference. Only Liu, the Lolos, four other Chinese, and ourselves were present. All the proceedings had to be translated from Chinese into the Lolo language and vice versa. First Liu made a speech emphasizing the following points: that there should be close relations between the Han Chinese and the Lolos, that the Lolos should be given an education equal to that of the Chinese, that every tribe in Sikang should be equal, that the Provincial Government would keep its promise to solve all disputes by peaceful means rather than resorting to arms, that the Lolo system of slavery should be abolished, and that no excessive taxation of the Lolos would be allowed. The Lolo chiefs, with their colorful earrings, pointed turbans, baggy pants, and ornate knives and pistols, listened with respectful silence during this speech. Then each rose in turn and made a statement agreeing with much of what the Governor had said. They were surprisingly frank, however, in certain criticisms. In particular they complained that not enough attention was being given to their standard of living, and they accused by name two men, one a Chinese general and the other a certain tribal leader, whom they considered to be oppressive and undesirable.) Despite Liu's attitude, however, it remains a fact today that the Provincial Government in Kangting contains only a dozen or so Tibetans - none of them in responsible positions - and even fewer Lolos. (In criticising Chinese policies toward minorities, however, Americans should not forget their own history, and the treatment of the Negroes - and the American Indians!)

Economically, Sikang is generally backward and undeveloped. Despite this fact, however, there is a considerable amount of trade which goes on, and in this respect Sikang is the main gateway between China and Tibet. This trade is a spectacular business, for it moves slowly over high mountain passes and through deep gorges, and almost all of it is carried on human backs or on pack animals. The main commercial center of the province is Yaan, a city of about 40,000. (This is a very rough estimate since I was unable to obtain any statistics on the city's population.) Yaan, which hugs close to the Szechwan border, is the place where most of the important trading establishments maintain their headquarters, and it is a bustling Chinese city. (The evidence of Liu Wen-hui's personality is omnipresent in Yaan. There is a Liu Street, a Liu Suspension Bridge over the Ya River, a memorial to Liu's reconstruction of the

city, a column erected on Liu's fiftieth birthday, and so on.)

The most colorful trading city, however, is Kangting. It is the meeting place of Chinese and Tibetan traders (similar in its position to Kalimpong in India on the other side of Tibet). Chinese goods are brought over the mountains from Yaan as far as Kangting, and from there the Tibetans take over. Most of the Chinese transportation is by human carriers, but to a lesser extent pack animals (horses, ponies, donkeys, mules) are used, and from Yaan to Lianglukou (about half-way to Kangting) a few animal carts are employed. Most of the exchanges between Tibetan traders and Chinese in Kangting is on a barter basis, and from the Tibetan caravanseries in Kangting Chinese goods go by yak caravan up onto the Tibetan grasslands less than forty miles away, and then westward. Kangting is a beautiful, delightful, and amazing little city. It is set in a mere hole in the mountains, and a torrential stream rushes through the center of town. Its architecture is an attractive mixture of Tibetan and Chinese elements, and its population is the same. (About thirty years ago the Tibetans were the majority group, but now they are about one-sixth of the total population of 11,606. Government employees form the largest group in the present population of the town, and most of the rest of the people are employed in trade and commerce.) The temperature in Kangting is pleasantly cool even in the middle of summer, for the altitude of the city is over 8,000 feet. Although it takes five days of hard walking to reach Kangting from Yaan, one is almost flabbergasted upon reaching the town to discover good electric lights (from a 500 KW hydroelectric plant belonging to a private company organized by Liu), a theater with motion pictures, and shops full of gadgets, modern appliances, and goods of all sorts imported from East and West.

Transportation in the whole province of Sikang is primitive and slow. The only automotive transport is a bus line which runs from Chengtu in Szechwan to Yaan. The only navigable river used for trade is the Ya River; bamboo rafts float downstream from Yaan to Kiating in Szechwan and are towed upstream from Kiating to Yaan. Most of the other rivers in the province are swift and broken by innumerable rapids; they are potentially useful for hydroelectric development but not for transport. Besides the 91 mile road from Yaan to Chengtu (most of it in Szechwan), there are several other roads, all of which were built during the period of the Sino-Japanese War. These include the 135 mile road from Yaan to Kangting, the 509 mile road from Kangting to Yuchu in Chinghai, the 310 mile road from Sichang via Fulin to Kiating, the 27 mile road from Yaan to Yunking, and the 162 mile road from Sichang into Yunnan. Maintenance of these roads has been impossible, however. At present the only two sections which are occasionally passable for small motor vehicles such as jeeps are the Yaan-Lianglukou section of the Yaan-Kangting road and the road between Sichang and Fulin, and even these sections are impassable for vehicles much of the time due to landslides and washed out bridges.

Trade through the province follows several main routes. A local trade is carried on between South Sikang and Szechwan via the route from Sichang to Kiating. A small amount also goes between Sichang

and Yaan and Kangting via Luting. By far the largest part of the trade, and all of the Sino-Tibetan trade which goes through Sikang, is channeled through Yaan and Kangting. West of Kangting two main routes are used for caravans. One goes via Chinghai and then into Tibet. The other cuts straight across Sikang into Tibet. Both of these routes are extremely important and heavily used. The circuitous route via Chinghai is the easier of the two, because it crosses fewer high mountain ranges. There is also some trade directly between Tibet and Chinghai which misses Sikang entirely, but the main trade route at present between Tibet and China goes through Kangting, even though in former times the Chinghai route was the main one for Tibetan tribute to Peking and the road through Kangting was only a secondary route. In addition, there is a trickle of trade directly between India and Sikang.

(In regard to other communications in the province there are both national and provincial telegraph lines serving the major towns in the eastern Yaan-Sichang-Kangting triangle. There are provincial radio stations in Kanging, Yaan, Sichang, Paan, Kantse, Yuehsui, Lihua, Hanyuan, and Tanpa for official intercommunication. There are two government-operated (provincial) broadcast stations in Kangting. Provincial telephones reach and connect Yaan, Hanyuan, Luting, Kangting, and Yungking; national lines connect with Yaan and Kangting; and Sichang also has telephone service. There are several airfields in Sikang: Sichang Field, Yaan Field, and Yingkwantsai (near Kangting) - which were built during the war - and Kantse Field and Lihua Field which have never been completed. All except the Sichang Field are now unused and in disrepair, however, and the only air link with the outside consists of periodic commercial flights between Sichang and Chungking.)

The main item of trade between China and Tibet, and in fact the foundation of the trade between the two countries, is tea. Tea is an indispensable part of the Tibetan diet, and all of it must be imported. Some tea is brought into the country from India and from the Chinese province of Yunnan, but a large share comes through Kangting. Most of the latter supply is grown in the mountains in the Yaan region and is carried in long, narrow baskets, each weighing approximately seventeen and one-half pounds, on human backs, six to thirteen baskets per back, as far as Kangting. There it is repacked in skin containers, each of which holds three baskets of tea, and is transported on by yak. This tea makes up the largest part of China's exports to Tibet, both in volume and in value. Formerly there was an export tax levied on this export of tea, but it was stopped about a year ago. (A 15 percent tax is still levied on other exports, and imports, however, according to the local Chinese authorities. Although the Chinese tax on tea has been discarded, temporarily at least, the Tibetan authorities in Chamdo are reported to be levying heavy import duties on tea brought in. It is difficult, almost to the point of being impossible, to get any accurate figures on the volume of the tea trade. (I was unable to get any statistics on either volume or value of the trade in tea - or any other commodity for that matter. The Provincial Government says that it does not have any such statistics on trade. I was given an unofficial estimate, however, that during the past year tea exports amounted to about two hundred thousand (200,000) packages - a figure which I was told was one third the figure

of five years ago. The explanation given for the recent drop was the increasing cost of production and the declining quality of the tea from Sikang which has led the Tibetans to switch some of their trade to alternative sources of supply - India, Yunnan, etc.) Trade items coming from Chinese sources and going out as far as Kangting also include food (Kangting is almost entirely dependent upon imported food), and many manufactured goods from Chungking, Shanghai, and elsewhere, but few of these commodities go beyond Kangting.

In return for tea the Tibetans trade a more diversified line of specialties. In value the most important of these is a high grade of musk, which is shipped on from Kangting to Shanghai (and some of it to foreign countries) for the manufacture of perfume. Tibet is one of the major musk-producing countries in the world. The next in importance among Tibetan exports to China are medicinal supplies (mostly herbs) and animal and plant products which are used for specialized purposes such as dye-making. These include fritillary, radix rhea, angelica sylvestris, safflower, deer horn, sal ammoniac, conarium, and others. Exports of less importance include yak and sheep wool, woolen cloth, Tibetan carpets, Tibetan handicrafts, mica, and some gold and silver. In addition, a rather fantastic trade in British manufactured goods is carried on, and the Tibetans carry British cigarettes, serge cloth, and khaki cloth all the way across Tibet from India to Kangting. (A very small amount also comes directly from India.) British cigarettes, tax-free, are cheaper in Kangting than they are in London.

Apart from the freak prices of British goods, however, the general price level and cost of living in Kangting and other areas well within the interior of the province are extremely high. The average price level of food in Kangting, for example, is three times as high as in Chengtu, which is only a little over 200 miles away. High costs of living are responsible for a good deal of hardship among the common people, and there is considerable poverty. (I saw more beggars in Yaan than I think I have in any other place in China in recent months.) As one goes into Sikang Province prices mount with the altitude - and with the distance that goods have to be carried. The high cost of human transport is the reason, of course. To cite one example, it takes ten to twelve days for carriers to take a load of tea from Yaan to Kangting, and the price of the tea is doubled by the transportation costs.

The most valuable item of trade between Sikang Province and the rest of China does not come from Tibet or from the Tibetans, however. It comes mainly from the Chinese and tribal areas of the province. That item is opium. It is an open secret that opium is the most important product and the most important export of Sikang Province. It is also an open secret that the opium trade is a monopoly of the 24th Division, the provincial authorities, and the Brothers' (secret) Society. (It actually is not necessary to draw a distinction between the secret society and the civil and military authorities, because they are usually identical.) Liu Wen-hui and his deputies reap tremendous

profits from the opium trade, and opium is, in fact, the financial support for Liu's regime. The trade is not completely open, and the poppy fields all are deep in the mountains away from the roads, so that one doesn't see them as a casual traveler along the main lines of communication, but opium can be bought anywhere along the roads at small inns. The Lolos and some other tribes produce it in great quantities (although they rarely consume it themselves) and trade it mainly for small arms. It is also grown in considerable quantities by Chinese farmers in the mountains. Some of the Chinese farmers are forced to plant poppies, their reluctance to do it voluntarily being a result of the fact that the profits are reaped by Liu and his agents, and not by the Chinese farmer-producers themselves. (Extensive poppy growing, incidentally, makes Sikang much more of a food deficit area than it would be if all the farmers grew food crops.) Collection of the opium is the responsibility of designated agents of Liu and troops, particularly those of the 24th Division. A few private operators muscle in, but only at great risk, for they incur the wrath of the authorities. Once collected, the opium is channeled through Yasn to Chengtu and then into Chinese and world-wide nets of narcotic smugglers. At present Sikang (together with neighboring areas in Szechwan and Yunnan) is probably the major area of opium production in the world.

Although most opium is exported some is consumed within the province. At one time several years ago representatives sent by the Central Government are said to have had considerable success in reducing opium smoking, but in recent years it has increased again, although it is far less than it was many years ago. A foreign doctor in Yasn estimates that ten percent of the population there smokes opium (as contrasted with about fifty percent when he first arrived in the city many years ago), and a Catholic priest in Kangting estimates that the same percentage of the population in that city is made up of addicts. Members of certain occupational groups, such as sedan chair carriers, are almost one hundred percent addicted, but people at all levels of society, including many wealthy merchants and officials, also consume the drug.

Much of the banditry and lawlessness in Sikang can be traced directly or indirectly to the opium trade. Confused and violent civil strife often breaks out in opium-growing districts after the harvest (it is currently bitter in the ChiaJung region, north of Kangting, which includes part of both Sikang and Szechwan), and banditry reaches its peak during the periods when opium is being transported from production areas to important trading centers in and out of the province. The prevalence of such lawlessness makes firearms almost a necessity even for law-abiding citizens. Sikang, in fact, is probably one of the best-armed regions in the world, and it is a rare family, whether Chinese, Tibetan, or Lolo, which does not possess a rifle if they live outside of the largest towns. It is interesting, incidentally, that most of these rifles (even in the Tibetan homes) are the identical bolt-action rifles used by Liu's troops. Thousands of these

rifles are brought into the province by the military authorities every year, and many of them are used as a medium of exchange in trade carried on by the authorities.

The potentialities for future economic development in Sikang Province are difficult to estimate, because reliable information about the province's resources is still scarce. One thing is certain at present: the existing political regime in the province is a liability to the people and an obstacle to real development. The province today is little more than a private domain used as a military base and a source of income by one of the most notorious men in China. But even assuming that the province had a first-class political administration it is difficult to know what developments could take place. The rugged terrain, of course, makes any extensive agricultural development impossible. (At present, rice is grown in patches in the valleys around Yaan and Sichang and in some other areas near the eastern side of the province. In the mountains corn, rye, potatoes, beans, peas, and a few minor grain crops are produced in small quantities from fantastic little farms scratched into the sides of mountains on slopes which often are as steep as sixty or seventy degrees - believe it or not, but I saw them! - On balance, however, these areas are heavily deficient in food production, and land for further development of farming is almost non-existent. In the grasslands the barley crop comes closer to meeting the needs of the people there, but although production probably could be increased to achieve complete self-sufficiency there is not much prospect for development beyond that, for the people in nearby areas do not eat barley to any great extent.) There may be somewhat better prospects for eventual development of animal industries in the grasslands area of the province. At present the Tibetans live largely from their animal production, but animal products are sold commercially only in small quantities. The Tibetan grasslands are among the finest pasture and grazing areas in the world, and animal products probably could be increased considerably if markets were developed and if the animal industry was commercialized.

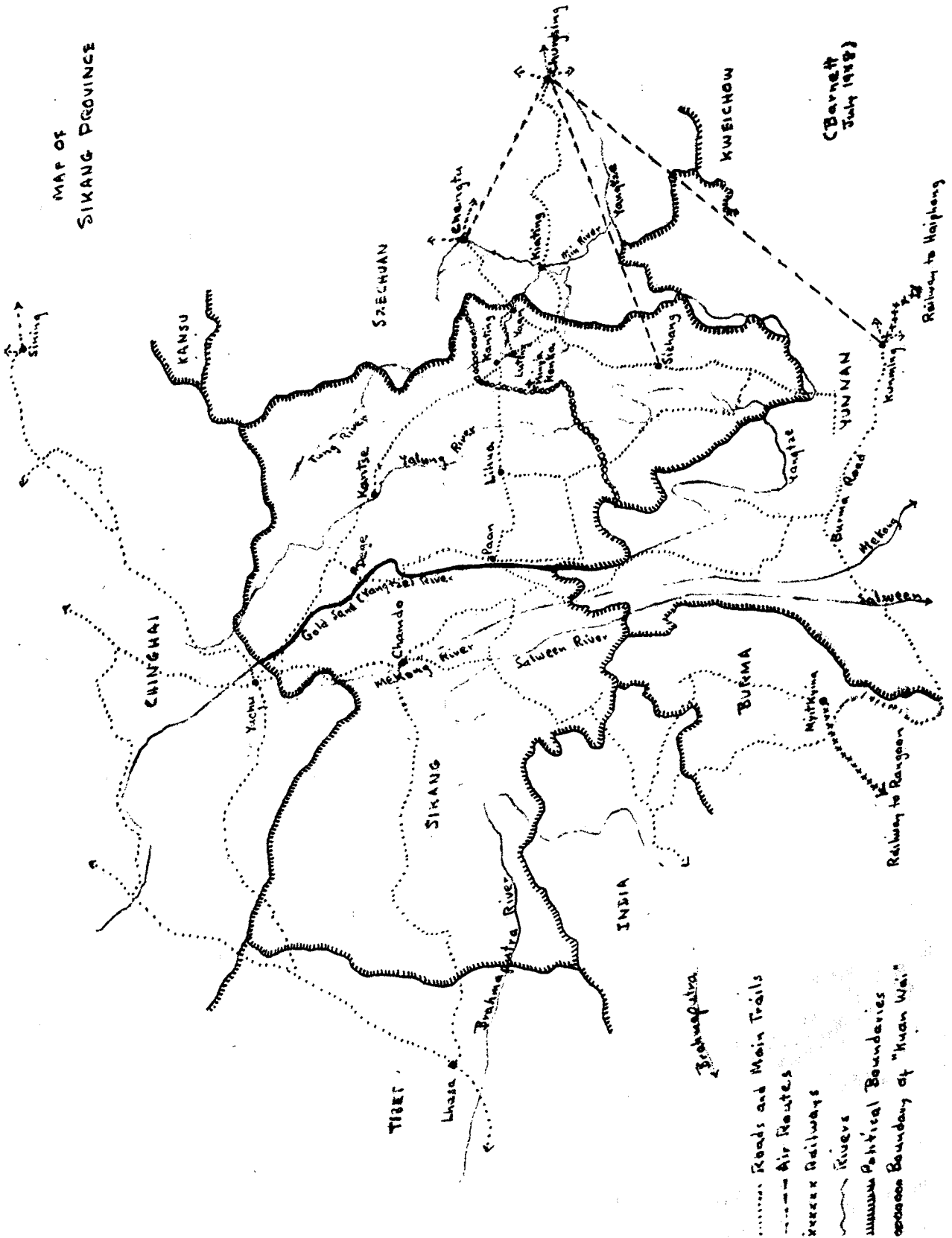
At present there is very little manufacturing industry in the province (except for a little at Sichang and Tibetan handicrafts at Dege), and no immediate prospects for development. Future possibilities are not completely lacking. For example, processing industries (wool, leather, dairy products, etc) might be built up on the basis of an expanded and commercialized animal industry. Cheap hydroelectric power is readily available for harnessing and would facilitate the development of light industries.

Perhaps the main unexploited natural wealth of the province, however, is in its forests and minerals. Great stands of uncut timber cover mountains in many parts of the province. The Provincial Commission of Reconstruction estimates that there are 20,148,000,000 of pine timber in three regions alone (the Yangtze River region, the Yalung River region, and the Tienchuan-Paohsien region). Mineral resources are not well-known, but many people believe they are great. The Commission

of Reconstruction lists known reserves as 531,000,000 tons of coal, 33,220,000 of iron, and 424,000 tons of copper. It also lists deposits of considerable, but unknown, quantities of zinc, silver, gold, antimony, lead, asbestos, and mica. Of the latter it is known that gold, mica, and asbestos are particularly important. Very little of the province has been thoroughly prospected, furthermore, and mineral resources may be greater than it is now believed. At present almost none of the known resources are efficiently exploited. Infinitesimal amounts of coal, mica, silver, and copper are produced, but that is all. Whether or not any sizeable mining industry can be developed, though, depends not only upon more energetic methods of exploitation but on more thorough geological surveys of the province as well. And one prerequisite for economic development of any kind is the construction (in some cases repair is all that is needed) of good roads along the key routes of trade in the province.

At present, however, Sikang remains what it has been in the past; a wild, undeveloped, confused, and romantic frontier land, a place far off the beaten track which is geographically and psychologically remote from the rest of China.

MAP OF
SIKANG PROVINCE



(Barnett
July 1948)

- Roads and Main Trails
- Air Routes
- Railways
- ~~~~~ Rivers
- ===== Political Boundaries
- ===== Boundary of "Kuan Wei"