

Vertical Boundaries, National Identities: British Mountaineering on the Frontiers of Europe and the Empire, 1868-1914

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The boundary between Europe and Asia has been indistinct for much of world history, observed H.B. George, a don at New College, Oxford, in 1865.¹ The author of many works of historical geography, George noted that Russian geographers had recently shifted the boundary of Europe east to the Urals and south to the Caucasus. If the Caucasus were part of Europe, then they were also the highest mountains on the continent. 'We are well aware how potent an instrument a natural boundary can be made in imperial hands; and it must now, I fear, be taken for granted that the Caucasus is included among European mountains, and Mont Blanc irrevocably superseded.' George added that, 'the Alpine Club must confess it to be rather discreditable that a country so admirably suited for the playground of Englishmen should have received so little attention', and pronounced it 'the bounden duty of somebody, possessed of the requisite leisure' to climb in the Caucasus.² In 1868, a group of young English mountaineers, led by Douglas Freshfield, answered George's challenge by climbing Elbruz, the highest peak in the range.³

George described the Caucasus with the language of sport and the poetics of imperial power. He represented mountaineering as not merely a recreation, but part of the cultural re-creation of Britain as an imperial nation. British mountaineers represented the Caucasus and other mountains as the boundaries of Europe and the Empire in ways that illuminate the construction of imperial geographies and national identities. Scholars have critically examined the links between the 'new geography' and the 'new imperialism' and the broader cultural connections between travel, exploration and empire.⁴ Anchoring the history of geography and other disciplines in their political context has been part of a broader reassessment of the role of academic knowledge in constituting imperial power.⁵ In addition, recent research has drawn attention to the ways in which national and imperial identities have been defined in relation to a variety of 'others' including us/them, insider/outsider, Protestant/Catholic, white/black, and so on.⁶ While a few of the similar imperial dichotomies – colonizer/colonized, Occident/Orient, formal/informal, metropolis/periphery – have been

deconstructed, others survive as analytical categories. One way to move beyond these binary oppositions is to examine the particular moments when such self/other identities were mapped onto here/there geographies on the frontiers and boundaries of the empire.⁷

Imperial identities were not fixed and stable like lines on a map, but contingent, constructed, and contested. British mountaineers placed themselves in different 'imagined communities' when they themselves were located on different boundaries.⁸ The territories in which the mountaineers travelled and climbed also may be considered borderlands, contact zones, or frontiers, which Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson regard as 'not a boundary or a line, but as a territory or zone of interpenetration between two previously distinct societies'.⁹ Moreover, encounters in these zones *between* societies were often influenced by boundaries *within* each society, stemming from differences in class, ethnicity, gender, race, or sexuality. As Ann Stoler observes, all too often the 'politically constructed dichotomy of colonizer and colonized' is taken as unproblematic: 'colonial projects and the European populations to which they gave rise were based on new constructions of European-ness'.¹⁰

This article examines how the experiences and discourses of British mountaineers on the boundaries of Europe and the Empire constructed imperial and national identities from the 1860s to the First World War. Since the 1830s, the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) had institutionalized geography as exploration and discovery, and it soon became the repository of Britain's imperial archive of geographical knowledge.¹¹ In the 1850s, middle-class men founded the Alpine Club and invented the sport of mountaineering in the Alps by adopting the discourse of discovery from the RGS and explorers in the Arctic and Africa.¹² From the 1860s through the ascent of Mount Everest, the meetings and publications of the RGS and the Alpine Club provided the most prominent fora in which mountaineers gained recognition for their ascents. Also in this period, however, the cultural and political boundaries crossed by British mountaineers posed challenges to this rhetoric and reshaped their imperial identities.

In the Caucasus and in Africa, British climbers transformed cultural encounters into imperial identities. In the 1860s and 1870s in the Caucasus, British climbers initially constructed spatial versions of their racial identity as Europeans: Britishness and Europeanness were not opposed but fused into one when placed on the boundary with 'Asia'. By the 1880s and 1890s, however, many climbers in the Caucasus and Halford Mackinder in Africa experienced these boundaries increasingly in racial and imperial terms. On his ascent of Mount Kenya, Mackinder defined the frontier between indigenous peoples and British settlers, which included large numbers of Indians working on the Ugandan railway, as the boundary of 'Asia' and

'Africa'. Crossing these cultural boundaries, British climbers received the assistance of British government and the accolades of the RGS.

Yet when British mountaineers climbed on the political frontiers of India in the Himalayas, they received a very different reception in official circles. Narratives of mountaineering as geographical exploration came into conflict with official discourses that represented the Himalayas as political or military frontiers. From the 1890s onward, the climbers, the RGS, and the Government of India each offered conflicting assessments of the effects of mountaineering expeditions upon indigenous societies, the pursuit of profit, and Britain's relations with other Great Powers. Proposals for mountaineering expeditions to the Himalayas in general – and to Mount Everest in particular – initiated disputes between the RGS and the Government of India over how to define geographical knowledge and the interests of the imperial state. Even the RGS, as it focused on Antarctic exploration, expressed occasional ambivalence about mountaineering.

Thus, British mountaineering on the frontiers of Europe and the empire illustrates the variety and contingency of imperial discourses and identities. Although the climbers received the support of British officials, their attitudes and activities could often be very different from the 'official mind' of colonial administrators. Indeed, as a broader cultural practice of British imperialism, mountaineering on the edge of the empire staked out the symbolic as well as the geographic limits of British imperial authority. British mountaineers constructed a variety of overlapping identities which they represented to others as embodiments of British prestige and imperial power.

I

H.B. George proposed British ascents of the Caucasus because he thought the peaks were in Europe. Indeed, British mountain climbing in the Caucasus was part of a broader political and cultural redefinition of the geography of the Caucasus.¹³ Russia had only recently conquered the states of the Caucasus. Contemporary anthropologists were also developing polygenist theories of race, in which several races developed independently of one another around the world.¹⁴ Within this framework, 'Caucasian' increasingly came to designate the Indo-European or 'white' races of mankind. During the 1860s and 1870s, British climbers identified the Caucasus as part of Europe in order to bring geographical constructions of place into accordance with ethnological languages of race.

The first ascent of Mount Elbruz, in 1868, prompted a debate over the Caucasus as the boundary between Europe and Asia.¹⁵ This debate questioned, but ultimately reinforced, Victorian assumptions about race and

cultural difference. The climbers defined their inspiration to climb the peak in racial terms. 'The Caucasus is too glorious a country,' wrote Comyns Tucker, a barrister, 'to be left to the savage races who, as a rule, are its only inhabitants, or to the Russians, who cannot understand its beauties.'¹⁶ F.F. Tuckett, a woollen merchant, asked if 'there must be some boundary line between Asia and Europe...what more natural or fitting selection could be made than a long, lofty, continuous mountain barrier?'¹⁷ In contrast, several non-climbing correspondents contended that the 'boundaries of a great continent like Europe' ought not to be 'a district so purely Asiatic as is Astrakhan and its neighbourhood'.¹⁸ Those who wanted to exclude the Caucasus applied cultural and racial criteria ('a district so purely Asiatic'), while those who wanted to include the Caucasus in Europe emphasized topographical features ('continuous mountain barrier'). Both sides agreed on the importance of drawing the boundary line that would keep Asia out of Europe.

At stake in this discussion was the geographical definition of Britain's racial identity. British climbers placed the Caucasus in Europe to strengthen their European identity. Defined as a racial and cultural boundary, British official and scientific circles affirmed the climbers' definition of the Caucasus. Roderick Murchison and the RGS supported the conventional view among geographers that the Caucasus were part of Europe.¹⁹ When a British group climbed Elbruz's western and slightly higher summit in 1874, the question of Europe versus Asia appeared to be settled. In *The Frosty Caucasus*, Crauford Grove asked rhetorically whether 'the mighty wall of the Caucasus, or an artificial line drawn across country' was the most fitting boundary of Europe.²⁰

While British climbers continued to think of the Caucasus as a borderland, by the 1880s they began to describe the region in imperial terms. In 1888 British climbers climbed nearly every Caucasian peak in what Douglas Freshfield referred to as 'the *annus mirabilis* of the Caucasus'.²¹ This influx of climbers entailed two further changes that led British climbers to describe the Caucasus in imperial terms. British climbers reasserted the importance of racial differences in the Caucasus in order to re-establish boundaries between themselves and the local population. In addition, as the Caucasus increasingly appeared to be the region where two empires meet, British mountaineers transformed the Caucasus from a cultural boundary between Europe and Asia to an imperial boundary between Britain and Russia.

In the 1880s British climbers highlighted racial boundaries in the Caucasus that undermined the earlier identification of the Caucasus with Europe. British climbers were reluctant to describe the peoples of the Caucasus as Europeans. One sign of the construction of racial boundaries

between the British climbers and the local population was the increasing emphasis on the racial ties between the British climbers and their Alpine guides. C.D. Cunningham wrote that it would be a long time before British climbers felt as much affection for the 'dark-skinned Boteas' of the Caucasus, as they did for the 'sturdy Oberländer who greets us with *Grüß* *üch* on the familiar mountain-paths of Meiringen'.

The sunburnt faces of a group of Swiss guides as represented in the first attempts of an amateur photographer, have much more of what is *gemüthlich* about them than the long-robed men of Gebi in the 'Frosty Caucasus'. As time passes on, as rum, missionaries, and British vice-consuls gradually prepare these now somewhat uncivilized districts for the climbing Britisher, we may perhaps hear of some Wili Ali who is regarded as a sort of Melchior by the explorers of these parts.²²

The encounters which British climbers had with the 'other' in mountains outside the Alps engendered closer identification with their Swiss guides and asserted Britain's European identity. This discourse of racial difference weakened the cultural ties between the Caucasus and Europe and it enabled British climbers to redefine the Caucasus as an imperial boundary.

In the 1880s British climbers employed the same discourse of discovery and exploration in the Caucasus that mid-Victorian climbers had used in the Alps.²³ British climbers thus transformed the Caucasus from a familiar European place into an unfamiliar and remote space to be explored. Consider the discourse surrounding one of the 1888 expeditions that ended in tragedy, as four climbers disappeared. 'The disaster is a most melancholy one', wrote *The Times*, 'and will remind all Englishmen of the great catastrophe on the Matterhorn.' *The Morning Post* believed that exploration justified the loss of lives, 'whether in the heart of Africa, the Arctic regions, or the almost equally unknown ice-world of the Caucasus'. *The Pall Mall Budget* echoed this familiar sentiment: 'The same spirit turned into a more profitable channel has given her India and her colonies, and her consequent prestige among the peoples of the world.'²⁴

But this general discourse of discovery and exploration took a specific form in the Caucasus. As the boundary of the Russian empire, British climbing in the Caucasus assumed a new imperial significance. Clive Philipps-Wolley, an English sportsman on the spot who knew the Caucasus, described his search for the missing climbers in two articles in *The Field's* regular column on 'Travel and Colonisation'. 'English names are in the air wherever danger is to be met or honour won, from the Arctic Pole to the peaks of the Andes. Nowhere is the English name more honoured than in the Central Caucasus.'²⁵ Philipps-Wolley argued that their example was all the more powerful because they had died on foreign soil.

It is no small thing to have taught the Russians of the Caucasus to feel towards us that strong sympathy which one brave man must feel for another; to have taught them that the old pluck of the nation is untamed; that though they may think it folly to make a playground of their highest Alps, our men have muscles hard enough and heads cool enough to bring them back safe and successful year after year from peaks before their time untrodden and heights hitherto held inaccessible.²⁶

The more prominent British presence south of the Caucasus made the mountains a boundary between empires, between Russia and Britain. This new imperial context transformed British mountaineering in the Caucasus from a representation of a European to an imperial identity.

II

During the closing years of the nineteenth century, a heightened awareness of geographical enclosure and the compression of time and space transformed the frontiers of the Empire. The Congress of Berlin, the scramble for Africa, and the race to Fashoda all reinforced the widespread perception that boundaries were being fixed, frontiers closed.²⁷ For Halford Mackinder, one of the founders of academic geography in Britain, these were the dominant facts of his time.²⁸ Although Mackinder was obsessed by this sense of geographical enclosure, the boundaries that he faced on the ground during his first ascent of Mount Kenya in 1899 were overwhelmingly racial and cultural. On these boundaries in Africa, the British government and scientific establishment offered essential support to Mackinder's expedition.

Mackinder's ascent contributed to the scramble for first ascents in Africa.²⁹ Mount Kilimanjaro, the continent's highest peak, had attracted a variety of missionaries and explorers to its slopes from the 1860s to the 1880s. Sir Harry Johnston, for example, climbed on Kilimanjaro in 1884 on a Royal Society/British Association for the Advancement of Science expedition which had distinctly political overtones. Although the boundary commission of 1886 placed Kilimanjaro in German East Africa, these borders were not confirmed until the Heligoland Treaty of 1890, which is no doubt why Hans Meyer, a geographer from Leipzig, was eager to plant the German flag on Kilimanjaro in 1889.³⁰ Meyer christened the highest, rocky tooth 'Kaiser Wilhelm-Spitze' and surrounding glaciers and huts were named after Bismarck, Friedrich Ratzel, Karl Peters, and others.³¹ After Mackinder's ascent of Mount Kenya, James Bryce, then President of the Alpine Club, was gratified that a British climber had bagged the highest

peak in British East Africa. 'When Kilimanjaro was, at the special request of the German Emperor, included within German East Africa, it was a matter of regret to many; but now we found in Kenya we had a mountain nearly as high, more striking in its physical features, more difficult of ascent, and possessing a flora quite as interesting as its German rival.'³² Although this international competition provided the context for Mackinder's ascent, it did not supply his motive for climbing Mount Kenya.

Mackinder decided to attempt the ascent of Mount Kenya to convince the travellers and explorers of the RGS that he was not 'a mere arm chair geographer'.³³ Mackinder was then juggling three separate academic appointments in Oxford, Reading, and London. The funding for his position at Oxford, which was up for renewal, was dependent on the support of the RGS. After Mackinder heard from in-laws working in Kenya that the Ugandan railway would make central Kenya relatively accessible, he quietly planned an ascent. To prepare, Mackinder took lessons in surveying in England and climbing in Switzerland.³⁴ He also had to obtain the consent of British officials. By pulling a few Oxford strings, Mackinder received permission from the Foreign Office. But the British Commissioner in Kenya was kept in the dark until Mackinder reached Mombasa.³⁵ His relatives on the spot, however, gave Mackinder the trump card he needed to secure permission from the local British officials – knowledge that a German had recently been granted permission to visit the same district. If there were any problems, Hilda Hinde advised him to get everything in writing and hand it over to a friend in Parliament: 'They do so many dirty and dark things out here that they can't afford exposure.'³⁶

Mackinder's expedition to Mount Kenya crossed a series of boundaries.³⁷ As the region was suffering from famine, severe drought, and smallpox epidemic, Mackinder's party were virtually quarantined from the local population before they went inland. Moreover, their staging ground at the head of the railway was Nairobi, then a classic frontier-town with tent encampments but few permanent structures. Mackinder and his colleagues also managed a diverse staff of nearly 200 people, consisting of Swahilis hired in Zanzibar, and Masai and Kikuyu hired in Nairobi. Early on Mackinder noted that, within his entourage, there were 'divisions among our followers upon which we might depend in ruling them'.³⁸

But the most obvious and persistent boundaries Mackinder faced were the differences of culture and power that separated his safari from the local population and the unfamiliar landscape. Where possible, Mackinder used his team of guides and porters to insulate himself from the local population.³⁹ Mackinder used many of the common tropes of imperial travel literature to reconcile familiar categories and new experiences. The space at the centre of each village was 'just like an English village green'. However,

Mackinder did separate the English and the African landscapes by time immemorial: 'the forest, with its familiar plants, brought one back to pre-historic England, when the mammoth broke through our thickets'.⁴⁰ He compared local chieftains to the heads of Scottish clans and the African porters and the local population to elephants, monkeys, dogs, and camels.⁴¹ Mackinder also thought local social networks exercised sovereignty over geographically defined spaces. One river, for example, marked 'the boundary between Meranga and another Kikuyu country called Kaleti'. Even on the internal evidence in his diaries these local 'tribes' were not defined strictly in territorial terms, yet Mackinder insisted on understanding them as territorially bounded groups.⁴²

Mackinder's relations with the indigenous population were always uneasy and often based on the explicit threat of force. British 'punitive expeditions' over the previous decade had left a legacy of mistrust. 'Everywhere we heard the same tale', Mackinder wrote, 'that the people feared we would shoot them.'⁴³ These anxieties were compounded by Mackinder's utter dependence on the local population for food supplies, which were none too plentiful in the prevailing famine conditions. After Wangombe, a prominent local trader and leader, reneged on a promise to supply food for the expedition, Mackinder warned Wangombe to 'behave himself or we should send an expedition against his village'. Mackinder held Wangombe prisoner while an armed escort obtained food from Wangombe's village. In the meantime, Mackinder fired his semi-automatic pistol 'against a tree-trunk for Wangombe's benefit'. Mackinder also learned to fire warning shots to calm chaotic situations: 'it was a strange experience to be brought face to face with the ultimate sanctions of society'.⁴⁴ Shortly afterward, a group linked to Wangombe ambushed and killed two of Mackinder's Swahili guides. Under siege and with supplies of food and ammunition running dangerously low, part of the expedition left for Naivasha. In Nairobi, John Ainsworth, the Sub-Commissioner, learned of Mackinder's plight and despatched two parties with additional food and guns. Ainsworth explained his actions thus: 'The expedition, I suppose, is in a way a private one, but at the same time its results may and will be of public interest.'⁴⁵ Mackinder found solace in the memory that an earlier explorer 'had trouble with some people in the same boundary zone'.⁴⁶

Mackinder chose not to retaliate, but hunkered down to continue his survey and climb of Mount Kenya. During the tense days waiting for a relief party, he compulsively read Dickens' *Old Curiosity Shop*. Once a detachment of the East African Rifles arrived, Mackinder completed his ascent. At Sidney Hinde's suggestion, he named Mount Kenya's two highest peaks Batian and Nelion in honour of two Masai chiefs, since by legend the Masai had originally descended to the plains from Mount

Kenya.⁴⁷ His mission accomplished, Mackinder rushed back to the railhead, where he experienced the epiphany of all of his border crossings. 'Suddenly one passed out of Africa into Asia, out of the *Bwana* country and into the *Sahib* country! There was a bazaar, with turbaned fallow Punjabi coolies, and Masai women. In the partially cleared bush were green tents. There I found a man paying wages.'⁴⁸ As a *sahib* among the large number of Indians in Kenya to build the Ugandan railway, Mackinder once again felt within the boundaries of imperial rule, far more than ever was the case while he was a *bwana* among Africans in the foot hills of Mount Kenya. So gratified was Mackinder to reach this point, one of the cultural boundaries of the British Indian empire, that, he added, 'So I came back to civilisation.'⁴⁹ With his reputation secure as a geographer-cum-explorer, Mackinder returned from the boundary of Africa and Asia to become an advocate for strong imperial ties and a geopolitical theorist.⁵⁰

III

As the boundary of India, Russia, and China, the Himalayas were, according to a popular book of the era, the region 'Where Three Empires Meet'.⁵¹ As political and military frontiers, the Himalayas were different from the predominantly cultural boundaries of Europe/Asia/Africa. The imperial competition to control the border zone around the Himalayas spawned the 'Great Game' with Russia, which is often remembered for the cloak and dagger atmosphere of Kipling's *Kim*, a novel which Kenneth Mason, a climber and surveyor, thought 'caught the spirit' of the period.⁵² The 'Great Game' also created a set of discourses concerning the relationship of geographical knowledge and military power on the frontier. In the 1890s, proposals by Douglas Freshfield, William Martin Conway, and A.F. Mummery to climb on the Himalayan frontier exposed the continuing tensions between the imperial bureaucracy and the climbers and geographers over how to define geographical knowledge and the interests of the imperial state.

The frontier had created political obstacles for Himalayan mountaineering before the 1890s. In the late 1870s Edward Whymper, an engraver who had made the first ascent of the Matterhorn, applied to climb in the Himalayas. 'But, just at the time when it was possible to start, our rulers entered upon the construction of a "scientific frontier" for India, and rendered that region unsuitable for scientific investigations. I was recommended by experienced Anglo-Indians to defer my visit, and I followed their advice.' Whymper turned to Ecuador, 'the most lofty remaining country which was available'.⁵³ Away from the frontier, W.W. Graham made the first ascent of Kabru in 1883. Graham's ascent to the

highest elevation ever was challenged by other climbers – many of whom wanted to claim the high point for themselves – in large part because Graham failed to make the scientific observations required by geographers. As Graham told a disappointed audience at the RGS: 'I went to India more for sport and adventures than for the advancement of scientific knowledge.'⁵⁴

In the 1890s the Government of India began to support proposals for mountaineering on the frontier. In 1891 Douglas Freshfield, an experienced climber and Honorary Secretary of the RGS, proposed exploring Kangchenjunga, which straddled the Nepal/Sikkim border. Freshfield planned 'to find out, as far as is possible, what may be practicable in the way of mountaineering in the Himalaya for men of Alpine experience'.⁵⁵ Freshfield asked for assistance from the Government of India since he had received similar facilities in the Caucasus from Russian authorities. Lord Lansdowne, the Viceroy, decided that 'I shall be glad to help him in an unobtrusive manner' so long as Freshfield attempted the ascent of Kangchenjunga on the Sikkim side and he did not cross the border into Nepal.⁵⁶

At the same time, William Martin Conway's proposal to climb in the Karakorum Himalayas raised broader issues about the Great Game with Russia. The President of the RGS, Sir M.E. Grant Duff, lobbied the Viceroy on Conway's behalf and asked if the RGS could 'obtain fuller information from India about the geographical *data* ascertained by your Excellency's officers on their travels round the frontier'. Grant Duff maintained that the Indian authorities responsible for declassifying maps had grown more secretive in recent years: 'Now we find it easier, much easier, to get information from Russian, than from Indo-Anglian sources.'⁵⁷ Lansdowne offered his qualified support for Conway's expedition. 'The fact that [Conway] is supported by the Royal Geographical Society will of course entitle him to whatever assistance we can give him without prejudice to public interests'. But the Russian presence along the Indian frontier made it necessary to restrict the areas in which exploration could be permitted and to limit the amount of geographical knowledge that could be published.

The fact that a small body of Russians are still hovering about the neighbourhood of the Passes leading over the Hindu-Kush, exposes explorers in those regions to the chance of a disagreeable *rencontre*, which, for obvious reasons, it would be as well to avoid. I hope too that it will not be forgotten that there are many sections of our frontier which we should not like to have described in public documents. The less information useful for military purposes with which to supply the Russians the better.⁵⁸

In reply, Grant Duff noted that Conway planned to travel away from areas

of unrest. He also suggested 'if the War Office, your Office, and the Royal Geographical Society could all work together, surely it would be better!' Grant Duff forwarded an earlier proposal from the Commander-in-Chief in India to 'treat the Indian Intelligence Branch as a branch of the Royal Geographical Society and allow it something in the way of funds for geographical exploration'. Together, they could arrange 'many explorations in which both military information and geographical knowledge can be obtained'.⁵⁹

These proposals initiated an acrimonious debate. The Government of India cautioned the RGS not to 'make use of any knowledge which the indulgence thus shown to Mr. Conway may place in their possession, in such a manner as to supply any Foreign Power with information which might be valuable to it from a military point of view'.⁶⁰ Indignant, the RGS asked for instances when the RGS had indiscreetly published official secrets and blamed the delay in declassifying maps on interdepartmental rivalry in India. In public, Douglas Freshfield complained that 'the Anglo-Indian Government prohibits all independent travel in its trans-frontier lands'.⁶¹

The discussion focused on the method of declassifying military maps, the Government of India's attitude toward independent travellers, and the nature of geographical knowledge. The Government defended the laborious process of declassification and noted that, whatever process was used, it was 'not likely to be sufficiently fast to relieve the Indian Government from unfavourable comment by the Geographical Society'.⁶² Officials also asserted categorically that there was 'no clashing of departments'. The Government of India further noted that the objections to independent travellers came not from India, but from neighbouring states, especially Afghanistan and China. When the Government of India attempted to explain the purpose of a 'sporting expedition' along the Afghan frontier, for example, the Amir of Afghanistan objected 'on the ground that if English parties were permitted to go there, the Russians would "certainly ask for similar freedom; then it would become necessary to prevent them by violence and war, thus creating animosity"'. Freshfield conceded that the Government's policy 'may be justified by special circumstances'.⁶³

The climbers and the officials viewed geographical knowledge in fundamentally different ways. On the one hand, the Indian Government defined military information as the instrument of military policy. Maps were kept blank only for military purposes, and only the Government of India could decide when these circumstances applied. The Government found it 'satisfactory to notice Mr. Freshfield's admission that the system pursued towards independent travellers by the Indian Government may be justified by special circumstances. That is the essence of the matter.' On the other hand, Freshfield defined geographical knowledge as a systematic science, in

which the role of the RGS was to assign credit for the primacy of discovery. Freshfield maintained the 'suppression of the general and scientific results of British exploration, with the consequent discouragement to observation among our officers, is the main issue in the correspondence'. Blanks on the map obscured the geographical achievements of British officers. 'The frequent suppression of the results of the travels of British officers, their enterprise is discouraged, and in some cases the advance of scientific knowledge is hindered, in others the credit of important discoveries is transferred to foreigners.' Freshfield also wanted to erase the distinction between military information and geographical knowledge. Freshfield concluded by hoping that 'the Viceroy, his attention having been drawn to the matter, will see his way to reconcile the interests of the State and Science, and to prove that they are, to a far greater extent than has hitherto been recognised, identical'.⁶⁴

The Government of India never addressed Freshfield's contention that state and science were symbiotically linked, since officials centred their objections around practical considerations of military strategy and logistics. Lord Lansdowne told the RGS that scientific expeditions posed problems for military operations along the frontier. Conway's party, for example, had gone into the field at a 'very inconvenient time' since the 'Hunza operations had just been concluded'.

We were experiencing great difficulties in supplying our own troops, and the presence of an independent exploring party in a country drained of supplies and disturbed by hostilities, which had scarcely ceased, was not unlikely to give trouble. Nevertheless, desiring to meet [the RGS's] wishes as far as was possible, we facilitated Mr. Conway's movements, and our officers were instructed to give his party every assistance in their power.⁶⁵

The area was still far from under British control. C.G. Bruce, a Gurkha officer with Conway, laconically recalled that 'two and a half years were yet required before the tribes of the Hindu Kush understood the meaning of the "Pax Britannica"'. Yet even in these unsettled conditions, Bruce conscripted porters from the local population to carry the supplies for Conway's expedition: 'What would have happened if a whole village had been ordered to send every available man with some unknown Englishman, and to stay with him for a fortnight above the snowline, is better imagined than described, yet this is what must necessarily occur in the Himalaya.'⁶⁶

In 1895 A.F. Mummery encountered similar resistance to his proposal to climb Nanga Parbat. James Bryce wrote on Mummery's behalf to Lord Elgin, the Viceroy, that 'emulating the exploits of Conway and Bruce', Mummery intended to travel by the Gilgit Road into Kashmir to ascend

Nanga Parbat. British officials in India were concerned that permission might lead to increased pressure to use the Gilgit Road when 'the object is not, I suppose, much higher than gratification of Mr. Mummery's vanity?'⁶⁷ Elgin, however, told Bryce, 'The chief difficulty in these regions is not so much that we are afraid of travellers seeing or telling too much, as that the transport is so scarce that we can hardly get enough for the absolute necessities of the Government service.'⁶⁸ Officials in London were equally sympathetic. The Permanent Under Secretary of State for India thought that '(quite apart from the wish to please Bryce) these climbers are deserving of help and encouragement, inasmuch as they do a certain amount of useful work'.⁶⁹

The official obstacle to granting permission to Mummery was to set a precedent of opening the Gilgit Road to travellers. As the Viceroy's Private Secretary reported, 'I quite agree that obstacles should not be placed in the way of mountaineers, whose explorations may be of some use. But each permission makes it more difficult to refuse in other cases, and it is not easy to draw a hard and fast line between mountaineering and sport, or ordinary travelling.' British officers complained when civilian travellers were granted permission to travel in regions from which they were excluded.⁷⁰ Mummery altered his route in response to concerns about the Gilgit Road, and was given permission for the ascent.⁷¹ C.G. Bruce again joined the expedition to organize the porters. After several failed attempts on Nanga Parbat, Mummery and two of Bruce's Gurkha subalterns, Rangobir Thapa and Goman Singh, disappeared while crossing a high ridge on Nanga Parbat, and were presumed killed by an avalanche. Vertical boundaries were real as well as imagined.

IV

'Can Mount Everest be Ascended?', Clinton Dent asked in 1892.⁷² Since Mount Everest was located near the Indian frontier on the border of Nepal and Tibet, this was as much a political question as a mountaineering problem. Proposals to climb Mount Everest before 1914 were often rejected by British officials, despite the support of Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India. To the exponents of the 'official mind' of imperialism, the ascent of Mount Everest interfered with the conduct of foreign policy on the frontier of India. To Curzon, however, the ascent of Mount Everest was a representation of his forward policy on the Indian frontier. Throughout his career Curzon attached great importance to ritual and spectacle, and during his period as Viceroy he orchestrated numerous ceremonies to represent the authority of the British Raj, most extravagantly the 'Curzonation' Durbar of 1903.⁷³ But even Curzon could not push through the Everest proposal in the

face of continuing resistance from Nepal and other branches of the colonial bureaucracy.

Curzon proposed an expedition to Mount Everest in 1899 after learning of Douglas Freshfield's renewed plans to walk around Kangchenjunga, which included surreptitiously crossing the border into Tibet and Nepal. Freshfield told Curzon that he was concerned if his plans became known, 'we should have paragraphs in the papers "Expedition to Mount Everest" etc'. Such a prospect appealed to Curzon, who was eager to obtain permission for a British expedition to Mount Everest: 'I have always regarded it as rather a reproach that having the tallest, and in all probability, the second or third tallest mountains in the world on the borders of British Protected or Feudatory territory, we have for the last 20 years equipped no scientific expedition and done practically nothing to explore them.'⁷⁴ Curzon was fascinated with boundaries. The previous year he had completed a memoir, *On the Indian Frontier*, but its publication was vetoed with his appointment as Viceroy. Curzon's obsession with the influence of the 'frontier' in history was abiding. He later dedicated his Romanes lectures at Oxford to the subject because 'a large part of my younger days had been spent in travel upon the boundaries of the British Empire in Asia, which had always exercised upon me a peculiar fascination'.⁷⁵

But Curzon and Freshfield's passion for the ascent of Everest was not widely shared in India and England, not even within the RGS which was then devoting its energies to Antarctic exploration. In 1899 Curzon sought permission for an ascent of Everest from Nepal while Freshfield sounded out the RGS and other scientific societies in London. Freshfield reported that both the RGS and the Royal Society were too busy competing with one another for control of British Antarctic exploration to pay much attention to Everest.⁷⁶ Indeed, the attention of the RGS had shifted to Antarctic exploration as a way to restore its reputation after a divisive debate over the admission of women in the 1890s.⁷⁷ Clements Markham, who became President of the RGS in the wake of the affair, later told Curzon, that 'I believed, rightly or wrongly, that the only way to restore the Society's credit was to undertake some great enterprise in the cause of geography. I chose the Antarctic Regions.' By 1911 Markham thought the expeditions, led by Captain R.F. Scott, were a complete success. 'It restored our credit to us, lost by the mismanagement of the female trouble.'⁷⁸ Climbing Everest at that time would not have served the same purpose for Markham, since women were already travelling in the Himalayas. In the Antarctic, however, the RGS was able to reaffirm the masculinity of exploration, without resurrecting the divisions over gender and geography that female explorers had raised in the Himalayas and elsewhere.⁷⁹

With the RGS committed to Antarctic exploration, the Everest proposals

faded away in the face of British apathy and Nepalese intransigence. Curzon attempted to revive the Everest plans in 1905 by offering to pay half the total cost of the expedition up to £3,000 from Government of India revenues. Curzon felt some urgency since his term of office in India was coming to an end, and his successor might not be as sympathetic to the proposal.⁸⁰ Yet the RGS was more interested in surveying the lower Brahmaputra valley, as there could be 'considerable mineral wealth in this region such an expedition might also be of considerable commercial importance'.⁸¹ The RGS offered to pay £500 towards an Everest expedition, so long as it was organized by the Government of India, but concluded that the ascent of Kangchenjunga was not 'a matter of sufficient geographical importance to justify any expenditure of the Society's funds'.⁸² George Goldie, the RGS President, told Curzon: 'The main current of feeling here is that while the ascent of Mount Everest would be a very sporting venture and might also yield answers to some interesting questions, it would have to be treated as part of some wider (it could not well be loftier) geographical work.' Goldie assured Curzon that the RGS was in favour of mountain ascents, but wanted to 'cover them with a veneer of geography'.⁸³

Curzon and Freshfield attached symbolic importance to a British ascent of Everest. As Curzon wrote to Freshfield: 'If we don't do it, explorers of other nationalities will step in and do it instead. With the prize dangling before our eyes it would be in my view a reproach if alien hands were allowed to snatch it.'⁸⁴ Freshfield confirmed Curzon's fears of a foreign expedition by reporting that in London he had seen the Duke of the Abruzzi, who hoped to take a large team of Italian Alpine guides to Everest. Such an option was out of the question 'for the British purse, as we have no climbing Princes'.⁸⁵ A few years later, in 1909, the Duke of the Abruzzi climbed Bride Peak, over 25,000 feet high, temporarily claiming the undisputed height championship of the world. Freshfield complained to James Bryce that 'I think you will agree it will be a sad exhibition of nervousness if such an opportunity of exploring the highest mountains in our sphere of influence in the world, is lost. The men and the money are not to be found every day.'⁸⁶

To imperial policy-makers, however, these views conflicted with diplomatic initiatives on the Indian frontier with Russia and China. As a member of the Alpine Club, Lord Minto, who replaced Curzon as Viceroy, was sympathetic to a proposal to climb Everest. But Minto informed the RGS that Everest was politically inaccessible. The Nepalese Durbar objected to any expedition to Everest and the British government 'absolutely object to any expeditions entering Tibet'.⁸⁷ John Morley, the Secretary of State for India, recalled for Minto 'the language used by my

predecessor', St. John Brodrick, which excluded proposals by travellers to enter Tibet.

He explained [Morley wrote] how the effect of Indian policy in relation to Afghanistan, Siam, Tibet or any other dependency of the Chinese Empire, is liable to be felt throughout Europe. He insisted, therefore, that the course of affairs on the Indian frontiers cannot be decided without reference to imperial exigencies elsewhere; and he urged how consistently averse the Government had been to any policy in Tibet that would tend to throw on the British Empire an additional burden.⁸⁸

As a consolation prize, Minto suggested the ascent of Kangchenjunga to the mountaineers. Kitchener was ready to offer leave of absence to several officers and render other assistance by the Indian Army. However, these plans too were rejected by Morley, because they would infringe upon a recent agreement with the Russian government not to mount any scientific expeditions to the region over the next three years. In *The Times*, George Goldie, the RGS President, denounced the 'regrettable interposition by a Liberal Government of a Himalayan barrier to the advance of knowledge in this direction'.⁸⁹

The Everest plans scuttled, Tom Longstaff and Arnold Mumm set their sights on Trisul, one of the highest mountains completely within British territory. Their success on Trisul confirmed to Curzon that his hopes for an Everest expedition had been well founded. After Longstaff read a paper about the expedition, Curzon described why he had originally proposed the attempt on Everest.

As I sat daily in my room at Simla and saw that range of snowy battlements uplifted against the sky, that huge palisade shutting off India from the rest of the world, I felt it should be the business of Englishmen, if of anybody, to reach the summits. From that point of view I was delighted when Dr. Longstaff came out to conquer...I always thought that Kangchenjunga, being within our territory, and Everest only a little way outside it and the English being the first mountaineering race in the world, an Englishman ought to be the first on the top of Kangchenjunga, and, if possible, of Everest also.⁹⁰

Curzon chose the language of 'battlements' and 'palisades' because the Himalayas were located on the borders of British India. The language used to describe the ascent of Everest was also influenced by Antarctic exploration. The closing of yet another frontier by polar explorers left Everest alone as the last unconquered place on earth. Everest became known as 'the Third Pole'. When Major C.G. Bruce opened negotiations

with Nepal to permit access to Everest in 1908-9, he recognized that there was some confusion as to whether Everest was on the border between Nepal and Tibet: 'the highlands to the north evidently, no matter where the boundary lies, (if it can ever be fixed at all), must be an uninhabited Arctic region'.⁹¹

Bruce's Everest proposal also met resistance from the Nepalese and British governments. Bruce reported that the Maharaja of Nepal initially supported a joint Anglo-Nepalese attempt on Everest of limited size and duration. But the Maharaja refused permission because the proposed agreement had too many 'loop-holes'.⁹² The British Resident in Nepal reported to his superiors that the Maharaja 'gave China as an instance of a country where increasing troubles have followed on the entry into it of the European. He says that no one here wants Nepal "opened up".' Advising against pressing for permission, the Resident articulated the views of the 'official mind' of the British imperial bureaucracy. On this issue, he concluded, British interests coincided with those of the Maharaja.

I take it that we do not care a fig for the internal affairs of this country – so long as they do not harm us, (as a matter of fact the people are happy, contented and uncommonly well-off and it would be a thousand pities if Indian 'civilization' and its accompaniments in the shape of education, forward movement and sedition were to penetrate into Nepal – the longer it is kept back the better) – all that we want is control of Nepal's foreign policy.⁹³

The Resident briefly considered the sort of arguments that appealed to the British mountaineers. As he wrote from Kathmandu: 'It is of course extremely dull and tiresome here and it perhaps would be interesting to go to places hitherto unvisited by white men. But I see no good to be got out of it for the Government, and the personal satisfaction is not to be considered in a matter of this sort.'⁹⁴ These were the considerations, on the contrary, that British mountaineers took for granted. The climbers and other proponents of the ascent of Everest assumed a linkage or identity between their own actions and the national interest.

Imperial officials could also advocate these broader cultural assumptions. Curzon, of course, was indignant at the cancellation of Bruce's expedition.⁹⁵ In 1909, even John Morley 'lent an interested ear' to Major C.G. Rawling's plans to climb Everest, and advised Rawling merely to postpone them for a year. Rawling thought it 'almost wicked to leave the greatest mountain in the world in a veil of mystery and ignorance'. But Rawling's Everest proposal, and another by a group of Swiss climbers, were both politely rejected in 1914.⁹⁶ As British mountaineers learned to their disappointment, boundaries may bound, but they also could exclude.

V

Boundaries were essential to the construction of Britain's national and imperial identities. Why did H.B. George find it 'discreditable' and Lord Curzon a 'reproach' that British mountaineers had not yet climbed the Caucasus or Himalayas? These mountains represented a challenge to British climbers, and not merely because they were there as geographical features of the landscape. As boundaries, these mountains posed a challenge because of the specific cultural associations that British climbers used to distinguish the places they thought of as here, from the places they thought of as there. Mountaineers drew boundaries between Europe and Asia, between Asia and Africa, between India and Russia and China, between themselves and guides or porters or coolies, between the heights on which man had trodden and those to which he still aspired. Each of these divisions established a bond, not a boundary, between the climbers' personal identity and their imagined sense of Britain's racial, national, and imperial identities.

The encounter with the 'other' affected how British climbers described these boundaries. The boundaries in the Caucasus were dependent on the imagined frontier with Europe's 'other' in Asia that the climbers brought with them. In Kenya, Mackinder's boundary of Africa and Asia was more directly the result of his encounter with the people of Africa. When British climbers met the 'other', they often responded by attempting to maintain British prestige. On a climbing and shooting trip in Sinai in 1912, for example, Bedouin guides challenged two British climbers to follow them up the steep passages. 'Every now and then we would reach a pitch which would be pronounced "Good for Arab; not good for English!" Then Eaton would stoutly murmur that the prestige of the white man must be maintained, and up we would go, though it may be not with the catlike agility of our barefooted cicerones, who would nevertheless nod grave approval and mutter "Quaiss" to our gratification.'⁹⁷ Similarly, George Orwell memorably described his experience shooting an elephant as a police officer in Burma 'solely to avoid looking a fool', the inevitable consequence of not personifying imperial prestige.⁹⁸ This prestige was the cultural expression of British power and authority, and strategies for representing it – including Curzon's spectacular rituals and the ascent of Mount Everest – became increasingly prominent as the British coped with the contradictions of colonial difference throughout the Empire.⁹⁹

British climbers in the Himalayas also met the 'other', but the political dimensions of the frontier of India and the Great Game with Russia erected boundaries between British officials and British mountaineers because they each defined the frontier in different ways. British officials expressed reservations about climbing in the Himalayas because they saw a conflict

between military operations and geographical exploration. The political and strategic assumptions of British officials about the Great Game with Russia were the consequence of their own imagined geographies. Yet these assumptions were not shared by everyone even within military circles. After listening to a paper at the RGS on the Pamirs, for example, General Richard Strachey remarked that 'the way in which the question of the occupation of this region, either by Russia, Afghanistan, China, or Britain, occupies some people's minds, I can only regard as an illustration of the folly of humanity'.¹⁰⁰ In contrast to this view, constructions of the Himalayas as a frontier may appear to make attempts at military and political conquest by British officials or attempts at geographical conquest by British explorers and mountaineers to be two sides of the same coin. Their respective endeavours were never exclusively political or cultural, but mingled elements of both. Even so, the differences between the colonial officials, explorers, and mountaineers should not be elided too easily. These differences among the British persisted into the 1920s, when British diplomats finally obtained permission from Tibet for an attempt to climb Mount Everest.¹⁰¹

British mountaineering represented British imperialism and national identity in contingent and relational circumstances. Climbing mountains in borderlands forced British climbers to negotiate the limits of the places they defined as here or there, much as contact with the 'other' forced them to distinguish between the people they defined as us or them. Yet these boundaries were in flux; differences were renegotiated. Definitions of here and there, us and them, changed in relation to one another, and over time. Mountain climbing may appear most clearly 'imperial' when practised by a self-avowed imperialist like Mackinder, or when proposed as a spectacle of the Raj by a Viceregal patrician like Curzon. Not all British mountain climbing should be considered imperial. Nevertheless, when these mountaineers placed themselves on the border between different cultures, nations, empires, or continents, their cultural assumptions about boundaries, geography, and empire enabled them to construct personal identities that represented Britain's national identity and imperial prestige.

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NOTES

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1. Locating the boundary between two continents on the same landmass has vexed geographers for centuries. See W.H. Parker, 'Europe – How Far?', *Geographical Journal*, 126 (1960), 278–97; D. Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh, 1968); and M. Bassin, 'Russia between Europe and Asia: the Ideological Construction of Geographical Space', *Slavic Review*, 50 (1991), 1–17.
2. H.B. George, 'Mount Elbrouz, and the Attempted Ascent of it by a Russian Expedition', *Alpine Journal*, 2 (1865), 169, 177.
3. Recent accounts, however, take seriously the claims that a Circassian guide climbed Elbruz in 1829. See A. Salkeld and J.L. Bermúdez, *On the Edge of Europe: Mountaineering in the Caucasus* (London, 1993), 241–4.
4. See A. Godlewska and N. Smith (eds.), *Geography and Empire* (Oxford, 1994), and M. Bell, R. Butlin and M. Heffernan, *Geography and Imperialism, 1820–1940* (Manchester, 1995); B. Hudson, 'The New Geography and the New Imperialism: 1870–1918', *Antipode*, 9 (1977), 12–19; R.A. Stafford, 'Geological Surveys, Mineral Discoveries, and British Expansion, 1835–71', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12 (1984), 5–32; D.R. Stoddart, *On Geography and its History* (Oxford, 1986); P. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay* (Chicago, 1987); M. Bassin, 'Imperialism and the Nation State in Friedrich Ratzel's Political Geography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 11 (1987), 473–95; R. Stafford, *Scientist of Empire: Sir Roderick Murchison, Scientific Exploration and Victorian Imperialism* (Cambridge, 1989); J.M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and the Natural World* (Manchester, 1990); D.N. Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition* (Oxford, 1992); M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992); F. Driver, 'Geography's Empire: Histories of Geographical Knowledge', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 10 (1992), 23–40; T. Bayliss-Smith, 'Papuan Exploration, Colonial Expansion and the Royal Geographical Society: Questions of Power/Knowledge Relations', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 18 (1992), 319–29; B. Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery* (Oxford, 1994); D. Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford, 1994); A. Blunt and G. Rose, *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (New York, 1994).
5. See, for example, E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), and E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993).
6. See R. Cohen, *Frontiers of Identity: the British and the Others* (London, 1994); L. Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: an Argument', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992), 307–29; L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, 1992); and A.P. Cohen, *Symbolizing Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures* (Manchester, 1986). For related discussions, see also P. Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley, 1989); and M. Bassin, 'Turner, Lolov'ev, and the "Frontier Hypothesis": The Nationalist Signification of Open Spaces', *Journal of Modern History*, 65 (1993), 473–511.
7. For recent discussions of the myth of the 'frontier', see R.H. MacDonald, *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880–1918* (Manchester, 1994), and R.H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: the Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890–1918* (Toronto, 1993).
8. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed., (London, 1991).
9. H. Lamar and L. Thompson, *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven, 1981), 7. The literature on these border areas is extensive. For other approaches, see Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*; G. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The*

- New Mestiza* (San Francisco, 1987), and M. Kearney, 'Borders and Boundaries of State and Self at the End of Empire', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 4 (1991), 52–74.
10. A.L. Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31 (1989), 137. See also A. Stoler, 'Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial South East Asia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34 (1992), 514–51; and F. Cooper and A. Stoler, 'Tensions of Empire: Colonial Control and Visions of Rule', *American Ethnologist*, 16 (1989), 609–20.
 11. For the history of the RGS, see the works cited in note 4, especially Stoddart, *On Geography*, and Livingstone, *Geographical Tradition*. For a study of the 'imperial archive', see Thomas Richards, *Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London, 1993).
 12. See P.H. Hansen, 'Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 34 (1995), 300–24.
 13. See Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge, 1994), in addition to the other works in note 1.
 14. See G.W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1987).
 15. See D.W. Freshfield, *Travels in Central Caucasus* (London, 1869), D.W. Freshfield, 'The Caucasus', in H.W. Bates (ed.), *Illustrated Travels: a Record of Discovery, Geography, and Adventure*, vol. 2, (London, 1870), 92–5.
 16. *Alpine Journal*, 4 (1869), 254.
 17. *The Times*, 14 Sept. 1868; 15 Sept. 1868.
 18. *The Times*, 16 Sept. 1868; 17 Sept. 1868; see also 26 Aug. 1868, 12 Sept. 1868. Two correspondents, for example, resisted the claim that mountains 'formerly essentially Asiatic, now become the highest in Europe. Surely some definite line must be drawn, else all geography becomes a confusion of ideas.'
 19. R. Murchison, 25 Jan. 1869, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 13 (1869), 72–3. On Murchison's career, see R. Stafford, *Scientist of Empire*.
 20. F.C. Grove, 'The Frosty Caucasus' an Account of a Walk Through Part of the Range and of an Ascent of Elbruz in the Summer of 1874 (London, 1875), 36–7. See also *The Times*, 27 Aug. 1874; 28 Aug. 1874; 5 Sept. 1874.
 21. Freshfield, *Exploration of the Caucasus*, vol. 2 (London, 1902), 22. See also A.F. Mummery, *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus* (London, 1895).
 22. C.D. Cunningham and W. Abney, *Pioneers of the Alps*, 2nd ed., (London, 1888), 50–1. The reference is to Melchior Anderegg, one of the most famous Swiss guides of his generation.
 23. See Hansen, 'Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering'.
 24. *The Times*, 6 Oct. 1888, *Morning Post* (1888), *Pall Mall Budget* (1888). See newscuttings in C124, Alpine Club Archives, London.
 25. *The Field* 72 (8 Dec. 1888), 811.
 26. *Ibid.*, 72 (15 Dec. 1888), 871.
 27. S. Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983).
 28. On this theme, see G. Kearns, 'Closed Space and Political Practice: Frederick Jackson Turner and Halford Mackinder', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 1 (1984), 23–34.
 29. H.J. Mackinder, *The First Ascent of Mount Kenya*, K.M. Barbour (ed.), (Athens, Ohio, 1991). See also B.W. Blouet, *Halford Mackinder* (College Sta., Tx., 1987), 73–86; W.H. Parker, *Geography as an Aid to Statecraft* (Oxford, 1982), and G.Ó. Tuathail, 'Putting Mackinder in his Place: Material Transformations and Myth', *Political Geography*, 11 (1992), 100–18.
 30. H. Meyer, *Across East African Glaciers: An Account of the First Ascent of Kilimanjaro* (London, 1891; originally Leipzig, 1890); H.H. Johnston, *The Kilimanjaro Expedition: A Record of Scientific Exploration in Eastern Equatorial Africa* (London, 1886).
 31. See I. Allan, *Guide to Mount Kenya and Kilimanjaro*, 4th ed., (Nairobi, 1981), 276–84. The highest point is now known as Uhuru, or Freedom Peak.
 32. *Alpine Journal*, 20 (1900), 156.
 33. Mackinder, *First Ascent*, 31. Compare Blouet, 76, and Parker, 20.
 34. Mackinder, *First Ascent*, 32.
 35. See the correspondence between RGS and the Foreign Office, 7 July 1899, and 17 July

- 1899; Foreign Office Corresp. File (1888–1902), Royal Geographical Society Archives, London, [hereafter RGS Archives].
36. H. Hinde to H. Mackinder, 29 June 1899; Mackinder Papers, MP/E/100, School of Geography, Oxford.
 37. For conditions at the time, see also B. Berman, *Crisis and Control in Colonial Kenya* (1990), C.H. Ambler, *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism: The Central Region in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 1988), F. Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labour and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890–1925* (New Haven, 1980), and R.L. Tignor, *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya* (Princeton, 1976).
 38. Mackinder, *First Ascent*, 112.
 39. Consider the spatial description of the typical camp, which also accurately represents the hierarchy of the safari. *Ibid.*, 117.
 40. *Ibid.*, 122, 150, 154.
 41. *Ibid.*, 148, 151, 200, 236.
 42. See, especially, Mackinder's confusion over the relations between Wangombe and the Masai in *ibid.*, 155. In general, see F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Differences* (Boston, 1969), and M. Fried, *The Notion of Tribe* (Menlo Park, 1975).
 43. Mackinder, *First Ascent*, 126, 145. The importance of official rhetoric should be emphasized. In Mombassa, Clifford Craufurd, the Commissioner, complained that one official 'inadvertently used the word "raid" for "punitive expedition." ... False impressions as to the methods of our Government are produced by carelessly worded reports such as the one under review.' Minute, 16 June 1899, FO2/197, Public Record Office, Kew [hereafter PRO].
 44. Mackinder, *First Ascent*, 156, 160. On Wangombe, see J. Kenyatta, *My People of Kikuyu, and the Life of Chief Wangombe* (London, 1942), 31–64; and compare Mackinder's treatment of Wangombe to John Boyes' experience a year earlier. J. Boyes, *John Boyes, King of the Wa-Kikuyu* (London, 1911), 179–88.
 45. Ainsworth to Craufurd, 4 Sept. 1899, PRO: FO 2/197/377–379. See also Ainsworth, Diary, 28 Aug. 1899, MSS Afr. s. 378, Rhodes House Library, Oxford.
 46. Mackinder, *First Ascent*, 181.
 47. *Ibid.*, 192.
 48. *Ibid.*, 247. See Mackinder's diaries for the various versions of this passage. For the manuscript version, MSS Afr. r. 26; an edited typescript, MSS Afr. r. 30, 346, Rhodes House Library, Oxford; and in the later typescript, 353–4, School of Geography, Oxford.
 49. Although this phrase was a manuscript addition to the typescript, it does not appear in the recently published version of Mackinder's diaries. See MSS Afr. r. 30, 346, Rhodes House Library, Oxford.
 50. See J.R. Ryan, 'Visualizing Imperial Geography: Halford Mackinder and the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee, 1902–11', *Ecumene*, 1 (1994), 157–76.
 51. E.F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet: A Narrative of Recent Travel in Kashmir, Western Tibet, Gilgit, and the Adjoining Countries* (London, 1893). For the broader contexts, see D. Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian, and Russian Rivalries* (London, 1969); R. English, 'Himalayan State Formation and the Impact of British Rule in the Nineteenth Century', *Mountain Research and Development*, 5 (1985), 61–78; and A.K.J. Singh, *Himalayan Triangle: A Historical Survey of British India's Relations with Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan, 1765–1950* (London, 1988).
 52. See K. Mason, *Abode of Snow: A History of Himalayan Exploration and Mountaineering from Earliest Times to the Ascent of Everest* (London, 1987), 86. On the 'Great Game', see P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (London, 1992), P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (London, 1990), and J. Keay, *The Gilgit Game: Explorers in the Western Himalayas, 1865–95* (London, 1979).
 53. E. Whymper, *Travels amongst the Great Andes of the Equator* (London, 1892), xi. See also Whymper's diaries in the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge.
 54. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, n.s. 6 (1884), 429. See also W.W. Graham, 'Up the Himalayas: Mountaineering on the Indian Alps', *Good Words*, 26 (1885), 18–23, 97–105, 172–8; and *From the Equator to the Pole: Adventures of Recent Discovery by Eminent Travellers* (London, 1887), 54–131.

55. Freshfield to M.E. Grant Duff, 23 Feb. 1891; enclosed with Grant Duff to Marquess of Lansdowne, 4 March 1891, MSS. Eur. D 558/13, British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections, London [hereafter OIOC].
56. Lansdowne to Grant Duff, 15 April 1891. Freshfield later postponed his Kanchenjunga plans due to the death of his son, but Freshfield later went to Kangchenjunga in 1899. See Grant Duff to Lansdowne, 15 Aug. 1891, MSS. Eur. D. 558/13, OIOC, and D.W. Freshfield, *Round Kangchenjunga: A Narrative of Mountain Travel and Exploration* (London, 1903).
57. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, 15 Aug. 1891, MSS Eur. D. 558/13, OIOC.
58. Lansdowne to Grant Duff, 14 Sept. 1891, MSS Eur. D. 558/13, OIOC. See also Lansdowne to Lord Aberdare, 15 Sept. 1891, MSS Eur. D. 558/13, OIOC, and Add. 7676/P139*, Cambridge University Library. A former President of the RGS, Lord Aberdare, was also the father of Major C.G. Bruce, one of Conway's companions.
59. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, 16 Oct. 1891, with enclosure H.A. Sawyer, Quarter-Master-General in India, (Intelligence Branch), to Secretary to the Royal Geographical Society, 19 Nov. 1890, MSS. Eur. D 558/13, OIOC. Grant Duff also assured the Indian authorities that Conway was 'ready to vary their route for the purpose of paying particular attention to any point that the Indian Government may desire to have elucidated'. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, 27 Oct. 1891, MSS Eur. D 558/13, OIOC; and Add. 7676/P141, Cambridge University Library.
60. Foreign Department, India, to RGS, 23 March 1892, quoted in Lansdowne to Grant Duff, 20 Sept. 1892, MSS Eur. D 558/14, OIOC.
61. D.W. Freshfield, 23 Nov. 1891, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* n.s.14 (1892), 31.
62. See extracts of the 'Note', Foreign Department, Calcutta, and the full text of Freshfield to Grant Duff, May 1892, and the 'Observations on Mr. D. Freshfield's Letter', 20 Sept. 1892, all of which are printed with Lansdowne to Grant Duff, 20 Sept. 1892, MSS Eur. D 558/14, OIOC.
63. See Freshfield to Grant Duff, May 1892, and 'Observations on Mr. D. Freshfield's Letter', 20 Sept. 1892, MSS Eur. D 558/14, OIOC.
64. Ibid. Compare Freshfield's well-known comment in 1904: 'We should, I believe, "think imperially" to more purpose if we took pains to "think geographically".' D.W. Freshfield, 'Mountains and Mankind', *Geographical Journal*, 24 (1904), 446. For a related discussion, see D.R. Stoddart, 'The "New Geography" and the "New Army" in England, 1899–1914', *Political Geography*, 11(1992), 87–99.
65. Lansdowne to Grant Duff, 20 Sept. 1892, MSS Eur. D 558/14, OIOC. Although the Viceroy cleared the RGS of the charge of publishing secrets, he did cite three papers on sensitive regions that were read to the RGS without permission. For an example of the restrictions on Conway, see W.J. Cunningham (Deputy Secretary, Government of India) to Conway, 29 Feb. 1892, Add. 7676/P152-3, Cambridge University Library.
66. C.G. Bruce, *Twenty Years in the Himalaya* (London, 1910), vii, 135.
67. W.J. Cunningham to H. Babington Smith, 21 March 1895, MSS Eur. F 84/66, OIOC.
68. Elgin to Bryce, 27 March 1895, MSS. Eur. F 84/30a, OIOC.
69. A. Godley to H. Babington Smith, 19 April 1895, MSS Eur. F 84/30a, OIOC.
70. Babington Smith to Godley, 15 May 1895, MSS Eur. F 84/30a, OIOC.
71. See Mummery to Godley, 18 April 1895, MSS Eur. F 84/30a; Babington Smith to Mummery, 14 June 1895, MSS Eur. F 84/66, OIOC.
72. C. Dent, 'Can Mount Everest Be Ascended', *Nineteenth Century*, 32 (1892), 604–13. The same question is featured in C. Dent, *Above the Snowline* (London, 1885), and the Badminton library volume on *Mountaineering* edited by Dent.
73. On Curzon's ceremonies, see D. Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy* (New Haven, 1994), 77–108; B. Cohn, 'Representing Authority in British India', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), 165–210; and, more generally, D. Gilmour, *Curzon* (London, 1994).
74. Freshfield to Curzon, 17 May 1899; and Curzon to Freshfield, 2 July 1899; MSS Eur. F. 111/183, OIOC.
75. G.N. Curzon, *Frontiers, the Romanes Lecture, 1907* (Oxford, 1907), 3. Partial proofs of his book, *On the Indian Frontier* (1898), are in MSS. Eur. F 111/118, OIOC.

76. See Curzon to Freshfield, 9 July 1899; Freshfield to Curzon, 24 Aug. 1899; Curzon to Freshfield, 31 March 1901; Freshfield to Curzon, 20 Nov. 1902; MSS Eur. F. 111/181, OIOC. See also Earl of Ronaldshay, *Life of Lord Curzon*, vol. 2, (London, 1928), 167; and Freshfield to Bryce, 27 July 1899; Bodleian Library, Oxford.
77. The divisiveness of the debate can be seen among the advocates for the ascent of Everest. Curzon bitterly opposed admitting women; Freshfield was a strong advocate, and resigned from the leadership of the RGS in protest after women were denied admission. For recent, brief accounts of the debate, see A. Blunt, *Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York, 1994), 148–54, the exchange between M. Domosh and D.R. Stoddart, in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, n.s. 16 (1991), 95–104, 484–90; and D. Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (Oxford, 1989), 214–27.
78. C. Markham to Curzon, 9 Nov. 1911, MSS Eur. F. 112/51, OIOC. On Scott's expeditions, see R. Huntford, *Scott and Amundsen* (London, 1979).
79. Among the many relevant works, see Blunt and Rose, *Writing Women and Space*; and L. Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (Minneapolis, 1993).
80. Curzon to Freshfield, 24 Feb. 1905; Freshfield to Curzon, 31 March 1905; Curzon to Goldie, 15 Aug. 1905; MSS Eur. F. 111/183, OIOC.
81. President of RGS to Secretary of State for India, 16 March 1906, India Office Corr. Block, 1881–1910, RGS Archives.
82. RGS Expedition Committee, 23 Oct. 1905, Committee Minute Book, 156; and Council Minutes, vol. VII, 217; RGS Archives.
83. Goldie to Curzon, 8 June 1905; Freshfield to Curzon, 28 June 1905; Goldie to Curzon, 29 June, 1905; MSS Eur. F. 111/183, OIOC.
84. Curzon to Freshfield 2 Oct 1906, Everest Expeditions Corr. Block 1881–1910; RGS Archives.
85. Freshfield to Curzon, 16 Oct. 1906, MSS Eur. F. 111/183, OIOC.
86. Freshfield to Bryce, 2 Dec. 1906, MS. Bryce 67, fols. 187–8. Bodleian Library, Oxford.
87. Minto to Goldie, 27 Dec 1906, RGS Archives.
88. Morley to Minto, 15 June 1906, L/P&S/10/186, OIOC.
89. See *The Times*, 8 March 1907, and *Alpine Journal*, 23 (1906–7), 50–1, 466–8.
90. *Alpine Journal*, 24 (1908), 189–90. See A.L. Mumm, *Five Months in the Himalayas: A Record of Mountain Travel in Garhwal and Kashmir* (London, 1909), and T.G. Longstaff, *This My Voyage* (London, 1950).
91. Bruce to Butler, 10 Oct. 1908, FO 766/13, PRO.
92. Bruce to Keltie, 24 Feb. 1909; Bruce Corr. 1881–1910; RGS Archives.
93. Macdonald to Butler, 3 March 1909, FO 766/13, PRO.
94. Macdonald to Cobb, 9 March 1909, FO 766/13, PRO.
95. Curzon to Morley, 11 June 1909 and 20 June 1909, MSS Eur. D. 573(e), 251–261; and Curzon to Younghusband, 13 June 1912, MSS. Eur. F. 197/225, 16, OIOC.
96. See Rawling to Smith, 1913 [f. 218], and other correspondence in L/P&S/10/412, 195–219, OIOC, and 'Proposals for an expedition to Mount Everest in 1915', in Journal MSS India 1913 Rawling; and Rawling corr., 1911–21, RGS Archives.
97. G.E. Howard, 'Scrambles in Sinai', *Alpine Journal*, 28 (1914), 19.
98. G. Orwell, *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays* (New York, 1950), 12. Compare Kenneth Mason's reminiscences on the importance of maintaining imperial prestige. C. Allen (ed.), *Plain Tales from the Raj* (New York, 1985), 61–2.
99. T. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1994).
100. R. Strachey, 23 Nov. 1891 in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, n.s. 14 (1892), 33.
101. See P.H. Hansen, 'The Dancing Lamas of Everest: Cinema, Orientalism, and Anglo-Tibetan Relations in the 1920s' (unpublished essay).