In the previous chapter, Shakabpa recounted how Tibet was able to assert its autonomy in the aftermath of the demise of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. However, as chaos in China declined, authorities there aspired to gain command over the portions of the empire, as they would say, that had drifted away from central control. In 1916, Chinese forces came into contact with Tibetan troops in Kham, foreshadowing the larger conflict that would follow. As China was able to extend its influence into the border areas, Tibetan monasteries and lay people experienced ever greater oppression and dislocation. Under the command of the Do Governor Jampa Tendar (d. 1921/1922), the monastic member of the cabinet, Tibetan forces in Kham experienced success. Chinese and Tibetan troops clashed in Riwoché and Chamdo in 1917, and a more general war in Kham in eastern Tibet was decided in Tibet’s favor, with some prominent Chinese commanders being killed or committing suicide at their surrender. Shakabpa portrays this quite decisive victory as being a thoroughgoing repudiation of Chinese involvement in the region, and he depicts the local Khampa leadership as accepting Lhasa’s authority.

Ultimately, a British official, Eric Teichman (1884–1944), became involved in the resulting peace negotiations and the withdrawal of forces agreement.\(^a\) A notable consequence of these talks was the determination of Tibet’s eastern border at the Drichu River.\(^b\) Even more significant for Shakabpa, however, is what these tripartite talks indicate about Tibet’s international status:\(^c\)

> Not only is it clear that there are no grounds for supposing Tibet’s power to be insignificant, but the fact that the three—China, Tibet, and Britain—made a treaty as equals indicates very clearly that Tibet was free and independent.

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\(^b\) See map of eastern Tibet, p. 784.

\(^c\) See p. 799 below.
1. As in the map showing Tibet’s place in Asia, this map depicts the extent of cultural or linguistic Tibet. The border between Tibet and India follows the McMahon Line. The Yangtze River, called the Drichu (’bri chu) in Tibetan, was regarded as forming the border with China. See p. 783 above.