

## Pass to travel in the Sikkim region of India, issued to Mr James Campbell<sup>1</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1886

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For context of the photos below see the extract from the Ballarat Star, Victoria, Friday 24 December 1886 (pages 8/9 below). The small brass urn to the left of the photo came back with James from the same trip. Both the pass and the urn are in remarkable condition given that they are 135 years old. (Oh, and the clock on the right behind the pass is even older – it was presented to James' father in 1857.)



See close-up on next page.

Close-up of pass issued to James Campbell, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1886.

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<sup>1</sup> James Campbell (1845-1893), my great grandfather

Sikkim Pass

giving permission to travel in Independent Sikkim  
from the representative of the Rajah of Sikkim, resident  
in Darjeeling

Handwritten text in a non-Latin script, likely Tibetan or Nepali, consisting of several lines of cursive script.

Translation

Mr James Campbell expressed his wish to the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling  
to visit Comanche and Soreng. At the request of the Deputy Commissioner I have the  
honour to address you, the Comanche Lamas, that you will be kind enough to have all  
the bridges put in order throughout the road, and supply him on his camp with food, eggs,  
milk and rice to any quantity that may be required by him. His letter is written to  
Lass Kargi, representative of the Sikkim Board on the 4<sup>th</sup> of the 9<sup>th</sup> Dubei month, under  
orders of the Deputy Commissioner.



29<sup>th</sup> Oct 1886

See translation overleaf.

## Translation

Sikkim Pass

Giving permission to travel in independent Sikkim

From the representative of the Rajah of Sikkim, resident in Darjeeling

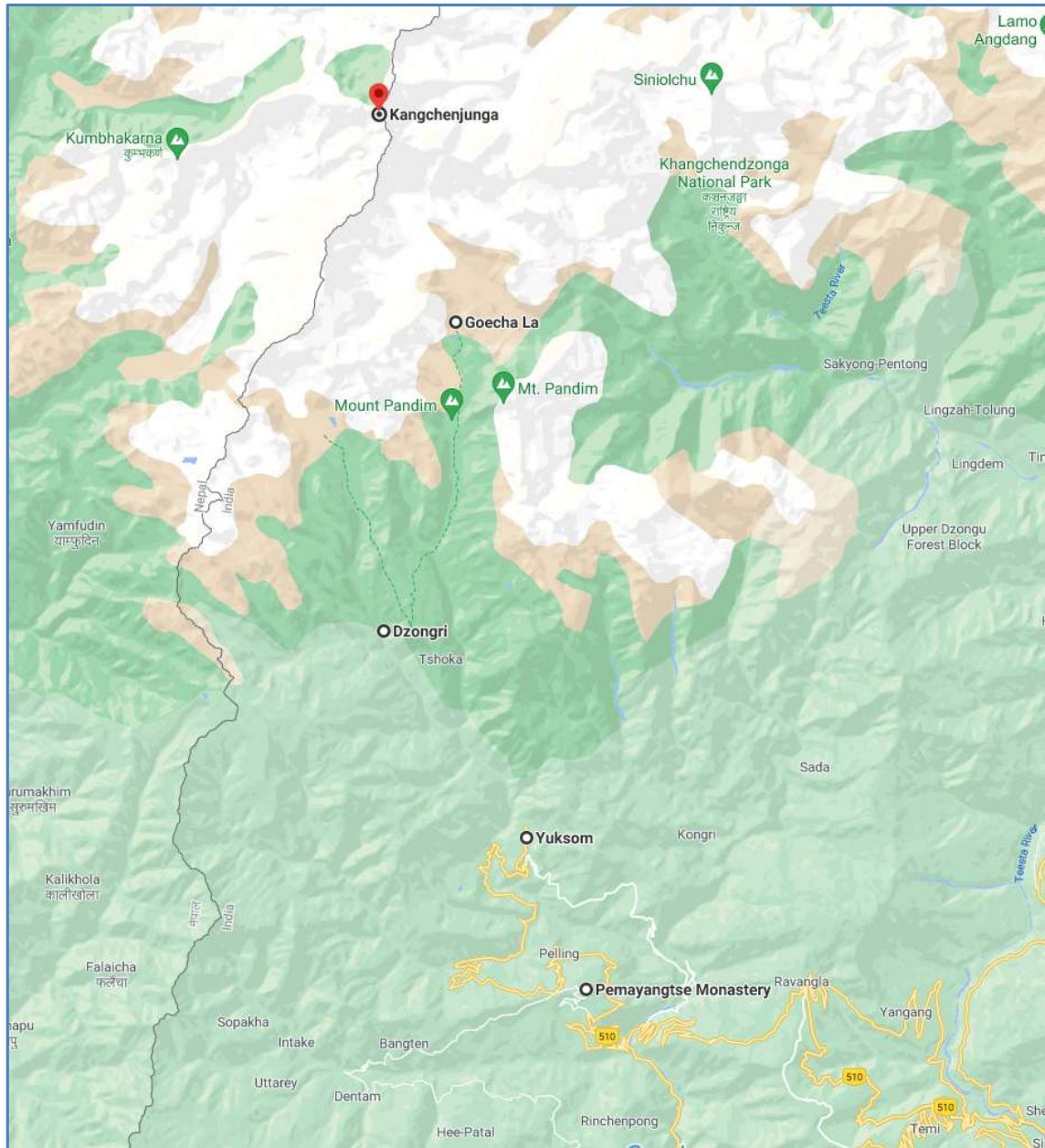
Mr James Campbell expressed his wish to the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling to visit Pemionchi and Jongri<sup>^</sup>. At the request of the Deputy Commissioner I have the honour to address you, the Pemionchi Lamas, that you will be kind enough to have all the bridges put in order throughout the road, and supply him in his camps with fowls, eggs, milk and rice to any quantity that may be required by him. This letter is written by Laso Kanji, representative of the Sikkim Court on the 4th of the 9th *Bartea*<sup>#</sup> month\* under orders of the Deputy Commissioner.

<sup>^</sup> - probably the places known today as Pemayangtse Monastery and Dzongri. See ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pemayangtse\\_Monastery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pemayangtse_Monastery))  
(<https://traveltriangle.com/blog/dzongri-trek/>)

<sup>#</sup> - translation/meaning unclear

<sup>\*</sup> - the 29<sup>th</sup> of Oct 1886

**Northern region of West Bengal (Darjeeling area) of India showing main points of James Campbell's travels from his pass and from his description of 17<sup>th</sup> Nov 1886.**



THE HON JAMES CAMPBELL IN INDIA.

The many friends of Mr Campbell will no doubt be glad to have news of his wanderings in Eastern lands The following are extracts from a letter sent by him to his brother-in-law here, received by the last mail:

“Where is Tonglu?’ I am afraid if you searched the best atlas you could find, you might come to the conclusion that ‘there aint no sich place.’ But there is. Your geographical ignorance will really be no discredit to you when I say that Tonglu consists of one; Government bungalow of three rooms, and one thatched house that any dog with a grain of self-respect would turn up his nose at if you offered him it as a kennel. The *raison d’etre* of Tonglu is that it’s on the road to Sandakphu and Phallut, where the most glorious views of Kinchinjunga, and the (I stop to slay the largest and most aggressive moth I have yet met in India), vast snowy range of the Eastern Himalayas are to be seen. The bungalow—a sort of Government hotel—looks straight out bn Kinchinjunga towering up 28,176 feet, whilst far beyond are the magnificent peaks of the Tibetan snows. I refrain from the slightest description at present; I’ll make an attempt later on. But of this be assured—the noblest description of the finest word painter the world ever possessed is, compared with the reality, as the paltriest pencillings of a beginner put alongside the most perfect landscape paintings, of the greatest masters. You can judge, then, what I think of any descriptions I may attempt. Tonglu, by the way, is 10076 feet above the level of the sea. Your two letters to hand, and I again heartily thank you for your news. Following briefly your items:- Yes, you are right. In the midst of all these glories of nature and wonderful cities, longings for home come at times with indescribable force. I fear I shall not carry out ray programme in full, but I almost feel bound to see China and Japan. After that you may expect anything. . . . -The truth is that in this sort of lonely travelling there is so much of balance that it is doubtful if it is in any marked degree a pleasure. One journeys along seeing beauties and grandeur of nature, remarkable cities, magnificent buildings, and that is a pleasure of the highest order. But there is a great deal of worry in it all, sometimes an intense sense of loneliness, sometimes a complete weariness and revulsion even from that which is beautiful or grand, but, above all, home faces are constantly interposing, and the dear eyes speak where the tongue is silent. Home scenes, in all their quiet beauty; home joys that thrill the heart; the loving circle of wife and children; the friends whose hands we wish to clasp and whose voices we wish to hear; thoughts of all these come at times with a force which is well nigh irresistible. And so all this seeming pleasure— for it seems so pleasant to anticipate, and so pleasant to the lookers-on—is really weighted down with drawbacks until I sometimes ask myself if it is pleasure at all. That it is profitable in the sense of a widened experience and a widened knowledge there is not the shadow of a doubt, and that the pleasure will come is equally certain. My experience in the past is that I have enjoyed great sights and scenes very little at the time compared with the pleasure of retrospection. We forget all the worries and troubles, we are once more with those we love, and the joy of home reunion causes the gnawing pain of separation, which we so acutely felt at the time, to fade away, whilst the memory of wonderful buildings and glorious scenes is with us as a joy for ever. If it were not that I am so constituted as to enjoy either company or loneliness, to be contented with companionship or with my I own thoughts, I should feel this long journey unutterably wearisome. You may express surprise that anyone should grow weary of the remarkable cities of this strange laud or its indescribably magnificent mountains. But it is so. You may remember that splendid passage from Richter, in which the

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<sup>2</sup> Note the different spellings from those in use today.

<sup>3</sup> Ref:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/210839136?searchTerm=%22james%20campbell%22%20india>

angel takes the man up to see the glories of the universe; and as suns after suns, system after system, glories upon glories, are revealed, the man stops. He will go no further. His human heart sinks, his human nature faints beneath the weight of all the splendours he has seen. So in smaller things. Richter puts in its grandest form a truth that we see every day in our pettiest affairs. After a while we become sated. We stop and cry, 'It is enough: I will go no farther.' And thus the balance is maintained between those who travel and those who do not. We live for happiness, not pleasure, and I question if the widest traveller is one whit happier at the end of it all than the man who steadily pursues his even lot amid familiar surroundings, and with the never-failing joys of loving wife, children, and friends. But, bless my heart, where have I got to? I was going to comment on Ballarat news and gossip, and here I have been pathetically wringing my hands; philosophising, after a fashion, and proving, if I prove anything, that I should return to Victoria forthwith. There's a flaw in my logic somewhere; it would never do for me at present to prove a case against myself. But I'll leave you to find it out. *Revenons à nos moutons* —excuse the French, but it's a handy phrase, and I may add (in confidence) a frightfully commonplace quotation ... I met with a most bitter disappointment since arriving in Darjeeling. Next to seeing Cashmere, I was anxious to get to the foot of the Kinchinjunga glacier, about 17,000 feet up, accessible, but rarely visited because of the difficult nature of the country to traverse. It takes about 40 miles on horseback and about 70 or 80 on foot in the wild Himalayas. I made all enquiries, got my tent, and was going on swimmingly when the political officer at Darjeeling informed me he regretted he could not give me a pass, and without a pass it would be impossible to proceed. It seems there is some complication at present between the Rajah of Sikkim, the Tibetans, and the British, owing to the Tibetans having crossed the frontier into Sikkim territory, and thus given provocation to a breach of the national peace. The Rajah of Sikkim is in disgrace, the Sikkimites are divided into British and anti-British, and the result is cessation of friendly feeling at present between the governing powers. The political agent, therefore, refused a pass to another gentleman a few days back, and now myself, on the ground that if anything happened to us, it would still further embarrass the British and make complications worse. So with deep regrets I had to give up this most cherished part of my tour and content myself with making for Phalbut, 53 miles from Darjeeling, where, as I said before, the grandest view of Kinchinjunga and 'the snows'—to use the local phrase—is to be had. Hitherto I have been luxuriating in railways, tongas, horses, ponies, jinrickshaws and jumpuns or doolies, so this time I resolved to see if there was any manliness or stamina left in me after the heat of an Indian summer, and squarely and honestly walk the whole road. I have now done 38 miles out of 53, and am in great perplexity as to whether I am a hero or an idiot. Such a walk! I am writing now at Sandakphu, having done another stage since I began this letter, and it is a stage, which will live for ever in my memory. Counted by the valleys I have descended and the mountains I have climbed, I reckon I have completed the champion walk of India. I loved mountain climbing until to-day. I lost reckoning of the ascents and descents, but when I came to the last ascent I felt like, groaning aloud. I could see the road zagging above me, actually in this case, into the clouds. I toiled up, perspiring at every pore though a keen cold wind was blowing, and at last arrived at this bungalow, which, is—mark well the figures—11,929 above the level of the sea, or nearly five times the height of Mount Warrenheip. I began at Tonglu, 10,076, descended about 2000 feet right off, then went up and down seemingly interminable heights and depths varying from 100 to 1000 feet, and wound up by finding myself at the foot of another mountain on this mountain ridge, about 1500 feet above my devoted head. What nearly broke my heart, and filled me with an unreasonable sort of fury against some person or persons unknown was to find, after I got up about 700 or 800 feet the road ran cunningly behind a hill, and descended about 300 feet, which I had to make up -on the last part of this same mountain, where the ascent was like the roof of a house. They told, me in Darjeeling, in a light, and airy sort of way, that the road 'ran along the ridge of - the mountains' Several times to-day I found

myself thirsting for my informant's blood. Grampian's excursions are the merest child's play compared to this. I thought we did well at Mount Difficult, but I shall regard that as a kind of before breakfast walk henceforth. You know that good old story about the Scotch thief being caught breaking through a wall, and when asked where he was going to, replied, "Back again." That's my deplorable position.—I've got to gasp and pant my way back to Darjeeling. I believe might get a pony, at two of the stations; but if my feet hold out—I held them out repeatedly today—I'll see it to the bitter end. You will not be able to know the result this mail, as I am sending this letter, by a chance coolie going into Darjeeling in time to catch the mail closing in Calcutta on the 26<sup>th</sup>; but if a skeleton is found on these Himalayan heights later on, don't, I beg of you, I pray of you, let any of the Ballarat poets write a new 'Excelsior.' Spare me, spare me that!"

THE HON. JAMES CAMPBELL IN INDIA.

The following is a continuation of the account previously published by us of Mr Campbell's journey in the region of the Himalayas as given by him in letters to his brother-in-law here.

Writing from Darjeeling, under date 1st November, he says:

"I got back here all safe and sound after my 106 mile walk, and I am delighted now that I saw it through. It was hard, but it was pleasant, and there is always a complacent sense of victory after one has done a hard task. Much more so, if others undertake the same toil and don't get on as well as you do. Two other deluded mortals did the same walk, and came up with me at Phallut where I stayed three days. It took them 12 hours to do that terrible journey between Tonglu and Sandakphu which had taken me seven and a-half. That was balm in Gilead! There's not a 'ped' in Victoria, amateur or professional, but will understand in a moment how that fact soothed my feelings, and relieved my aching corns. When I got back after my tramp I found the aspect of affairs in re the Kinchinjunga glacier entirely changed. It appears that some of the high officials had learnt of the refusal of passes to Mr Apcar and myself, and of the reasons which caused the Deputy Commissioner to refuse them. They laughed his reasons to scorn, and laughed still more at the idea of there being any serious danger. On my return I was informed that there was no real danger, and that if I wished a pass I could get it. I certainly did wish a pass, for, as I told you before, next to Cashmere, I was anxious, if possible, to get to the slopes of Kinchinjunga, and the closer view I got of this stupendous mountain from Sandakphu and Phallut only made me the more anxious. Accordingly I accepted the pass with alacrity, and started on Wednesday. I have considerable doubts, from what I hear, if I can get to the point I wish to attain, namely, Guicha-la<sup>5</sup>. I am told that it is probable the coolies will serve me as they have served two other parties in previous years, namely, refuse to go beyond Jongri, where the steep ascent commences. Jongri is 13,241 feet up, Guicha-la about 17,000 feet, and immensely steep to climb. You are then in the midst of mountains from 22,000 feet to 23,000 feet high, and as the cold is something frightful the coolies refuse to go on, and they are the masters of the situation, for without coolies to carry tent, bedding, and food it is impossible to proceed. However, I'll go as far as I can, and if I can't get beyond Jongri I must just content myself. Even that will be a magnificent spot to go to. A gentleman who is here, and has been as far, tells me the view at Jongri is overwhelming in its sublimity. And over 13,000 feet is high enough for any reasonable ambition"

Again, writing from Joshing on 17th November, he says:

"Here I am, back within three marches of Darjeeling, which I expect to reach on Friday (this is Wednesday) by making a forced march on the last day. I have already made three forced marches— that means, by the way, doing double stages in one day—and if you want to realise what exertion and exhaustion mean, come here and try just one. Never, never, never have I had such an experience in my life. My Phallut trip was the merest child's play, and I feel rather ashamed now of ever having mentioned that. Fifteen miles a day there seemed frightful, especially ending up by climbing 1500 feet; but I have had to do that distance, and end by climbing 4000 feet on this journey. Imagine doing a terrible toil down deep valleys, up the other side, where every step makes you pant, then along mountain paths, where in parts there is room just for one foot, and end up the day by ascending to the height of Mount William, but much steeper and rougher than that ascent was. For eight days I toiled and panted on (excluding

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<sup>4</sup> Ref:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/210840298?searchTerm=%22james%20campbell%22%20india>

<sup>5</sup> Today – Goecha La - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goecha\\_La](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goecha_La)



one Sunday, which was truly a day of rest), till I reached a height of about 8000 feet. During these days I had various climbs from 1200 to 5000 feet. On the ninth day I rose to 13,140 feet, and on the tenth day to about 15,000 feet. During seven days I had perfectly heavenly weather, but on the eighth, when I had reached where the sublime scenery commences—for the scenery though grand up to that point is a mere preparation for the glories to-come—when I had reached this point the clouds came round, and for four mortal hours I climbed up hill in a driving storm of cloud, sleet, and snow. The bitter cold of such a storm you can imagine at a height of over 13,000 feet, and I was compelled to pass the night in a wretched stone rest-house, which the Tibetan shepherds have erected, where the wind came through between the stones like pointed spears. Here, nearly suffocated by the smoke, and with nine coolies and my cook for companions, huddled about, I had the delicious pleasure of passing the night. The following morning the clouds partially broke, giving me one or two magnificent part views, but they quickly closed in, the wind rose, and in another storm of sleet and snow, I drove on to the next stage higher up. You can't imagine what a snowstorm is at 15,000 feet, and I trust you never may. We literally staggered on—hair, clothes, everything covered with ice, and so, shivering in every limb, arrived at our destination, which consisted of simply a huge rock, with some stones piled at foot about three feet high. I had to pass the night in my tent, and I shall never forget that night. The next day it was still snowing, and the head man of the coolies represented we were in danger of being snowed in. I didn't believe him, but I felt, as I was ignorant of the country, I could not take the responsibility of running any risks where 11 men beside myself were concerned. I ordered a retreat, and in the face of a bitter wind, with sleet and snow, we beat back to Jongri. The following morning the clouds broke for a little while, but again the sleet and snow came on, and as I was told this might continue for a week or more, I consented to return, and with bitter regrets left Jongri. The great object of my visit was lost, and I had had all my toil and-trouble for nothing—hardly nothing, as the partial views I had were unspeakably grand—but nothing as compared with what I might have had. I made a forced march to Eebbe, and to cut a long story short, arrived here to-day, the last two days having been simply heavenly weather again. In a word, I had the misfortune to run into bad weather exactly at the time I was among the grandest scenery. I deeply regret now I did not stay, but you can understand the situation from what I have told you, and I may just add that it would take very splendid scenery indeed to repay staying 15,000 feet high in a tent for five days extra with the delectable company of shivering, yet noisy and strong-smelling coolies.”

From Badamtam, on 20th November, he continues:

“Back again within six miles of Darjeeling; safely in British territory; comfortably housed with a hospitable tea planter, and above all deeply thankful to God for his continued mercies. I made two more forced marches so as to send off a letter early this morning telling of my safe arrival. I did five miles riding yesterday and about 15 miles walking to the Rungeet River, having made a descent of 6000 feet. Then, at 5 o'clock, I walked about 4 miles more without a single stoppage, ascending about 1600 feet in that walk. I was thus continually on the move from 8 a.m. to about 6.30 p.m., less an hour occupied in crossing the Rungeet and visiting the Namste Monastery.”