

Translating Tibet in the Borderlands: Networks, Dictionaries, and Knowledge Production in Himalayan Hill Stations

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Borderland texts

No country in the world has exercised a more potent influence on the imagination of men or presented such fascinating problems for solution to the explorer as Tibet; and this influence has been active amongst all the generations which have exploited the byways of the earth from the days of Herodotus to those of Younghusband.

– Thomas Holdich¹

Introducing his account on Tibet and exploration, Thomas Holdich (1843–1929), a British India government geographer decorated for his map and boundary making, pinpointed a problem that has troubled those wanting to know something of Tibet since the first accounts of giant gold-digging ants appeared in the pages of Herodotus’ *The Histories*.² Concrete facts had always been hard to come by. This was still the case during the decades that spanned the turn of the twentieth century. Even claims that the veil over this once mysterious place had been lifted, made by members of the Francis Younghusband-led Mission to Lhasa in 1903–1904, were short-lived.³ Once British Indian troops and their loot left Lhasa in September 1904, access to central Tibet’s capital yet again became a thing of dreams. Therefore, all kinds of information relating to Tibet, its culture, political

1 Thomas Holdich, *The Story of Exploration: Tibet, the Mysterious* (London: Alston Rivers Ltd, 1906).

2 Herodotus, *The Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 212–213.

3 The British Mission to Tibet was sanctioned by then Viceroy Curzon and led by Colonel (later Sir) Francis Younghusband. Its initial aim was to sign a trade agreement with Tibet. However, the mission turned into a punitive expedition and many Tibetans were killed and monasteries and homes were looted. A unilateral agreement was signed in the Potala in Lhasa in September 1904 by a proxy head of state, as the Dalai Lama had fled to Mongolia.

systems, and language, needed to be made somewhere else. In many cases, those seeking such things came to Darjeeling and Kalimpong, the British hill stations of north-eastern India.

Despite the diminutive size of Darjeeling and Kalimpong, these borderland towns have recently been reconsidered using Mary Louise Pratt's definition of a "contact zone."⁴ Pratt highlights the phenomenon of transculturation in such places, using contact zones to explode the myth of the lone traveller and, more widely, colonial travel writing, something she calls "imperial meaning-making."⁵ Taking this concept into the Himalayas, I will show that colonial officers did not have control over knowledge production, especially in relation to Tibet. Instead, using the texts produced in the hill stations, and their acknowledgements, silences, and contested claims of authorship, I will show that despite citing the colonial officer's name as author, no such monopoly over scholarly understanding existed. As Pratt also notes, "People on the receiving end of European imperialism did their own knowing and interpretation...using European tools."⁶ Transculturation, here understood as a process of selecting, contesting, and inventing from materials transmitted by colonialism, provides a useful framework for working out how those tools could be used to one's own advantage, whilst also being used to suppress.

Yet Darjeeling and Kalimpong and their borderland position in the British Empire present the opportunity to think not just about transculturation, but also transculturality, a subtle but crucial difference. Mobility plays an important role in Himalayan hill stations and such connectivity occupies an important place for Bennesaieh when she defines the separation between transculturation and transculturality. The difference for her comes from "the sense of movement and the complex mixedness of cultures in close contact," and "the *embodied situation of cultural plurality* lived by many individuals and communities of mixed heritage and/or experience..." these dynamic qualities produce a subtle shift in the colonial makeup of specific locations, especially those on the edges.⁷ This definition speaks very pointedly to Darjeeling and Kalimpong, places that were home not only to diverse local populations, but also to continually shifting groups of people. From the plains came British

4 See <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/d-historicities-heritage/d19-kalimpong.html> [Accessed on 2. July 2016].

5 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 7.

6 *Ibid.*, 7.

7 Afef Bennesaieh, ed., *Amériques Transculturelles / Transcultural Americas* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010), 16.

colonial officers, Scottish tea planters, missionaries, and both European and Bengali tourists. These groups were then knitted to those who came from beyond India's British-controlled borderlands; Nepali settlers, Bhutanese commercial agents, Tibetan, Kashmiri, and Ladakhi traders and pilgrims, Tibetan Buddhist scholars, and not forgetting a host of spies and intelligence gatherers from Russia and China. As transcultural alliances were so obvious here, I want to propose that Darjeeling and Kalimpong also had features of a particular kind of cosmopolitanism.

A useful way of assessing the Himalayan hill station as a potential cosmopolitan centre is to compare its characteristics to a better studied and generally recognised site of cosmopolitanism, the Early Modern Mediterranean port city. The checklist offered by Henk Driessen for port city cosmopolitanism includes "[T]he substantial presence of ethnic trading minorities; a general enterprising atmosphere; linguistic and religious plurality; openness and tolerance; considerable economic growth; common interests across ethnic boundaries; a basic education system modelled after the [...] English systems; and vast commercial, social, and cultural networks."⁸ I believe that Darjeeling and Kalimpong were the borderland equivalent of the Early Modern Mediterranean port because of, rather than despite, their colonial foundations. For those who travelled to these hill stations, to learn, trade, and explore, they became land-locked entrepôts, which also acted as proxies for Tibet.

Although trade fostered a sense of cosmopolitanism in the port cities discussed by Driessen, it is late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial anxieties and the products of these uncertainties that dictated both the types of cultural and intellectual exchange that took place there and the agents that facilitated it. The Mission to Lhasa represented the culmination of British anxieties in Tibet's borderlands.⁹ Yet, these anxieties emerged already in 1835 as the British extended their colonial reach and interest in Tibet, beginning with the annexation of Darjeeling from the *Chögyal* (Tibetan *chos rgyal*), or king of Sikkim. This upward movement into the hills pushed back existing frontiers and entangled the British in very different encounters from those they were familiar with on the Indian plains. Not only were the politics and power-bases different, ensuring that the British became embroiled in regional struggles with Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim, and Tibet over fluid and often contested

8 Henk Driessen, "Mediterranean Divides and Connections: The Role of Dragomans as Cultural Brokers," in *Agents of Transculturation*, ed. Sebastian Jobs and Gesa Mackenthun (Münster: Waxmann, 2013), 30.

9 Viceroy Curzon believed that Russian guns were stockpiled in Tibet and he was disturbed by accounts of Tibetan delegations to Russia. The Mission to Lhasa was conceived based on this intelligence. Sam Van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 171.

boundaries, but so too was the language. The British now had to make sense of new intelligence and new sources and this need to know was heightened by British concerns about influences were at play beyond the Himalayas. Looking out from the newly created hill stations of British India, the British could only speculate on the persuasive powers of other empires that had influence in Tibet, namely China, but increasingly also Russia. With Tibet soon to be identified as a British India “buffer zone,” collating sources on this place and finding cultural brokers who could decipher them suddenly became paramount.

As Mantena lays out in her work on Indian historiography, the production of colonial dictionaries and grammars in local languages, aimed specifically at colonial officers rather than native speakers, was often the first sign that a potential colonizer intended to know or control knowledge over a place or people.¹⁰ Furthermore, travelogues, especially those written as a part of diplomatic or missionary practices, acted as proto-ethnographies providing information on local practices that new recruits could expect to encounter. As Mantena shows in her treatment of the first Surveyor General of India, Colin Mackenzie (1754–1821), and as Pratt asserts in *Imperial Eyes*, travelling to familiarize oneself with places was a powerful practice. It brought distinction and occasionally fame to those who surveyed previously unmapped lands. But in many cases, access to specific sites of cultural and political interest was restricted. For a localised context, Mantena shows that the British did not have the knowledge necessary to gain access to villages in South India; they needed cultural brokers, or as she calls them, local intellectuals, to do that. She also shows the colonial context of these obstacles when she says, “It would have been virtually impossible to gain entry into localities without inducing fear and, potentially, anger at the blatant intrusion into their inner cultural worlds.”¹¹

In the Tibetan context the barriers were not just at the village level; they prevented access to a large part of a country that was perched right on the colonial doorstep. Tibet enforced tight boundary controls and, as the return of an unopened letter from the Viceroy of India to Tibet’s Dalai Lama in 1899 illustrates, Tibet had no interest in building links with the British prior to 1903–1904. The idea that Darjeeling and Kalimpong acted as proxies for Tibet is very real here, as these closed borders created intellectual bottlenecks in the hill stations. Although those from Himalayan worlds could travel freely into British India, those arriving from the plains did

10 Rama Sundari Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 151–177.

11 *Ibid.*, 54.

not have such freedom to travel into Tibet. Yet these physical barriers did not prevent the writing of histories, ethnographic studies, travelogues, and dictionaries on the subject of Tibet. It simply meant that the British collected information in different ways. Unlike the dragoman of the Mediterranean, who may be understood as a locally fixed resource for traders who relied on them in port cities (although of course many dragomans travelled), the local intellectuals of the Himalaya were highly mobile. They brought the sources and the cultural *savoir-faire* to the borderlands, sometimes covertly. The only alternative for the British was to collect information in the Tibetan spaces that were part of the hill station's cosmopolitan make-up—a practice that was employed on a regular basis.

By the 1880s, scholars working on Tibetan subjects from Sikkim, the Bengal plains, Mongolia, Norway, Germany, Moravia, and Tibet were living and working in Darjeeling and Kalimpong alongside scholar-administrators from British India. Their presence was noticed by a somewhat motley group of spiritual seekers, explorers, spies, museum curators, and future Tibetologists from the Ukraine, Japan, Russia, Scotland, Germany, the United States, France, and England. These individuals sought out the hill stations and their resident scholars in the hope of learning the Tibetan language, of collecting texts and objects for their museums and libraries, or for the purpose of gaining secret or privileged knowledge about political, religious, or geographical matters. The period from the 1880s to the 1920s was a fertile time for knowledge production in the eastern Himalayas. It saw many breakthrough publications about Tibet and its language, many of which are still referenced to this day. This makes the decades preceding and following the Mission to Lhasa a productive site for thinking about networks of knowledge production in the hill stations of the eastern Himalayas.

None of this was unique to Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Similar communities were at work in Tibetan borderland sites separated by vast distances, each with its own specific network and *raison d'être*. In Lahul, on India's north-western border with Tibet, the Moravian Christian missionaries were particularly visible through their publications. Heinrich August Jäschke (1817–1883) compiled *A Romanized Tibetan and English Dictionary* in 1866, followed by a number of grammars and word books as well as his acclaimed *A Tibetan-English Dictionary, With Special Reference to the Prevailing Dialects* in 1881. Along Tibet's eastern border with China, anthropologists and missionaries of German descent from North America established themselves as pioneers of Tibetan scholarship through proto-ethnographies and field-collecting for museums. Again, early missionary networks are most visible in these areas, where the Canadian Dr. Susie Rijnhart wrote up her ill-fated travels

across the borderlands between 1895 and 1899.¹² The anthropologist Berthold Laufer, working in the same area, collected more than four thousand objects in northern Kham (Tibetan *khams*) for the Chicago Field Museum. On his arrival in 1909, he met the American Albert Shelton (1875–1922), Rijnhart’s colleague in the Foreign Christian Missionary Society. Shelton was based in the frontier towns of Tachienlu (also known as Dartsedo, Tibetan *dar rtse mdo*) and Batang (Tibetan *'ba' thang*). On periodic furloughs in the United States he lectured widely to potential missionary recruits on Tibetan subjects. He also wrote journal articles and travelogues, and amassed an unprecedented collection of objects for the Newark Museum in New Jersey, leaving the museum with one of the world’s great Tibet collections.¹³ Diplomatic networks were also present on Tibet’s eastern edges. Notable amongst them was William Woodville Rockhill (1854–1914), America’s first Tibetologist, who learnt Tibetan in Europe, took up a position at the U.S. Legation in Peking in 1883, and from there undertook trips to Tibetan and Mongolian cultural areas.



Fig. 1: Walter Yeeling Evan-Wentz and Kazi Dawa Samdup, taken in Gangtok around 1919. Courtesy of the University of Manchester.

12 Susie Rijnhart, *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple* (Ohio: Foreign Christian Missionary Society, 1901).

13 See Douglas A. Wissing, *Pioneer in Tibet: The Life and Perils of Dr. Albert Shelton* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

It is clear that while Tibet was off-limits, colonial and missionary agencies of various kinds and sizes believed that its borderlands and especially its centres of trade, with many people passing through, were valuable sites for conducting Tibet-related research. The associated individuals might appear isolated from each other, stationed as they were in such remote locations across the Tibetan borderlands, be it in Ladakh, Batang, Darjeeling, or Kalimpong. Their publications, however, show that they collaborated, corrected, edited, and exchanged their work, revealing extended networks of knowledge production on Tibet's borderlands.

Contested forms of colonial knowledge

In times of old it was not considered that the mere knowledge of language sufficed to make a man a "translator" in any serious sense of the word; no one would have undertaken to translate a text who had not studied it for long years at the feet of a traditional and authoritative exponent of its teaching [...].
 – Lama Anagarika Govinda¹⁴

In his introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Lama Anagarika Govinda, a German-born devotee and teacher of Tibetan Buddhism and meditation, uses a passage from *Hinduism and Buddhism* by the Sri Lankan philosopher and historian Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877–1947) to articulate the complexities and pitfalls of doing research and writing on a culture that was not one's own.¹⁵ He voiced his disquiet over the production of Orientalist knowledge, "especially [...] in the realm of Tibetology, which such scholars have approached with an air of their own superiority."¹⁶ The Lama was openly critical of European men trying to produce reputable tomes, as his experiences showed him that they were often ill-equipped to do so. He further believed that these men had written their books using knowledge of others without acknowledging their contribution. Kazi Dawa Samdup (Dousandup, 1868–1923) (figure 1), the Sikkim school headmaster and later university lecturer, was the actual and acknowledged translator of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* that was published under the name Evans-Wentz. If he had lived to see its publication he would have easily recognised the sentiments behind the Lama's criticism. When he reflected upon his own philological project, *An English-Tibetan Dictionary*, which was

14 W. Y. Evan-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1927; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 1xiii.

15 Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), 49.

16 Evan-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 1xiii.

published in 1919, he felt, “The work could only be undertaken by a person whose mother tongue was Tibetan, or a dialect of Tibetan—in short, one who thought in Tibetan.”¹⁷

Driessen thought it unlikely that one would find a dragoman equivalent, “in mountains or inland towns,”¹⁸ but in Darjeeling and Kalimpong they were highly visible. Despite their critical role in the colonial cosmopolitanism of the eastern Himalayas, they have received little scholarly attention beyond a general acknowledgement of their importance. While a wide body of research has been devoted to the contributions of pre-colonial and Early Modern cultural brokers, there has been little interest in those who continued to work with the British at the height of Empire. This article addresses this imbalance, highlighting the continuing reliance of colonial officers on local intellectuals and the multiple ways that their contributions were used and then silenced.

I will study the interaction between those who thought in Tibetan (and, just as importantly, in colonial English) and those Europeans who needed their site-specific expertise. Focusing on certain Darjeeling-based partnerships, I also offer insights into the recurring patterns of knowledge production. Alliances between British officers and European and American scholars on the one side, and families of local intellectuals on the other, were continually renewed from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. They enabled Europeans to produce reliable and trustworthy publications and reports for colonial agencies and the general public, but also to make a name for themselves as Tibetan scholars.¹⁹ Such a charting of scholarly practice is understood by Tibetans as a “genealogy of knowledge”. Returning to Mantena, she has noted that it is often difficult to trace these intellectual relationships back across generations to their origins.²⁰ Yet, while these tracings *are* problematic and scant, they are nevertheless useful as they lead us to question what we think we know about imperial knowledge production and its processes. These scholarly relationships, often portrayed as serendipitous or singular, as a product of a moment in time, were nothing of the sort in this Himalayan context. Instead, certain families were targeted generation after generation by colonial officers and “rewarded”—within heavy colonial constraints—for the research skills they made available. These intellectual relationships, which reflect the “soft”

17 Lama Kazi Dousamdub, *An English-Tibetan Dictionary* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1919), vi.

18 Driessen, “Mediterranean Divides and Connections,” 30.

19 For a discussion on the production of reliable legal knowledge, see Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 95–138.

20 Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography*, 54.

power of colonialism, not only sustained and maintained both Himalayan and colonial power structures, but they also secured personal prestige and future mobility for the individuals involved. These scholarly abilities offered many complex benefits, inasmuch as both colonial officers and local intellectuals had something to gain from working with each other.

Genealogies of knowledge: Dictionaries in Darjeeling and Kalimpong

As for the language, though there have been several gallant attempts to plunge into the labyrinthine obscurities of its construction—notably on the part of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös in 1834 and subsequently of H. A. Jäschke—that also, it must be confessed, remains more or less a mystery; for no one, I take it, is likely to aver that the present state of our knowledge on the subject is at all satisfactory.

– H. B. Hannah²¹

Almost eighty years after the Hungarian Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1784–1842) had completed his Tibetan-English dictionary in Ladakh (he would die of malaria in Darjeeling in 1842 as he waited to travel to Lhasa),²² and three decades after Jäschke had completed his dictionary in 1881, Herbert Bruce Hannah, a Calcutta high court judge, felt that foreigners were still scrambling in the dark when it came to the Tibetan language.²³ He had some authority to speak on the matter as he had just published his own Tibetan grammar. Despite authoring this volume he did not claim that his work was definitive, but instead modestly explained in his grammar’s preface that this was merely a compilation of his classroom notes, scribbled down as his tutor, the “intelligent and scholarly Tibetan,” Kazi Dawa Samdup, taught him the basics of the Tibetan language.²⁴ In the preface to his own work, the

21 Herbert Bruce Hannah, *Grammar of the Tibetan Language, Literary and Colloquial* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1912), iii. The Baptist (or Serampore) Mission Press played a significant role in the publication and global circulation of resources on the Tibetan language. See John Bray, “Missionaries, Officials and the Making of the Dictionary of Bhotanta, or Boutan language,” *Zentralasiatische Studien* 37 (2008): 33–75.

22 Alexander Csoma de Kőrös, *Essay towards a Dictionary, Tibetan and English*, with the assistance of Bandé Sangs-rgyas Phuntshogs (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1834).

23 His exact words were, “wherever he gropes there is something that seems ever to elude him; and amid the weird philological phantoms that flit uncertainly around in the prevailing gloom, his constant cry, I feel very sure, is still one for more light.” Hannah, *Grammar of the Tibetan Language*, iii.

24 Hannah describes Samdup as “my Mūnshi,” a Persian word for interpreter or secretary. Hannah, *Grammar of the Tibetan Language*, x.

mentioned in *An English-Tibetan Dictionary*, Samdup notes that this was a pupil-teacher relationship that had lasted for more than a decade.²⁵

Hannah validated his own small contribution to Tibetan language translations by outlining his own genealogy of knowledge, in order to give his readers an intellectual lineage or scholarly framework for this new publication. He listed those whose work he had studied and from whom he had borrowed; those who had personally taught him; and those who had sponsored him, edited his work, and encouraged him. Hannah clearly considered himself part of a global network of scholars who were attempting to provide access to the Tibetan language. Alongside Csoma de Kőrös and the Moravian Jäschke, Hannah would also cite the Tibetan dictionaries, grammars, and manuals of the Irishman Vincent Henderson (1873–n.d.), who worked for the Chinese Maritime Customs Office and was stationed in Tibet; the Bengali Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Das (1849–1917); and the British Reverend Graham Sandberg (1851–1905), who worked with Das on his monumental dictionary project (see below); and finally, the Norwegian missionary Edvard Amundsen (1873–1928) from the China Inland Mission, who, like Das and Sandberg, was stationed in Darjeeling. His sponsors, who also supported his tutor’s publication seven years later, were the Bengali vice-chancellor of Calcutta University, Sir Ashutosh Mukerjee (1864–1924) and the English Orientalist and linguist Sir Edward Denison Ross (1871–1940), who had not only established the first Tibetan language department in India at Calcutta University, but was to become the first director of the School of Oriental Studies (later renamed the SOAS) in London in 1916.²⁶

For Hannah, this genealogy not only embedded him in an emerging community of Tibetan Studies scholars, but by citing the names of two of Darjeeling’s preeminent academics, Kazi Dawa Samdup and the Scottish-Sikkimese David Macdonald (1870–1962), he was also authenticating the intellectual worth of his publication for this growing network. Previously, Csoma de Kőrös had acknowledged the work of Sangye Phuntsog, a lama from Zangla monastery in Ladakh, whose contribution had been critical for the completion of his 1834 dictionary, while Jäschke had entrusted the editing of his Tibetan translation of the New Testament to none other than Macdonald, whom Hannah described as “probably the first Tibetan scholar in India.”²⁷ In Hannah’s case the names

25 Dousamdup, *An English-Tibetan Dictionary*, vii.

26 Denison Ross also catalogued the collection of the Hungarian explorer M. Aurel Stein at the British Museum. See Imre Galambos, “Touched a Nation’s Heart: Sir E. Denison Ross and Alexander Csoma de Kőrös,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 21, no. 3 (2011): 361–375.

27 Hannah, *Grammar of the Tibetan Language*, x.

of the two men he acknowledged would have been recognisable to many of his readers, as both not only had distinctive careers, but would be instrumental for the intellectual progress of several early Tibetologists.

It was no coincidence that Macdonald, Samdup, and Hannah were active in Darjeeling at this time. There had certainly been more than a few gallant attempts to dispel the fairy tales circulating about the Tibetan language since the middle of the nineteenth century by an emerging and closely connected group of scholars. Looking closely at who was doing the dispelling, it is possible to trace these genealogies back into the nineteenth century and see them continued by a further generation of Darjeeling scholars in the twentieth century. While certainly incomplete, this genealogy still provides important insights into the significant part certain local families played in the imperial project.

The 1879 *A Manual of Tibetan* by Thomas Herbert Lewin (1839–1916) is a useful place to start this mapping process as its title page gives us the name of the man at the root of this Darjeeling-based intellectual family tree.²⁸ When Lewin arrived in Darjeeling as Deputy Commissioner in October 1877, he had served as a British Indian Army officer for more than a decade in several Hill Tracts of north-eastern India. He compiled this manual using the same procedure as that used for his *Progressive colloquial exercises in the Lushai dialect of the “Dzo” or Kuki language*, which he had compiled for the Lushai Hills in 1874. It consists of a series of increasingly complex dialogues to develop the skills necessary to speak colloquial Tibetan. While the Lushai Hills manual did not mention the people who helped in the compilation, *A Manual of Tibetan* claimed the authority and help of “Yapa Uygen Gyatso, a learned lama of the monastery of Pemiongchi.” Lama Uygen Gyatso (1851–c.1915) was a well-known and respected monk in Darjeeling, who had come from Pemayangtse (Tibetan *Padma g.yang tse*) Monastery in Sikkim. His family owned estates in southern Sikkim and had served the Sikkim *Chögyals* for several generations.²⁹ He had just completed twelve years of study at Pemayangtse when in 1873 he travelled with the eighth *Chögyal*, Sidkeong Namgyal (1819–1874), to Darjeeling. In discussions with British officers the *Chögyal* personally recommended Uygen Gyatso for the post of Tibetan language teacher at a new British India enterprise, the Bhutia Boarding School that was to open in Darjeeling in the following year (figure 2).

28 Thomas Herbert Lewin, *A Manual of Tibetan, being a Guide to the colloquial Speech of Tibet, in a Series of Progressive Exercises, Prepared with the Assistance of Yapa Uygen Gyastho, a Learned Lama of the Monastery of Pemiongchi* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1879).

29 Nicholas Rhodes and Deki Rhodes, *A Man of the Frontier: S. W. Laden La* (Kolkata: Mira Bose, 2006), 8. For further details on the wealth and status he would accrue later in life, see Peter Richardus, ed., *Tibetan Lives: Three Himalayan Autobiographies* (Richmond: Curzon, 1998), 25–26.



Fig. 2: Staff and students of the Bhutia Boarding School, Darjeeling, 1888. Private collection. Sarat Chandra Das is standing, third from the left, and Ugyen Gyatso is seated in the back row, fifth from the right.

The school's proclaimed aim was to provide an education in both Tibetan and English, as well as in religion and subjects such as mathematics, preparing the boys for work in British India's government institutions. Tacitly, it was also considered a finishing school for potential *pundits*, the covert surveyors of Tibet. The *pundits*, a small elite group of Indian and Himalayan men (chosen because they could pass as Tibetans), were trained by officers from the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India to map territories beyond the Indian borders. Using their paces to measure distance, and modified Tibetan religious objects as surveying equipment, they mapped previously uncharted lands and collected texts and objects that could help decipher the cultural and political features of the area.³⁰ Ugyen Gyatso and the school's young Bengali headmaster Sarat Chandra Das would lead by example, cooperating as *pundits*.

Ugyen Gyatso's own monastic mission as Pemayangtse envoy to Tashi Lhunpo monastery in southern Tibet in 1878 paved the way for Das's covert travels to Tibet, first in 1879 and again in 1881–1882. Ugyen Gyatso accompanied Das on both these expeditions acting as "secretary, collector, and surveyor."³¹

30 For the recruitment, training, and expeditions undertaken by these men see, Derek J. Waller, *The Pundits: British Exploration of Tibet and Central Asia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

31 See Sarat Chandra Das, *Journal to Lhasa and Central Tibet* (London: John Murray, 1902), vii. See also page xi for Das's short biographical account of Ugyen Gyatso.

His survey work in Tibet would be confirmed by the topographical drawings made by the British officer Laurence Austine Waddell (1854–1938) in 1904 (see below), and when the Swedish explorer and collector Sven Hedin (1865–1952) perused the survey, he concluded that Ugyen Gyatso was “exceptionally intelligent and a conscientious topographer.”³² The more than two hundred manuscripts Ugyen Gyatso collected for Das would form the basis for Das’s highly confidential government reports;³³ for his descriptive account of his second mission, *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet* (1902)—which would coincidentally fall victim to the American Diplomat and Tibetologist William Woodville Rockhill’s heavy-handed editing;³⁴ and, of particular interest here, his much referenced 1902 *A Tibetan-English Dictionary with Sanskrit Synonyms*.

Das hoped that his dictionary would “assist European scholars in the thorough exploration of the vast literature of Tibet,”³⁵ perhaps a reference to the events that had secured funding for his publication. To gain support for the expected substantial costs of developing this dictionary, Das asked Sir Alfred Croft (1841–1925), the Director of Public Instruction in British India at the time, for support. He approached Croft, a long-time supporter of Das as well as a member of the team that edited and prepared the *pundit* reports for the government, at the perfect moment. Shortly before, the German philologist and Orientalist Max Müller (1823–1900) had written to Croft in Calcutta from his new base in Scotland that there was a need for an English translation of a Sanskrit-Tibetan work on Buddhist terminology.³⁶ As a result, Das’s tri-lingual translation project was approved. Thirteen years later, as Das sat down to write his preface in his Darjeeling home, “Lhasa Villas,” he quoted at length from the 1834 preface to Csoma de Kőrös dictionary to establish his own scholarly lineage for his growing audience. Das’s acknowledgements of

32 Sven Hedin, *Scientific Results of a Journey in Central Asia, 1899–1902* (Stockholm: Lithographic Institute of the General Staff of the Swedish Army, 1907), 4:526.

33 The wider significance of what was happening in Darjeeling is clear from the circulation of the supposedly confidential reports produced by Das. Waller notes that they “were actually to be purchased in the open market in St. Petersburg soon after it was [they were] printed.” See Waller, *The Pundits*, 293n40.

34 Das had met Rockhill in 1885 in Peking, when he accompanied the British diplomat Colman Macaulay to China. Macaulay’s visit failed to secure permission from the Qing Empire for a political and scientific mission to Tibet. Sarat Chandra Das, *Autobiography: Narrative of the Incidents of My Early Life* (Calcutta: Past & Present, 1969), v.

35 Sarat Chandra Das, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary with Sanskrit Synonyms* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1902), i. Scholarship was often described in terms of exploration by the authors of these early works.

36 Das, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, iii.

his own intellectual debts, however, are more important as they both reveal and withhold the details of the entangled colonial networks responsible for the dictionary's production.

The group of men Das credited in his preface reflect the range of European agencies working on dictionaries in Darjeeling. It also becomes clear that several contributors had moved to Darjeeling, creating a critical mass of colonial scholarly knowledge. The aforementioned clergyman and scholar Sandberg was a chaplain in Calcutta, but he also worked on Tibetan translations for the British India Government. It was he who wrote the translation of the then Viceroy Curzon's ill-fated letter to the thirteenth Dalai Lama in 1900, which was returned unopened.³⁷ The Moravian scholar-missionary Reverend Augustine William (Wilhelm) Heyde (1825–1907) moved to Darjeeling in 1898 specifically to work on Das's dictionary after having spent fifty years at the mission in Kyelang, Lahul.³⁸ Working alongside both these men was Sanskrit specialist Professor Satish Chandra Acharya from a college in Krishnagar, West Bengal. He had met Das while translating Pali texts for the Buddhist Text Society.³⁹ There were also several other scholars whom Das chose not to acknowledge, but who worked with him throughout or for extended periods. These included the already-noted Ugyen Gyatso and the Darjeeling-based Mongolian scholar Lama Sherab Gyatso (c. 1820–after 1902).⁴⁰

We can see the web of connections that led back to Ugyen Gyatso and the effect of his expertise on his colonial contemporaries, but what impact did he have on future generations of local scholarship? A third unacknowledged contributor to Das's dictionary was a young Bhutia scholar, Sonam Wangfel

37 See, F. W. Thomas, "Sandberg, Samuel Louis Graham (1851–1905)," rev. Schuyler Jones, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35932> [Accessed on 2. November 2013].

38 Bray, "A History of the Moravian Church in India," in *The Himalayan Mission: Moravian Church Centenary, Leh, Ladakh, India, 1885–1985*, ed. Moravian Church (Leh: Moravian Church, 1985), 27–75 and J. E. Hutton, *A History of Moravian Missions* (London: Moravian Publication Office, 1922), 861. The revisors' preface written by Sandberg and Heyde and included at the beginning of the dictionary, suggests that the project suffered from immense difficulties and that Sandberg's and Heyde's revisions were considerable. Das, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, xi–xvi.

39 Many thanks to Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa for pointing out Acharya's colonial connections. Having learnt the Tibetan language in Darjeeling, he became a translator for the British, most notably during the ninth Panchen Lama's visit to Calcutta in 1905. See Satish Chandra Vidyabhusana, *A History of Indian Logic* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1921), xviii.

40 Lopez Jr., citing Tibetologist Dan Martin, points out that "It was Sherab Gyatso who was the true author of Sarat Chandra Das's Tibetan-English Dictionary, a fact only acknowledged on the Tibetan title page of this work." See Donald S. Lopez Jr., *"The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Biography"* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), 159n4.

Laden La (1876–1936), who had his first posting for the British India government in Darjeeling as an Apprentice Compositor in the Government Press. This was an enterprise set up solely to support Das’s dictionary project, and Laden La worked under the supervision of Sherab Gyatso. Laden La had been groomed for empire from his school days. Trained as an imperial cultural and diplomatic broker, he had the ability to bridge the gaps between local and colonial ways of knowing. He was also Ugyen Gyatso’s nephew. Laden La was chosen to carry on the relationship already established between his pro-British family and the colonial officers stationed there.⁴¹ He held several posts in the Imperial Police Service, for which he became well known to future researchers of Anglo-Tibetan relations.⁴² But he was also a gifted translator who, like David Macdonald, would become an Examiner in the Tibetan language for the British India government. As a Bhutia Boarding School pupil, Macdonald had also studied under Ugyen Gyatso. Thus his influence continued as Laden La and Macdonald began editing dictionaries with a new generation of colonial officers.

Filed in amongst a collection of Laden La’s private papers is a “tentative edition” of a twenty-four page booklet authored by Sikkim’s then Assistant Political Officer, (later Sir) Charles Bell (1870–1945), entitled *Tibetan Glossary and Rules for Transliteration from Tibetan into Roman Characters*. Published in 1904, this was Bell’s first attempt at making the Tibetan language comprehensible for himself and his future fellow officers. Its publication would also signal Bell’s intention to make a name for himself as someone knowledgeable in Tibetan-related affairs. Bell had arrived in Darjeeling in 1900 and, as he recalled much later, “I saw much, yet understood but little (at first).”⁴³ This rather unassuming start would lead to an illustrious diplomatic career in the borderlands, coupled with a reputation for Tibetan scholarship. Bell’s direct superior and mentor, Ernest Herbert Cooper Walsh (1865–1952), the new Deputy Commissioner for Darjeeling, was quick to introduce his assistant to the scholarly landscape of Darjeeling. By late 1904 both men were stationed in Yatung, Chumbi valley, in the new British Trade Agency that had been created by the British following the pressurised treaty negotiations

41 A second uncle of Laden La’s was also a *pundit*. Rinzin Namgyal (RN) made covert explorations in Sikkim and Tibet, leading the 1884–1885 survey team that completed the first tour around of Kangchenjunga in Sikkim. See Indra Singh Rawat, *Indian Explorers of the Nineteenth Century* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information, 1973), xviii.

42 See, Alex McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997), 111; Nicholas Rhodes and Deki Rhodes, “Sonam Wangfel Laden La—Tibet 1924 and 1930,” *The Tibet Journal* 28, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 77–90.

43 “Type copy of book VI,” Eur Mss F80/218, Ch. 1, 2, India Office Records (hereafter IOR), British Library.

conducted by Younghusband in Lhasa. Walsh had just returned from Lhasa with his designated translator and assistant, Laden La, and was passing the time by working on *A Vocabulary of the Tromowa Dialect of Tibetan spoken in the Chumbi Valley*, which was published in 1905. Before Walsh submitted his manuscript, the vocabulary was edited by Macdonald, while Laden La compiled the Sikkimese words that featured in a separate glossary.

As dictionary writing was clearly in the air, Bell shared a copy of his “tentative edition” with Laden La, who in turn “scribbled notes which Bell used in subsequent editions.”⁴⁴ Although this small effort did not make it to full publication, Bell’s enlarged and corrected version developed into a more ambitious project, the 1905 *Manual of Colloquial Tibetan*, for which Hannah reserved his most effusive praise in his 1912 preface. This, like Walsh’s vocabulary, not only took into account Laden La’s comments, but was shaped to a great extent by Macdonald.⁴⁵ A now familiar practice shows Bell establishing his credentials by referring in his acknowledgements to the community of scholars with whom he had studied and worked. Macdonald featured prominently. “[M]y thanks are due to Mr. David Macdonald, who has revised this book throughout, and to whose unrivalled knowledge of both colloquial and literary Tibetan are largely due whatever merits the work may possess.”⁴⁶ The intellectual fingerprints of Ugyen Gyatso are clear to see.

As already noted, this sudden rise in the production of dictionaries in Darjeeling was part of a wider information gathering project that occupied the British India government at the turn of the twentieth century. As British India pushed its frontiers further outwards, the large number of government-sponsored publications rolling off the printing presses made its very particular interest in Tibet visible. The political basis for this need to understand the Tibetan language is further illustrated by the last dictionary briefly under discussion.

Tashi Wangdi’s 1909 *Tibetan-English-Hindi Guide* was sponsored by the Bengal government and was conceived during a crucial moment in the diplomatic contact between China, Tibet, and British India.⁴⁷ The 1908 conference held in Calcutta brought the three parties together in order to rework the unilateral treaty signed in 1904 in the Potala by Younghusband and the Tibetan representative, the *Ganden Tripa* (Tibetan *Dga’ldankhripa*). Tashi Wangdi was appointed as translator for the

44 Rhodes and Rhodes, *A Man of the Frontier*, 17.

45 David Macdonald, *Twenty Years in Tibet* (1932; repr., Varanasi: Pilgrim Publishing, 2005), 40.

46 Charles Alfred Bell, *Manual of Colloquial Tibetan* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1905).

47 I am grateful to Mr Tashi Tsering, Director of Amnye Machen Institute, Dharamshala, who shared his rare copy of this dictionary with me.

conference, but the difficulties in defining specific words and their significance led the Chinese representative, Chang Yin-tang, the High Commissioner of the Imperial Chinese Mission to India, and his Tibetan counterpart, Tsarong Shapé (born Wangchuk Gyalpo, d.1911 in Lhasa), one of the Chief Ministers of Tibet, to co-commission this *Guide* to facilitate future diplomatic encounters. While Wangdi continued the practice of acknowledging his influences by naming Bell as part of its genealogy, he had his own intermediary on whom he relied for editing and proofing. This was a Tibetan from Lhasa, Gungthang Shapé (born, Tenzin Wangpo, d.1911 in Darjeeling), who was later described as “a sort of confidential agent of the Dalai Lama” and who by 1908 already had more than a decade’s worth of experience in Anglo-Tibetan borderland talks (figure 3).⁴⁸

In his dictionary’s preface, Wangdi makes another requirement for scholarly authority visible. It was not enough to produce Tibetan-related research in the borderlands. It was even more highly regarded if it could be authenticated by somebody from Lhasa.



Fig. 3: *Johnston and Hoffman*, Tibetan Delegation at Hastings House, Calcutta, 16 March 1910. Photograph, 350 x 495mm. Liverpool, National Museums, Charles Alfred Bell Collection, 50.31.133. Laden La (far left, standing), Tashi Wangdi (second from left, standing), Charles Bell (third from left, seated next to the Dalai Lama), Gungthang Shapé (seated, far right).

48 For a brief biographical account, see Luciano Petech, *Aristocracy and Government of Tibet* (Rome: Istituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, 1973), 224. Gungthang’s work on the thirteenth Dalai Lama was a mandatory text for the high proficiency exam in Tibetan taken by colonial officers. Sarat Chandra Das, *An Introduction to the Grammar of the Tibetan Language* (1915; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972), ii.

Lhasa vs. local: The authenticity of knowledge

The previous attempts at the systematic exploration of the subject of Lamaism had been made by writers who had not themselves been in personal contact with Tibet and Tibetan Lamas. They were mere compilers at second hand of miscellaneous notes and tales of travellers, who themselves had visited mostly mere outlying provinces of "The Closed Land."

– Laurence Austine Waddell⁴⁹

One might be forgiven for thinking that the author of *The Buddhism of Tibet; or, Lamaism*, Laurence Austine Waddell, the “Sanitary Commissioner” for Darjeeling and later “Antiquarian to the Force” during the Mission to Lhasa, had spent an extended and rare period of research in Tibet in the latter stages of the nineteenth century. Although Waddell tells us he made three attempts to “evade the Tibetan frontier guards and penetrate some distance into ‘The Closed Land’ itself,”⁵⁰ he nevertheless ended up finding his research site much closer to home. Despite his bombastic claims, his personal collecting sites were not in Tibet, but in the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries of Darjeeling and Sikkim. These places were clearly not closed lands; their contents could be surveyed and collected at a more considered pace because these, as Waddell himself tells us, “were freely accessible to European sight-seers.”⁵¹

Waddell, like many of his colonial contemporaries, also wrote a dictionary soon after his arrival in Darjeeling,⁵² but my interest here is not in his philological studies, but in how he chose to authenticate his scholarly work. Like Das, Waddell was at the front line of collecting and recording in Darjeeling, acting as “the man on the spot” for some of Britain’s leading anthropologists. As a member of the Royal Anthropological Institute in London, his networks connected him to men prominent during the “museum period” in the burgeoning professionalization of anthropology in the late nineteenth century.⁵³ As a result, his research formed a significant portion of *The Gazetteer of Sikkim* (1894), a volume edited by Herbert Hope Risley,

49 L. Austine Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet; or, Lamaism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd, 1939), viii.

50 Ibid., xii.

51 Ibid., x.

52 Ibid., xii

53 See Clare E. Harris, *Museum on the Roof of the World*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 38–47 for discussions on Waddell and museological networks in the late nineteenth century.

British India's leading anthropologist. This, was soon followed by Waddell's own influential work, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism* (1895), for which he made extensive use of the manuscripts and religious objects in his collection.⁵⁴ Having established his own position as an authority on "Lamaism," he briefly took up a professorship of Tibetan at University College London (1906–1908) upon his return to England a decade later.

Waddell felt that the speculations about Buddhism by philosophers such as Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) warranted the publication of a book like *The Buddhism of Tibet*. There was little competition. In fact, Waddell could only think of works on the subject by Karl Friedrich Köppen (1808–1863) and the explorer Emil Schlagintweit (1835–1904), that were long out of print. Proclaiming that his own publication now filled a gaping void in the world's knowledge on Tibetan Buddhism, he was particularly patronising towards Schlagintweit, writing that his work, "however admirable with respect to the time of its appearance, was admittedly fragmentary, as its author had never been in contact with Tibetans."⁵⁵

How did Waddell convince his own readership that his new publication on Tibet was a significant advance, that it was not based on peripheral knowledge, but that it offered informed research rather than speculation? How did he do this when, despite his unauthorised attempts, he had not managed to stay in Tibet for any considerable amount of time? Waddell chose to anchor the authenticity of his information to central Tibet. In carefully explaining his research methodologies he stressed that those who sourced and translated texts for him came directly from Lhasa and Tashi Lhunpo monastery in Shigatse and not from the Himalayan hill stations to which he was restricted.

[By] engaging a small staff of Lamas in the work of copying manuscripts, and searching for texts bearing upon my researches. Enjoying in these ways special facilities for penetrating the reserve of Tibetan ritual, and obtaining direct from Lhasa and Tashi-lhunpo most of the objects and explanatory material needed, I have elicited much information on Lamaist theory and practice which is altogether new.⁵⁶

54 Waddell would also cite Das's still supposedly confidential reports as a source for his own work.

55 Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet*, vii. It seems that Schlagintweit's brothers did have Tibetan connections. See Moritz von Brescius, "Empires of Opportunities: The Role of German Travelling Scholars in Europe's Overseas Empires, ca. 1830–1880," (PhD thesis, European University Institute/Cambridge University, 2015).

56 Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism: With Its Mystic Cults, Symbolism and Mythology, and in Its Relation to Indian Buddhism* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1895), xi.

In short, if he could not go to Lhasa, then Lhasa would come to him. Rather than travelling to build knowledge and cultural understanding on a subject Waddell instead relied upon the mobility of the material, textual and oral sources to do the travelling for him. The men who travelled specifically for Waddell and those who arrived to Darjeeling and became sources for Waddell illustrate the entangled reasons for their presence in Darjeeling. Waddell noted in his book's preface that he was greatly assisted by "the learned Tibetan Lama, Padma Chhō Phél; by that venerable scholar the Mongolian Lama She-rab Gya-ts'ö; by the Ñin-ma Lama, Ur-gyān Gya-ts'ö, head of the Yang-gang monastery of Sikkim and a noted explorer of Tibet; by Tun-yig Wang-dan and Mr. Dor-je Ts'e-ring; by S'ad-sgra S'ab-pe, one of the Tibetan governors of Lhasa."⁵⁷ Besides the now familiar names of Ugyen Gyatso and Sherab Gyatso, the lamas resident in Darjeeling and working for the British government, there is a Chief Minister of Tibet and his secretary sent to Darjeeling for treaty negotiations with the British and a further "Tibetan lama" who Waddell forgets to note is also a teacher at the Bhutia Boarding School in Darjeeling.⁵⁸ While Waddell's authentic sources may well have come from Lhasa and Shigatse, the list of names demonstrates that it was still the responsibility of those stationed in Darjeeling to make them accessible.

Waddell shows how critical it was to give knowledge credence by suggesting that it came from Lhasa, especially for those wanting to establish their credentials as burgeoning scholars of Tibet. The scholarship of decades past had, to Waddell's mind, been characterised by recycled and repackaged fragmentary facts on Tibet garnered from a range of sources. Like those in the process of producing dictionaries, Waddell realised that to make one's reputation there must instead be a claim to new information from an untapped and inaccessible place, in this case a fabled "closed land" like Tibet, and more specifically, Lhasa. The snag here was that the number of people who had made it to Lhasa could be counted on one hand. If one could not reach Lhasa oneself, connections to knowledgeable people who had were vital if the author wanted to have any hope of validating his claims to be a Tibetan expert.

Waddell typified the thinking of those stationed in the eastern Himalayas. There were vast tracts of Tibet still unknown to Europeans based in India,

57 *Ibid.*, xii.

58 This interesting example of a cultural broker (Achuk Tsering, see next section) dismissing the work of a rival also identifies Waddell's Tibetan lama. "R[ai] B[ahadur] Achuk Tshering [sic] tells me that Col. Waddell's lama (who worked with him for a long time + told Achuk Tshering [sic] that he, Col. Waddell was compiling a book), was not very learned. His name was Lama Pema Chöphel + he was Tibetan teacher at the Bhutia Boarding School at Darjeeling. He did not know much Tibetan literature." Charles Alfred Bell, *Diary Volume VI*, February 23, 1918, private collection.

but the focus was firmly on Lhasa, a place that Charles Bell, when he finally arrived there in 1920, would describe as “the heart of it all.”⁵⁹ After Bell’s move to Kalimpong in 1901 to take up the post of Settlement Officer,⁶⁰ he made it clear that colonial officers were well aware of the value of knowledge from and about Lhasa. Opinions and practices from the borderlands may be valuable for the colonial officers stationed there, but they also considered them a product of a transcultural colonial encounter that lacked authenticity, and was somehow less Tibetan.

Rai Bahadur Achuk Tsering (1877–1920) and Dewan Bahadur Phalha se Sonam Wangyal, or Palhese for short (c.1870–c.1936) (figure 4), came from two contrasting Himalayan worlds and they had cultural knowledge that Bell valued differently.

Achuk Tsering, like Macdonald and Samdup, was a graduate of the Bhutia Boarding School system, sent there by his “respectable Bhutia family,” who owned estates in southern Sikkim and who seems to have helped the British during the 1888 Sikkim border disputes with Tibet.⁶¹ On completing his studies in Darjeeling he was recruited into the service of the British in 1896, where Bell recalled much later in retirement that, “he was one of several clerks in a small countrified Government office.”⁶² His family connections within Sikkim society are made obvious by his first marriage into Sikkim’s most influential family, the Barmioks, who had provided council to Sikkim’s *Chögyals* for generations. Despite this prestigious union, the marriage failed to produce children and Achuk Tsering married again.⁶³ With his second family he settled in Kalimpong, becoming an expert in diplomatic negotiations, especially those concerning Bhutan. He travelled with Bell on his first government survey of Bhutan and the Ammo Chu valley in 1904, and then acted as Bell’s “Confidential Clerk” during the signing of the Punakha Treaty in Bhutan in 1910. In the same year, during the thirteenth Dalai Lama’s meeting with the Viceroy of India in Calcutta, he worked as

59 Charles Alfred Bell, *Portrait of a Dalai Lama: The Life and Times of the Great Thirteenth* (1946; repr., London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), 263.

60 Charles Alfred Bell, Settlement Officer, final report on the survey and settlement of the Kalimpong government estate in the district of Darjeeling 1901–1903 [published 1905], Eur Mss F80/239, Rs 5 7s. 6.d, IOR, British Library. Ugyen Gyatso was now the estate’s manager.

61 An 1888 campaign medal, still with the family in Kalimpong, provides this thread of evidence. I am indebted to Achuk Tsering’s family for our discussions.

62 Bell, *Portrait of a Dalai Lama*, 245.

63 Thanks to Mr Tashi Densapa for this information. Tashi Tsering, personal communication with the author, April 10, 2013.



Fig. 4: Achuk Tsering (left) and Palhese (right), Gangtok, before 1920. Private collection.

a clerk and translator, a role he would take on again for the Sikkim delegation at the 1911 Delhi Durbar. He was also a valued translator and go-between at the Simla convention of 1913–1914. Achuk Tsering’s diplomatic value to Bell is obvious, as his name appeared first on Bell’s staff list for his mission party to Lhasa, where, tragically, he died in December 1920.

After his death, a deeply distressed Bell said of Achuk Tsering, “He was a man of great political acumen, my right hand man in Tibetan, Bhutanese and Sikkimese politics.”⁶⁴ There is no question that Bell valued Achuk Tsering’s

64 Charles Alfred Bell, *Tibet Notebook II*, 91, private collection.

trans-Himalayan knowledge, but it is also clear that Bell did not see Achuk Tsering's knowledge as purely Sikkimese, Bhutanese, or even for that matter Tibetan, but considered it tainted by the colonial experience. Bell makes this explicit when recalling his borderland experiences. "The Tibetans who live in Indian territory, even those on the Tibetan frontier in Darjeeling and Kalimpong, gain only a partial knowledge of Tibet and Tibetan life, religious, domestic or political, for they are heavily influenced by Western ideas."⁶⁵ Bell evidently differentiated between the knowledge and skills he gathered from those who lived in the borderlands as opposed to those whom he saw as occupying a "purer," more Tibetan space. Palhese was a man who, in Bell's mind, epitomised the features of a Tibetan cultural broker.

Unlike most of the men discussed in this paper, Palhese neither spoke nor wrote in English, and he often baffled Bell with the poetic, almost incomprehensible, rhymes and idioms of the Tibetan language. For Bell, he was a "veritable encyclopedia [sic] of things Tibetan, high and low, especially on the secular side," and he gave Bell access to intellectual and aristocratic expertise that, to Bell, was "a close preserve."⁶⁶ He taught Bell to speak honorific Tibetan, the language of the Lhasa aristocrats; he selected objects coveted by the Lhasa elites for Bell's collection; and he advised him on every detail of Lhasan etiquette. He held a unique position as the only Tibetan aristocrat directly employed by the British India government,⁶⁷ and his standing was more exclusive still as he worked solely for Bell. The two men worked together for more than thirty years. Yet this rarefied picture does not stand up to scrutiny, as Bell only had access to Palhese's cultural capital because of the latter's exile in the Himalayan borderlands.

Palhese belonged to the Phalha, a wealthy and politically influential family of southern Tibet, who owned estates near Gyantse as well as large properties in Lhasa. But Das's covert visit in 1881–1882 had cost the Phalha family its security and status. Palhese's mother and father had supported Das during his visit, unaware that he was a colonial spy. There are conflicting reports about torture, death, and banishment for Palhese's parents, but what is certain is that several of the family estates were sealed. Palhese met Das when he was just thirteen years of age, and we are unsure of his position in Tibet in the ensuing years, but in 1903 he was posted to Yatung as a low-level officer by the Tibetan government. Here he must have met Bell and other British officers, and it was

65 Bell, *Portrait of a Dalai Lama*, 25.

66 *Ibid.*, 25.

67 McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, 124.

most likely here that he decided (or was coerced) to work for the British.⁶⁸ His work with Bell (who later developed a pro-Tibetan stance) led the Dalai Lama to reinstate the Phalha estates and Palhese was given high honorific titles by both the British and the Tibetans. His knowledge and communicative abilities allowed him to recover something of his wealth, status, and power, along with a partial reintegration into Tibetan society.

Bell, like Waddell, privileged southern Tibet and especially Lhasa, which he saw as “the nerve-centre of these mountain lands.”⁶⁹ Those in the borderlands involved in developing a scholarly picture of Tibet looked to Lhasa to authenticate the publications they produced. Knowledge of Lhasa was highly prized, with those writing on Tibet hoping to raise their authoritative status by working with those who knew Lhasa—its monasteries, its language, its etiquette, and its culture. But in reality knowledge production in the borderlands was impossible to label or compartmentalise. This was also true for the men who produced it; they too had multiple agendas and just as many loyalties, sometimes to forces well outside the control of British India.

Ghum monastery: Dictionaries in a contact zone

The Ghum monastery was founded in 1875 by Llama [sic] Sherabgyatsa, one of the Yellow-sect Geylukpa [sic], and was intended primarily as a place for political meetings more than as a monastery. It receives a grant of Rs. 60/- per mensem from the Government, is managed by a secretary and a committee, and has some fifty monks in residence.

– E. C. Dozey⁷⁰

By the time Englishman Eric Collin Dozey, a long-time Darjeeling resident, journalist and author, published his tourist guide to Darjeeling and Sikkim in 1917, it was already an open secret that Ghum or Ghoom Monastery (figure 5) was a meeting place for many of those with an interest in Tibet.

As Waddell’s collecting practices show, monasteries in the borderlands were critical sites for access to different kinds of primary sources, but religion

68 Darjeeling Confidential Frontier Reports, November 1903, nos. 40–80, Secret External, Foreign Department, National Archives of India, Delhi.

69 Charles Alfred Bell, *Religion of Tibet* (1931; repr., New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000), 49.

70 E. C. Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District since 1835*, 3rd ed. (Darjeeling: Gurkha Press, 1922), 80.

and scholarship were only part of a complex story unfolding in Darjeeling. In Ghum, lamas, officers and explorers blurred the lines between scholarly pursuits and information gathering for the purposes of colonial security.

Sherab Gyatso, the dictionary compiler for Das and the lama who worked with Waddell, was the Head lama of Ghum monastery, which still stands on the outskirts of Darjeeling (figure 6). He was Mongolian by birth, but served as an astrologer to the eighth Panchen Lama, Lobsang Chökyi Wangchuk (1855–1882), at Tashi Lhunpo monastery. From the account Sherab Gyatso gave to Ugyen Gyatso, the lama left China in 1856, spending twelve years living as a prominent monastic figure in Kongbu, now Kongpo (Tibetan *kong po*) and then Pemakoichhen, now Pémakö (Tibetan *pad ma bkhod*) in south-eastern Tibet's lower Tsangpo valley—a distance of more than 300 kilometres from Lhasa—before making his way to Darjeeling.⁷¹ While not, strictly speaking, a *pundit* for the Survey of India, on arrival in Darjeeling he offered what he knew to Ugyen Gyatso, allowing the survey to make the first sketch map of the region in which he had lived. When Croft compiled his 1895 report on the progress of the dictionaries and translations currently in production at the Darjeeling press, he noted of Sherab Gyatso that “The Lama has hardly an equal in Tibetan scholarship on this side of the Himalayas; and as he is approaching eighty years of age, though still a man of remarkable energy, it is desirable to utilise his great erudition while it is still at our disposal.”⁷² He continued his dual monastic and intelligence roles at Ghum, searching out illustrative passages of Tibetan text for Das's dictionary project, while teaching at the Bhutia Boarding School.⁷³ After the construction of Ghum monastery, the British would send many notable future translators/cultural brokers to Ghum for Tibetan language training, including Laden La, the teacher and translator Lobzang Mingyur Dorje (n.d.), and the British India officer and interpreter Karma Sumdhon Paul (1877–c.1935).⁷⁴

The lama's scholarship also made Ghum monastery an important address for a number of international travellers. The Ukrainian Helena Blavatsky

71 G. Strahan, report on the explorations of Lama Sherap Gyatso, 1856–68, explorer K-P, 1880–84, Lama UG [This is Ugyen Gyatso.] 1883, explorer RN 1885–86, explorer PA 1885–86, in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet, 1889, Dehra Dun, V/27/69/26, IOR, British Library. In Darjeeling Sherab Gyatso posed as a Tibetan lama in a series of staged photographs commissioned and used by Das and Waddell. See Harris, *Museum on the Roof of the World*, 89–103.

72 G. Strahan, report on the explorations of [...], V/27/69/26, IOR.

73 Das, *Autobiography*, 31.

74 See Richardus, ed., *Tibetan Lives*, 79, for a vignette of Sherab Gyatso's teaching practice, provided by Karma Sumdhon Paul. All three would work for Das, but would go unacknowledged.



Fig. 5: Tinted postcard of Ghum Monastery, photograph taken after its restoration (paid for by Laden La) following the 1934 earthquake. Courtesy of Emma Martin.



Fig. 6: Postcard of a staged photograph featuring the “Darjeeling lamas,” including Lama Sherab Gyatso (second from left), taken around 1890–1900. Courtesy of Emma Martin.

(1831–1891), a founding member of the Theosophical Society found refuge there during her stay in Darjeeling in 1882,⁷⁵ and the lama could also name amongst his pupils Ekai Kawaguchi (1846–1945),⁷⁶ the Japanese monk who came to Darjeeling in 1898 to prepare for his trip to Lhasa disguised as a Chinese pilgrim. Ekai Kawaguchi's second Darjeeling-based tutor also found refuge with Sherab Gyatso at Ghum monastery. The considerable sum of sixty rupees given by the British India government to Ghum monastery for intelligence services rendered must in part have been warranted by the activities of the Buryat monk, Kachen Lobsang Tsering (also known as Sherab Gyatso, d.1909),⁷⁷ who was better known to the British as Shabdung Lama.⁷⁸ His life, like Palhese's, was deeply affected by the clandestine mission of Das and Ugyen Gyatso.⁷⁹ Das had met Shabdung Lama in 1882 when he stayed in Drongtse, near Gyantse, during his 1881–1882 trip. He described him as a “boy-monk,” who “fetch[ed] water from the wells for my use.”⁸⁰ He was in fact the attendant of a revered *Gelukpa* (Tibetan *dGe lugs pa*) lama known to the British as Sengchen Lama, who also had ties to Tashi Lhunpo and Ghum monasteries.⁸¹ Sengchen Lama met his end when the Tibetan government ordered his execution by drowning for giving Das a safe haven during his covert expedition. On his master's execution in 1887, Shabdung Lama was force-marched to Lhasa and imprisoned there, but escaped, through Bhutan, to Darjeeling and finally to Ghum monastery.⁸²

75 Das would also provide her with texts for her writings. See K. Paul Johnson, *Initiates of Theosophical Masters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 24–25.

76 On Das's recommendation, see Ekai Kawaguchi, *Three Years in Tibet* (Benares: Theosophical Printing Press, 1909), 11. Das died in 1917, shortly after travelling with Kawaguchi to Japan to study Buddhism. See Das, *Autobiography*, vi.

77 See sle zur 'jigs med dbang phyug et al. *Bod kyi rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad gzhi 'i rgyu cha bdams bsgrigs*, 'don thengs bdun pa (Lhasa: bod rang skyong ljongs par 'debs bzo grwa nas par lha sa, 1985), 7:9–11.

78 The biographies of the Mongolian Sherab Gyatso and the Buryat Shabdung Lama have been conflated to create one man by Harris, Lopez Jr., and Toni Huber. Harris, *Museum on the Roof of the World*; Toni Huber, *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage and the Tibetan Reinvention of Buddhist India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), Donald S. Lopez Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-la: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). I align myself with McKay, because sources, some cited here for the first time, clearly refer to two separate men. McKay, “The Drowning of Lama Sengchen Kyabying: A Preliminary Enquiry from British Sources,” in *Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar of the IATS, 2000*, vol. 1, *Tibet: Past and Present*, Tibetan Studies 1, ed. Henk Blezer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 263–280.

79 See McKay, “The Drowning of Lama Sengchen Kyabying.”

80 Das, *Autobiography*, 60.

81 The Phalha family were in a “priest-patron” relationship with the Sengchen Lama.

82 'jigs med dbang phyug, *Bod kyi rig gnas lo rgyus [...]*, 10.

He was well established in Ghum by the early 1890s, working for Das as a clerk on his dictionary project in 1894 (perhaps as compensation). Despite Shabdung Lama's participation in British India's dictionary projects, the British, their colonial anxieties heightened, watched the activities of the lama's guests at Ghum monastery with some interest. This is hardly surprising as they included several Russian "bogey men," most significantly the Russian-trained Kalmykian explorer Ovshe Norzunov (n.d.) and later his monastic teacher, the Buryat lama Agvan Dorzhiev (1854–1938),⁸³ whom the British suspected of brokering diplomatic ties between the thirteenth Dalai Lama and Tsar Nicholas II.⁸⁴ Despite their suspicions, the British continued to employ Shabdung Lama as a Tibetan teacher, translator, and colonial intelligence gatherer. Captain (later Colonel) William Frederick Travers O'Connor (1870–1943), who wrote his own dictionary and who co-wrote government guidelines on Tibetan transliteration with Bell in 1904,⁸⁵ employed the lama not only as his Tibetan tutor, but also as an intelligence gatherer in the Darjeeling bazaar.⁸⁶ Bell was also likely to have been a pupil of Shabdung Lama, as he recalls that his first Tibetan teacher was "a gifted monk, who was born in Tibet and had worked for many years in a monastery not far from Gyantse[sic]."⁸⁷

The position of Ghum vividly illustrates the wider necessity for bringing those with pertinent information together in Darjeeling. The monastery was multi-faceted in its purpose and a perfect site for producing the entangled forms of colonial knowledge necessary to develop a comprehensive picture of Tibet. This monastic contact zone, built by a Mongolian and sponsored by the British, acted as a transitory home for a global community of spiritual seekers, monastic spies, and covert explorers. It also played a central role in training those who went on to become some of the most recognisable (if often hidden) names in early Tibetan Studies scholarship. Ghum, then, was a place where even perceived multiple allegiances—on occasion with Russia, one of British India's most feared colonial opponents—were tolerated by British India officers.

83 For detailed accounts of Dorzhiev's life see John Snelling, *The Story of Agvan Dorzhiev: Lhasa's Emissary to the Tsar* (Shaftsbury: Element Books Ltd, 1993) and Alexandre Andreyev, *Soviet Russia and Tibet: The Debacle of Secret Diplomacy, 1918–1930s* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

84 In 1901, Laden La would inform Walsh about these uninvited visitors and Norzunov would be placed under surveillance and interviewed on several occasions. See Snelling, *The Story of Agvan Dorzhiev*, 67–68. They were right to suspect him, see Jampa Samten and Nikolay Tsyrempilov, *From Tibet Confidentially* (Dharamshala: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 2012).

85 Charles Alfred Bell and Frederick O'Connor, *Rules for the Phonetic Transcription into English of Tibetan Words* (Darjeeling, 1904).

86 McKay, "The Drowning of Lama Sengchen Kyabying," 270.

87 Bell, *Portrait of a Dalai Lama*, 24.

Such a pivotal position made Sherab Gyatso and Shabdung Lama powerful, inasmuch as they were able to operate outside the authority of accepted colonial networks. This was not the case for most. Many of the men discussed here gained positions of power and in some cases significant wealth, but in tracing the processes of knowledge production it is clear that colonial barriers were often present. It is already obvious that British officers did not always acknowledge the men who made their publications possible, and there were considerable hurdles for those outside the core colonial networks. Despite this, there is an alternate reading of this transcultural encounter to be explored, as colonial officers did not always get exactly what they wanted, because access to valuable expertise was a matter of negotiation.

The boundaries of knowledge

I would add Sir Charles Bell should in due courtesy have mentioned in his books about the role I played specially when for that purpose he sent for me and sought my advice and help.

– David Macdonald⁸⁸

Making a name was not always easy for the men who worked in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Geographical boundaries placed limits on what was known and what was privileged, but there were other kinds of boundaries. The frustrated note written by Macdonald and quoted above can be read as articulating a much wider and long-suppressed disappointment in the value of knowledge production. As already noted, Bell and Hannah, amongst others, did to some extent acknowledge Macdonald, but Macdonald still felt it necessary to write himself back into the making of some of the most significant publications of the late nineteenth century (figure 7).

A man with whom Macdonald had good reason to be frustrated was Waddell, who failed to acknowledge that Macdonald spent close to a decade working with him on textual translations.

When Macdonald left the Bhutia Boarding School at the age of nineteen, he received a posting at the Vaccination Department, on Waddell's recommendation, spending most of his time at the Depot Headquarters in Ghum.⁸⁹ Only a few years older than his pupils, he filled his evenings by

⁸⁸ David Macdonald, untitled and undated note on the subject of China and Tibet, 1921, private collection.

⁸⁹ Macdonald, *Twenty Years in Tibet*, 12.



Fig. 7: David Macdonald (centre, seated) with Gyantse Trade Agency staff, 1921. Private collection.

teaching English to several boys attending Sherab Gyatso's Tibetan classes at Ghum monastery.⁹⁰ Yet the majority of his spare time was occupied with bringing some of Waddell's best-known publications to fruition, including *The Buddhism of Tibet* and Waddell's significant contribution to Risley's *The Sikkim Gazetteer*. It is left to Macdonald to tell us that, "For some years I assisted this officer in the preparation of his works on the then little known religion of Tibet and Sikkim, Lamaism, and in some portions of his contribution to the Sikkim Gazetteer and the Linguistic Survey of India."⁹¹

When surveying Macdonald's standing within this scholarly network, one perhaps understands his career progression as an Anglo-Indian as exceptional. He did indeed break several employment barriers, securing appointments to posts previously given only to British officers, but he also had to push past boundaries that seem to have had the sole aim of excluding him from the recognition he deserved as a scholar and instructor. In 1924, now close to retirement, Macdonald was forced to take the Higher Proficiency Test in Tibetan by his new supervisor, Political Officer Frederick Marshman "Eric" Bailey (1882–1967) and his memoir does not hide his frustration over the incident.

I passed with ease, receiving a reward of two thousand rupees from Government. In a way, this test was a farce, for I had been appointed

⁹⁰ Richardus, *Tibetan Lives*, 80.

⁹¹ Macdonald, *Twenty Years in Tibet*, 12.

an examiner in the Degree of Honour test in that language as far back as 1906. This is a higher examination than that for which I was allowed to appear. However, the rules admitted of my appearing, and so I did.⁹²

Those who set the rules and demanded his attendance also seemingly wished to put Macdonald in his “colonial” place. In 1921, Bailey took over the post of Political Officer not from his official predecessor, Bell, but from Macdonald, who had been acting in the role until Bailey’s arrival. McKay notes that Bailey “found it demeaning to his prestige to take over Sikkim from an Anglo-Sikkimese.”⁹³ Bailey, it seems, wanted to assert his authority over those whom he thought of as his imperial inferiors.

Macdonald was not the only man to suffer from being passed over in silence in the pages of Darjeeling-based scholarship—I have noted several others in this article. Kazi Dawa Samdup, with whom I began this article, also found complex and uneven hurdles as he pursued his philological activities.⁹⁴ Family pressures meant that Samdup became a British India employee rather than a monk, as he hoped, but he nevertheless became a Tibetan Buddhist teacher to Walter Yeeling Evan-Wentz (1878–1965), the American “author” of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, who could neither speak nor read Tibetan,⁹⁵ as well as to Hannah and the French explorer and scholar Alexandra David Neel (1868–1969).⁹⁶

His expertise was called upon for several Anglo-Sikkimese projects, including the translating and annotation of the *History of Sikkim*,⁹⁷ a project undertaken at

92 Macdonald, *Twenty Years in Tibet*, 311.

93 McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, 103.

94 Kazi Dawa Samdup’s name appeared in the acknowledgements of several publications, but he was not necessarily given the substantial credit he deserved. See Ken Winkler, *Pilgrim of Clear Light: The Biography of Dr. Walter Evan Wentz* (1982; repr., Bangkok: BooksMango, 2013); Kathleen Taylor, *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra, and Bengal* (2001; repr., Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

95 See, Dasho P. W. Samdup, “A Brief Biography of Kazi Dawa Samdup (1868–1922),” *Bulletin of Tibetology* 44, nos. 1–2 (2008): 155–158. Laden La recommended Samdup to Evan-Wentz in 1919 when the two met in Darjeeling. Laden La also worked on translations for Evan-Wentz’s *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, finally published in 1954.

96 David-Neel travelled in disguise overland from China to Lhasa in 1924. Her inspiration came during a meeting in 1917 in Japan, with Ekai Kawaguchi. See Samuel Thévoz, “On the Threshold of the ‘Land of Marvels:’ Alexandra David-Neel in Sikkim and the Making of Global Buddhism,” *Transcultural Studies* 1 (2016): 168.

97 See Tashi Tsering, “A Short Communication about the 1908 ‘Bras ljongs rgyal rabs,” *Bulletin of Tibetology* 48, no. 1 (2012): 33–60.

the behest of John Claude White (1953–1919), Bell’s predecessor as Political Officer. He also acted as chief translator for the British during White’s and the Sikkim delegation’s trip to Calcutta in 1905–1906 for the ninth Panchen Lama’s visit to the Viceroy of India, and under Bell’s tenure he acted as the *Chögyal’s* interpreter during the Delhi Durbar of 1911. He also played a critical role at the Simla convention of 1913–1914, translating many of the documents the Tibetans brought with them to establish their claim to independence.⁹⁸ He became a renowned scholar in his own right following the publication of his acclaimed *An English-Tibetan Dictionary* in 1919, which both Hannah and Macdonald had urged him to finish. In the same year, he moved to Calcutta University to take up a professorship in Tibetan.

Despite his seemingly smooth rise, it had been an eventful intellectual journey for Samdup. From the preface to his dictionary it is clear that his position as a local scholar, who began his work outside of approved colonial structures, limited his abilities to gather the necessary information. Samdup began compiling his dictionary in 1902 in Darjeeling, but despite the hill station’s philological heritage, until 1906

the only books of reference which I wished to consult—viz. (1) Csoma de Kőrös’s and (2) Jäschkes’ Tibetan-English Dictionaries, and that masterpiece of work, the late Rai Sarat Chandra Das Bahadur’s Tibetan-English Dictionary—were all beyond my means of purchase and could not be borrowed, and I often despaired of being able to complete my self-imposed task.⁹⁹

Sponsorship, and specifically colonial sponsorship, was evidently critical here, and without it scholarship proved difficult to pursue. Following his move to Gangtok in 1905 as headmaster of the Bhutia Boarding school outpost, White became Samdup’s sponsor and only then did he receive the dictionaries he needed to complete his work. When White retired from service in 1908, Samdup faced new challenges. He assumed that his sponsor would continue to support his complex philological work, but when White retired he left his scholarly responsibilities behind. Samdup had to wait until a further opportunity presented itself in 1911 at the Delhi Durbar. There he met Denison Ross, who recommended his work to Sir Ashutosh Mukerjee, and as a result Samdup (and

98 Ryosuke Kobayashi, “An Analytical Study of the Tibetan Record of the Simla Conference, 1913–1914: Shing stag rgya gar ‘phags pa’i yul du dbyin bod rgya gsum chings mol mdzad lugs kun gsal me long,” in *Current Issues and Progress in Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Third International Seminar of Young Tibetologists*, ed. Tsughito Takeuchi et al. (Kobe: University of Foreign Studies, 2013), 183–200.

99 Dousamdup, *An English-Tibetan Dictionary*, 2.

by extension his pupil, Hannah) found a new sponsor in the form of Calcutta University. Samdup came to the realisation that research and publishing one's work was only possible if sanctioned and supported by a colonial infrastructure. However, I do not wish to present a picture of victimhood here, as Samdup, an established intellectual, was also more than willing and able to create barriers to his knowledge for the colonial officers he worked with.

When White retired in November 1908, he wrote to Samdup and noted of his successor that "I think you will like Mr Bell."¹⁰⁰ Bell was now Political Officer for Sikkim, Bhutan, and Tibet, based at the Gangtok Residency, and Samdup was an established headmaster. The two men developed a scholarly relationship around 1912 that lasted until Bell's retirement in 1918. They regularly spent their Saturday afternoons together discussing texts that Samdup translated for Bell. By 1916 Bell and Samdup had worked together on numerous translation projects, but it is all too clear that Bell was still wholly reliant on Samdup for his authoritative translation skills. In June, Bell sent Samdup a letter asking him to estimate the cost of a new translation: "[W]hat would [be] your charge for translating this History of Tibet by the 5th Dalai Lama (113 sheets)? A typed translation would be preferred. The translation should be [a] simple one, i.e. not ornate."¹⁰¹ It seems that their scholarly relationship was agreed on a "pay as you go" basis. Bell needed to buy his access to Tibetan culture, for even with unequal colonial power balances, Samdup's knowledge was not available to him free of charge. Samdup was more than willing to drive a hard bargain, and after he named his price, which was beyond the means available, Bell wrote that he could not afford it, and offered changed terms.

Please return the History by the 5th Dalai Lama unless you are willing to reduce your terms. I'm sorry that I cannot afford your price. I can offer only two rupees per sheet, the dedication + poetry being omitted, + only the plain history part translated. I should of course provide the paper. The translation need not be typed. If these terms suit you, please keep the History + let me know, + I will send you the paper.¹⁰²

Samdup knew that such a project needed a translator who thought in Tibetan. He knew the outer limits of this colonial officer's scholarly abilities, and as a result he placed a solid value on his own scholarly worth. There

100 White to Samdup, 1 November 1908. Kazi Dawa Samdup papers, L/PS/10/C909, IOR, British Library.

101 Bell to Samdup, 30 June 1916, Kazi Dawa Samdup papers, L/PS/10/C909.

102 Bell to Samdup, 7 July 1916, Kazi Dawa Samdup papers, L/PS/10/C909.

are no further letters on how the negotiations were resolved, but obviously an agreement was reached on the new terms and the translations found their way into Bell's *Religion of Tibet*, where Samdup is acknowledged in a chapter Bell called "Sources".

Relevant portions of the leading histories so received have been translated for me by Mr Negi Amar Chand, Mr David Macdonald—who speaks and writes Tibetan more easily than English—and Rai Bahadur Nor-bu Dhon-dup. A great deal has been done by Mr Tse-ring Pün-tso and most of all by that tower of learning, the late Kazi Da-wa Sam-trup.¹⁰³

Bell's and Samdup's experiences bring into sharp focus the lived realities of scholarly networks in colonial hill stations. One's own expertise was controlled, haggled over, and promoted. Sponsors could open many doors, but many more opportunities could be lost if those who claimed to be knowledgeable omitted to mention with whom they had produced their publications. Knowledge production was not a genteel profession here in the hill stations of eastern India; it was a decidedly contentious process of negotiation under the complex asymmetrical conditions of colonialism.

Conclusion

Darjeeling and Kalimpong were transcultural scholarly spaces that, by their very nature, were dynamic and continually reconfigured by local and colonial politics, by trade and by the highly mobile people that lived and worked there. Borderlands are often conceptualised as peripheries, delineating the boundaries of what is known about places and peoples beyond frontiers. But these hill stations on the boundaries figured as central hubs, with information flowing in from both sides of the border. Modern forms of knowledge production about Tibet developed here, especially in the realms of language and ethnography. Colonial scholars looked towards Darjeeling to find the best-informed and most accessible local intellectuals to help them establish themselves in contemporary Tibetan Studies. This is where they found people with the necessary language and cultural background, who had access to sources and areas in Tibet that were off limits. This notion of the Himalayan hill station as a peripheral site can be turned on its head in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The scholars who worked here were at the centre of Tibet-related knowledge production, feeding those at the peripheries—the museums, libraries, and universities of Europe and North America—with new publications and specimens.

103 Bell, *Religion of Tibet*, 199–200.

Approaching this knowledge production from a local Himalayan perspective shows the complexity of the scholarly, social, and political processes of information collection and publication. Local expertise was grappled with and negotiated in a way that gave considerable agency to select local intellectuals and never simply reproduced the asymmetry of colonial settings. Several genealogies came together here. Colonial genealogies anchored in successions to the same administrative position merged with lineages anchored in teacher-student relations and local family lineages to produce site-specific knowledge.

Colonial knowledge was then fundamentally informed by multiple ways of reading the Tibetan world. The final products of these encounters, the dictionaries, grammars, and manuals, with their partial acknowledgements of local contributors, represent a highly visible transcultural interaction while clearly retaining their distinctly colonial flair. These hybrid texts allow us to trace the scholarly discussions, ambitions, disappointments, and uncertainties that made new ways of reading Tibet possible in the hill stations of the Himalayas.