
Acknowledgements

This volume is the direct outcome of a conference held in Kalimpong from March 05 to March 08, 2015. Under the title *Transcultural Encounters in the Himalayan Borderlands: Kalimpong as a "Contact Zone,"* researchers with a variety of disciplinary backgrounds discussed important developments in the cultural history of the area with a focus on the first half of the twentieth century. But the book must also be seen within the context of larger efforts to investigate the Eastern Himalayan border region through new theoretical and conceptual approaches. One of these attempts was run from Heidelberg, as part of the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context." There, a project directed by Birgit Kellner and Markus Viehbeck, including Anna Sawerthal as a PhD student, focused on the region as an important space for "Encounters between Tibet and Western Modernity." The connection to Tibet was also addressed in a panel at the Thirteenth Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies in Ulaanbaatar, which was organized by Markus Viehbeck in 2013. That same year, another group of researchers from the University of Toronto drew attention to the region with a workshop on "Lamas, Spies, Gentleman Scholars, and Trans-Himalayan Traders: The Meeting of Religion, Colonialism, Politics, and Economics in Twentieth-Century Kalimpong." In an attempt to tie together the different efforts in Toronto, Heidelberg, and several other places, the Eastern Himalayan Research Network (EHRN) was founded, which also allowed people to be reached beyond the limitations of individual areas of expertise. Many of the people represented in this volume are directly or indirectly connected with this network and we would like to thank above all Jayeeta Sharma for launching the initiative, but also for her theoretical and practical input in organizing the conference. On a more informal level, a much larger network of individuals emerged, driven by their common interest in the Eastern Himalayas. Listing all of these people would go beyond the scope of these brief introductory remarks, but we would like to single out and thank Isrun Engelhardt, who supported our own efforts in Heidelberg from the very start and was crucial in establishing connections between many different individuals.

An important aspect in the conception of the conference was that it should facilitate local involvement. Rather than having the conference conducted at a European University, we therefore opted to talk about Kalimpong and the Eastern Himalayas in Kalimpong itself. Naturally, this complicated practical matters considerably, and it is only with local support that the conference could be conducted smoothly. Sandip C. Jain, editor of the *Himalayan Times*, was crucial in all aspects of local organization and we cannot thank him too much for all the work he invested in the project.

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Further, a group of volunteers from Kalimpong College assisted in both the preparation as well as the running of the conference, all of whom we would like to thank wholeheartedly, as well as the college's director Rajendra P. Dhakal. Nilam and David McDonald kindly opened their Himalayan Hotel as an ideal venue for the conference, also linking up once more to the efforts of an earlier generation of scholars of the Himalayas. That the conference proved such a success, especially on a local level, could be seen not only in various media reports (articles about the event have been posted, among others, in the *Himalayan Mirror*, *Sikkim Observer*, and *Hāmro Prajāsakti*), but more importantly in the interest and enthusiasm of the audience. About 100 people joined the sessions every day, and, with their intellectual stimulus during formal and informal discussions, contributed to the present volume.

In Heidelberg, we would like to thank various people for turning the resulting manuscript into an actual book: our student assistant Dominik Wallner for standardizing the different contributions, Kim Friedlander and Malcolm Green for their meticulous work in proofreading the entire manuscript, our (anonymous) reviewers for their constructive criticism, Andrea Hacker for her advice and service as head of the Editorial Office at the Cluster, as well as the team at Heidelberg University Publishing for handling the final production of this book.

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Markus Viehbeck, for the "Heidelberg Kalimpong Project"