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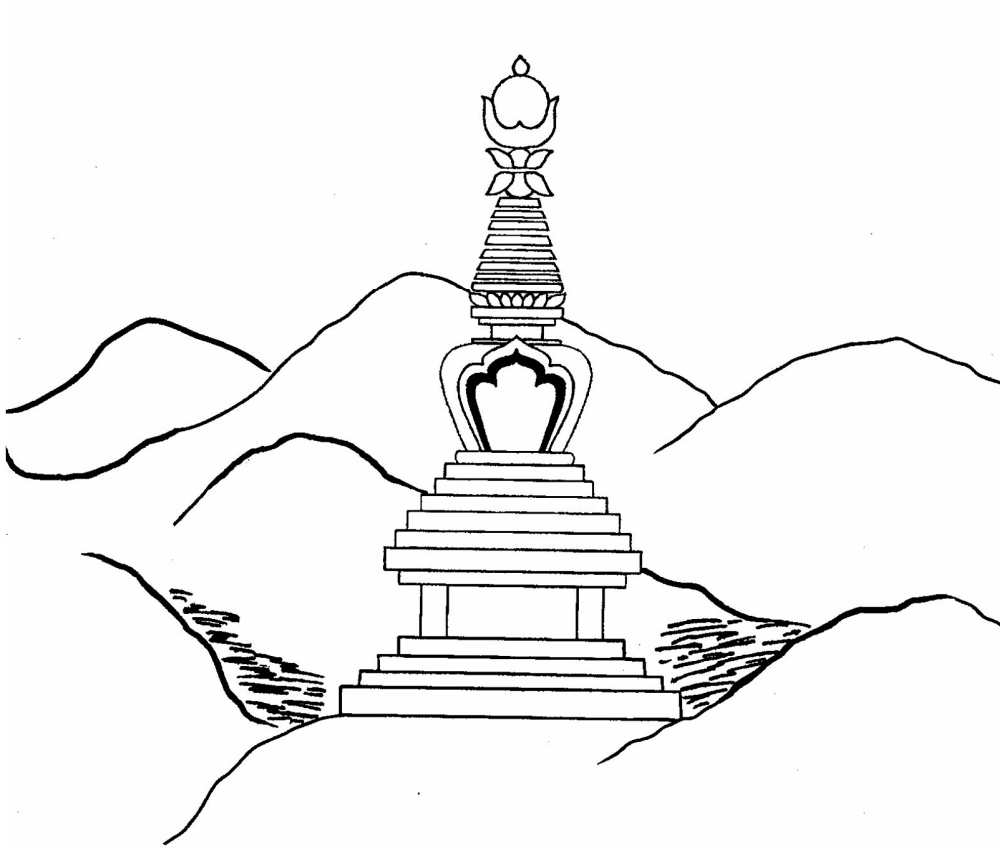
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NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY
GANGTOK, SIKKIM

The Bulletin of Tibetology seeks to serve the specialist as well as the general reader with an interest in the field of study. The motif portraying the Stupa on the mountains suggests the dimensions of the field.

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BULLETIN OF TIBETOLOGY

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EDUCATIONAL AND MEDICAL JOURNEYS

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COSMOPOLITANISM IN THE HIMALAYAS:
THE INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS OF
KHU NU BLA MA STAN 'DZIN RGYAL MTSHAN
AND HIS SIKKIMESE TEACHER, KHANG GSAR BA BLA MA
O RGYAN BSTAN 'DZIN RIN PO CHE¹

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Introduction

Students of Himalayan societies are increasingly rethinking the mutual location of the 'centre' and the 'periphery,' in the intellectual and cultural as well as political senses. Centre and periphery have tended to be quite fluid in the Himalayan world, both internally, and *vis à vis* the adjoining cultural areas of India, China and Central Asia. Scholarship is beginning to explore this in multiple ways. For example, a recent collection of essays on Khams and the Sino-Tibetan border area has emphasized the need to place the so-called 'periphery' (in this case Khams) at the 'centre' of accounts, rather than writing political or social history from the more traditional vantage points of either Lhasa or Beijing.²

¹ This article is drawn from a more extensive treatment of this and related topics in my Ph.D. dissertation: "Practicing Philosophy: The Intellectual Biography of Khu nu Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen." Research related to this article was supported by a Fulbright-Hays grant for Tibet and India in 2004. I would like to express my thanks to all those who so generously assisted me during my research in 2004. In particular, I am extremely grateful to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, especially to the Director, Tashi Densapa (Bermiok Rinpoche); to Dr Anna Balikci, to Acarya Tsultrem Gyaltso and to Saul Mullard for their great kindness and extensive help during my research in Gangtok. I am also deeply indebted to Tashi Tsering of the Amnye Machen Institute on numerous counts, especially for urging me to think about many of the connections mentioned in this article and for allowing me to draw on the extraordinary resources of his personal knowledge and archives. Khu nu Rinpoche's main biographers, K. Anrup and mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, were exceptionally helpful and gracious in sharing their great knowledge and allowing me to benefit from their work, and I am extremely grateful to them. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I express my thanks to all Khu nu Rinpoche's disciples, friends and colleagues who have shared their knowledge about him with me. Needless to say, all views and errors expressed here are my own.

² See Epstein, 2002.

Religiously and intellectually speaking as well, significant spiritual and intellectual movements have repeatedly emerged from centres of religious practice located in areas of the Plateau other than official 'centres' such as Lhasa.³ While this article cannot consider the full history of those developments sometimes described as the *'ris med'* movement,⁴ one should note the extraordinary degree of intellectual and spiritual richness that characterized Khams during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period. This richness may again be seen to shift the so-called 'centre' away from Central Tibet in certain respects, although at the same time, Central Tibet was continually involved with and influenced by these developments. Students of Tibetan history will think of many other examples in which the rise and fall of regional powers and the movements of outstanding spiritual and intellectual leaders periodically altered the relative gravity and influence of the various Tibetan regions.

As understanding grows about the complexity of regional centres and their mutual influences across the Plateau and neighbouring areas, it is worth examining the apparently mundane fact of extensive travel across the Himalayan region, as a crucial ingredient of lineage transmission and of the learning process undertaken by individual scholar-saints. One of the most striking elements in the intellectual history of the Himalayan area is the remarkable degree of mobility and cross-regional sharing of ideas that has taken place, in many historical periods. This mobility is a crucial ingredient in the mutual interpenetration and fluidity of the so-called 'periphery' and 'centre' in the Himalayan world.

The far-reaching interpersonal connections of lama-student lineages often transcended geography, long before the era of motorized transportation. In the *ris med* context of the turn of the twentieth century, these interpersonal links often brought together multiple Tibetan Buddhist traditions as well, thus also complicating questions of sectarian identity. The complexity of lineage history works to upset rigid designations of centre versus periphery, whether couched in

³ On the constructedness and mid-seventeenth century origins of Lhasa's centrality, see Blondeau and Gyaltso, "Lhasa, Legend and History," in Pommaré 2003.

⁴ For discussions of nineteenth and twentieth century Khams as a locus of non-sectarian scholarship and practice, see Smith 2001 and Jackson 2005.

geographic or sectarian terms. Arguably it is in part the practical fact of extensive travel that made this possible.⁵

However, the scope of such travel has not always been fully visible, possibly because several factors tend to obscure it. Scholars have long recognized the importance of long distance trade and lengthy pilgrimage journeys for the societies of the Plateau. Nevertheless, many ethnographic studies of Himalayan cultures, particularly western language studies, have tended for obvious practical reasons to concentrate on limited cultural and geographic areas. Similarly, historical works have also often focused closely on individual regional and cultural groupings, even where these studies note that important interconnections with the rest of the Himalayan region exist. As a result, the contemporary literature does not fully describe the complex human networks that link together often very geographically distant parts of the Himalayan area.

Nevertheless, in fact Himalayan scholar-practitioners have historically shown enormous enterprise in their search for good teachers and important teachings, and have been willing to travel great distances to contact them. Thus the effects of particularly charismatic teachers and engaging ideas have been notably wide spread, with individual lamas of outstanding brilliance having an impact across the whole Himalayan region. One of the most dramatic examples of this may be the case of the nineteenth century master rTogs ldan Shakya Shri (1853-1919),⁶ whose impact, via his widely travelling students, reached from Khams in the east to Ladakh in the west and to remote valleys of the Indian border in the south. Indeed, his influence extends via the teachers in his lineage to the United States and European countries in the present day.⁷

The travels of the Kinnauri (Khu nu in Tibetan) scholar-yogi sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan (1895-1977)⁸ as a student and later as a teacher in

⁵ See in this vein, Crook, "The Meditation Notebook of Tipun Padma Chogyal," in Osmaston 1997; Tashi Rabgias, *History of Ladakh called The Mirror Which Illuminates All* (pp. 485-7) and 'Brug chen Rin po che, *rTsibs ri'i par ma dKar chag* (pp. 57-64) which describe the diffusion of *ris med* ideas in Ladakh.

⁶ For the life of rTogs ldan Shakya Shri, see the *nam thar* by Ka: thog Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho: *Grub dbang shakya shri'i nam thar me tog phreng ba*.

⁷ I wish to thank Tashi Tsering for encouraging me to think about these connections, and especially for bringing the centrality of rTogs ldan Shakya Shri to my attention. For a discussion of rTogs ldan Shakya Shri's legacy in Ladakh in particular, see again Crook, in Osmaston 1997.

⁸ Khu nu Rin po che's date of birth is given in several sources as 1894, but this is apparently incorrect, according to two authors who have written about his life. Both

his own right, offer an important twentieth century example of this mobility of ideas and persons, and of the extensive interpersonal networks such travels made possible. sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan (known as Khu nu Lama, Khu nu Rinpoche or Negi Rinpoche) travelled as a young man to Sikkim and then to many regions of Tibet in search of teachers. Later in his life he journeyed back to India in search of further instruction, and in response to the requests of his own students for teaching. His travels for the sake of learning in many ways parallel the journeys of his Sikkimese teacher, Khang gsar ba bLa ma O rgyan bstan 'dzin, who also travelled extensively in Central Tibet and Khams in order to study with various masters.

Their remarkable mobility across the Himalayan Plateau and parts of India offer a window into the network of cross-regional connections that have bound together geographically distant Himalayan intellectual and religious communities and allowed important lineages to spread across the Plateau. In this article, I briefly describe some aspects of their travels and in particular, the lineage connections this travel enabled Khu nu Rinpoche to make. In the closing section, I explore the fruitfulness of applying terms such as 'cosmopolitan' and 'modern' to Khu nu Lama and his fellow travellers.

The life of Khu nu bLa ma sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan

Khu nu bLa ma sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan is probably best known today as the author of a book of poems in praise of bodhicitta, the *Byang chub sems kyi bstod pa rinchen sgron ma*.⁹ A deeply modest practitioner who actively shunned fame, he somewhat in spite of himself nevertheless became rather well known at several points in his life. While he was still quite young, his skill as a Sanskrit scholar and as an expert in poetics made him a popular teacher on those topics in both Khams and Central Tibet. Even more dramatically, toward the end of his life he became a teacher to His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in India. This naturally brought him a certain prominence, although there are many stories about his tendency to slip away whenever there was a danger of public attention.

mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche and K. Anrup Gasha agree that the correct date should be given as 1895, despite earlier printings of the 1894 date.

⁹ This has been translated into English by Gareth Sparham under the title *Vast as the Heavens Deep as the Sea: Verses in Praise of Bodhicitta* (1999. Boston: Wisdom Publications).

As I describe in detail elsewhere, Khu nu Rinpoche's influence on Tibetan intellectual life is multi-faceted and significant in many fields. He is a crucial twentieth century figure in the areas of poetics, Sanskrit and Tibetan grammar, topics on which his scholarship was legendary. His legacy is even more significant for the study and practice of bodhicitta, a subject with which his name continues to be linked today, in particular through his best-known student, the Dalai Lama. In addition, he was an important twentieth century lineage holder for transmissions and practices connected with virtually every Tibetan Buddhist lineage, including systems of Dzogchen, Mahāmudrā and the Kalacakra tantra. This last is a dimension of his life and work that remains little known.

For all of these reasons, Khu nu Rinpoche played a significant (though intentionally low-profile) role in re-establishing the continuity of Tibetan intellectual and spiritual life in India after 1959. He was also a remarkable exemplar of the approaches to learning and practice often grouped under the rubric of *ris med*, or non-sectarianism. With this spirit as well, he influenced the current generation of Himalayan scholars and practitioners, particular those coming of age in India in the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies.

Moreover, much like the nineteenth century Eastern Tibetan master rDza dPal sprul Rinpoche, with whose lineage Khu nu Lama is closely connected, Khu nu bLa ma sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan spent many years of his life teaching basic Buddhism and literacy and encouraging Buddhist practice in the small valleys of the Indian Himalayas from which he himself came. Like dPal sprul Rinpoche before him, he was particularly concerned to make Buddhist ideas and practices accessible to people in the most remote areas, especially those who lacked regular access to education.¹⁰

In his own teaching activities, Khu nu Rinpoche was thus part of the great dissemination of ideas between Khams, Central Tibet, Sikkim and the valleys of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh. Khu nu Lama participated in and helped extend a living network of scholarship, student-teacher relations and lineage connections that bound together people who were physically separated by great distances.¹¹

¹⁰ I would like to thank E. Gene Smith for emphasizing this element of both dPal sprul and Khu nu Rinpoche's careers to me.

¹¹ Indeed, in an interview with his most prolific biographer K. Anrup Gasha (who was himself a student of Khu nu Lama's for many years, and is from the neighbouring Himalayan region of Lahaul), K. Anrup suggested that in his opinion

For the purposes of this article, Khu nu Lama's own studies are perhaps even more revealing than his teaching activities, and it is his studies that I shall describe briefly here. His pursuit of education was extensive and lasted for some thirty years in many different areas of the Himalayan region and India (indeed, arguably he never stopped studying, even at the end of his life). Because Khu nu Lama himself did not leave a written record of his travels, the chronology of his journeys for the sake of learning must be reconstructed from the oral records of his surviving friends and disciples, considered together with the somewhat limited textual sources that exist. Since new information is still coming to light, what follows is not the final word on his travels and studies, but forms a general sketch of what it is possible to know now. However, enough information is available to gain a sense of the scope of Khu nu Lama's travel (and of some others of his generation) and to glimpse the extensive interpersonal and lineage connections which all this arduous wandering made possible.

Early travels to Sikkim and Central Tibet

Khu nu bLa ma sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan was born in 1895 in a small village called Sunnam in the Kinnaur Valley in modern day Himachal Pradesh. His father's family was Nyingma and his mother's was Drukpa Kagyu (two of the three schools found in the Kinnaur area; Gelugpa institutions and practitioners also exist there).¹² As a young boy he was sent to his mother's family, where he began his studies under the guidance of his maternal uncle, Rasvir Das.¹³

Khu nu Rinpoche subsequently studied with and received ordination from bSod nams rgyal mtshan (b. 19th century), who had himself been a student of the great rTogs ldan Shakya Shri in Khams. Thus already in his earliest studies in his remote home valley, Khu nu Lama was affected by the great movement of ideas and teachers between far-distant regions of the Plateau. Some scholars have in fact suggested that this early connection with bSod nams rgyal mtshan may have planted the idea for his own future travels, and indeed that bSod

Khu nu Lama was particularly interested in spreading Buddhism in the Himalayas. K. Angrup (Tib. Ngos grub ga zha ba) interview, September 2004.

¹² Ven. Gurucharan Singh Negi (Bisht), interview, April 2005.

¹³ K. Angrup Gasha, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzugs so*.

nams rgyal mtshan may have urged Khu nu Lama to one day go to Khams himself.¹⁴

In any event, at the age of 17,¹⁵ wanting to learn more than was available in the Kinnaur area at that time, Khu nu Rinpoche decided to travel to Tibet to study, despite the resistance of his family. (In fact, such travel to Tibet was not entirely uncommon for motivated Kinnauri students.¹⁶) Before travelling all the way to Tibet, however, Khu nu Rinpoche first stopped in Gangtok in 1913, where he met the great Sikkimese literary scholar O rgyan kun bzang bstan 'dzin rdo rje Rin po che.¹⁷

Khang gsar ba O rgyan bstan 'dzin Rin po che (1863 - 1936) was the son of the Sikkimese minister bSam 'grub Khang gsar A thing Lhun grub. In his younger days, he himself had travelled extensively in Tibet, in particular in Khams. He also studied at Tshor phu during the time of the 15th Karmapa, Mkha' khyab rdo rje, and was especially noted for having been the student of rTogs ldan Kar ma smon lam od zer lhag bsam rgyal tshan. As the lineages for the Sanskrit tradition he studied (outlined below) show, he, like Khu nu Rinpoche after him, was extraordinarily fortunate in his teachers, and became the student of some of the greatest and most famed scholars of the *ris med* period in Central Tibet and Khams. He is particularly known for his commentarial works on the *sNyan ngag me long*.¹⁸

Khu nu Rinpoche studied poetics and began his grammatical studies with O rgyan bstan 'dzin at Rumtek, remaining in Sikkim for almost three years.¹⁹ During that time he studied *sNyan ngag, Sum rtag,*

¹⁴ BSod nams dbang grags, unpublished manuscript, p. 3.

¹⁵ mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, p. 2a.

¹⁶ Interestingly, while as one would expect, the vast majority of those travelling to Tibet for Buddhist education were men, some nuns also turn out to have made the trip for the same reason, although sadly not always meeting with the same breadth of educational opportunities. See Lamacchia, 2001 for a fascinating discussion of this aspect of cross-regional travel.

¹⁷ K. Angrup Gasha, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, p. 52.

¹⁸ See Tashi Densapa Rinpoche, Introduction, to O rgyan bstan 'dzin's *sNyan ngag me long le'u bar pa'i 'grel pa*.

¹⁹ K. Angrup Gasha, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, p. 53.

Interestingly, mKhan Rin po che bDe chen rdo rje mentioned that Khu nu Rin po che also travelled in areas of North Sikkim during his time of study in Sikkim. mKhan Rin po che speculated that Khu nu Lama might have been travelling there together with bLa ma O rgyan bstan 'dzin. Interview, September 2004.

and both the *dByangs can* and *Candra pa* Sanskrit grammars, beginning what would be an exceptional mastery in these topics.²⁰

Many decades later, the great Sa skya pa scholar sDe gzhung Rinpoche itemized two lineages for the Sanskrit lexical tradition taught by O rgyan bstan 'dzin as a result of O rgyan bstan 'dzin's own extensive travels in Khams. The first transmission comes from Zhe chen dBon sprul 'Gyur med mthu stobs rnam rgyal via Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas, to Yongs 'dzin Lhag bsam rgyal tshan (who was tutor to the Karma pa mKha' khyab rdo rje), and from him to O rgyan bstan 'dzin. The second comes via Zhe chen dBon sprul 'gyur med mthu stobs rnam rgyal to 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and then to Ngor dPon slob Ngag dbang legs grub, and from him to O rgyan bstan 'dzin.²¹

It seems likely these are the lineages for the grammatical and poetic teachings that O rgyan bstan 'dzin shared with Khu nu Rinpoche as well. The lineage lists give a sense of the intellectual and spiritual world of which O rgyan bstan 'dzin's journey to Khams made him a part. (Khu nu Rinpoche would later meet and study with other masters from these same famous lineages.)

At the end of his life, Khu nu Rinpoche returned to Gangtok several times due to his relationship with the royal family.²² From this, and from the length of his initial stay, one can hypothesize that he found his studies in Gangtok very engaging. It is certainly striking that this serious young student heading for Tibet - a Tibet that he envisioned as the heartland of Buddhist learning - should find such rich intellectual resources in Gangtok, and suggests something about what kind of place Gangtok was during the period.

Khu nu Rinpoche's experiences in Gangtok work to highlight the position of the city as a connecting point for travelling practitioners and scholars, as well as traders and other travellers. Dodin, for instance, mentions in an article on Khu nu Rinpoche that there were other Kinnauri students and residents in Gangtok when he first went there. Dodin's interview material from the Kinnauri scholar gSang sngags

²⁰ mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzugs so*, p. 2a.

²¹ Jackson, p. 597, n.233.

²² Khu nu Rin po che was guru to the Queen Mother and to Sem Tinley Ongmu Tashi, and made several visits to them in Gangtok in the nineteen seventies. They also came a number of times to see him in Bodhgaya. Khu nu Rin po che also performed *zhabs brtan* rituals on behalf of the King. Sem Tinley Ongmu Tashi, interview, September 2004. Khu nu Lama also taught several times at the Nyingma Shedra in Gangtok. mKhan Rin po che bDe chen rdo rje, interview, September 2004.

bstan 'dzin²³ suggests that Khu nu Rinpoche may have intentionally made Gangtok his destination in his early search for teachers, possibly because Kinnauris who had been there already had made it known to him.²⁴ Trulku Pema Wangyal likewise notes that when Khu nu Lama arrived in Gangtok he had a relative who was already living there. It was after this person urged him to learn Tibetan that he went to Rumtek to begin his studies.²⁵

Khu nu Rinpoche's relationship with O rgyan bstan 'dzin seems to have been an extremely important connection for the young scholar. While my research on their interaction is not yet complete, one can discern a few hints. Khu nu Lama lists O rgyan bstan 'dzin Rinpoche as the first of his Nyingmapa root lamas, for instance, in a note that he composed in Kinnaur later in his life, in which he listed his root teachers in each of the four Tibetan Buddhist lineages.²⁶

Perhaps it is also possible to see O rgyan bstan 'dzin Rinpoche's influence in some of Khu nu Lama's later travels in Central Tibet and Khams, as Khu nu Lama's movements in many ways mirrored those of his teacher. Several years afterward in Tibet, for instance, Khu nu Rinpoche may have been following O rgyan bstan 'dzin Rinpoche's example when he formed a relationship with the Lhasa sMan stsis khang (Medical and Astrological Institute), where he was both a teacher and student. Both he and Lama O rgyan bstan 'dzin taught (and in Khu nu Rinpoche's case, studied) with the sMan stsis khang's great doctor mKhyen rab nor bu (1883-1962) who was personal physician to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.²⁷

After studying in Sikkim for three years, Khu nu Lama left Gangtok and made his way to bKra shis lhun po Monastery in Shigatse.²⁸ Some who knew him suggest that he went there because the

²³ gSang sngags bstan 'dzin was the father of Roshan Lal Negi, the famous Kinnauri scholar and biographer of Khu nu Lama sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan.

²⁴ Dodin, "Negi Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen: A preliminary account of the life of a modern Buddhist saint" in, Osmaston 1997, p. 85-86; p. 94 n. 9.

²⁵ Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview, April 2005.

²⁶ Khu nu Rinpoche's biographer K. Anrup obtained a copy of this handwritten list, the contents of which he shared with me. Interview, September 2004.

²⁷ Byams pa Phrin las, *Gangs ljongs gso rigs bstan pa'i nyin byed rim byon gyi rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs*, p. 437. K. Anrup explains that Khu nu Rinpoche was mKhyen rab nor bu's student, as well as his teacher in the literary sciences. Interview, September 2004.

²⁸ One interesting question is whether Khu nu Rinpoche took ordination during this first time at bKra shis lhun po, and moreover, whether he participated in the full monastic curriculum and schedule. At this point it is not possible to state his exact status with certainty, since several sources disagree on this point.

Tibetan province of Tsang was convenient to the Sikkimese border, and bKra shis lhun po was of course a famous seat of learning. However, K. Angrup Gasha suggests that Khu nu Rinpoche chose bKra shis lhun po intentionally because there is a historical connection between bKra shis lhun po and students from Kinnaur (and from other areas of modern-day Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh). Students from Kinnaur were traditionally housed in the Gu ge khams tshan with the monks from the Ngari area, and there were apparently several Khu nu bas there even in the forties and early fifties.²⁹ Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, monks at bKra shis lhun po could receive monthly scholarships of grain and were thus guaranteed support while they studied^{30, 31}.

At bKra shis lhun po, Khu nu Rinpoche continued studies in grammar, poetics and the literary sciences (*rig gnas*) in general, as well as philosophy. He became a student of the great bKra shis lhun po dKa' chen Sangs rgyas dpal bzang with whom he studied in particular the *TSHad ma rnam 'grel*, the root text together with an (unspecified) commentary.³²

²⁹ Rintan, interview, May 2005.

³⁰ K. Angrup Gasha, interview, September 2004; Rintan, interview, May 2005.

³¹ The experiences of Kinnauris, Ladakhis and other monks from the Indian Himalaya at bKra shis lhun po is an interesting point for further study, since the role of the great monastic seats in actively recruiting and welcoming young men from outside the borders of Tibet is little known. An interesting comparison would be to the experiences of students from Mongolian areas in Drepung, Sera and Ganden. Mongolian students were often famously brilliant debaters and ultimately met with considerable success in both their spiritual and political activities following their Tibetan studies. Nevertheless, sometimes their own autobiographical materials note instances of conflict with the Tibetan students. See for instance the autobiography of the great Mongolian scholar and statesman, Aghvan Dorjiev, advisor to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. (Dorjiev, 1991) On the other hand, in a recent interview, one former Tibetan resident of the Gu ge khams tshan at bKra shis lhun po in the early nineteen fifties said that he remembered no instances of conflict at all between various Kinnauri and Ngari ba residents there. Rintan, interview, May 2005.

By way of contrast to the experiences of Himalayan students at these major Gelukpa seats, one might also consider the travels of Sikkimese monks, who primarily visited the Nyingma centres of rDo rje brag and sMin 'gro gling and the Karmapa's seat at Tshor phu.

³² mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, p. 2a.

After three years at bKra shis lhun po,³³ Khu nu Rinpoche studied and taught literary sciences in Lhasa and at several other places in Central Tibet.³⁴ He studied in Lhasa itself, in particular with scholars connected to the sMan stsis khang, of whom the most famous was, as already noted, mKhyen rab nor bu.³⁵ He also taught in several capacities, both at the sMan stsis khang and as a tutor to prominent families, including the sMon sgrol (*sic*; this may also refer to the sMon grong ecclesiastical house) and the bSam grub pho brang.³⁶

He visited at Drikung til, where he both taught and studied with the great Drikung yogi Grub dbang A mgon Rinpoche.³⁷ He studied *PHyag rgya chen po* at a Drukpa centre called 'Khamda,' which may have been a retreat centre located above the Drolma Lhakhang, outside Lhasa.³⁸ According to oral accounts given by Khu nu Rinpoche to Trulku Pema Wangyal at the end of his life in Bodhgaya, at some point during this period in Central Tibet, Khu nu Rinpoche also studied at the major Gelukpa centres of Drepung, Sera and Ganden.³⁹

At some point during this period, the Ninth Panchen Lama Chos kyi nyi ma (1883-1937) asked Khu nu Rinpoche to return to bKra shis lhun po, and to teach *rig gnas* in the Panchen Lama's special school for future civil servants in his administration - the sKyid na' school.⁴⁰ Kh unu Lama did so for several years.

³³ K. Anrup, interview, September 2004, based on mKhas btsun bzang po's interview notes from Khu nu Rinpoche. Note that this time frame and some of the following chronology differs from both K. Anrup's earlier *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so* and the interview material provided by gSang sngags bstan 'dzin to Dodin; K. Anrup himself emphasizes that the updated chronology is the correct one.

³⁴ K. Anrup, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, p. 54.

³⁵ K. Anrup, interview, September 2004; BSod nams dbang grags, unpublished manuscript, p. 3.

³⁶ Byams pa Phrin las, *Gangs ljongs gso rigs bstan pa'i nyin byed rim byon gyi rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs*, p. 437; mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, p. 2a; K. Anrup, interview, September 2004.

³⁷ Oral communication, 'Bri gung Pa tog 2005. See rGya mtsho, 'Bri gung dKon mchog. 2004. Note that the chronology for their meeting is very unclear; it is possible that they met after Khu nu Rinpoche's return to Central Tibet from Khams. This point requires further study.

³⁸ According to gSang sngags bstan 'dzin, as described in Dodin, p. 86. Spelling of Khamda not clear.

³⁹ Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview April 2005.

⁴⁰ K. Anrup, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, p. 54; K. Anrup interview September, 2004. It should be noted that the

Khu nu Rinpoche continued in the sKyid na' school until he met Ka: thog Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho (1880-1923/25), who visited in the course of a pilgrimage to Central Tibet. Their meeting apparently made a profound impression on Khu nu Rinpoche, seemingly re-igniting Khu nu Lama's wish to travel to Khams and study there.⁴¹

Travel and study in Khams

Both Lama O rgyan bstan 'dzin and Khu nu Lama sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan went to Khams in pursuit of teachings, journeys that seem to have been extremely important for each of them. Indeed, as mentioned already, one naturally wonders if Lama O rgyan bstan 'dzin's description of his own studies in Khams influenced Khu nu Lama's eventual decision to go. Both men were from regions outside of Tibet itself - regions geographically quite far from Khams. Through their travels there, they entered into some of the most important lineages and philosophical developments of their day, developments that seem to have had their epicentre in Eastern Tibet.

Khu nu Rinpoche journeyed to Khams in the early nineteen twenties. He remained in Khams for approximately fourteen years.⁴² During this time, Khu nu Rinpoche met and studied with many of the most influential lamas of the time. Later in his life Khu nu Rinpoche listed his root gurus in each of the four major Tibetan lineages.⁴³ Most of the twenty-two lamas on that list were individuals he studied with in Khams.

While the scope of this article does not allow me to fully detail all the teachings Khu nu Rinpoche received while in Khams, I include here a brief summary of some of the most important connections he made

chronology for this is confusing in some respects: the Ninth Panchen Lama was in China and Inner Mongolia during the years 1923-1937, suggesting that if he invited Khu nu Lama to the school prior to his departure, it would have had to be very early in the nineteen-twenties. However, at that time Khu nu Lama would have been quite a young man, and it is surprising to think that he would have received such a prestigious invitation at such a young age. The exact sequence of these events will require further research.

⁴¹ bSod nams dbang grags interview, 2005.

⁴² K. Angrup interview September, 2004, based on interview material from Khu nu Lama provided by mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche. Note that this differs slightly from the chronology provided by gSang sngags bstan 'dzin to Dodin.

⁴³ K. Angrup interview September, 2004, based on Khu nu Rinpoche's handwritten list.

there. This helps to give a picture of the significance of his travel in Khams, both for Khu nu Lama himself, and for his later contribution to Tibetan Buddhism in India after nineteen fifty-nine. Even this partial list also gives a sense of the notably non-sectarian approach Khu nu Rinpoche seems to have taken to Buddhist learning and practice. (It is worth noting that it is in part this ecumenical interest in all traditions that made Khu nu Lama such a valuable resource to the Tibetan community after nineteen fifty-nine. He was literally a human repository of many different teaching lineages, each of which he was apparently able to explain from its own particular point of view.⁴⁴)

His first Khams pa teacher was Ka: thok Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho himself, with whom he studied for about three years.⁴⁵ Based on his oral interview with Khu nu Lama, mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche describes these studies with Ka: thok Si tu as being about '*nang don rig pa*,' which in this case according to K. Anrup means in particular meditation.⁴⁶ After this, Khu nu Lama began to travel extensively throughout the region, gathering initiations and transmissions for all schools of Tibetan Buddhism from the great masters of the day.⁴⁷

Following his studies with Ka: thok Si tu Rinpoche, Khu nu Lama became one of the last students of the great scholar and heir to the tradition of rDza dPal sprul, mKhan po gZhan dga' (mKhan po gZhan phan chos kyi snang ba, 1871-1927). According to mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, Khu nu Lama stayed with him for about a year and a half. During his studies with gZhan dga' he received in particular the transmission of the *gZhung chen bcu gsum*, the "Thirteen Indian

⁴⁴ Trulku Pema Wangyal for example notes that one of Khu nu Lama's great strengths as a teacher was his ability to explain each tradition's approach to a given topic, without blurring the traditions together, and also without ever asserting a particular view as finally correct. Thus his students were encouraged both to respectfully engage with each tradition, and to use their own powers of reasoning to navigate among the various viewpoints. (Trulku Pema Wangyal interview April 2005.)

⁴⁵ mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, p. 2b.

⁴⁶ mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*, *ibid*; K. Anrup, interview September 2004.

⁴⁷ In the following partial list of teachings received, where not otherwise noted, the sources for all information are mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so* and K. Anrup interview September 2004, both based on the same oral interview done with Khu nu Rinpoche in the early nineteen seventies.

Classics," with *mchan 'grel*, for which mKhan po gZhan dga' was particularly famous.⁴⁸

One scholar of this period of Khams pa religious history hypothesizes that Ka: thok Si tu Rinpoche may have made the introduction to mKhan po gZhan dga' for Khu nu Lama; this would help to explain how the Kinnauri scholar was able to gain acceptance as a student so close to the end of the master's life, when he was almost permanently in retreat.⁴⁹ On the other hand, mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche has suggested that since Khu nu Lama was the teacher of several important officials of the Central Tibetan government in Khams, it was these connections that opened many doors for him. In particular, Khri smon Nor bu dbang rgyal (1874-1945?) was a particularly important patron.⁵⁰

Either source for the introduction would demonstrate the process by which someone who was in many ways an outsider could gradually enter into the network of lineage relationships in a new place.

However, there is also a moving story describing how, having developed great faith in mKhan po gZhan dga' simply from hearing his name, Khu nu Rinpoche stubbornly refused to leave the site of mKhan po gZhan dga's hermitage until the master had taught him.⁵¹ That this story follows a traditional format of student-guru devotion does not necessarily make it untrue. Looking at Khu nu Rinpoche's lengthy list of gurus in Khams, one can at the moment only speculate about the exact circumstances of many of the connections, but it seems likely both that sTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan's own devotion opened doors for him, and also that one introduction led to another.

Khu nu Rinpoche also studied with two other great masters of rDza dPal sprul Rinpoche's lineage, Mi nyag mKhan po Kun bzang bsod nams and mKhan po Kun bzang dpal ldan. As was often his pattern, he received teachings and transmissions from these lamas, while also

⁴⁸ mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzugs so*, *ibid.* See also Jackson, D. P. 2003, pp. 26-30 for a brief biographical summary of mKhanpo gZhan dga'.

⁴⁹ bSod nams dbang grags, interview, 2005. On the other hand, it is also possible that mKhan po gZhan dga's own compassion was responsible for his acceptance, in particular his recognition of the fact that Khu nu Lama had travelled such a vast distance for the sake of Buddhist learning. bSod nams dbang grags, interview, 2005; Tashi Tsering oral communication.

⁵⁰ This point will require additional research. mKhas btsun bzang po Rinpoche, interview May 2005.

⁵¹ bSod nams dbang grags, interview, 2005; rGyal dbang chos kyi nyi ma. *rDzogs chen dgon gyi lo rgyus*.

teaching them Sanskrit and literary arts; they were also at times co-students of other teachers at rDzogs chen Monastery.⁵²

Khu nu Rinpoche's presentation of bodhicitta was strongly influenced by the commentaries of both of these masters on the *Bodhisattvacāryavatāra*, especially that of Kun bzang dpal ldan. (This is also to say that Khu nu Lama's presentation stemmed from the tradition of dPal sprul, whose teachings formed the bulk of these commentaries, in particular that of Kun bzang dpal ldan.)⁵³ At the end of his life, when he was in his turn transmitting these lineages to Tibetan lamas in India, Khu nu Rinpoche especially emphasized these commentaries. In particular he stressed their importance to his main student, the Dalai Lama.⁵⁴ As a result, these commentaries are the ones on which His Holiness the Dalai Lama relies primarily as well.

This example highlights the continuity of the lineage transmitted via Khu nu Rinpoche, from Khams in the nineteen twenties and thirties to India in the nineteen sixties and seventies, and into the present day, as His Holiness continues to frequently teach on the *Bodhisattvacāryavatāra* and bodhicitta in the tradition of Khu nu Rinpoche.

Another connection of particular interest is Khu nu Rinpoche's deep friendship with the young Dil mgo mkhyen brtse Rinpoche, which began during this time in Khams. The two studied with many of the same teachers, and in addition, Khu nu Lama taught Dil mgo mkhyen brtse Sanskrit. Many years later in India, Dil mgo mkhyen brtse Rinpoche would recommend Khu nu Lama as a Sanskrit teacher to his own students (to whom Khu nu Lama several times taught *rDzogs chen* texts as well.)⁵⁵

During his time in Khams, Khu nu Rinpoche also became a student of the great Sakya pa teacher sGa 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan (1870-1940). Indeed, according to one biography of that master, Khu nu Rinpoche was one of his main, or most fortunate, students.⁵⁶ Khu nu Rinpoche returned several times to meet with him and receive teachings, both at the Dzongsar Shedra while the master was teaching

⁵² Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview April, 2005.

⁵³ Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview April, 2005.

⁵⁴ Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview April 2005.

⁵⁵ Trulku Pema Wangyal, interview April, 2005.

⁵⁶ See Kun dga' bstan pa, *rnam thar sKal bzang rna rgyan*. Also see K. Angrup *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, and bZang po, mKhas btsun Rin po che. nd. *Khu nu bla ma rin po che'i rnam par thar pa nyid kyi zhal gsungs ma bzhugs so*.

there, and later at the hermitage of Ga'u ri khrod. Among the Sakya teachings which Khu nu Lama received from him were major texts connected to the *Lam 'bras*, as well as Sapan's *sDom gsum rab dbye* and others.

Khu nu Lama also met the great 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse chos kyi blo gros (1893-1959) several times, and received many tantric and sutric transmissions from him, including the *rGyud sde spyi'i mdzes rgyan* and *Na ro mkha spyod ma'i khrid yig*. He also received the *lung, dbang* and *khrid* for the Seventeen Nyingma Tantras, the *gNyug sems*, Dodrupchen's *gSang snying spyi don 'od gsal nying po*, and Rongtonpa's *Abhisamayalañkāra* commentary, among many others.

From the great scholar 'Bru khog bLa ma 'Jam dbyangs grags pa, Khu nu Rinpoche received the Kalacakra commentary *Dri med 'od kyi 'grel chen*, as well as many Drukpa Kagyu teachings. In addition, Khu nu Lama studied other topics with him, such as medicine, which are connected to the Kalacakra Tantra system. 'Jam dbyangs grags pa's brother bKra shis rgyal mtshan likewise taught him astrology, also important for the Kalacakra.

At Ser shul gon pa, Khu nu Rinpoche learned Gelukpa lam rim from Khri pa dGe legs bstan dar, as well as receiving transmissions for the Gelukpa tradition of Demchok. Subsequently at 'Dan khog rnam rgyal ling, Khu nu Rinpoche met Lama Dam chos, from whom he learned Karma Kagyu teachings.

Sometime after this at rDzogs chen Monastery, Khu nu Lama met lHa rgyal Tshul khriims blo gros, the famous tantra, Kangyur and Tanyur scholar. From him Khu nu Lama received many *rDzogs chen* teachings from the tradition of Longchenpa and Rongdzom. For a year, Khu nu Lama also studied the medicine tantras with the medical expert Amchi A seng (in an unspecified location).

Returning to Derge, Khu nu Rinpoche received the *lung-s* for the complete works of Dwags po lha rje, and transmissions for the *sGrol dkar rjes gnang sgrub thabs* and for *bDe chen zhing du dren pa'i smon lam* from the Eleventh Si tu Rinpoche. Also at Derge, though perhaps somewhat later, the famous Derge Gon chen mKhan po Nga dbang bsam gtan blo gros (1868-1931) gave Khu nu Rinpoche teachings including the *'Jigs byed kyi bka' dbang*.

Around this time, Be ri mKhyen brtse Rinpoche gave Khu nu Rinpoche a number of major Drikung teachings, including the *dGongs gcig* commentary *rDo rje ma* and the *rTen snying lnga ldan*. Following his familiar pattern, Khu nu Rinpoche in return taught him about literature.

As can be seen from the above, Khu nu Rinpoche himself taught extensively in Khams, mainly on literary topics such as Sanskrit, poetics, and Tibetan grammar. Among his most important teaching connections was that with the Derge royal family to whom he taught *rig gnas*; the Derge princess became one of his main students.⁵⁷ Moreover, during the years nineteen twenty-six and seven, Khu nu Lama was the Sanskrit teacher of the great Sakya lama sDe gzhung Rinpoche.⁵⁸ Elsewhere, in Chamdo, government officials requested him to teach *rig gnas*, both literary arts and topics in medicine and astrology. At many of the monasteries and hermitages where Khu nu Lama received transmissions and instruction, he was also requested to teach *rig gnas* to the resident monks and lamas.

Interestingly, Khu nu Rinpoche does not seem to have been the only scholar from a far off Himalayan region to be teaching and studying in Khams at that time. Jackson records that while Khu nu Lama was in residence at rDzogs chen Monastery with sDe gzhung Rinpoche, teaching him Sanskrit, there were several Bhutanese monks staying there as well, who were also studying Sanskrit with Khu nu Lama.⁵⁹ Clearly, Khu nu Rinpoche and his teacher O rgyan bstan 'dzin were not the only ones to travel great distances in pursuit of learning. Khams during that time was apparently home to multiple groups of such visiting scholars.

Conclusion

Tibetans and people in the Himalayan world in general are justly famous for their willingness to travel great distances to go on pilgrimage or engage in trade. I have argued here that travel for the sake of study and for receiving teachings is an equally significant aspect of mobility across the Plateau. Such travel, and the intellectual curiosity and spiritual intensity which motivated people to embark on such journeys apparently brought scholar-practitioners from a great range of backgrounds, regions and local cultures into extended contact with each other. As a kind of thought exercise, therefore, I suggest we might characterize the time of the *ris med* movement ('movement' here in the sense of the development of networks of scholars who shared a

⁵⁷ K. Angrup, *Khu nu rin po che'i rnam thar thar pa'i them skas zhes bya ba bzhu gs so*.

⁵⁸ Jackson, D. P. 2003.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 64.

ris med attitude) as an instance of a kind of 'cosmopolitanism' in the Himalayas.

The cultural fact of regional, linguistic and lineage diversity in the geographic centres of *ris med* activity, especially in Khams; individual scholars' intellectual and spiritual stance of curiosity toward all Tibetan traditions; their interest in studying as many traditions as possible; and the plurality of lineage connections and thus of intellectual and spiritual authority - all these contribute to a situation of considerable fluidity and openness.

Needless to say, it would be a mistake to impose models of intellectual life or modernity taken too rigidly from western, especially European experiences. The Khams of scholars such as mKhan po gZhan dga', which Khu nu Rinpoche visited to such great benefit, was overwhelmingly rural except for a few centres such as Derge. This in itself is a radical difference from the European city centres in which the modern western notion of cosmopolitanism developed. Furthermore, the process of study with a given master and of thereby joining what one might call the 'community of scholars' (or of lineage holders) was a highly individual and personal experience, although strong patterns and networks of relationship tie all these individuals together.

The spiritual and scholarly networks of the Plateau in all these ways appear quite different from the nineteenth and early twentieth century British culture of learned societies, or from the European experience of literary salons or cafe society, to cite two famous models of cosmopolitanism. In that sense, both the use of the term 'movement' to describe the developments of that time, and the notion of a kind of 'cosmopolitanism' must be handled with care. I do not intend the word 'cosmopolitan' to obscure the uniqueness of the Himalayan experience, or to unduly link Himalayan experiences to contemporaneous developments in other, very different societies.

However, there has recently been interest in exploring the usefulness of the term 'modernity' to describe various Tibetan and Himalayan experiences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Indeed, among other developments, in 2003 there was a conference at Columbia University in New York devoted explicitly to Tibetan Modernities.) It is interesting to explore the resonances of the term 'cosmopolitan' while considering what sort of modernity individuals like Khu nu Rinpoche may (or may not) have been creating.

Khu nu Rinpoche and most scholars of his generation were deeply and lovingly concerned with the past. (Indeed, even the iconoclast dGe 'dun chos 'phel - who knew Khu nu Rinpoche in India - had a major

interest in the past, despite his more radical attitude toward it.) Thus any notion of modernity associated with these scholar-practitioners would paradoxically need to be a modernity that includes that past.

Scholars like Khu nu Rinpoche were interested in the continuity of the masters of each lineage and with traditionally valued forms of learning, in both the Buddhist and the 'minor' disciplines of knowledge, such as Sanskrit. They were not developing any sort of modernity that rejected or intended to supersede the past - quite the contrary. They were in fact in pursuit of a renewed relationship with the great traditions whose roots rested in the long history of both Tibetan and Indian scholarship and practice. Thus I suggest that if we use the term 'modernity' to characterize their work, we do so in a nuanced way as a 'modernity' of renewal and re-appropriation.

It is nevertheless provocative to consider what we might call these cross-Himalayan networks of teacher-student connections that resulted from travel between regions. Perhaps the term 'cosmopolitan' can encourage further reflection on the nature of various forms of Himalayan modernity, and can further serve to reinforce an appreciation for the extremely sophisticated level of Tibetan-language medium intellectual life of the early and mid-twentieth century period.

I myself would argue that it was precisely in the devoted return to Buddhist sources, for which Sanskrit study is the paradigm, that a great mind like Khu nu Lama (and Kong sprul before him) could renew the past's vibrancy and usefulness for practitioners of the present. That practice of renewing one's relationship with the living traditions of the past is its own form of modernity. In the boundary-crossing search for the most valuable knowledge regardless of geographic region or sectarian tradition, there is a particularly Himalayan form of cosmopolitanism.

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THE INDIGENISATION OF WESTERN MEDICINE IN SIKKIM

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Introduction

The British imperial Government of India established its direct authority over Sikkim after the conflicts of 1888-89, appointing John Claude White¹ to fill the newly created post of Political Officer Sikkim. As the imperial representative in Gangtok, White enjoyed considerable power - it was difficult for a local state to resist the 'advice' of a Political Officer who so prominently represented the economic and military power of the British Empire - and until his retirement in 1908, White effectively ruled Sikkim through a Durbar that he appointed and controlled; as he put it, 'everything was in my hands'.²

But when White took up his position, Sikkim was of little but strategic value to Britain's Indian Empire. It was impoverished and lacking in most of the structures of modern government - there were no police, no law courts, no public works, no secular education system, and no public health system. White was expected to develop his domain, but imperial government funding for this was limited to a subsidy of 12,000 rupees per annum. This was originally paid directly to the Sikkimese ruler, but with White determined to stamp his authority over the state, the Chogyal was effectively exiled from Gangtok until late 1895, and after his banishment the subsidy went 'towards the expense of management of the State by a British officer'³, suggesting that the Political Officer used this money for his own expenses.

In order to obtain the finance necessary to create and develop the state structures seen by the British as essential to modern government, White initiated a series of revenue-raising measures in Sikkim. A land revenue settlement was made, forestry excise measures were introduced, and, acting through the council that he dominated, White was able to introduce the unpopular measure of increasing immigration from Nepal in order to enlarge the tax base and raise agricultural production. Within a decade the revenue of the Sikkim state (which in 1891 was home to just 30,458 people⁴), had increased from just over £500 to £150,000 per annum.⁵ This income enabled White to begin

financing modernisation initiatives such as the education of Sikkimese youths in British India and the introduction of allopathic, or what is popularly known as ‘Western’, medicine.

This paper, drawing on the records of the imperial government and interviews with Sikkimese medical practitioners, will examine the subsequent development of this new medical system in the wider context of modernisation, and discuss how it came to develop the indigenised character it has in Sikkim state today.⁶ In presenting a narrative of medical progress, it is not my intention to suggest that this was uncontested, or that the process did not involve complex negotiations with practitioners of the indigenous medical systems.⁷ Nor is it to ignore contemporary problems and issues. My concern, however, is primarily with the influence and actions of individuals and institutions on the indigenisation process.

The Early Years (1880-1915)

By the late 19th century, it was established practice in the Empire for Medical Officers (generally from the Indian Medical Service), to accompany Political Officers touring or stationed in remote areas. Originally this had been to ensure the diplomats’ good health, but it had become apparent to the imperial policy-makers that the physicians could make a substantial contribution to the diplomatic success of the Political Officers’ missions by providing free medical services to the indigenous peoples, both elites and non-elites. The goodwill gained from this was seen as an important part of the political project of obtaining indigenous consent to British rule, and this ‘political’ role became the primary reason for the presence of Medical Officers in states such as Sikkim.⁸

When White first took up his post, the military medical staff who had served on the 1888-89 Sikkim campaign remained there under the command of Dr J.K. Close⁹ of the Indian Medical Service (hereafter IMS). After their departure, a Surgeon-Captain, Dr D.G. Marshall,¹⁰ was posted to Gangtok in 1891 to act as White’s Medical Officer, and he was replaced the following year by Surgeon Captain Dr A.W.T. Buist-Sparks.¹¹ In 1893, Buist-Sparks was replaced by Surgeon-Captain Dr G.F.W. Ewens.¹² Like his predecessors an IMS officer, Ewens remained in Gangtok until at least 1895.¹³

These officers were the first biomedical physicians to reside in Sikkim, and given that three of them later reached the rank of

lieutenant-colonel, and that Marshall had topped the examinations in his intake, they must have been among the better-than-average physicians in the imperial service. But Western medicine in such outposts did not then represent the scientific advances of the late 19th century as it would a decade later, and there is little evidence of their making any great impact on the medical world of Sikkim. Indeed their services may have been given only to White and his immediate circle; certainly in the absence of the banished Chogyal it was impossible to implement the usual imperial medical strategy of first impressing the ruling elites.¹⁴

These early physicians do not appear to have had a proper dispensary, and even the conditions in which they lived were primitive. Describing the later development of Gangtok, White refers to an unnamed Medical Officer and his wife in this early period 'who lived in a two-roomed hut built of wattle and dab [sic]', where their wooden furniture was liable to sprout in the rainy season.¹⁵ A Government medical dispensary was finally opened in Gangtok in the 1896-97 administrative year, but this must have been a very basic facility. An account from Sikkim in the 1960s describes how even in that time dispensaries 'usually are housed in small sheds. Half of the space is occupied by the medicine racks and table for dispensing. The remaining portion with a partition wall is being utilised by the compounder as his residence.'¹⁶

There is no record of any European physician having replaced Ewens, and it seems likely that an Indian-trained Sikkimese medical assistant then served in the Gangtok dispensary.¹⁷ Certainly by 1905 the dispensary was under the control of Civil Hospital Assistant H.N. Mitra, who remained there for some years.¹⁸ White does not appear to have submitted any annual report on the Sikkim state until 1902, but that first brief statistical report does provide the daily average number of patients at the Gangtok dispensary,¹⁹ as follows

1896-97	6.5
1897-98	7.4
1898-99	7.4
1899-1900	5.9
1900-01	5.3
1901-02	12.8

The sudden increase in 1901-02 is difficult to account for unless it includes smallpox vaccinations, with the rise consequent on the

epidemic of 1900. But in June 1902 another state dispensary was opened in Chidam,²⁰ and around this time a third dispensary opened at Rungpo. The latter was under the charge of the Public Works Department, suggesting that White, following a common imperial officer's administrative strategy of diverting funds allocated for one department to another, more needy area, was able to use PWD funds for medical purposes. With the establishment of these institutions, a structural basis for future medical developments had been made.

From 1902-03, Sikkim became an important staging post for what is popularly known as the 'Younghusband mission' and White was preoccupied with the mission from 1902 until he returned from Lhasa in the autumn of 1904. Gangtok was increasing in size and population, and the presence of numerous military units, each with their own Medical Officer, in and around Sikkim as a consequence of the Younghusband mission, were a reminder of the unsettled state of medical development there. The question of appointing a permanent European official to oversee medical issues in Sikkim was raised in a series of proposals White made early in 1906, but discussion over whether the resulting charges should fall to the military or civil department lasted for more than two years, not helped by White's characteristic tardiness in answering correspondence.²¹ White reported that the

want of an administrative medical officer over both civil and military matters for the Agency is being more and more felt. There are many pressing questions such as the development and supervision of existing dispensaries, the opening of new ones, vaccination, sanitation, etc., and the organization of medical aid generally, which require special knowledge and which are now suffering from the fact that there is no medical officer attached to this Agency.... All of ... [the dispensaries in Sikkim and Tibet] are under separate management and, although I can visit them occasionally, I am unable to say if the work in each is being properly carried on without a medical advisor. New dispensaries are required to be opened in Sikkim and without proper medical advice it is difficult to say where and how they should be opened. If all the dispensaries were brought under one control they would be worked more advantageously.²²

White requested the appointment of, 'a man of experience and tact' to administer both civil and military medical matters in Sikkim,²³ and it

was eventually agreed to establish a new IMS position of Assistant Civil Surgeon at Gangtok to supervise all medical matters in Sikkim state, including the state and missionary dispensaries, jails, schools, and 'personal attendance on the Chogyal and his family'.²⁴

This latter duty was a regular charge in the various states under a Political Officer, and does not confirm that Sikkimese royals had adopted medicine at that time, although the Chogyal Thubtob Namgyal was now reconciled to British authority, and his Private Secretary, Rai Bahadur Lobsang Choden, had served as a British medical interpreter on the Younghusband mission and might be presumed to have spoken well of medicine. But as it was agreed that the Agency Surgeon should receive extra allowances that nearly doubled his regular pay of 300rps a month, to compensate for the fact that there was 'practically no private practice in Gangtok',²⁵ it appears that at that time few if any of the Sikkimese elites were then liable to resort to medicine.

The first Civil Surgeon appointed to Gangtok was Assistant Surgeon 2nd class John Nelson Turner (*b.*1871), a member of the Indian Subordinate Medical Service, and not a qualified doctor. Turner took up his post in August 1909, and remained in Sikkim until early in 1920, by which time he was a Senior Assistant Surgeon who had been given the honorary rank of Captain during the First World War, when the IMS suffered a considerable shortage of manpower that it alleviated through the use of the Subordinate service officers. When Turner arrived in Gangtok, the three government dispensaries at Gangtok (which had in-patient facilities), Chidam, and Rungpo, had, in the previous year 1908-09 treated around 14,000 patients (of whom 13 died), including 218 in-patients at Gangtok. The figure of around 7,500 patients at Gangtok – compared with that previously given showing around 4,500 patients there in the year 1901-02 – does suggest a gradual increase in the Sikkimese uptake of medicine. In addition, three Church of Scotland Mission dispensaries in the state, to which the Government contributed an annual sum of 250 rupees, had treated more than 9,000 patients.²⁶

The Missionaries

Although the Political Department was actually reluctant to support Christian missionaries, regarding them as liable to upset the indigenous societies and thus create political instability, the establishment of a Political post in Gangtok was of considerable interest to the

missionaries, for whom expansion into Sikkim was a logical consequence of their existing work in Kalimpong-Darjeeling. By the 1880s, missionary strategists were confronting the problem of how best to encourage 'native' conversion, and their initiatives towards Sikkim developed at a time when the provision of medical services was increasingly seen as the most effective tool for conversions to Christianity.²⁷ As a result, both the missionaries and the Government of India contributed to the early development of Western medicine in Sikkim.

Church of Scotland missionaries from Kalimpong made several visits to Sikkim in the 1880s,²⁸ but were unable to obtain permission for a missionary to reside there. So the Reverend MacFarlane used the Lepchas, who had proved so amenable to conversion in Kalimpong district,²⁹ to spread the Gospel among their fellow tribesmen in Sikkim. His efforts enjoyed some success; by 1886 (when MacFarlane himself died), there were 26 Christians in Sikkim, and by 1888 their numbers had doubled.³⁰ The Chogyal continued to resist missionaries establishing a permanent presence until, in the changed political conditions after 1888-89, he was forced to allow them to establish a base in Sikkim. Gangtok itself remained out-of-bounds, but a site was selected in Chidam, in southern Sikkim, just a day's journey from Darjeeling, and a mission house was completed there in 1890, the same year that White moved into the newly built Residency in Gangtok.³¹

The missionaries' earlier initiatives in Darjeeling-Kalimpong enabled them to establish a strong influence over educational developments in Sikkim. While the Chogyal resisted the missionaries' efforts to expand Christianity in his domain, as early as 1880 he allowed the establishment of schools on the Western model - if these were staffed by local teachers -, and by 1890 seven such schools had been opened in southern Sikkim. But qualified local teachers were inevitably those who had emerged from the Christian educational structures in Darjeeling-Kalimpong and, in addition to education in Sikkim, many Sikkimese were educated at the mission's Training Institute in Kalimpong; in 1891, 17 out of the Institute's 37 students were Sikkimese.³² These schools produced a body of youths educated on the Western model, who were thus equipped to become the first generation of Sikkimese to serve in the new state institutions such as schools and medical dispensaries. The existence of such a group was to be crucial to the establishment and indigenisation of medicine in Sikkim.

The missionaries were much less successful in attracting converts. After its initial florescence among the Lepcha community, Christianity seems to have made little impact in Sikkim, with the number of Christians declining from 368 in 1913 to 343 by 1922.³³ The missions responded with a new emphasis on medical activities. In 1901, in describing the missionaries' main activities in Sikkim as 'evangelistic, educational, and vocational training', the Reverend Mackean made no mention of medicine.³⁴ But in January 1921, when he left Sikkim after spending a total of 14 years there, he recommended that his successor should be a medical missionary,³⁵ highlighting the one area where the missions had succeeded. In 1897 the Scottish missionaries had opened a dispensary at Chidam staffed by a compounder, Elatji Matiyas, a Lepcha convert to Christianity.³⁶ By 1906 further dispensaries staffed by local Christian compounders had been opened at Rhenock, Seriyong, and Dentan. In 1906 they dealt with 5,734 cases,³⁷ and by 1910 three more dispensaries had been opened.³⁸ Additional dispensaries followed, and by 1923-24 there were a total of 11 mission dispensaries in Sikkim, including one opened at Lachung in northern Sikkim by the Scandinavian Alliance Mission, which established a base there with two female missionaries in 1894.³⁹

It appears that as in so many other regions, the missionaries had found medical services the most effective way in which to reach the local populace. But whereas in Kalimpong-Darjeeling there were Europeans in day-to-day charge of the biomedical facilities, in Sikkim the dispensaries - like the schools - were under the immediate control of Sikkimese from the time they were opened. While the missionary ideal was the indigenisation of Christianity (and its associated teaching and medical programmes), in practice Europeans tended to retain control of the missions they established throughout the colonial period, with local converts restricted to control over peripheral or isolated mission outposts. But the Sikkimese opposition to the permanent presence of European Christians hastened the rise of indigenous Christians to control over the church, and meant that Sikkimese were the primary agents - and public face - of missionary medicine there.

In this early period, Sikkimese Christians educated on the Western model seem to have been 'generalists', who moved easily between posts as teachers, preachers, or compounders. Those educated by Christian teachers who had not converted were similarly liable to be employed in a variety of posts, including the growing colonial and state government bureaucracy.⁴⁰ But after the initial period there was a growing specialisation typical of the processes of modernisation, and

the move to state hegemony in regard to health and education was reflected in the way in which government employment came to carry greater social status than employment with the missions.

After Mackean's departure, another missionary willing to serve in Sikkim was eventually found. This was the Honourable Mary Scott, and just as the Reverend Graham took on the David Livingston role in Kalimpong, so too does she fill the 'heroic' role in histories of the Sikkim Church, where her arrival is described as 'the most important watershed in the history of Christianity in Sikkim'.⁴¹ Born in Scotland in 1877, a daughter of the 8th Lord Polwarth, Miss Scott travelled to Kalimpong in 1905. She remained there for 18 years, 'in what', one missionary wrote, 'some of us considered to be "insubordinate cooperation" with the Church of Scotland Mission',⁴² and received the Kaiser-i-Hind medal for her medical services to villagers during epidemics such as the influenza outbreak of 1918-19. Miss Scott agreed to fill the vacancy in Sikkim, and although her medical skills seem to have been self-taught, her aristocratic background and established reputation for good works stood her in good stead when she arrived there in April 1923. She was permitted to live in Gangtok, 'a great concession by the Sikkim Maharajah',⁴³ that was apparently a personal tribute to her character and reputation rather than a result of any initiative by the Political Officer.⁴⁴

Mary Scott remained in Sikkim for 16 years, where she was responsible for all missionary and church activities. Despite her lack of qualifications, she devoted much of her time to medical matters, supervising the mission dispensaries, organising medical camps, nursing and relief programmes during kala-azar epidemics, and even caring for the sick in her own home.⁴⁵ Where earlier efforts to spread Christianity into Sikkim focussed on the Lepchas, Miss Scott used a different strategy. While identifying herself with the Sikkimese to the extent of wearing local clothing and living in simple quarters in the Gangtok bazaar, she also deliberately set out to gain the support of the local elites. Doubtless helped by her aristocratic background, she became a friend of the Maharani, accompanied Sikkimese royalty on a tour of India, and even acted as a hostess at the palace.⁴⁶ Before health problems with the altitude forced her to leave Sikkim, her efforts were rewarded when the Chogyal allowed the opening of a Christian Church in Gangtok in 1936.⁴⁷ The Reverend Gavin Fairservice and his wife Ruth replaced her, but were not permitted to reside in Gangtok as missionaries,⁴⁸ and a 1938 regulation requiring Sikkimese to obtain permission from the Durbar to convert to Christianity suggests

Christianity's gains in Sikkim owed more to Mary Scott's personal influence than to any great enthusiasm for the new faith by the Sikkimese rulers.

In the absence of dispensary records or relevant writings by Mary Scott, it is difficult to gauge the impact of missionary medical initiatives on the Sikkimese. But it does appear that during the first two decades of a British presence there, in terms of structures, medical standards, and patients attracted, the missionaries played at least as significant a part in the introduction of medicine into Sikkim as imperial government efforts. Both government and missionary dispensaries were staffed by compounders trained by the missionaries in Kalimpong, and their standards, facilities and resources must have been very similar.

While eventually overtaken by state initiatives, the missionaries continued to be important agents for the spread of medicine, particularly in remote areas, down to the 1930s and '40s. As in Kalimpong and elsewhere, their influence on professional standards and the moral and ethical boundaries of the medical profession was also significant. Demonstrating a strong work ethic and dedication to service, they set high standards of professional care that their Sikkimese trainees were required to emulate, no doubt aided by the fact that the Christian construct of the 'compassionate doctor' and ideals of service to the poor translated without difficulty into similar Buddhist ideals.⁴⁹ In a small and autonomous state, isolated from the extremes of Indian society, such standards and ideals proved easier to maintain in the post-colonial period than they did in India itself.

Medical Development (1915-1940)

By 1915 considerable progress had been made towards the indigenisation of Western medicine in Sikkim. While the colonial state did, in many senses, use medicine as a 'tool of empire',⁵⁰ it was also part of the ideological justification for empire; providing a humanitarian provision to the citizens of the colonial state in return for their assent to colonial rule. It was also a 'tool' that the imperial Government wished to give up. The provision of medical services was expensive, and it became more so as Western medicine developed new therapies and technologies. The indigenisation of medicine was thus both an economic necessity, and (at least from the British perspective) a humanitarian service.

Tibet and Bhutan did not develop any significant indigenous Western medical tradition during the British period.⁵¹ But in Sikkim the indigenisation of medicine proceeded steadily. While Sikkim state's closer treaty links to British India and the political alliance that developed between the British and the Sikkimese aristocracy fostered this process, the key factor appears to have been the number of Sikkimese who had received a Western education.⁵² The government and mission schools in Darjeeling and Kalimpong, and in Sikkim itself from the 1880s,⁵³ provided a small but regular supply of youths, either from the Sikkimese aristocracy or the Lepcha and Nepali Christian communities, who were educated in the Western system. Such an education was an essential precursor to the biomedical training process, imparting the modern scientific world view necessary for the understanding of medicine. The fact that this education was, in state schools, essentially secular, and did not require conversion to Christianity made it more easily acceptable to the Himalayan Buddhist aristocracy, who came to occupy the more powerful positions in the developing medical structures, while the 'native Christians', from traditionally lower status social groups, filled the lower ranks of compounders, dressers, and nurses. Western medicine in Sikkim thus developed local social characteristics.

During White's residency, no Sikkimese appear to have progressed beyond compounder qualifications, but his successor Charles Bell was a much less autocratic colonial officer, who sought to encourage indigenous modernisation in the Himalayan states as a means of strengthening them, and consequently the security of British India's northern border. Bell therefore encouraged the education of Sikkimese medical students, albeit with the primary aim of employing them in Tibet.⁵⁴ Thus, of the first three students sent from Sikkim to Temple Medical College in Patna, two were immediately posted to a Political Department dispensary in Tibet when they graduated. These men (who were not closely related), were Tonyot Tsering and Bo Tsering (Libing family), both Kalimpong educated Sikkimese, who graduated as Sub-Assistant Surgeons in 1913 and 1914 respectively.⁵⁵ However, their contemporary, Bhowani Das Prasad Pradhan, however, a member of the Nepali community, remained in Sikkim after completing training in Patna and was placed in charge of the Chidam dispensary in 1913.⁵⁶

Thus, as the structures of a state medical system began to be developed in Sikkim, vacancies were filled by the emerging Sikkimese medical graduates. Their training was financed from the Sikkim state revenues. Thus we read, for example, that in 1924-25, 'Lobzang

Mingyur, a student who was sent to the Campbell Medical School, Calcutta, at the expense of the Darbar, finished his course of studies and was entertained at the Gangtok hospital as an extra compounder.⁵⁷ Associated aspects of the development of a modern state public health bureaucracy similarly aided the employment of the growing Western-educated administrative class. During the 1920s, registration of births and deaths was made compulsory, while a Civil Veterinary Department was established with a hospital and dispensary at Gangtok under a 'Babu' Bannerjee, and dog licenses were introduced, with orders given to destroy dogs without the appropriate discs.⁵⁸ In addition, sanitary measures were introduced in the Gangtok bazaar.⁵⁹

We have seen that the indigenisation process saw Western medicine take on aspects of traditional Sikkimese social structures, and this was particularly significant in regard to its patronage by the state's traditional ruler. The 9th Chogyal of Sikkim, Sir Thutob Namgyal, was increasingly supportive of modernisation. After his death in 1914, Sidkeon Namgyal Tulku, who had been groomed for the post by the British, succeeded him but died after ruling for just 10 months.⁶⁰ Sidkeong Tulku's younger half-brother, Tashi Namgyal, who had been educated at St Paul's and Mayo College, then became Chogyal in 1915, and ruled Sikkim until his death in 1963. Tashi Namgyal was, according to the British reports 'deeply interested in medical affairs', and in the early 1920s he and his wife ('the Maharani' in British records), made a number of visits to the hospital in Gangtok, 'and rendered every help possible.' The Maharani even joined the Political Officer's wife in organising classes at which local ladies might prepare garments for patients and so forth.⁶¹ This type of patronage continued into the post-colonial period.⁶²

These symbols of royal approval for, and association with, the new medical developments had considerable symbolic significance in Sikkimese society, bestowing royal authority on the new medical system and encouraging others to support it.⁶³ This relationship – and the greatly improved ties between Chogyal and Political Officer after White's departure were clearly articulated in the naming of a new Gangtok hospital built to replace the existing dispensary there.

On 24 September 1917, the new Chogyal Tashi Namgyal officially opened the Sir Thutob Namgyal Memorial Hospital.⁶⁴ Situated on a ridge overlooking Gangtok,⁶⁵ it began with beds for 10 in-patients⁶⁶ and charge of the new facility was given to a state Medical Officer of Sikkimese nationality.⁶⁷ The hospital became the centre of medicine in Sikkim, although it was initially poorly –equipped: not until 1923-24,

for example, did it have a microscope.⁶⁸ But additional specialist wards were gradually added; a tuberculosis ward in the late 1920s and a maternity ward in the late 1930s,⁶⁹ after a trained midwife was first posted to the hospital in 1929-30.⁷⁰

Despite the new hospital, patient numbers at Gangtok do not appear to have increased at this time. In 1923-24, just under 8,000 patients attended the hospital, little more than had attended the dispensary a decade earlier. But in the ensuing decade down to 1933-34, Gangtok outpatient numbers doubled to just over 16,000, although in-patient numbers remained steady, varying from a low of 317 in 1929-30 to highs of 465 in 1924-25 and 455 in 1933-34.⁷¹ The reasons for the increase are not stated in British accounts, but the growing population, biomedical advances, and personnel changes must all be considered as factors apart from a growing acceptance of medicine among the Sikkimese.

On the 1st of November 1922, John Turner was replaced as Gangtok Civil Surgeon by an Anglo-Indian, the Senior Assistant Surgeon Dr John Charles Dyer of the Subordinate Medical Services. As a fully-qualified medical practitioner, Dyer was of higher professional status than Turner, and he was a well regarded medical officer⁷² who had accompanied Sir Charles Bell to Lhasa in November 1920, and remained there for several weeks. When Dyer left Sikkim in January 1928, his replacement was Sub-Assistant Surgeon Dr Kenneth Percival Elloy DCM,⁷³ who remained in Gangtok until February 1932, when he was replaced as Civil Surgeon by Dr W.St A. Hendricks. Like Dyer and Elloy, Hendricks, described by the Political Officer's wife as 'a very fine GP',⁷⁴ was an Anglo-Indian, but he was also a member of the IMS, the first officer of the higher service to hold the Civil Surgeon position.

The IMS officers considered themselves the elite medical service, just as the Political Officers considered themselves the elite government service,⁷⁵ and in the late 1930s the political role of the Sikkim Medical Officers was increasingly to the fore after some decades in abeyance. Thus the emphasis on the modernity of medical practice in Sikkim in reports on kala-azar, the fever which broke out in epidemic form in Sikkim every 15-20 years; it was noted in 1939 that treatment of the fever in Gangtok 'was in every way in accordance with recent teaching', and that the advice of a specialist from the Tropical School of Medicine in Calcutta was being followed.⁷⁶

Yet Sikkim remained an economically insignificant state. Kala-azar was believed to be spread by sandflies, but as the report noted, 'to carry out efficient antisandfly measures in one village would absorb the

whole revenue of the state.’⁷⁷ Most of Sikkim’s medical costs continued to be borne from state revenue, including contributions to the mission dispensaries. The contribution of the imperial Government was small; in 1917-18 they gave just 1,500 rupees for medicine, in addition to indirect costs incurred by the PWD dispensary at Rungpo.⁷⁸ These economic restrictions must have acted as a considerable brake on medical progress in Sikkim state.

One possible source of income was to charge for medical services, and a step in this direction was taken in the 1920s. Initially, as was the case throughout all of those regions where British authority was represented by the Political Department, biomedical services were provided free of cost (as they were at missionary dispensaries). It was stated in regard to Sikkim that ‘The established policy of the State is to place medical aid within the reach of all classes of people in the State’⁷⁹ and in the case of the Chogyal and his immediate family, the Civil Surgeon, as we have seen, received an additional allowance to compensate him for calling on the royal family, while all others could receive free treatment at the dispensaries and hospitals. But just as the wealthier Sikkimese might choose to consult privately with the Civil Surgeon, so too, in the 1920s, was there a demand for private treatment at the hospital. Thus one ward in the Gangtok hospital was converted into a paying ward, where the charge was ‘Rs 1 per day, for the bigger room and annas 8 per day for the smaller.’ The ward had been built as a TB ward, but it was decided to transfer lepers to the existing facilities in Kalimpong – with Rs 200 per annum to be given to that hospice there - and to convert the leper ward into a TB ward.⁸⁰

Nor was any proscription made on private medical practice in Sikkim. In the early years several individuals who had trained as compounders in Kalimpong and worked in dispensaries in the region began private biomedical practice in Sikkim, although it was not until the 1970s that fully-qualified doctors set up private practice there. Until then, any Sikkimese qualifying as a doctor would be absorbed into government service.⁸¹

The question of cost was a complex one. While free biomedical services were available, Sikkimese traditions of etiquette demanded that ‘you should not go empty-handed’ when calling on others, even family members. Thus visitors to medical practitioners would, within this system, bring not only the ceremonial white scarf but also a gift. This might consist of an envelope containing money, but villagers would generally give produce, such as yak butter. Thus one doctor recalls that his fridge was always full of butter (which he didn’t use and

gave away to others).⁸² In the European understanding, therefore, medical treatment was not entirely free.

The Modern Era (post-1940)

The indigenisation of medicine in Sikkim meant that the departure of the British had little medical impact there; the last of the imperial Civil Surgeons, Dr G.F. Humphreys IMS, was an experienced doctor who had served as the Medical Officer in Gyantse from October 1940 to May 1944, and had visited Lhasa in 1942-43 as accompanying physician to two American emissaries. As an Anglo-Indian, he stayed on in Gangtok until the mid-1950s, providing continuity throughout the transitional post-colonial period. The Sikkimese Sub-Assistant Surgeons who had served in the imperial dispensaries in Tibet withdrew back to Sikkim during the 1950s as the Chinese take-over of Tibet intensified, thus increasing the pool of experienced medical practitioners available to the Sikkim state.

Patient numbers continued to increase in independent Sikkim; from 115,060 in 1954 to 188,526 in 1963.⁸³ But throughout the 1950s and '60s, medical development in Sikkim was restricted by the limited state revenues available, and continued to rely on Royal patronage to fund many routine items.⁸⁴ At the time of the Indian take-over in 1975, there were just four district hospitals in addition to the STNM Hospital in Gangtok, and the bulk of medical consultations took place in rural dispensaries and primary health care centres staffed by compounders, who thus remained the principal interface between allopathic medicine and the local patients.⁸⁵

During this period, the Sikkimese health services were heavily reliant on the variable commitment of Indian specialists employed on short-term contracts. But an indigenous class of medical specialists capable of administering and operating Sikkim's medical services was developing. Rather ironically, more indigenous Sikkimese occupy the higher ranks of the public health service today than was the case in independent Sikkim before 1975.

The first generation of Sikkimese practitioners of allopathic medicine were not fully qualified doctors. Men like Bo and Tonyot Tsering were Licensed Medical Fellows, who held the rank of Sub-Assistant Surgeon in government service. But by the 1940s, a new generation of qualified doctors began to emerge, largely from the small group of Western educated Sikkimese who formed a bureaucratic class

serving the Chogyal and colonial governments. This class had come to an accommodation with the British, and with their primary identity being Sikkimese and Buddhist, they were not a part of the nationalist struggles and religio-political divisions developing in India. As a cosmopolitan elite at home both in British and Tibetan society, they were able to benefit from the crucial role they played as intermediaries between their neighbouring powers, Tibet and the British Raj. Thus individuals such as Bo and Tonyot Tsering were crucial to the British medical project in Tibet, and gained advanced social status at home through their activities and through their employment with the leading regional power.

Among the new generation of medical practitioners to arise from this class were the son of Sikkimese medical pioneer Rai Bahadur Tonyot Tsering, Dr Pemba T. Tonyot, who became the first Sikkimese anaesthetist. Another was Dr Pemba Tsering, whose father had served in the Political Department and risen to the important position of Head of British Mission Lhasa. Others from this social class were Dr Tsering Tendup Kazi, who may have been the 1st Sikkimese to qualify as MD.,⁸⁶ and Dr Tsewang Paljor, the first Sikkimese to qualify as a surgeon, whose great-grandfather was the leading aristocrat Raja Tenduk Paljor, whose estates had extended to Darjeeling. Similarly Dr T.R. Gyatso, the present Secretary of the Sikkimese Department of Health and Family Welfare, is a grandson of the well-known Kazi Dawa Samdrup, translator of the Royal *History of Sikkim*.

The close links between members of this class are illustrated by the fact that the first female doctor in Sikkim, Dr Mrs Leki Dadul, who graduated from Calcutta around 1955, married Rai Bahadur Bo Tsering's son, Sonam Dadhul, who became Chief of Police in Sikkim. He recalls that his father was a very social man, throwing so many parties that their house seemed like a hotel, and it does appear that the personal qualities of Bo and Tonyot Tsering were an important factor in their winning acceptance in Lhasa.⁸⁷

The careers of these individuals tended to follow a similar pattern, and they shared ideals of service and duty that had been reinforced by the educational and professional structures of British imperial rule. Dr Pemba T. Tonyot, for example, was born in Yatung and educated at the Gangtok Tashi Namgyal school. His father had hoped his son would follow him into medicine and Dr Tonyot did so, 'being religious minded and seeing it as a noble profession'. After matriculation he obtained a BA in science before going on to qualify as MBBS in Madhya Pradesh, and in 1966 he became the first Sikkimese to

graduate as an anaesthetist, being posted to STNM Hospital in Gangtok to replace an Indian doctor. As the only anaesthetist, he carried on for 10 years without leave, and when, as a Tibetan speaker, he was deputed for three months to care for the ailing Karmapa Lama at Rumtek, no major operations could be carried out in Gangtok. He later became Medical Advisor to the Government of Sikkim before retiring in 2003 and recalls with satisfaction that ‘by God’s grace’ no patient died under his care.⁸⁸

His near-contemporary, Dr Tsewang Paljor, was similarly schooled in Gangtok and then St Joseph’s school in Darjeeling where he studied science. Recognising the shortage of medical personnel in his native land and the opportunity he had to serve there, he then applied to the Government and was selected for medical training in Andhra Pradesh, graduating MBBS in 1968. After returning to Sikkim to serve in the STNM Hospital, he was sent in 1972 to take a masters degree in surgery at the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research at Chandigarh, then returned to Gangtok as the first Sikkimese surgeon, again replacing an Indian serving on contract.⁸⁹ After 1984, he transferred to Namchi in South Sikkim to establish a new hospital there with specialist services to relieve the burden on Gangtok hospital. He remained there until 1998, when he returned to Gangtok as Principal Chief Consultant and Medical Advisor to the Government of Sikkim, primarily concerned with planning for a new Gangtok hospital. Having married the second daughter of Princess Coo Coo-la, a physiotherapist who had trained at Millfield and Cardiff, he retired in 2003, although he still does some private practice.⁹⁰

A slightly different path was followed by Sonam Dorji, who as a youth was selected by the 1935-45 Sikkim Political Officer Basil Gould to study at High School in Gangtok. Then, in search of adventure, he headed off to join the Gurkhas, fighting at Imphal against the Japanese forces in 1942 alongside Ganju Lama, who won the Victoria Cross.⁹¹ On his return to Gangtok, Sonam Dorji remembered the Political Officer Arthur Hopkinson recognising his services with the offer of any position he sought, and, acting on ‘intuition’, he opted for medical training at Campbell Medical College. He went on to serve at what were now the Indian Government diplomatic posts in Tibet during the 1950s, relieving a Dr Tenzing in Lhasa⁹² and taking the chance to make the *parikrama* of the sacred Mount Kailas in western Tibet while serving at Gartok. After the transfer of the Indian positions to Chinese control in 1954, he spent most of his career serving in north Sikkim, before retiring with wife Namgay Dolma in 1989.⁹³

Dr Lobsang Tenzing was from a somewhat different background. Originally from the village of Mangan in north Sikkim, he was the son of the Christian pastor there, although himself a Buddhist, and a nephew of Dr Norbu, who was killed in the Gyantse floods in 1954. The Tenzing family placed great emphasis on modern education, and after finishing his matriculation in Gangtok in second place on the merit list, he was sent to NRS Medical College in Calcutta, completing his MBBS in 1963, the first of his Lepcha-Bhutia community to do so. He was posted to the STNM hospital that year, and was then posted as Medical Officer at the Mangan hospital from 1967-1971. Dr Lobsang eventually retired as Director-cum-Secretary of Health in 1995, having been the first local doctor to reach this position.⁹⁴

Along with the doctors and licensed practitioners, the (until recently all-female) profession of nursing also developed in Sikkim, albeit that the profession is still not of particularly high status. In 1954, having reached 7th grade in Mary Scott's school, Nurse Mrs Sonam Eden ('Phigoo'), was one of two girls aged around 15-16 who were sent to Kalimpong under the state Five Year Plan to train as nurses. Mrs Sonam Eden, along with Mrs Prabitra Pradhan, trained under the Scottish missionary Dr Albert Craig, a man of very high standards who she remembers as strict and short-tempered in contrast to the 'Mother Theresa' figure of Mary Scott. On her return to Gangtok, Phigoo was posted to the STNM Hospital where she remained until retiring in 1995 after 40 years of service.⁹⁵

A Postscript

In Sikkim today, the STNM Hospital straddles a main Gangtok intersection. As of 2000, it was a 300 bed hospital, with 78 doctors including 36 specialists on staff under the charge of 'Director-cum-Medical Superintendent' Dr H. Pradhan, and in 1999, 351 major and 984 minor surgical operations were carried out there. Plans are advanced for a new 500 bed hospital, as patient numbers continue to increase; reaching around 140,000 in 1999.⁹⁶ While Sikkim is part of India, most of its medical personnel is born in Sikkim⁹⁷. For medical purposes the state is divided into four districts, each under a Chief Medical Officer who is also head of the central hospital in that district. A network of primary health care centres and sub-centres exists in each district,⁹⁸ and medical services remain largely free of cost.⁹⁹ A subjective judgement considering patient-doctor relations, service

morale, non-elite class access, and not least financial probity, as well as numerous statistical indicators,¹⁰⁰ would suggest Sikkimese today enjoy among the best biomedical services in India.

Notes

1 John Claude White CIE., (1853-1918) was born in India and educated in Bonn and at Coopers Hill College of Engineering. His memoirs, *Sikkim and Bhutan*, were first published in 1909 and have been frequently reprinted; for more critical analysis of White's career, see Alex McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj: The Frontier Cadre, 1904-1947*, Richmond, Curzon Press 1997, esp. pp.xxii – 42.

2 White, *Sikkim* ... p.26; the Durbar's insignificance is suggested by the fact that it did not meet at all in at least one year, 1905-06; India Office Library and Records [hereafter, IOR], Microfische 804, Sikkim Annual Report 1905-06, White to India 20 August 1906.

3 *Ibid.*

4 H.H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, 1928, (Low Price Publications, Delhi reprint edition, n.d.), p.27.

5 White, *Sikkim*, pp.26-27; William McGovern, *To Lhasa in Disguise*, London 1924, pp.30-31.

6 This paper is part of a wider project on the introduction of 'Western' biomedicine into the Indo-Tibetan Himalayas, for which I am pleased to acknowledge the support of the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at University College London. Particular thanks are due to the various medical personnel in Sikkim who assisted me in my research there, most of whom are represented here by interviews, and to Dr Anna Balikci-Denjongpa and Tashi Densapa at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in Gangtok. Naturally, however, I am responsible for all conclusions here.

I would be interested to hear from anyone who could add to this project: I may be contacted on DungogAlex@hotmail.com

7 These issues are explored in more depth in a monograph currently in preparation entitled *Footprints remain: The introduction of Western biomedicine into the Indo-Tibetan Himalayas*.

8 "It is a well known principle that medical officers are attached to our Consulates and Agencies in remote localities primarily on account of political considerations"; National Archives of India [hereafter, NAI], Foreign Department [hereafter, FD], External A, 1906 Sept., 40-46, File note by "R.S.B. & R.W.S.", 29 May 1906.

9 Dr Joseph Kinnear Close (b.1864), born in Belfast, Royal University of Ireland, served on Sikkim campaign 1888, retired with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

10 Dr Daniel Grove Marshall (1860-1923) IMS, born Shrewsbury, University of Edinburgh, topped IMS list for February 1888 intake, served at the Siege of Peking, retired with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

11 Dr Arthur William Tremeneve Buist-Sparks (1866-1925) IMS, born in Scone (Perthshire), Edinburgh University, retired with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

12 Dr George Francis William Ewens (1864-1914) IMS, son of a Kensington wine merchant, Royal University of Ireland and Royal College of Surgeons.

13 *The India List: Civil and Military*, relevant editions.

14 We read that in 1892 the Chogyal's two-year old daughter Kumari Kunzang Wangmo was still treated by indigenous 'propitiatory rites, such as burning of incense etc' when very ill; *History of Sikkim*, compiled by H.H. The Maharajah and Maharani of Sikkim, (Kazi Dawa Samdrup, translator), Gangtok 1908, p.108.

15 White, *Sikkim...* p.36.

16 Mitra, S.K., 'Present-Day Health Organization in Sikkim' in *Indian Journal of Public Health* XIII.1, 1969, p.6.

17 *Thackers* records that an H. Nath Mitra was Hospital Assistant at Gangtok in 1907-10, with the Lepcha Christian Ongden serving in the Chidam dispensary in 1907, but has no earlier entries for this post.

18 IOR, microfische 804, Sikkim Annual Report 1905-06, White to India, 20 August 1906; in 1905-06 Chidam dispensary was staffed by Indu Bhusam Sen Gupta until 7 June 1905, then by Mohan Malakan until 15 September, when a compounder took charge until C.H.A. Ongden arrived on 13 January 1906.

19 IOR, V/27/62/197, *Sikkim State Gazetteer*, Statistics 1901-02, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta 1905.

20 *Ibid.*

21 See NAI, FD, External A, May 1908, 46-49, various correspondence.

22 NAI, FD, External A, Sept. 1906, 40-46, J.C. White to India, 20 March 1906.

23 *Ibid*

24 NAI, FD, External A, May 1908, 46-49, J.C. White to India, 14 October 1907.

25 *Ibid*; White estimated that 'the incumbent of the post is not likely to secure more than Rs 20 or so a month from private practice.'

26 IOR, L/P&S/10/92-1289, *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for 1908-09*, Calcutta Govt. Press 1909: p.7 (chapter VI). The total number of patients given in the report does not properly tally with the breakdown of patients per dispensary given as an appendix. Given that the population of Sikkim was probably around 35-40,000 at that time, the figures must refer to cases treated rather than individual patients. It is unclear whether the 250 rupees was in total or per dispensary, although the latter seems likely. The report appears to have been compiled shortly before Turner's arrival, and the author must be Charles Bell. There were 6,299 out-patients in Gangtok dispensary in 1905-06: IOR, microfische 804, Sikkim Annual Report 1905-06, White to India, 20 August 1906.

27 Rosemary Fitzgerald, "'Clinical Christianity': The Emergence of Medical Work as a Missionary Strategy in Colonial India, 1800-1914", in Biswamoy Pati & Mark Harrison (eds), *Health, Medicine and Empire: Perspectives on Colonial India*, London 2001, esp., pp 89, 104-111.

28 *Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Sikkim: Millennium Celebration Year 2000 Souvineer*, no author; Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Sikkim, n.d [2000?], p.8. The mission to Sikkim was supported by the Scottish Universities Mission (SUM) and was separate from, and not always enjoying good relations with, the CSM, although numerous individuals worked for both missions.

29 J.R. Minto, *Graham of Kalimpong*, William Blackwood, Edinburgh 1974, p.28.

30 Louis Fader, *Called from Obscurity: The Life and Times of a True Son of Tibet, Gergan Dorje Tharchin*, Vol.II, Mirror Press, Kalimpong 2004, pp.8-10: *Evangelical ...* p.8.

31 *Evangelical ...*, p.8. The significance of this symbolic convergence of imperial political and religious power cannot have escaped the attention of the Sikkimese, yet should not be exaggerated; as noted, the Political Officers, White included, were generally strongly opposed to the missionaries proselytisation and gave them little real support. White, for example, certainly had the power to have obtained them the right to reside in Lhasa, but did not do so.

32 Cindy Perry, *Nepali around the World*, Kathmandu 1997, pp.88-93, 120-21 n.46.

33 *Evangelical ...* p.20.

34 *Evangelical ...* p.24, quoting Rev. Mackean to J.C.White, 18 September 1901.

35 Albert Craig, *A Scot in Sikkim*, Board of World Mission and Unity, Edinburgh, n.d., p.10; *Evangelical ...* p.10

36 *Nepali Around ...*, p.93.

37 Dep. 298 (13), Minutes of the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee 1903-06, p.501. *Nepali Around...*, p.93 includes Phambong rather than Seriyong in the list of dispensaries: both are in western Sikkim.

38 *Evangelical ...* pp.9-10.

39 IOR, V/10/1977, Sikkim Annual Report [hereafter, SAR],1923-24. Peripatetic dispensaries were also introduced, set up at the fairs that are meeting grounds for Himalayan populations, while the SUM opened new dispensaries at Vok and Rinchenpong, although it was forced to close Richenpong and Dentam on the dismissal of the compounder in charge of these sites. IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1912-13.

40 Babu Y. Isaac, for example, who was later employed as a confidential clerk at the British Trade agency in Yatung (Tibet), was baptised and later ordained by the Scandinavian missionaries, and he opened a school in Song in 1901; see *Nepali Around ...*, p120, n.10.

41 *Evangelical ...* p.10.

42 Basil Gould, *Jewel in the Lotus*, London 1957, p.180, quoted in Fader, *Called ...* vol.2, p.423.

43 Craig, *A Scot ...*, pp.1-10, quotation from p.10.

44 The well-known frontiersman Major F.M. Bailey was then the Political Officer Sikkim. Like White, he was opposed to the presence of missionaries, although he skilfully used them as a source of intelligence; on Bailey see A. Swinson, *Beyond the Frontiers: the biography of Colonel F.M. Bailey, explorer and secret agent*, London 1971; for more critical analysis in regard to his Himalayan career, see McKay, *Tibet...* esp. chapter 7.

45 Mary Scott's precise activities are difficult to ascertain; cautious as to Sikkimese opinion and aware that her activities were observed, if not actively monitored, she did not keep a diary or write about her activities in letters; see Craig, *A Scot ...*, p.11.

46 Craig, *ibid ...*, pp.10-15.

47 *Ibid*, pp.14-15. The Hon. Mary H.H. Scott DD, DCS, KIH, remained in Kalimpong working with the blind until 1953 when she returned to Scotland, where she died in 1964.

48 *Nepali Around...*, pp.89, 120 n.13.

49 Interview with Nurse Mrs Sonam Eden ('Phigoo'), Gangtok, 6 June 2004; interview with Dr Tsewang Paljor, Gangtok, 6 June 2004; interview with Dr Pemba T. Tonyot, Gangtok, 4 June 2004.

50 The term is from Daniel Headrick, *Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1981.

51 On which see Alex McKay, 'British-Indian Medical Service Officers in Bhutan, 1905-1947: A Historical Outline', in Karma Ura and Sonam Kinga (eds), *The Spider and the Piglet: Proceedings of the First International Seminar on Bhutan Studies*, The Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimphu (Bhutan) 2004; (also available online at: www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/publications/spdr-pglt/spdr-pglt.htm); Alex McKay, 'The Politics of Voluntary medicine: India, Tibet and China, 1900-1947', forthcoming in *Imperialism and Medicine in South Asia*, Sanjoy Bhattacharya & Biswamoy Pati (eds), Orient Longman.

52 Something lacking in both Bhutan and Tibet; see McKay, *ibid*, 'The Politics....'

53 By 1915 there were two main schools in Sikkim, the Bhutia and Nepalese boarding schools, along with 20 village schools maintained by the state, 12 Church of Scotland and two Scandinavian Missionary Alliance schools, and three run by private landlords; IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1914-15.

54 NAI, FD, Internal B, June 57-58, C. Bell to India, 6 April 1909.

55 Interview with Sonam Dadul, Gangtok, 4 March 1994; interview with Tashi Tsering Tonyot, Gangtok, 26 February 1994.

56 IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1912-13. By this period, the British did not use Nepali personnel in Tibet due to their cultural differences with the Tibetans.

57 IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1924-25.

58 IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1922-23; V/10/1978, SAR 1929-30.

59 IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1923-24.

60 Re Sidkeong Tulku, see Alex McKay, "'That he may take due pride in the empire to which he belongs": the education of Maharajah Kumar Sidkeon Namgyal Tulku', in the *Bulletin of Tibetology*, 39 (2), 2003.

61 IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1922-23; V/10/1977, SAR 1923-24; also see, re the Chogyal's patronage of a kala-azar treatment centre at Rungpo, IOR, L/P&S/13/449, Government of India Foreign Department to India Office, 1 April 1937.

62 Interview with Nurse Mrs Sonam Eden ('Phigoo'), Gangtok, 6 June 2004.

63 As early as 1905 three beds in the Gangtok dispensary were subsidised by 'Messrs Jetmull and Bhoraj': IOR, microfische 804, SAR 1905-06, White to India, 20 August 1906. In 1913 we read of the willingness of 'some *Kazis* [the Bhutia and Lepcha land-owning aristocracy] and *thikadars* [Nepali landlords] to build suitable dispensaries if drugs etc. are provided [by the Government]'; IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1912-13.

64 E.C.Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District since 1835: with a complete itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and the District*, Jetsun Publishing, Calcutta 1989 (Reprint of 2nd, 1922 edition: 1st published 1916), p.16.

65 It moved to larger premises at its present location in the centre of Gangtok in 1937.

66 Interview with Dr T.R. Gyatso, Gangtok, 5 June 2004.

67 Dr Tsering Tendup Kazi is the first of the hospital superintendents mentioned in records I have sighted. He was replaced by Dr Panchabir Singh around 1931; IOR, V/10/1978, SAR 1929-30; V/10/1980, SAR 1932-33.

68 First introduced in 1923-24; IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1923-24.

69 IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1927-28 & 1928-29; Margaret Williamson, *Memoirs of a Political Officer's Wife in Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan*, Wisdom, London 1987, p.227.

70 IOR, V/10/1978, SAR 1929-30. But it was noted in 1969 that there was no specialist obstetrician or gynaecologist in any Sikkim hospital; see Mitra, S.K., 'Present-Day Health Organization in Sikkim' in *Indian Journal of Public Health*, XIII.1, 1969.

71 IOR, V/10/1977, respective Sikkim Annual Reports.

72 Dyer was promoted to Lieutenant in 1937 and retired in 1938; IOR, L/Mil/14/6895.

73 Dr Elloy, b 1884, retired 1939, served in France, Mesopotamia and Palestine in WW1.

74 Williamson, *Memoirs ...*, p.53.

75 Interview with Dr M.V. Kurian, Coimbatore, 12 January 1994.

76 1939 Government of Sikkim report 'Kala-azar in Sikkim' (apparently compiled by Gould and Hendricks) and 'Second Report on Kala-azar' by L.E. Napier. Copies in possession of the author.

77 *Ibid.*

78 IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1917-18.

79 IOR, V/10/1978, SAR 1929-30.

80 IOR, V/10/1977, SAR 1927-28 & 1928-29.

81 Interview with Dr Tsewang Paljor, Gangtok, 6 June 2004.

82 *Ibid.*

83 *Ibid*; Mitra, S.K., 'Present-Day Health Organization in Sikkim' in *Indian Journal of Public Health* XIII.1, 1969, p.5.

84 E.g., the last Chogyal's American wife, Hope Cooke, provided uniforms for the hospital nurses; interview with Nurse Mrs Sonam Eden ('Phigoo'), 6 June 2004.

85 Mitra, S.K., 'Present-Day Health Organization in Sikkim' in *Indian Journal of Public Health* XIII.1, 1969, p.5.

86 Dr Tendup Kazi was Medical Officer in the General Hospital in Namchi, south Sikkim, which opened in 1925; *Souvenir: ...*, n.d.; by at least 1928 he was made State Medical Officer in charge of the STNM Hospital in Gangtok; his precise qualification is uncertain; IOR, V/10/1978 SAR 1929-30;

87 Interview with Sonam Dadul, Gangtok, 3 June 2004.

88 Interview with Dr Pemba T. Tonyot, Gangtok, 4 June 2004.

89 Interview with Dr Tsewang Paljor, Gangtok, 6 June 2004.

90 *Ibid.*

91 Interestingly, Sonam Dorji recalled that the Japanese would sometimes avoid shooting at them, directing fire at the British rather than their fellow Asians.

92 Dr Tenzing, who was en route to Lhasa, died in the floods that destroyed the Gyantse Trade Agency in 1954.

93 Interview with Dr Sonam Dorji, Gangtok, 7 June 2004.

94 Information courtesy of Dr Anna Balikci.

95 Interview with Nurse Mrs Sonam Eden ('Phigoo'), Gangtok, 6 June 2004.

96 *Master Plan for Modernisation of STNM Hospital – a Project Report, August 2000*, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, pp.11, 52.

97 There are now at least 10 doctors from Sikkim employed in the U.K., USA, and Europe.

98 T.R. Gyatso & B.B. Bagdas, *Health Status in Sikkim (Survey Conducted by Department of Health & Family Welfare)*, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Sikkim, 1998, p.5.

99 Under article 371F of the Sikkim-India merger agreement added to the constitution of India, Sikkim holds a special status allowing traditional laws to remain effective: thus free medical treatment remains.

100 E.g., Sikkim is 'possibly the only state in [India] to achieve the notional norm of establishing 1 primary health centre for 20,000 people'; *Sikkim Human Development Report 2001*, p.21.

KING ARTHUR COMES TO TIBET: FRANK LUDLOW AND
THE ENGLISH SCHOOL IN GYANTSE, 1923-26¹

MICHAEL RANK

With the spread of the British Empire, the British educational system also spread across the world, and this is the story of how, in the early 1920s, it reached as far as Tibet.

The English School at Gyantse in southern Tibet had its origins in the aftermath of the 1903-04 Younghusband Expedition which enabled Britain to gain a foothold in the “Roof of the World”. Britain consolidated its advance in the Simla Convention of 1913-14. At about this time it was decided to send four young Tibetans, aged between 11 and 17, to Rugby school in England to learn English and the technical skills necessary to help their country to modernise. At the Simla Convention, the idea of setting up a British-run school in Tibet also came up. Sir Charles Bell, doyen of British policy in Tibet, noted that it was the Tibetan Plenipotentiary who broached the subject: “Something of the kind seems indispensable to enable the Tibetan Government to meet the pressure of Western civilization. And they themselves are keen on it. Without such a general school education Tibetans cannot be trained to develop their country in accordance with their own wishes.”²

Britain was anxious that it was not viewed as imposing its values on Tibet, and another Government of India official stressed that it should be “made clear that the school is being established by the Tibetans on their own initiative and will be entirely their own affair—

¹ I am grateful to Dr Anna Balikci-Denjongpa, editor of the *Bulletin of Tibetology*, for her support, and to Dr Mark Turin for suggesting that I submit this article to the journal. I am also grateful to Joyce Hill, Richard Mildon, Jean Rasmussen, Eileen Walsh, Michael Walsh, Malcolm Lyell and Ruth Whall for shedding light on Ludlow’s early life, and to the late Stephen Aris, Hugh Richardson, William Stearn and Sir George Taylor for their personal reminiscences.

This is an expanded version of an article, “Frank Ludlow and the English School in Tibet, 1923-1926,” by Michael Rank, 2003, *Asian Affairs*, vol. XXXIV, pp. 33-47. The earlier article includes photographs of the school taken by Ludlow.

² British Library, Oriental and India Office Collection (OIOC), L/PS/11/208, C.A. Bell to Secy of Govt of India in the Foreign and Political Affairs Dept, Simla, 3 September, 1921.

i.e. it is not in any way a British enterprise betokening ‘peaceful penetration.’”³

It is easy in this post-colonial age to be cynical about British colonial officials setting themselves up as guardians of Tibetan freedom, but many British administrators did undoubtedly have a genuine respect for the Tibetan people and their culture. Arthur Hopkinson was later to worry that the encounter with Western culture had brought “the worst aspects of capitalism” to Tibet⁴, while works such as *Lhasa the Holy City* (1938) by F. Spencer Chapman are suffused with the respect felt by this distinguished mountaineer for the Tibetan elite, or at least for the more progressive elements among this class.

In any case, it was eventually decided to open an ‘English school’ at Gyantse, the scene of the main battle of the Younghusband Expedition and where there was already a British Trade Agent and military escort. The presence of a British community there “offers the opportunity to the students of mixing with a few people of British race,” a Government of India official noted, adding: “The number of students likely to attend the school at the beginning will be between 25 and 30, none of whom will presumably have had any previous education even in Tibetan. It is proposed to give the boys sound education in both English and Tibetan for 5, 6, 7 or 8 years according to their requirements and send them thereafter to European schools at hill stations, such as Darjeeling, Mussoorie, Naini Tal, etc., for about a year in order for them to mingle with European boys and to learn European ideas, manners and customs.”⁵

The 13th Dalai Lama himself approved of the idea and the Sikkimese police officer Rai Bahadur Sonam Wangfel Laden La reported that “He is very keen to introduce English school, bring in Mining Engineers to work the Tibet Mines, & Mechanics to improve the arsenal, & experts to improve the making gunpowder & cartridges, also to improve his army & introduce Power in whole Tibet.”⁶

³ Op. cit., note, 1922.

⁴ Cited in *Tibet and the British Raj* by Alex McKay (Richmond, 1997), p. 180. This, together with *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951; the Demise of the Lamaist State* by Melvyn C. Goldstein (Berkeley, 1989) and *Tibet, China and India 1914-1950* by Alastair Lamb (Hertingfordbury, 1989), provides an excellent account of the political background to the events described in this article.

⁵ OIOC, L/PS/11/208, from H. Sharp, 17 April 1922.

⁶ Letter from Laden La (to India Office?), 21 October, 1921, LP&S/10/538. Laden La had been in charge of the Dalai Lama’s security during his exile in India and was in 1922 invited to Lhasa to set up and train a modern police force in Tibet.

Sir Charles Bell outlined the purpose of the school in some detail in his book *Tibet Past and Present* (Oxford, 1924). “Put briefly, our main requirement was that Tibet herself should be strong and free” (p.190), he declared, adding that “In Tibet also we had an ideal barrier against Bolshevik aggression, for the latter is abhorrent to the orderly Tibetan mind and to the religion which inspires it” (p.191). “[Tibet’s] deliberate but sustained advance would be promoted by the establishment of an English school in Tibet”, Bell added, but noted that “Tibetans of the upper classes were averse from sending their boys or girls to school in India for education, and wished to see a school established in Gyantse or even in Lhasa itself” (p.196).

“The late Prime Minister, Lönchen Shatra, discussed the question with me in 1914. His views of the subjects that should be taught showed that even leading Tibetans are slow to realize the limitations of Western education and the long years that it requires. The school was to be for boys of twelve to twenty years of age, and the subjects to be taught were as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| a) English | e) Weaving |
| b) Engineering | f) Working in leather |
| c) Military training | g) Working in iron |
| d) Carpentry | h) Utilisation of horns
and bones” (p.196). |

“All with whom I discussed the matter insisted the head master should be British” (p.197).

Plans for the school were made public in 1922, when *The Times* published a short a short report noting that “A notable indication of the realization on the part of the Tibetan authorities that the permanent isolation of their country from modern influences is impossible is afforded by the decision of the Lhasa Government to start a school on English lines in Tibet for the education of the sons of officials.”

“The boys will be given a sound education in both English and Tibetan ... At first the number of boys will be small—perhaps not more than about thirty—but the school will expand as time goes on, and the boys will be kept at school for terms ranging from five to eight years, according to requirements, and afterwards will be sent to European schools in the Indian hill stations ... The school will be at Gyantse,

For an authoritative study of Britain’s role in Tibet see McKay’s *Tibet and the British Raj*, although it is mistaken in stating that Ludlow was the son of a Cambridge lecturer in Botany (the author confuses him with Kingdon-Ward, see below) and that he was educated in Chelsea before going to Cambridge (p. 226).

where there is a British Trade Agent, and there will be an opportunity to mix with a few English people.”⁷

A few months later, on January 30, 1923, a draft agreement was reached on appointing Frank Ludlow of the Indian Educational Service as headmaster of the school at a salary of 600 rupees per month, rising to 1,000 rupees, on a three-year contract. Ludlow, who was later to become a renowned Himalayan botanist and ornithologist and also to be influential in Anglo-Tibetan diplomatic relations, was born in Chelsea on August 10, 1885, the son of a grocer. Frank’s father, Walter Ludlow, is commemorated in a window in St George’s church, Dunster, Somerset, where he was a churchwarden. The family had moved to Somerset when Frank was a child; he attended a private school in Alcombe near Dunster, followed by King’s College, Taunton and Wellington School, Somerset⁸ before graduating from Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, in Natural Sciences in 1908. Attracted by the opportunities for natural history and shooting in India, he joined the Indian Educational Service in September, 1908 as vice-principal of Dayaram Jethmal Sind College, Karachi, and by 1920, after serving with the 97th India Infantry in Mesopotamia in the First World War, he had risen to the rank of Inspector of European schools.⁹

However, after 12 years in India, Ludlow was tired of the suffocating heat of the plains and could not resist the lure of Tibet with its little known wildlife and mysterious culture. He was asked by his director to submit the names of candidates for the post of head master of the proposed school in Gyantse. “The work and the prospect of living for three years in a mediaeval country appealed to me. I submitted my own name, and was eventually selected.”¹⁰

Negotiations over the details of his contract continued for some months. Ludlow stressed that “I do not expect to live in Tibet in the

⁷ The Times, late London edition, July 13, 1922, p. 10. This report is listed in the *Official Index to The Times* but does not appear in the microfilmed edition of the newspaper.

⁸ Wellington School, also known as West Somerset County School, is not to be confused with Wellington College, Berkshire which Ludlow’s friend F.M. Bailey attended.

⁹ See *A Quest of Flowers* by Harold R. Fletcher, with historical introduction by George Taylor (Edinburgh, 1975), *Tibet and Its Birds* by C. Vaurie (London, 1972), which is dedicated to Ludlow, Frank Ludlow (Obituary) by W.T. Stearn, *Ibis*, 116, p.234 (1974), *India Office List*, 1930 (which says he became principal of the Karachi college in 1916) and OIOC V/12/306, History of Services, Bombay 1920-1.

¹⁰ Report on the School, Ludlow Collection, OIOC, Mss Eur 979, hereafter “Report”.

same luxury as in India, but if I am going to stay at Gyantse for a minimum of 3 years, I shall have to take something more than a camp bed and a roll of bedding etc.” He was deeply concerned whether he would be able to continue shooting in Tibet, shooting being an essential part of ornithology in those days of relatively primitive optical equipment as well as a popular ‘sport’. He had been told of “the dislike the Tibetans have to shooting, and the taking of life generally,” and asked: “Does this mean that no Europeans in Gyantse are permitted to take a gun or rifle into the country? Also, are they absolutely forbidden to shoot even in out-of-way places where there are no towns, villages or monasteries? I ask this because I am a keen naturalist. The study of birds is my particular hobby, and I should like to be free to collect occasional specimens of scientific interest where there is no danger of wounding the religious susceptibilities of the people.”¹¹

To Ludlow’s relief this did not prove to be an obstacle. The Political Officer Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet, Major Frederick (Eric) Marshman Bailey¹², the writer, adventurer and spy who was to become Ludlow’s friend and mentor, reported that “The officers at Gyantse have always been accustomed to shoot here and no objection has ever been raised. It has always been the custom to avoid shooting near monasteries and generally to avoid hurting the susceptibilities of the Tibetans but I know of no single [sic] case in 18 years when any question has been raised on the subject by the Tibetans.”¹³

Ludlow was also concerned about the age of the boys who were to be his pupils: “Within reason, the younger the boys are, the better, 9-13 would be the most suitable ages. It will probably be best to discourage big boys of 15, 16 or 17. The latter would not benefit greatly from a year in a European school. Their knowledge of English and other subjects would be small, and they would find themselves classified with small boys in primary schools.”¹⁴

¹¹ OIOC, L/PS/11/208, to E.B. Howell, Secretariat, Delhi, 27 November. 1922.

¹² Bailey was well acquainted with Tibet, having served on the Younghusband Expedition and was later British Trade Agent in Gyantse. For a biography of Bailey see *Beyond the Frontier* by A. Swinson (London, 1971) and for a much more critical appraisal, *Loneliness and Time* by Mark Cocker (London, 1992), ch. 2.

¹³ Op. cit., from F.M. Bailey to Howell, 11 January 1923. Bailey epitomised the Edwardian love of hunting, and in an article entitled *A quiet day in Tibet* describes how, on being woken up by his servant, he would wonder, “What is to be done today?... The obvious answer to the question has just presented itself — Let us kill something” (cited by A.C. McKay in *British Trade Agencies in Tibet*, JRAS, 1992, p. 409).

¹⁴ Op. cit., Brief Notes to E.B. Howell, undated.

He was also all too aware that no school building existed. He did not have unrealistic expectations however, and noted: “Lighting and ventilation are important but I doubt if much attention is paid to these requirements in Tibet and the best must be made of what is available.”¹⁵

Ludlow arrived in Gyantse on 27 October, 1923, and soon found that almost all the issues he had raised were indeed problems, with the exception of shooting, which he was able to indulge in unhindered, so long as he was reasonably discreet.

One of the biggest sources of disagreement between the Tibetan authorities and himself was the length of school terms. Ludlow suggested that as some boys were expected to come from as far away as Lhasa, the year should be divided into two terms, with a summer vacation of 30 days and a winter vacation of 65 days. On 28 October, on the day after his arrival in Gyantse, he made this proposal to the Kenchung, the senior local official who was to become his main Tibetan official contact and his chief adversary: “To my intense surprise the Kenchung suggested there should be only one term of nine months followed by a winter vacation of 3 months. In vain I protested that boys and masters would be bored to tears long before the expiration of this huge term. No, he wanted one long term per annum.”¹⁶

Thus began a history of conflict which continued until Ludlow left Gyantse three years later, when the school closed due to political and parental opposition, leaving Ludlow a deeply disappointed man. But Ludlow’s diaries do not tell only of dashed hopes: they are a vivid, sometimes amusing, sometimes angry document that tell the story of the Gyantse school in considerable detail in which Ludlow’s highly attractive personality shines through. True, he could be impatient with Tibetan officialdom who, not surprisingly, had little understanding of Western ways, but he was so devoted to his pupils and to Tibet’s best interests as he saw them that his exasperation is entirely understandable.

Ludlow comes across in his diaries as something of a sociable loner. Anyone prepared to spend a few years in a remote town in Tibet would have had to have considerable reserves of self-sufficiency, but Ludlow was no hermit, and those who remember him recall a

¹⁵ Ditto.

¹⁶ Ludlow diary, OIOC, Mss 979, October 28, 1923. Hereafter all quotes from Ludlow’s diary are indicated with a date in the main text. Ludlow’s photograph albums, including pictures from his Gyantse days, are also in the OIOC (Photo 743).

“charming, modest man who seldom talked about himself — but had a quiet sense of humour.”¹⁷ This seems to be the impression most people had of him, but there was also a prickly side to his character, and he did not get on with everybody. He intensely disliked Hugh Richardson, Britain’s legendary last envoy in Lhasa, whom he regarded as obstructive and indiscreet (July 11, 1946), while according to Richardson, Ludlow was “unpopular with his staff as well as Tibetan officialdom for his brusque and impatient manners. He was a difficult person and remote ...”¹⁸ Ludlow could certainly be acerbic: he noted to Bailey that so far as their mutual friend Williamson was concerned, “Marriage, I am sorry to say, has not made him less self-centred”¹⁹, while as for (later Sir) Basil Gould, “Never have I known a man so egocentric.”²⁰

But this is not the Ludlow most people knew and loved, and in his Gyantse diaries he comes across as an enthusiastic and devoted teacher, albeit contemptuous of obstructive bureaucrats, British or Tibetan, or anybody else whom he saw as a threat to the best interests of his pupils. His decency is underlined when a friend named Patterson, an official of the British Trade Agency, died and his effects were put up for auction. “Things sold well; personally I bought nothing, as I dont [sic] like bargaining over a dead friend’s belongings. Silly, I know” (19 March, 1924).²¹

Things did not go smoothly at the school from the beginning. There was no school building, and no desks when he arrived, and little agreement with the Kenchung on just about anything. Ludlow was determined that the school should not neglect Tibetan language and culture as well as teaching the basics of the English curriculum. Early on, he asked the Kenchung if all his students could read and write Tibetan: “He said some would and others would’nt [sic]; and that those who could read and write *would be made to mark time until the others had caught up!!* A very absurd proposal, of course, to which I judged it better to say nothing. The Khenchung’s views on education are

¹⁷ Mrs Joyce Hill, letter to author, July 13, 2001. Stearn in his obituary (op. cit.) speaks of Ludlow in similar warm terms.

¹⁸ Letter to author, July 19, 1995.

¹⁹ Ludlow to Bailey, November 26, 1934.

²⁰ Diary, December 4, 1945.

²¹ It must be admitted that Ludlow in his youth had one deeply unappealing quality, albeit one that was pervasive among Britons of his time. His notebooks contain a couple of anti-Semitic comments, including this in a poem dated 1909 entitled *The Wail of the Wanderer*: “... And bid the helmsman steer into the West/And cast the Jewish lustful greed aside ...”.

obviously very primitive, and it is no use worrying him with educational principles. He seems to have no idea of classes, and thinks all boys, big and small, of varying degrees of intelligence, can be grouped together in one class" (8 November, 1923).

By the end of November, 30 boys had arrived, aged 8 to 18, though none of them was from Lhasa or hence the son of a Lhasa government official. "Some of them were charming kiddies, well-bred and well-clothed. Others were not so prepossessing and evidently came of more plebeian stock. I got the boys to seat themselves at my rather primitive benches and had one or two cut down to suit their size. Everybody was so solemn whilst this was being done, and the boys looked so glum, that I fished out a couple of footballs and told all except 2 or 3 to go out and play in the compound. This worked wonders, and five minutes later when I went out I found them running all over the place, laughing and chattering in the very best of spirits ... There is no doubt about the boys being keen on games, and there will be no difficulty on this score — one football found missing!" (8 November, 1923).

This being an 'English School', football and games generally formed an important part of the curriculum. There were also regular matches between Tibetan teams and the British military detachment, with plans for a league (6 March, 1924). Ludlow had been a member of his college football team at Cambridge, and it was noted in an official report that "Mr Ludlow pays attention to games and the building of character, as well as to book work ..."²² Ludlow's enthusiasm for football even reached the ears of the Dalai Lama, who asked about the result of a match between the school and an army team (the school lost 2-1), and then "enquired if it was true that I was very fond of 'kicking the ball with my head'!" (19 October, 1926).

Ludlow's diaries are also full of fascinating insights into Tibetan social mores. 'Tiffins' were the main social distraction and a chance to mingle with Tibetan officials informally. After one such tiffin, "we played the gramophone & Tering played his Tibetan mandoline. His daughter danced with her brother, Miss Macdonald [daughter of the veteran Gyantse Trade Agent, David Macdonald] & one of my servants. That is one of the pleasing things about Tibetan society — the daughter of the house, or any other member of the family, has'nt [sic] the slightest objection to dancing with a servant" (20 March, 1924).

At another tiffin, given by the new British Trade Agent, Frederick (Derrick) Williamson, there were 25 guests including about five ladies.

²² OIOC, L/P&S/11/208/4835, quoting Gyantse Trade Report.

“The ladies insisted on having tiffin in a room apart from us men, not that they minded having food with us Europeans so they said, but apparently it wasn’t the custom to sit down with men-folk from their own country” (13 August, 1924).

Imported tinned food was in reasonably good supply, and at a “Big break up tiffin” the menu consisted of “Soup, Salmon mayonnaise, Chicken & York ham, Mashed potatoes & salad, Curry & rice, Fruit Salad (Strawberries, Raspberries, Pears, Cherries, Grapes), Stilton Coffee & Liqueurs. Beer was on tap for everybody who wanted it. To my surprise, the Oracle had one or two glasses” (28 June, 1924).

To keep his spirits up, Ludlow would also from time to time order food from home via India. “Wrote to Calcutta and ordered some beer, Stilton cheese, and Harris’s Wiltshire bacon from the Army & Navy Stores. One must indulge oneself occasionally in these parts” (11 January, 1924).

Visitors formed a further distraction, and there were more of these than one might expect. These included the celebrated plant hunter Frank Kingdon-Ward and his friend Lord Cawdor, who had a passport from the Tibetan government to go botanising in eastern Tibet. Ludlow discovered that he and Kingdon-Ward were contemporaries at Cambridge and that he had been taught botany by his father, Professor Harry Marshall Ward. In a typical Ludlow phrase he describes his two visitors as “awfully nice men” (2 April, 1924).²³

Another visitor was the celebrated French mystic, explorer and writer Alexandra David-Néel. David-Néel, author of such works as *My Journey to Lhasa* (1927) and *With Magicians and Mystics in Tibet* (1931), could hardly have been more different from Ludlow. She was obsessed with the supernatural aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, while he was down-to-earth and sceptical. When David-Néel turned up unexpectedly, Ludlow mistook her for a Tibetan nun. “To my surprise the lady addressed me in somewhat broken continental English, & said she had come from China & wished to be put up in the dak [postal] bungalow. I explained to her that the bungalow was practically full as two of the rooms were being used as classrooms & I was occupying the other. I advised her to go to Macdonald, gave her one of my men to show her the way, & offered her my pony as she appeared to be tired. She went off but refused my pony.” Ludlow learnt from colleagues that

²³ See also *Frank Kingdon-Ward* by Charles Lyte (London, 1989), p. 70, which quotes from Lord Cawdor’s diary in which he describes playing football at Gyantse (“I played for the Tibetan team”) and also mentions the “good hard [tennis] court made of local cement.”

she “had just come from Lhasa where she had spent 2 months without anybody in authority there being a penny the wiser, that she had reached Lhasa from Kansu, & that for the last 13 years she has been wondering about East & Central Asia & has visited the Gobi desert, the Koko Nor desert, the source of the Hoang Ho, Kansu & various parts of China ... She appears to have spent a couple of years in a nunnery also ... She is naturally very fluent in Tibetan. She of course led the life of a Tibetan absolutely, eating tsampa & drinking buttered tea. She had no tents. She was remarkably cheery considering the privations she had undergone.”

When he met her again a couple of days later, Ludlow found that “Madame Neel is not very fit & seems to be feeling the reaction after her strenuous travels. She has only the clothes she stands up in & a local Tibetan has been very busy cutting up some Tibetan cloth for her. I made her come to my store & insisted on her taking some Bovril, Macaroni, sugar, rice, sardines, onions, etc. She wants feeding up badly” (5, 7 May, 1924).²⁴

Ludlow seems to have welcomed the distractions that the visitors provided, as there were endless frustrations from the very beginning. For example, no preparations had been made for the planned school before he arrived. To his consternation, he found that there was no wood in Gyantse for building desks, etc. and it would have to come from the vicinity of Lhasa. “How benches, tables, and chairs are going to be made in time I do’nt [sic] know. The carpenter also tells me he has no nails, screws, bolts, hinges or any fittings. Here’s a pretty state of things. The Tibetan Govt have known for at least a year that furniture would have to be made directly I arrived; yet they made no preparations for its manufacture ...” (5 November, 1923).

Fortunately the wood arrived a few days later, but the design and location of the school building were the next bone of contention. After receiving a telegram from Bailey, Ludlow asked if the Tibetan authorities had sanctioned expenditure on doors and windows which were to be made in Gangtok in Sikkim. But from the Kenchung Ludlow gathered that “Apparently the Tibetan Govt have no intention of putting up a building according to the Gangtok plans. They will erect some ramshackle affair just to save money. They hate spending it,

²⁴ See also *Forbidden Journey, the Life of Alexandra David-Néel*, by Barbara M. Foster and Michael Foster (San Francisco, 1987), which refers to her visit to Gyantse. For a photograph of this extraordinary but controversial woman at Gyantse, see Ludlow’s photo albums and also *Le Tibet d’Alexandra David-Néel*, “album conçu et réalisé par Françoise Borin” (Paris, 1979), p. 195.

nothing pains them more” (6 April, 1924). Tibetan reluctance to spend money on education became a frequent refrain and a cause for deep frustration. “I don’t suppose there is a civilised country in the world that spends less on education than Tibet. I don’t see how there can be, as there is no other paid schoolmaster in the whole country save myself” (23 August, 1924).

This was not the only aspect of Tibet that Ludlow found shocking. He was appalled to find that one of his students whom he had examined by the British doctor at Gyantse had venereal disease. “I had Lehding examined today by Vance. It turns out that he is suffering (and has been for the last 2-3 months) from gonorrhoea! The boy can’t be more than 14. Surely there cannot be a country in the world where morals are more lax than Tibet, nor can there be a country where syphilis and gonorrhoea are more prevalent. A huge percentage of the population, rich & poor alike, are infected & the only person up here who can effect a cure is the M.O. here. There ought to be a regular campaign against these diseases”. He discussed Lehding with the Khenchung, who was “absolutely dead against the dismissal of the boy & says if it is done, other boys will voluntary [sic] get the disease in order to escape being sent to school. Did you ever hear of anything approaching this. Lehding denies any contact & when I told the Khenchung this he said it was quite common to get this disease in Tibet without having had sexual connections!! He told me, he himself, had suffered from the disease some years ago! He proposes to fine the boys Rs50 or Rs60 & devote the proceeds to giving a tiffin to the other boys!!” (24, 25 November, 1924).

Ludlow was also appalled at how dirty the boys were. One boy sent round a servant to request a holiday so that he could wash his hair. “The holiday was refused of course, but it shows that *washing* is an unusual event & one that looms large in the toilet of a Tibetan boy” (21 August, 1924). Another boy complained of suffering from sores. “He showed me his legs which were filthy & covered with them. I sent him round to Vance [the British medical officer], who made him strip. His sores were simply due to rank filthiness & I don’t suppose the boy had washed his body for a couple of years.” But Ludlow consoled himself with the fact that standards of hygiene had risen under his guidance. “Many of the boys really do wash & I cannot help noticing that almost all of the boys in my class are visibly cleaner than they used to be” (10 August, 1925).

Returning to the difficulties of getting the school started, for one thing, there was still no sign of any boys from Lhasa a month after

Ludlow arrived. He was told that as the Tibetan capital was a week's journey away, they would not arrive for almost three weeks. "The delay appears to be due to the fact that the parents of two high officials when ordered to send their sons to the school, objected, and were, in consequence, punished by the Dalai Lama... The delay is very annoying as the boys will hardly have a month before they have to return home for the New Year... Laden La told Rechok [Ludlow's teaching assistant] that the 20 boys would all be young boys of 9 to 10 and that they would be well looked after. Some of them would have as many as four servants! I sincerely hope they *will* be well looked after, as it is no small undertaking to transport boys of 9 or 10 across passes of 16,000 ft high. I don't think many English parents would view the proposal with much favour" (30 November, 1923).

It also soon became clear that there would only be about 25 pupils, not 100 as first envisaged, which Ludlow called "a miserably small effort & a great mistake," although at this stage he was still hopeful, adding that "It ought to grow however, & the building should be planned so it can be extended." (24 July, 1924). But this optimism did not last long. Three weeks later he received a letter from Bailey, who had discussed the school with officials in Lhasa. "The parents there apparently are all dead against it. They say that the Tibetan Govt are paying large sums on education! but they would rather pay these large sums for English teaching in their homes. This is of course utter nonsense" (15 August, 1924).

It became increasingly clear that senior Tibetan officials were unenthusiastic about the school, and some were downright hostile. On 31 October, 1925, Ludlow wrote to Foreign Secretary in the Indian Government, Sir Denys Bray. "I told him, in my opinion the school would close when my agreement terminates next year, unless there is a change of power in Lhasa or something unforeseen happens. I shall be disgusted if it does. Although the Indian Govt cannot, of course, coerce the Tibetan Govt to keep the school on, it would certainly be worth their while to bring all their powers of persuasion to bear on the Tibetan Govt; not only in the interests of Tibet itself, but for their own political advantage as well. Boys brought up on the lines I am bringing them up on, are not going to forget me or the teaching they receive at my hands."

But the Tibetan government became increasingly uncooperative. Ludlow was furious when one of his best pupils, Tsewang, was removed from the school in order to become a *tsi-truk* or apprentice in the Kashag (council of ministers) in Lhasa. "To take this kiddie away

from school at his age is simply crass stupidity. If the Kasha[g] think that a boy of 14-¹/₂ after two years with me is fit enough to leave school the sooner they close down this establishment the better. I will never work for them if they are going to pursue this policy. Am writing to the Major [Bailey] to tell him so. Either Tsewang comes back to school or I go home" (15 May, 1926).

The following month Bailey sent Ludlow a draft of a letter he was sending to the Dalai Lama saying Ludlow would stay on only under certain conditions, namely no more withdrawals of boys like Tsewang, the appointment of a proper Tibetan teacher and that steps were taken to ensure boys return punctually to school. "It won't be the Major's fault & I hope it won't be mine if the whole experiment collapses. If the Tibetan Govt allow it to collapse, they will be damn fools, for without some sort of education they can stir neither hand nor foot in the future" (12 June, 1926). Soon rumours were circulating among the boys that the school was going to close, and Ludlow felt that "There is every likelihood of this being true" (25 June, 1926). "Poor old Tibet ... Two courses are open to it. To shut itself up & endeavour to ward off all outside influences as in the past, or advance a little with the times. If it attempts the latter, education is imperative, & I am confident in these days it cannot attempt the former" (15 July, 1926).

The Khenchung also threw some light on political factors behind the closing of the school. He told Ludlow of a Tibetan army plot in 1924 to deprive the Dalai Lama of all temporal powers, in which Shape Tsarong, the progressive, modernizing head of the Tibetan army, and Laden La were involved. The Dalai Lama uncovered the plot, and normal punishment would have consisted of being sewn up in a bag and thrown into a river, Ludlow states. But the Dalai Lama was reluctant to lose Tsarong who had served him well, so he was simply dismissed and the other plotters were fined. "If this story of the Khenchung's is true, & I see no reason why it should not be, & indeed have heard vague rumours of the plot before this, it helps us to understand why my efforts in the school have been of no avail. If Laden La, a British subject & a servant of the Indian Govt, is such a damn fool as to mix himself up with a treasonable plot in a foreign country, no wonder suspicions as to the usefulness of a school run by me should prevail" (19 September, 1926).²⁵

²⁵ For a detailed study of the coup plot, see *Tibet 1924: A Very British Coup Attempt* by A.C. McKay (Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society [JRAS], 1997, 411-424).

With some justification, Ludlow felt that to use the boys' lack of progress in Tibetan as a reason for closing the school was quite unsupportable. He told the Khenchung that he had "repeatedly asked them [the Kashag] to send a qualified Tibetan teacher during the past two years & had told them that education in their own language was of primary importance." (16 September, 1926). This was very true. Ludlow was adamant that the purpose of the school was not to turn his pupils into imitation Englishmen, and he was determined that they received instruction in their own language and culture as well as in English language and customs.

But how this was to be done was a continual bone of contention, and agreement was never reached. The Tibetans proposed that six hours a day be devoted to the Tibetan language in addition to four hours of teaching by Ludlow. "A more idiotic proposal I've never heard of. With 4 hours with me & 6 hours with him [the Tibetan teacher] the boys would collapse in a month" (12 May, 1924). But the Khenchung insisted that at least four hours a day be devoted to Tibetan, although Ludlow believed "that if efficient methods were employed 2 hours should prove ample. I said I intended to give the boys only 2 hours instruction in English & if I found this time sufficient for my purpose a similar period ought to be sufficient for Tibetan. Finally, I said it was obvious we should never agree, that what we were trying to do was to run the school on English & Tibetan lines at the same time - a perfectly impossible task, that we had better put the whole case before the Kasha & ascertain their wishes" (28 May, 1924).

Ludlow had little respect for Tibetan teaching methods: "Any system more utterly dull & boring it is difficult to conceive. On a pillar in the room hangs a whip, the Tibetan method of enforcing discipline. These protracted school hours have got to be altered. Fancy boys of 8 years of age having to work 8 hours a day! Three with me & 5 hours on their haunches in the monastery doing nothing else but write & re-write copies" (21 May, 1924).

Ludlow knew no Tibetan before he arrived in Gyantse, so he faced a daunting problem in finding a way of teaching his pupils English. "I found myself up against as big a difficulty, I suppose, as has fallen to the lot of any master ... Somehow or other I had to teach a class of boys who were unable to understand a word I said. I knew no Tibetan. They knew no English ...

"Employment of the 'direct method' was the only way out of the difficulty and I started on it immediately," he wrote in his Report. "As time went on and the boys' vocabularies grew, things became easier,

and I soon began to realize that my very ignorance of Tibetan was in reality a blessing in disguise. The boys simply *had* to understand me...”

English conversation was a top priority, and Ludlow was proud to report that by the end of three years “most of the boys in my class were able to carry on an intelligible conversation on any ordinary topic.” Once his pupils understood enough English, he added geography to the curriculum, “a subject in which I found not only my boys, but all Tibetans, amazingly ignorant. They knew little enough of their own country and except for China, Japan, Russia, India and England, had never heard of the existance [*sic*] of an other. England, they thought, was somewhere in India. When I produced maps and a globe I suddenly discovered that all Tibetans believe the world to be flat, and I began to wonder if Galileos [*sic*] fate would be mine if I preached to the contrary ...,” he wrote in his Report.

Once their English was strong enough, Ludlow introduced his pupils to the *Arabian Nights* and Grimm’s *Fairy Tales*. By 1926, four years after the school opened, the more advanced boys were “making excellent progress in English. Their spelling and handwriting were excellent, they were beginning to talk with commendable fluency, and were deeply interested in such books as Robin Hood, William Tell, King Arthur’s Knights, etc. In arithmetic they had obtained a good grasp of fractions, decimals, and simple interested. They delighted in their progress. ‘Only the cleverest Tibetans,’ they said, ‘are able to do fractions, and nobody has ever heard of decimals.’”

Ludlow was particularly gratified with the progress his pupils made in arithmetic. He was appalled at the traditional Tibetan method of teaching the subject, which consisted of boys laying peach and apricot stones, small sticks and broken bits of china on the floor and singing the sums at the top of their voice. “The result, of course, is pandemonium. If a boy does his sum wrong he has to sing it all over again as he cannot find out where he went astray.”

“Of all the things I ever taught my boys nothing impressed them more than our system of arithmetic. They learnt in 6 months what would normally have taken them 6 years to accomplish according to their own method, and when the school finally closed down, they were doing sums beyond the comprehension of any Tibetan in the country.”

Although Ludlow was scathing about the traditional Tibetan educational system, as we have seen he was deeply respectful of Tibetan culture. In his Report, he describes how two young men aged about 18 and 20 turned up for school “dressed in most ill-fitting European clothes ... and asked leave to cut off their queues. Probably

they thought this was the correct thing to do, or imagined I should be pleased at their request. I disillusioned them without delay. I told them I had not come to Tibet to turn them into imitation English boys, and that they must attend school dressed in their national dress, and follow the custom of their country and not cut their hair.”

“The following day the elder boy, Piche, son of the Postmaster General, disobeyed my order and cut his hair, whereupon my wrath descended. I published a school rule forbidding European dress except when playing games, and ordered Piche to grow his hair again and affix his queue as soon as possible. I reported my action to the Kashag. They approved, and thereafter there was no further trouble in this connection.”

But for all Ludlow’s efforts and the boys’ hard work, the school was probably doomed from the beginning due to opposition by conservative senior officials and parental hostility. By June, 1924 he reported that “On the whole, I was satisfied with the progress that had been made. I now had a school of 25 boys, most of whom came from good families. Work and games had been organised and school terms fixed. The boys themselves seemed happy and contented and showed early promise of excellent work. On the surface matters seemed to be progressing smoothly and evenly, but from Lhasa came grave and disquieting rumours that all was not well.”

“Parents, for example, were actively hostile. They said they would rather pay for an English education in their homes than send their sons to Gyantse, and they pestered the Kashag with constant petitions for exemption.”

“In fact there seems very little doubt that at this time the Tibetan Government were seriously meditating the closure of the school.”

“That this did not happen was largely, if not entirely due to Col. Bailey’s visit to Lhasa. It was most opportune. He was able to explain matters in detail to the Kashag and offer sound advice. With Tibetans, more than with most people, it is the spoken word that carries weight. The written is often viewed with suspicion and carries but little conviction.”

Ludlow reported that the results of Bailey’s visit “were seen immediately” with the building of a new school. Ludlow had been pressing for a proper school building rather than the *dak* bungalow since he first arrived, but the next two years had been declared inauspicious for all building work, and even for repairs. Although the new school building was not ready until the following year, Bailey’s visit to Lhasa seemed to mark an important victory.

But the parents remained as unenthusiastic as ever. “One of the greatest difficulties I had to contend with during my stay in Tibet, was the gross slackness on the part of parents sending their sons back to school after the holidays were over.”

“Once the boys reached Gyantse they attended school with the utmost regularity. But the difficulty was to get them back.”

“At the commencement of every new term I could always count on two thirds of my boys being absent. They would return a month late, just before the end of term, or even miss out a term altogether.”

“I complained frequently to the Kashag, and sent them lists of absentees, but all to no purpose; ... Not that my boys were the only culprits. Unpunctuality prevails throughout the country ... What is time in Tibet? Of no consequence whatsoever,” Ludlow complained in his Report, echoing a frequent refrain in his diaries.

Not long after the go-ahead was given for the new school building, Tsarong Shape, commander-in-chief of the Tibetan army, arrived in Gyantse. Tsarong Shape was the only senior Lhasa official to visit the school, and as the leader of the modernising faction in the Tibetan government he was highly popular with British officials, including Ludlow. “He is not at all a typical Tibetan either in his views or in his habits,” Ludlow wrote. “He dresses in European style & has very little pomp & ceremony about him. He seems to be the *one* man who is really wide-awake in Lhasa” (22 September, 1924).

But the visit—the first of two—was largely fruitless, although Ludlow was unaware at the time of the unsuccessful plot in which Tsarong had been involved a few weeks earlier which had led to his loss of influence. As Ludlow put it in his Report, “When I first arrived in Gyantse in October 1923 there seems to have been a strong progressive party in Lhasa headed by Tsarong Shape, who viewed the school with favour and desired advancement on modern lines in other directions.

“In the summer of 1924 this party lost power and most of its principal adherents were deprived of office. I cannot say for certain what the causes were which led to the summary dismissal of the principal officers in this progressive party. But Tsarong Shape was deprived of his Commander-in-chiefship, and in him the school lost its most influential supporter.”²⁶

²⁶ Tsarong’s wife Rinchen Dolma Taring describes in her autobiography *Daughter of Tibet* (London, reprinted 1986, p. 90) how her husband learned that he had been sacked as they returned to Lhasa from Gyantse. A messenger arrived when they were only a day’s ride from the capital informing him that by order of the Dalai

Despite the construction of a new school building, the omens were getting increasingly bad for the future of the school. Shortly before Tsarong Shape's visit, Bailey told Ludlow "it seems to be touch and go" whether the Tibetan government kept it going and cited "(i) Expense ii) the opposition of parents & 3) the hostility of the powerful lama element which hates all innovation" (1 September, 1924).

But Ludlow was convinced that the school was essential if Tibet was to survive in the modern world. He told Shape Tsarong "that I had only one object in mind — the good of Tibet & that any proposals I made concerning the school, however strange they might seem, would be made with one purpose & one purpose only, viz in the interests of the boys themselves & their country" (23 September, 1924).

But he failed to convince the authorities of this, and his confidence in them was not increased when he discovered that one of his pupils was from a low-ranking family and not the son of an official as he had been told. "Apparently some official or other was ordered to send his son here & being unwilling to do so has bribed some poor individual in his neighbourhood to send his son as a substitute. This shows the estimation in which the school is held" (11 September, 1924).

The outlook got gloomier and gloomier over the next year. The following April, when Tsarong Shape and his wife again visited the school, Mary Tsarong commented that it would be a great pity if the Tibetan government abandoned the project. "I know of course, the continuance of the school is a very doubtful question, & this remark of Mary Tsarong confirms it" (4 April, 1925). The Khenchung's attitude tended to confirm Ludlow's worst fears. One day the Khenchung failed to turn up as arranged when they were to meet early one morning to photograph a monastery which was falling into disrepair, a matter that was causing the Dalai Lama some concern. Ludlow was furious that the Khenchung failed to keep the appointment: "Pretty bad manners on the Khenchung's part ... However, I am getting used to these little pin-pricks of his. If he thinks I am going to lose my temper, or chuck the whole thing in disgust, he is very much mistaken. During this year I want to lay such solid foundations that the school will carry on. I know the Khenchung does'nt [*sic*] want it to, & I know heaps of others of his persuasion don't want it to, but *I* want it to, & am going to do my damned'st to see that it does carry on" (10 August, 1925).

Lama, "as there is no anxiety in the country at the moment, so we need not a Commander-in-Chief." Rinchen Dolma Taring had attended an American mission school in Darjeeling and was known to Westerners as Mary.

Ludlow expressed his worries to Sir Denys Bray, telling him that “in my opinion the school would close when my agreement terminates next year, unless there is a change of power in Lhasa or something unforeseen happens. I shall be disgusted if it does. Although the Indian Govt cannot, of course, coerce the Tibetan Govt to keep the school on, it would certainly be worth their while to bring all their powers of persuasion to bear on the Tibetan Govt; not only in the interests of Tibet itself, but for their own political advantage as well. Boys brought up on the lines I am bringing them up on, are not going to forget me or the teaching they receive at my hands” (October 1925).

Meanwhile, Ludlow’s relations with the Khenchung continued to deteriorate. When Ludlow and his friend the medical officer, Major Vance, went to India in January 1926, the Khenchung decided to use Ludlow’s bungalow for a Tibetan new year tiffin. “Damnably impertinence on the Khenchung’s part! ... I know that he has not built the school, or my bungalow with any view to their being permanent school buildings. He is just waiting until my 3 years’ contract is over & then intends utilising them for other purposes. Will he succeed or won’t he? Shall I fail or shall I not? I wonder. It won’t be my fault if I do fail” (January 1926).

An outbreak of smallpox the following March was extremely worrying, but fortunately all the boys at the school had been vaccinated by Vance, and none contracted the disease, even though Ludlow was refused permission to isolate his pupils. However, many local people did contract this terrible disease, and Ludlow tells of a woman in the paper factory just behind the school who had smallpox, so he asked her to be removed without delay. The Khenchung agreed to this, but three or four children were living with her in the same room. “They have not been vaccinated, having been told by a lama that evil will befall them if they are. Lamas are the curse of this poor country. Hopelessly ignorant themselves, they prey on the superstitious fears of an equally ignorant laity. I am very concerned about my boys” (31 March, 1926).

Ludlow reports that the Tibetans “have a curious custom - revolting one - with regard to people who die of smallpox. They are not buried, burnt or cut up in the ordinary way, but the corpses are kept in a kind of mortuary until the epidemic ceases or abates. No wonder smallpox is the scourge of the country” (27 March, 1926).

But it was not all gloom, even at this especially worrying time. Ludlow visited the monastery at Gobshi, where he was told there are “two very strange things ... ‘the horn of a horse and a piece of the sky.’ I asked the head lama if I could see the latter, but he told me these

wonderful relics were under lock & key ... Great pity! I should very much have liked to have seen a piece of the sky" (29 March, 1926).

Ludlow derived much amusement from certain Tibetan beliefs, sometimes at the Khenchung's expense. One day conversation somehow turned to eggs. "[The Khenchung] said cocks sometimes laid eggs!! & that he had a cock's egg at home. I think he was rather rattled because I roared with laughter at the idea. He said the eggs were small & round & when I suggested they were malformed hen's eggs he swore they were not & persisted in saying that cocks did sometimes lay eggs" (23 April, 1926).

Other superstitions Ludlow regarded as "simply heartbreaking." He set the boys an essay on Ngakpas (Tantric adepts), who, he was told, "keep off hail first by blowing conches, if this fails by blowing thigh bone trumpets, & finally by hurling stones at the sky with slings (ürdo). They can cure sores & ulcers by expectoration. One notorious Ngakpa at Shallu near Shigatse, having lived in a cave for 12 years is capable of passing his body through a small hole which no other human being can get his head through!!" (7 June, 1926).

At around this time an electricity plant was being brought in by mule from India to be installed in Lhasa by Ringang, one of the Tibetan youths who had been sent to Rugby School in 1912. By the time he had returned to Tibet in 1920 he had forgotten all his Tibetan, "But it soon came back to him & now he speaks it fluently. He is a good fellow & what I like about him is that he hasn't forgotten that he is a Tibetan" (September 1925).

But by the following year Ludlow was so generally despondent that he had little faith that the electricity plant would ever work. "Ringang's electric machinery is still going up to Lhasa in bits. I wonder if the plant will ever be pieced together, & still more if it will ever work for any length of time. The whole idea of an electric plant in Lhasa at the present stage of advancement in this country appears to be an act of utter folly" (5 June, 1926).

Despite the ill omens for the school, Ludlow approved a letter Bailey had written to the Dalai Lama stating the terms under which he was willing to renew his contract. He was prepared to relinquish further increments in pay "as long as I have enough to live on ... It won't be the Major's [Bailey's] fault & I hope it won't be mine if the whole experiment collapses. If the Tibetan Govt allow it to collapse, they will be damn fools, for without some sort of education they can stir neither hand nor foot in the future" (12 June, 1926).

By this time Ludlow had virtually given up hope for the school. "There is a rumour today among the boys that the school is going to close down. There is every likelihood of this being true" (25 June, 1926). "Of course the boys have done well but what does it all matter. The school will close in October, if not sooner, & then they will forget everything. Most disheartening" (23 June, 1926).

A couple of months later, Ludlow received the news he had been dreading. "I got a wire from Williamson to-day definitely [*sic*] stating that the school was to be closed. So that's it, in spite of all my efforts. Rather bad luck that the work which has attracted me more than any other I have ever had in my life, should be snatched away from me. I would rather have made a success of the school than have reached the topmost rung of the educational ladder in India ... Some of the elder boys, perhaps ... may have derived some benefit & retain some of what I have taught them. But most of the others will just forget everything. Poor kiddies! How can it happen otherwise" (20 August, 1926).

Williamson sent Ludlow a copy of a letter from the Kashag explaining their reasons for closing the school. The parents, the Kashag stated, "have been continually complaining that unless their boys have learnt their own language thoroughly in the beginning, the boys cannot do the Tibetan Govt service satisfactorily for the present & in future." They reiterated the proposal that the boys be taught English by Indian babus in their own homes, but stressed they had nothing but the greatest respect for Ludlow. "As regards a future teacher for future we request that Mr Ludlow himself may be kindly appointed when we require the service again. Please inform to the Great British Govt to whom we solely rely on & to Mr Ludlow so that they may not be disappointed with us."

Ludlow was predictably appalled. "Did any Govt ever write a more futile, disconnected, illogical letter? We want to close the school for the present, & then re-open it when the boys know enough Tibetan! As if there was any stage in a boy's education when it could be said 'Now you know enough Tibetan we will switch on to English etc.' Then also to expect me to come back & begin all over again. But this of course is mere soft soap. Once the school is closed they will not open it again unless forces compell [*sic*] them to do so. And forces *will* compel them to do so eventually. How on earth can Tibet have a decent army, its post & telegraphs, doctors, mechanics for their electric machinery etc & etc unless it gives its sons some measure of Western education. The whole thing makes me weep. The work of 2 1/2 years thrown away!

“It seems as though the Indian Govt can do nothing right for Tibet. We lend them Lhasa to train their police, & they allow all his good work in Lhasa to rot. We train officers for their army & they are dismissed wholesale. We try & run a school for them & they throw it to the dogs. Tibet plays like a child at new ideas, & like a child gets tired of its playthings & casts it aside. They will regret their decision one day when they are Chinese slaves once more, as they assuredly will be. China will recover in time and return” (28 August, 1926). The prescience of the last two sentences needs no comment.

Ludlow’s deep suspicion of the Chinese also comes out in his loathing for the Khenchung, who he was sure was delighted at the closure of the school despite his protestations to the contrary. “Consummate liar ... In his secret heart he hates the English, but he makes money out of us, is hospitable, gives good tiffins & until you know him, seems a charming personage. In reality he’s a cunning fox with pro-Chinese leanings. He knows I hate him, I know he hates me” (16 September, 1926).

Ludlow did not blame the Tibetans entirely for the closure of the school, however, and felt that the British authorities in India were just as culpable. “I got a letter from Sir Denys Bray at the Foreign Office today saying how upset he was at the closing of the school. I don’t know why he should be. I have warned him twice that there was every likelihood of it happening. I agree with Col. Bailey. A little more sympathy, a little more advice, & a little more encouragement from India would be appreciated by Tibetans & will save a deal of trouble later on. If Sir Denys Bray had proffered a little advice & encouragement a year ago the school could have been saved, but as far as I know he has not lifted a finger” (13 October, 1926).

Bailey agreed that the Foreign Office could have offered much more encouragement. He told Ludlow that “if the Foreign Office were to encourage him to go to Lhasa more often something might be done, & also if [*sic*] a little personal advice & support of Tibet at the present time might save a great deal of trouble later on. I quite agree. What on earth does the Tibetan Govt know about the school & its work, except from prejudiced reports from the Khenchung & others. They see no good accruing from it in the future. The present Lönchen or Prime Minister is only an inexperienced youth of 23” (9 October, 1926).

Not only was Ludlow bitter at the Indian Foreign Office and at Tibetan officials such as the Khenchung, he was also at a loss as to what he was going to do with himself after the school closed. “So I am just going to book my passage for mid-November, pack up all my

treasures & go home. What on earth I am going to do at home goodness only knows. What's the use of teaching English boys, when there are thousands of other people capable of doing the work far more efficiently. I must find something to do, but a humdrum existence at home has no attractions for me, I must confess" (28 August, 1926).

Ludlow was appalled by a letter from the Kashag telling the boys that they "must engage 'Babus' & sign an agreement not to forget what I have taught them, but to carry on with their work. The absurdity of it all! How on earth can a boy sign an agreement that he is not going to forget what has been taught him. Besides, where are they going to get the Babus from. In addition, why write to the boys, why not to their parents. The whole thing is simply pitiful" (25 October, 1926).

Ludlow was by now booked to return home on the P&O liner the *Ranchi*, leaving Bombay on 20 November. The very thought made him miserable. "I hate going down hill. It means India & the plains & heat & I loathe India & the plains & the heat after Tibet," he wrote on his trek near Yatung (7 November, 1926). "I'm *not* glad the gypsy life appeals to me & I hate the thought of the hurry & bustle of the west after the highlands of Tibet. I haven't had a watch for a year. What's the use of it? One knows when to get up, go to bed, have breakfast tiffin & dinner. What more do you want. I suppose I shall have to buy one in Calcutta, though, otherwise I shall get lost on the way home, miss the boat, or the *Rapide* from Marseilles or the beastly trains that start from Paddington at the exact second. What nonsense it all is, our complicated Western civilisation. Absolutely, hopelessly unnatural. Yet one can't help it or resist it. It's remorseless. We pursue a course of evolution just the same as plants or animals only a damn sight quicker to hither its all tending. I don't know" (8 November, 1926).

"This ends the whole business. I go down to Teesta tomorrow – Calcutta Bombay & home. I don't suppose I shall ever return to my work. If they wanted me I would come home from the ends of the earth to Tibet. But they won't want me." [last sentence deleted] (9 November, 1926).

Thus end Ludlow's Gyantse diaries, save for a note in which he says that in them "I have just scribbled down ideas as they entered my head, without any forethought or careful consideration whatsoever. Many errors have crept in. Perhaps one day the spirit may move me to revise & correct these errors, but for the present they must stand."

Although Ludlow was bitterly disappointed at the closure of the school, he won nothing but praise from Government of India officials. Ludlow's adversary, Denys Bray, commented, "The results were

surprising for the short time that the school was open and it is to be hoped that the Tibetan Government will return to the task when the present wave of reaction has spent itself. It is a great pity the school was not spared. But there were very strong forces working against it from the start and Ludlow has all the more reason to be proud of what he did manage to achieve.”²⁷

Frederick Williamson was even more effusive. “... The work done by Mr. Ludlow at Gyantse has been really excellent. I frequently visited the school and was very impressed with the progress made in so short a time. Some of the older boys now speak quite fluent English, though I fear most of them will rapidly forget it when the school is closed. Many of them are extremely intelligent, and would have proved most useful officials if their education had been continued. The thirty boys at the school provided quite a good football team and Mr. Ludlow’s influence in developing their characters was of the very best ... most of them will never entirely forget the impressions they have formed by associating with British officials, and the characters of all of them have benefited by Mr Ludlow’s influence.”

Williamson noted that “English education and progress are not popular with the clerical party [in Lhasa]” but nevertheless added that “The abolition of the school does not, I think, denote any new political developments. It is possible that the Tibetan Government may have been influenced by its expense, although they have not referred to it.” He also noted that “the Lhasa parents have disliked the school from the first, as they do not like parting from their boys for long periods. The opposition has not been so marked in the case of the boys from Shigatse, possibly because their parents are more afraid of the Government at Lhasa.”²⁸

The one person who fully supported Ludlow was his old friend Bailey, and Ludlow could not have been more grateful. “Nobody could

²⁷ Bray, Foreign and Political Dept, Delhi to Bailey, Sikkim, 31 January, 1928, L/P&S/11/208/4835. Ludlow continued to blame Bray long after the school closed. “Denys Bray broke my heart. He could have saved the school if he had instructed you to bring pressure to bear on the T.G. [Tibetan Government]. He was sadly lacking in foresight in this respect” (letter to Bailey, April 14, 1944). Bailey also had little time for Bray, see Swinson (op. cit.), pp. 199-200.

²⁸ F. Williamson, ICS, Political Officer in Sikkim, to Foreign Secy to Govt of India, Delhi, Gangtok, 18 October, 1926, ref. Ludlow knew Williamson well, although as noted above he did not much like him. On Williamson, who died in Lhasa in 1935 and was buried in Gyantse, see *Memoirs of a Political Officer’s Wife in Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan* by Margaret D. Williamson (London, 1987). The book includes photographs of Ludlow.

have helped me more than you have, and I only wish I could have repaid you better. I have failed, but I have done my best, although it has been a rather poor 'best', I am afraid (letter to Bailey, 10 August, 1926).

Ludlow was awarded the OBE in 1927 for his efforts in Gyantse, and thereafter set up a base in Srinagar, from whence he embarked on botanical expeditions in the Himalayas over the next 20 years.²⁹ In addition he inspected the Shyok dam, a remote natural barrage high in the Karakoram mountains that seemed on the verge of collapse, followed by an ornithological expedition to Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang) in 1929-30.

The main purpose of the school was to increase British influence in Tibet through the students, who, it was hoped would eventually become powerful officials in the Tibetan government. To this extent, the school was a failure and few if any of Ludlow's officials seem to have exerted a significant degree of influence in their country's affairs, just as the boys who were sent to Rugby "made no significant contribution in later life to the development of Tibet."³⁰ Evidence of this is the fact that only four former pupils of Ludlow are listed in the contemporary official publication *Who's Who in Tibet*, and none merits more than one star in a scale of zero to three stars to indicate degree of power or influence he exerted.³¹

But despite the political failure of the school and all the frustrations along the way, Ludlow would look back at those days with great affection. He once bestowed on the Ladakhis the ultimate compliment, calling them "The best natured people I have ever struck & on a par with the Tibetans at Gyantse" (11 July, 1932). He would occasionally hear from or meet up with former pupils. In Skardu in Kashmir he received a letter from Lhawang Tobgye in Lhasa: "He says he is still keeping up his English & asks me to send him a copy of stories from the Arabian Nights. He says the Dalai Lama ordered Ringang to conduct an examination in English of all my boys resident in Lhasa. Lhawang said with pride that 'he came out top' ... Lhawang has

²⁹ On Ludlow's botanical expeditions with George Sherriff, see Fletcher (op. cit.) and also the BBC Scotland documentary, *A Dream of Poppies*, directed by David Martin, 1980.

³⁰ *The McMahon Line* by Alastair Lamb (London, 1966), p. 603.

³¹ *Who's Who in Tibet*, 1938 and 1949, confidential Government of India Press publication, Calcutta. The entry for Lhawang Tobgye (Surkhang II), for example, states that he "knows a little English", and a handwritten note in one of the OIOC copies says he "proceeded to Peking, China, as leader of Youth League delegation in March 1953."

tremendous character & I expect one day he will grow up to be a powerful man in Tibet” (30 May, 1928). A few years later he met his star pupil, Sonam, in Kalimpong, and was pleased to see that “He has not altered much, & has remembered his English astonishingly well” (19 November, 1934).

There were occasional reports that the Tibetan authorities wished to reopen the school. The Trade Agent at Gyantse reported in 1932 that “It has been decided to start an English School in Lhasa and the building has already been erected. The Tibetan Government are anxious to obtain the services of Mr. F. Ludlow who was in charge of the school at Gyantse, as head”³². Nothing became of this plan, but it did not completely evaporate. Ludlow wrote in 1937 that “I learnt last year that the Tibetan Govt meditated re-opening the Gyantse School. I am afraid the job has no attractions for me now (even if I was wanted). They ought to have a younger man - [Spencer] Chapman for instance if he would take it. I’m too old to live at 13,000’ for any prolonged period ...” (letter to Bailey, 29 August, 1937).

Ludlow’s explorations at this time seem not to have been entirely for natural history purposes. Alastair Lamb notes that in October 1932 he and Williamson reached Nilang, east of Dehra Dun, as part of an investigation of a territorial dispute, and also comments that Ludlow and Sherriff “combined British official or semi-official service with apparently private travels in Tibet for purposes of botanical research ... During the 1930s the two men carried out a series of epic journeys in Tibet, many of them along the northern side of the McMahon Line, ostensibly solely in search of flowers. It is hard to avoid the suspicion that there was also a political motive behind their wanderings.”³³

During the Second World War, Ludlow was the British envoy in Lhasa, and it is hard to see how he could have been appointed to a senior and highly sensitive post without considerable political and diplomatic experience, although records of this are elusive.³⁴ Ludlow was appointed to this exalted position in 1942, his main task being to try to persuade the Tibetan government to allow Allied supplies to pass

³² L/P&s/12/4/66.

³³ *Tibet, China and India* by Alastair Lamb, pp. 372, 418.

³⁴ As Lamb notes (op. cit., p. 419), botanical expeditions which also had a political motive “could well leave little or no archival trace ... A great deal could be achieved by a private word here or there. No formal instructions or records were needed. The Political Officer in Sikkim would do all he could to guarantee assistance for his close friends from the Tibetans without being told to do so by the Government; and Government would learn of any interesting items of news from the two travellers [Ludlow and Sherriff] by informal channels.”

through their country into China. He was unsuccessful in this difficult task and he did not find being a diplomat nearly as satisfying as being a teacher. There is no room to go into detail here, but Ludlow disliked Lhasa from the very beginning and found Tibetan government officials difficult to work with. His residence in the Dekyilingka palace was extremely dirty, and he had little time for botany or ornithology. One bright spot was getting to know the new Dalai Lama, then a young boy. He visited the Potala in February, 1943: "This was my first sight of the child potentate, & I must confess he rather appealed to me. A cheery, rosy-faced child, bubbling over with mirth & goodwill to all people ..."

As British envoy in Lhasa Ludlow's suspicions of Chinese intentions towards Tibet intensified. He told Surkhang, a senior Tibetan official,³⁵ that "I disagreed with the present policy of holding up all supplies for the Chinese Govt. I said it was a great mistake & I wasn't at all certain that the T.G. [Tibetan Government] were doing just what the Chinese Govt wanted them ie giving the Chungking Govt a good excuse for aggressive action after the war" (5 April, 1942). After he left Lhasa he became even more alarmed. When exploring in Bhutan in 1949, he wrote: "I heard on the wireless that the Chinese Communist Army had reached Sining and had announced that in due course they would proceed to 'liberate' Tibet which was an integral part of the Chinese Empire! Poor old Tibet. I wonder if America, Britain, or India will take up cudgels on her behalf, or just stand still & watch her gobbled up ..." (3 September, 1949).

Although the Gyantse school was the first English school in Tibet it was not quite the last. In 1944, the Tibetan government asked for an English schoolmaster to be appointed for such a school in Lhasa as soon as possible. "We are also anxious to meet request generously and quickly at time when Chinese contemplate approach through Education. Condition of success will be selection of man likely to appeal to Tibetans as worthy successor to Ludlow," wrote Sir Olave Caroe.

But it was noted that "The more conservative of the officials will have nothing to do with the proposal, but there are some who would like it." Hugh Richardson commented that "to avoid conservative criticism of the school, the Tibetan Government hoped that English habits of dress etc should be avoided. I reminded the Tsikhang that one of the first things Mr Ludlow did when his school was opened at

³⁵ Surkhang Surpa was the father of Ludlow's student Lhawang Tobgye. Surkhang and his three sons are attacked for being pro-British in the Chinese propaganda book *Tibet Transformed* by Israel Epstein (Beijing, 1983), p. 44.

Gyantse in 1926 [*sic*] was to report to the Tibetan Government certain boys who had cut their hair.”

The school officially opened on 31 July, 1944 under the headmastership of a Mr Ronald Parker, who, like Ludlow, was brought in from India. But there was “vocal opposition” from the abbots of Lhasa’s two biggest monasteries, Drepung and Sera, and “The possibility that the Chinese instigated the opposition through pro-Chinese (Khampa) elements in the monasteries, cannot be ruled out.”

Basil Gould reported in December that “Progress made in 4 months of half time work (mornings being taken up with Tibetan lessons) and in spite of interruptions and uncertainty of future is remarkable.” But just a week later, Sherriff, who had succeeded Ludlow in Lhasa, reported that the school was to close after just a few months.³⁶

After resigning as head of the British mission in Lhasa, Ludlow continued with his botanical explorations. He passed through Gyantse for the last time in 1946, and was “glad to reach the comfort of the dak bungalow” where he listened to Princess Elizabeth’s wedding, “which came through splendidly. The BBC, I must say, are pretty efficient.” But he was appalled to find the European cemetery “in a shocking state,” and that the graves of his friend Patterson and of Henry Martin, the veteran BTA Chief Clerk, had been lost. “It is obvious that no attention has been paid to this cemetery & no repairs have been carried out for years. It is a disgrace to the BTA’s Gyantse or whoever is responsible for its upkeep” (16, 20, 21 November, 1946).

His trip to Bhutan in 1949 was Ludlow’s 12th and last expedition in the Himalayas, but he was philosophical about this: “However, I must not grumble. Fortune has been very kind to me during the last quarter of a century” (3 November, 1949). It was now time for him to return to Britain, reluctantly at the age of 64. Earlier he had written that “I have only 3 uses for London (a) the Natural History Museum (b) a decent theatre (but it must be a seat in the stall where my knees don’t touch the row in front) (c) a lobster mayonnaise at Scots, or a roast beef lunch at Simpsons” (letter to Bailey, 3 June, 1930). Ludlow must have

³⁶ LP&S/12/4216, file 44. Tibetan opposition to the school was reflected in a popular verse current at the time: “In the holy place of Lhasa is that English school. Till our boots split we must go there, as their unwilling tool!” (cited in David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson: *A Cultural History of Tibet*, 1968, revised reprint, 1986, p.263). For a discussion of the Lhasa school from a Chinese Communist perspective see <http://www.zyztb.org.cn/xizhang/d2q-2000-e/past.htm>. For an article on the school in Chinese, by the rehabilitated aristocrat Lhalu Cewang Dorje (b. 1913), see <http://www.ctibet.org.cn/2000/00-2/xizangwangshi.htm>.

found it an enormous wrench to return home, but he found a congenial job in the botany department of the Natural History Museum where he worked quietly until retirement. He was an unobtrusive but popular member of the department, and colleagues recall enjoying going out with him for lavish curries. Ludlow never married, and colleagues whom I interviewed knew little or nothing about his personal life. His death in 1972 earned him an obituary in *The Times*,³⁷ but he always shunned publicity and he has been largely forgotten since then.

But he has not been forgotten by the Tibetans — or the Chinese. A report on Tibet under Chinese rule by a Tibetan exile group praises “an intrepid Englishman, Frank Ludlow” for his efforts at Gyantse, and adds: “Had the school flourished from 1924 [*sic*] until the coming of the Chinese in 1949 it seems reasonable to assume that at least several hundred Tibetans, many of them in powerful families, would have possessed the framework to recognize that the peril Tibet faced in 1949 was of a qualitatively different order to any dangers faced by Tibet in the past. It is also possible that such people might have been able to alert the Dalai Lama to the fact that Tibet was unlikely to survive unless helped by the international community and that all attempts to compromise with Communist China, inspired as it was by the zeal, intolerance and dogma of a missionary faith, would be unproductive.”³⁸

The official Chinese view is of course very different. A propaganda book on the changes in Tibet since the Communist takeover describes how education for all had been achieved by 1965, while only the sons of the richest families went to school before Liberation. “Among nobles’ sons some got special instruction so they could become *kashag* officials, others were taught by tutors at home and a few, the very richest, were sent to a school maintained by the British in Gyangzê, or to India and even to Britain. Whatever education there was served the interests of the feudal ruling class, or of the imperialists, who used it to gain influence in Tibet’s ‘top families.’ Even at that, every start at modern secular education was soon choked off by feudal obscurantism, lay and secular.”³⁹

³⁷ *The Times*, March 27, 1972.

³⁸ *Tibet the Facts* (Tibetan Young Buddhist Association, Dharamsala, 2nd revised ed., 1990), n. 408, p. 382.

³⁹ *Tibet Transformed* by Israel Epstein (Beijing, 1983), p. 335. A recent Chinese-language article on the school is equally scathing. It describes how “because the school made every effort to inculcate the students with Western culture and to nurture pro-British elements it roused unhappiness among the broad ranks of the Tibetan monks and people and stirred up a tide of resistance. The 13th Dalai Lama saw through the ambitions of the plots laid by the British and following the wishes of

Despite his deep suspicion of the Chinese, Ludlow would surely have agreed with the last sentence. Nothing gave him more satisfaction than his achievements at Gyantse, and he remarked to the Maharajah of Bhutan that his time in Tibet and Bhutan “had been the happiest days of my life and that the recollection of them would be the solace of my old age” (3 August, 1949).

the people ordered the closure of the school which had been open for three years” (*Xizang Lishi Wenhua Cidian [Dictionary of Tibetan History and Culture]*, Wang Yao and Chen Qingying, eds, Lhasa and Hangzhou, 1998, p. 126).

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