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**Missionaries, officials and the making of the 1826 *Dictionary of the Bhotanta, or Boutan Language***

In 1826 the Baptist mission press in Serampore, near Calcutta, published the first Tibetan-English dictionary under the title *A Dictionary of the Bhotanta, or Boutan Language*. The publication of the dictionary represented a landmark in Western studies of Tibetan. However, by 1834 it had already been superseded by Alexander Csoma de Kőrös's *Essay Towards a Tibetan Dictionary*, and it is now largely forgotten or ignored, even by specialists.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this paper is to explain the circumstances in which the dictionary was produced and—while acknowledging its defects—to restore it to its proper place in the history of European contacts with Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim.

The paper has two main themes. The first is the contribution made by Christian missionaries to Western knowledge of the region. Representatives of three missionary groups played distinctive roles in the preparation of the dictionary:

- Francisco Orazio della Penna (1680-1745), an Italian Capuchin who worked for 20 years in Lhasa during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, prepared a 35,000-entry manuscript Tibetan-Italian dictionary, and this served as the main foundation for the Serampore dictionary.
- Friedrich Christian Gotthelf Schroeter (d. 1820), a German Lutheran in the service of the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS), drew on della Penna's manuscript to prepare a draft Tibetan-English version as well as a grammar.
- Two English Baptist missionaries, William Carey (1761-1834) and John Clark Marshman (1794-1877), prepared Schroeter's draft for publication.

The second theme is the interaction between missionaries and colonial officials. Through the good offices of a British army officer, Captain Barré Latter (1777-1822), the British government paid Schroeter a monthly salary so that he could concentrate on his linguistic researches, and it later sponsored the publication of

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<sup>1</sup> To cite one example, an otherwise authoritative historical essay on Tibetan lexicography by Melvyn Goldstein (1991) does not mention it at all.

the dictionary. The paper draws on late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century archives to analyse missionary and British government interests in the Himalayan region, and to show how these interests both conflicted and converged.

### 1. Eighteenth century beginnings

The Serampore dictionary was the outcome of a long process of gradually expanding Western engagement with Tibet, starting with the arrival of Roman Catholic missionaries in Lhasa in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and continuing with the growth of East India Company interest in the region in the second half of the century.

#### *The linguistic research of the Capuchin mission in Lhasa (1707-1745)*

The Capuchins worked in Lhasa in three phases: from 1707 to 1711, from 1717 to 1733, and finally from 1741-45.<sup>2</sup> Although they were ultimately unsuccessful as missionaries, their reports to Rome made an important early contribution to European knowledge of Tibet and the Tibetan language.

Giuseppe da Ascoli, Francesco Maria da Tours and Domenico da Fano started work on a Latin-Tibetan dictionary as early as 1708, and a manuscript copy survives in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.<sup>3</sup> Da Fano's work was based on the spoken language, and it seems that della Penna was the only Capuchin to make a sustained study of literary Tibetan, notably in the period from 1717 to 1721. This included a stay at Sera monastery, near Lhasa, during the same period when the Jesuit Ippolito Desideri was conducting similar research. Della Penna's main teacher was Rabs-'byams-pa Yon-tan Dpal-bzang-po.<sup>4</sup>

By 1732 della Penna had completed a Tibetan-Italian dictionary with some 35,000 entries as well as a counterpart Italian-Tibetan dictionary. Della Penna used his linguistic expertise to prepare a number of Tibetan works on Christian doctrine. He also translated Tibetan Buddhist texts into Italian, including Tsong Kha-pa's *Lam rim chen po* and *Shakya thub pa'i rnam thar* (a life of Buddha). These early works—all of which are now lost—were written by hand. However, between 1733 and 1741 della Penna travelled to Rome to seek further support

<sup>2</sup> On the Capuchins see: Engelhardt 2005, Jann 1930, Petech 1952-56, Reifenberg 1934 and Vannini 1976. On Desideri and the Jesuits see Wessels 1924 and Bargiacchi 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Petech 1952, Vol. 1, pp. lxxvi-xcviii, lists the Capuchins' known Tibetan works. There is a further manuscript copy of Da Fano's original in the Bavarian State Library. I am grateful to Isrun Engelhardt for this information.

<sup>4</sup> Giorgi 1999 (1759), p.6; Schubert 1950, pp. 284-285. Giorgi writes 'npal bazang'.

for the mission. While he was there he supervised the preparation by Antonio Fantozzi (Fontarius) of a set of moveable Tibetan type—the first to be created for Tibetan—and carried this back to Lhasa, together with a printing press.<sup>5</sup>

The Capuchins were pre-colonial in the sense that, although they were funded by Rome, they received no patronage or protection from a Western power while they were in Tibet. Nevertheless, in a society where there was no dividing line between religion and politics, their activities clearly had political implications. Already in 1725, there were rumours, apparently inspired by Indians, that the missionaries constituted the vanguard of a European army.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, they lost both political and social support because their Tibetan converts in the 1740s refused to recognise the spiritual legitimacy and authority of the Dalai Lama.

In 1745, the Capuchins decided to withdraw temporarily from Lhasa. Della Penna took the dictionaries with him, a mark of the value he attached to them, but left behind the printing press and most of the rest of the mission's document collection. Della Penna himself died in Nepal soon afterwards, and the Capuchins never returned to Tibet. Following the Gorkha takeover of Kathmandu in 1769 they withdraw even from Nepal, again taking the dictionaries with them, and thereafter concentrated on missionary work in northern India. As will be seen, the dictionaries passed into the hands of Captain Latter in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and then to Bishop's College, Calcutta.

The manuscript dictionaries are now held in a private collection in Italy, and a recent note by Erberto Lo Bue summarises their contents.<sup>7</sup> The Tibetan-Italian dictionary is written in *dbu can* script and consists of 386 pages on traditional Tibetan paper with the first and last pages missing. The Italian-Tibetan dictionary is larger, consisting of 436 pages. Again, some of the pages are missing. Lo Bue notes that the arrangement of the Tibetan-Italian dictionary differs from the established convention whereby words are arranged in the Tibetan alphabetical order of the root letters rather than the initial letters. Instead della Penna takes into account the prefixes as well as some head letters, but does not do so consistently. Thus *'khor* is found under the letter *a-chung* rather than *kha*; *sgra* is found under *sa*, but *rku ba* is found under *ka*.

The Augustinian Friar Antonio Agostino Giorgi drew on information supplied by the Capuchins in his *Alphabetum Tibetanum* (Rome, 1759-1762) which, as will be seen, was used by both Csoma de Kőrös and Schroeter. Giorgi's study is

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<sup>5</sup> Lenhart 1950, Petech 1952, Vol.1, p. xcvi; Schubert 1950, p. 285.

<sup>6</sup> Engelhardt 2005, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> Lo Bue 2001, pp. 88-94. See also [www.oraqidellapenna.com](http://www.oraqidellapenna.com)

confused by a polemical preoccupation with Manichaeism, which distorted his analysis of Tibetan religion, but it remained the most authoritative published work on Tibet for several decades. The appendices contain samples of the Tibetan script in della Penna's type, as well as translations of Christian prayers and a Tibetan text with a loose translation into Latin.

*Expanding British interests in the Himalayas*

The British takeover of Bengal in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century inevitably brought the wider Himalayan region within the horizon of the East India Company. The Company soon found itself facing another rising power: from the 1740s onwards the Gorkha ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah led a series of campaigns which greatly expanded his territory and laid the foundations of the modern state of Nepal. In doing so, he disrupted a traditional trading route from northern India to Tibet. Warren Hastings (1732-1818), who served as Governor-General from 1773 to 1785, wished to contact with Tibet in the hope of establishing an alternative trade route via Bhutan, improving the balance of trade in Bengal, and—if all went well—extending a new line of communication to China. However, the British started with a limited knowledge of Tibet, linguistic or otherwise.

In 1774 Hastings sent George Bogle (1747-1741) to Bhutan and Tashilhunpo in the company of Purangir, a Hindu *gosain* with extensive contacts in Tibet. Bogle established a strong personal relationship with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Panchen Lama, Blo-bzang Gpal-Idan Ye-shes (1738-1780), and this was all the more to his credit because he was constantly fighting suspicions that the British had designs on Tibet, and that he had come to “spy out the nakedness of the land.”<sup>8</sup> Bogle insisted that British interests in Tibet were commercial rather than political, and he also contrasted between his own motives with those of the Capuchins. In response to an enquiry from the Panchen Lama, Bogle said that:

... their [the Capuchins'] religion differed from ours, and in nothing more than in their intolerant spirit and desire of bringing all the world to their own opinions, whereas every religion was allowed in England, and good men of every faith respected.<sup>9</sup>

Hastings' attempts to foster trade relations with Tibet suffered setbacks with the deaths of the Panchen Lama in 1780 and of Bogle in 1781. In 1783 Samuel Turner, a second emissary from Hastings, re-established contact with Tashi-

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<sup>8</sup> Lamb 2002, p.238.

<sup>9</sup> Lamb 2002, p.

lhunpo.<sup>10</sup> However, the British diplomatic cause suffered further setbacks as a result of the war between Nepal and Tibet in 1792. The Qianlong Emperor despatched a Chinese army which defeated Nepal and consolidated Manchu supremacy over Tibet. British Governor-General Lord Cornwallis (1738-1805) tried to remain neutral, and thereby managed to displease both Nepal, Tibet and China. British contacts with Nepal and Bhutan were further complicated by frequent boundary disputes in the lowland areas known as the *terai* on the Nepal border, and the *duars* in Bhutan.

Bogle learnt sufficient Tibetan during his stay in Tashi Lhunpo to believe—perhaps rashly—that he need not be at the mercy of interpreters.<sup>11</sup> However, neither he nor any other British official achieved any literary competence, and Persian remained the main language for diplomatic communications between Tibet and British India, with Kashmiri merchants often serving as inter-mediaries. The Panchen Lama’s court in Tashi Lhunpo included a munshi, possibly a Kashmiri, who was able to translate letters into Persian.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the British inability to communicate without interpreters must have been a dis-advantage. A letter from the 8<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to Lord Cornwallis in 1793 implies a note of reproof in this regard:

Since you have obviously not clearly understood the writing of *Krung thang* [the Chinese general Fukang’an], which he wrote in the Tibetan language, I have sent a letter in both the Tibetan language as well as a Persian translation thereof, whose meaning you have certainly correctly understood.<sup>13</sup>

The British scholarly community performed little better. In 1784 Sir William Jones (1746-1793) founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal which pioneered the systematic study of Indian history, languages and literature. On his outward journey to India, Jones had noted 16 items that he would like to explore: item 16 refers to “the best accounts of Tibet and Kashmir.”<sup>14</sup> However, neither he nor any other British scholar in this period tried to take up the study of Tibetan, and no one at this stage thought to investigate the earlier work of the Capuchins.

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<sup>10</sup> Turner 1800.

<sup>11</sup> Memorandum from Bogle, July 1779. In Lamb 2002, p. 440.

<sup>12</sup> Bogle to Hastings, Rangpur, 30 Sept. 1780. In Lamb 2002, p. 444.

<sup>13</sup> Engelhardt 2002, p. 238

<sup>14</sup> Kejariwal 1988, p. 29.

### *Evangelical missions*

Bogle's pragmatic views on religious matters were representative of British officialdom in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Both then and—to varying degrees—in later years there was a recurrent view that the government could not afford to be associated with missionary activity because this might antagonise local Hindu and Muslim opinion, thus undermining British authority. The Company employed Anglican chaplains to minister to British residents in India, and it tolerated a handful of German missionaries in southern India. However, Europeans were required to obtain a license before entering British India dominions, and the Company used this power to restrict missionary activity.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, from the 1790s onwards, Evangelical ideas began to gain influence both in British establishment circles in London and among individual officers in India. Landmark dates included the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in 1792, the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1795, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1799, and the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in 1804. The missionaries' desire to preach the Gospel in Asian languages was to give a new impetus to linguistic research.

## **2. The Baptists in India and the Himalayan borders**

The BMS was the first of the evangelical societies to move to India. In 1793 William Carey, a largely self-educated Baptist minister from Northamptonshire, set out for Calcutta, sailing on a Danish ship out of Copenhagen rather than a British vessel in order to circumvent the requirement to seek a license before taking up residence in India. He travelled in the company of John Thomas, a Baptist doctor with previous Indian experience. Carey was a brilliant linguist who was ultimately most famous for his achievements in Bengali, but who took an interest in the Himalayan region from the beginning.

### *Early engagement with Bhutan, 1794-1797*

Carey's first years in India were spent searching for a firm base. As early as February 1794, he raised the possibility of going to the Himalayan region, reporting somewhat mysteriously that he had "been mentioned to Government by a Person high in office and utterly unknown to and unthought of by me, as a proper person to send to Tibet, and Assam, to make discoveries which they have

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<sup>15</sup> For a nuanced view of British government policy in this period see Carson 1990.

much at heart.”<sup>16</sup> Such a move would “open a new and wide door for usefulness in a Country remote from the Knowledge of Europeans”. However, he added that there were many obstacles as “all these nations are afraid that the English have designs to subjugate them, as they have Bengal.”

As an interim measure, Carey and Thomas took up employment in an indigo factory north of Calcutta. This post allowed time both for study and for further reconnoitring. In October 1795 Carey mentioned that he and Thomas were considering travelling to “Boutan, a feudatory of Thibet” to assess the prospects for missionaries.<sup>17</sup> At this point, part of the attraction of Bhutan was that it was beyond the reach of the British authorities and their restrictions on missionary activity. In April 1796, Thomas again brought up Bhutan in a long letter to the Society describing a commercial fair near the border where he had made friends with a Bhutanese trader. Thomas formed a favourable view of the country’s prospects, and imagined that in seven years they might be “writing an account of an annual meeting of the Missionaries from Tartary, Thibet, Bootan and Bengal”.<sup>18</sup> However, he was obviously concerned at the possibility of government interference, and added that “the jealousy and power of the H.Co [Honourable Company] is so great that the utmost Caution and Secrecy may be necessary, till they [the missionaries] are safe on the Mountains.”

Carey and Thomas followed up these initial contacts with a visit to Bhote Haut in the Bhutan *duars* in March 1797.<sup>19</sup> In an enthusiastic letter to the Baptist Minister Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), Carey reported that the Soobah (Subah), the senior local Bhutanese official, had received them with great politeness and was receptive to their role as religious teachers:

We had much talk about Bootan, and about the gospel; and the appellation of Lama was given to us, which appears to mean teacher, and which title is emphatically given to the Grand Lama.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Carey to Andrew Fuller, Debhatta, 15 Feb 1794. National Library of Wales. Isaac Mann Collection, MS. 1207E.

<sup>17</sup> Carey to Mr P\_\_\_\_\_ Birmingham, 2 October 1795. *Periodical Accounts relative to the Baptist Missionary Society* (Hereafter *PABMS*) 1: 218-219.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas to the Society. 25 April 1796. Baptist Missionary Society Papers. IN/16. Regent’s Park College Archives, Oxford.

<sup>19</sup> The British annexed the *duars* (Bhutanese districts on the plains) in 1865. Bhote Haut now seems to be in Jalpaiguri district but I have not been able to identify it precisely.

<sup>20</sup> Carey to Fuller, Mudnabatty, 23 March 1797. In E. Carey 1836, pp. 198-206.

The Soobah followed up the initial meeting with a formal ceremony to express mutual friendship, including an exchange of “five rupees and five pieces of betel in the sight of the whole town” after which they “embraced three times in the eastern manner, and then shook hands in the English manner.” However, on returning to the Soobah’s house, Carey and Thomas encountered a second Bhutanese official: a Vakeel (Vakil) who had been to Calcutta. He refused to stand up when they arrived but instead asked a series of questions—for example the number of servants that they had—in an apparent attempt to gauge their status. Finally, after exchanging angry words with the Soobah, he left abruptly. The Soobah threatened to kill the Vakeel but Carey was able to appease him.

Carey and Thomas decided not to proceed further into the Bhutanese hills. This was primarily because it would have been necessary to obtain an order from “Pargong, the seat of the Pelen Rajah” (the Penlop of Paro). A second factor was the anxiety of his Indian servants who “now began to propagate a great number of bloody tales”. Carey says that he and Thomas “were not quite so timid, though we were not without our cogitations.” Before the two missionaries set out, the Soobah offered further gestures of friendship, including presents, a band of music to accompany them, and guides to show them the way.

Carey does not say how he communicated with the Soobah, but it was most likely in Bengali. He concludes his account with a discussion of the local language:

They have a written language, and I am informed, many books (I suppose religious) written in it. The names of the letters are the same as in the Bengali language, with a few exceptions, and are written in the same order, with only this difference, that the Bengali has five letters in a series, or line of the alphabet, but the Bootea only four... I am to be furnished with a Bootea Mounshi, and Mr.T. with another.

In the event Carey did not pursue his Bhutan language studies because other opportunities opened up in Bengal. Perhaps this was just as well for the mission. Carey and Thomas presented themselves as religious teachers but, in the light of British territorial expansion elsewhere in the region, Bhutanese leaders would certainly have suspected them of political or even military ambitions. The Vakeel’s suspicious attitude almost certainly was more representative of Bhutanese official opinion than the Soobah’s apparent friendliness.

***Serampore Bible translations and linguistic research***

Carey’s fortunes took a turn for the better in 1799 when the BMS sent out reinforcements from England including William Ward (1769-1823), a printer

from Hull, and Joshua Marshman (1768-1837), a part-time teacher and minister from Bristol. Together they re-established the mission at a new site in Serampore, a Danish-administered enclave which was close to Calcutta but beyond the reach of British authorities. Carey, Marshman and Ward together formed an effective team that became famous as the 'Serampore Trio'.

Carey's fortunes further improved in 1801 when he was appointed to the East India Company's training college for young officials at Fort William. Carey taught Bengali, Marathi and Sanskrit, and his salary provided an important supplement to mission funds. Now that they had a secure base, the missionaries were able to expand their literary activities. In 1806 Carey and his colleagues issued their *Proposals for a Subscription for Translating the Holy Scriptures* into Asian languages, pointing to the wider social and political benefits in:

...promoting the diffusion of Oriental Literature, and affording new facilities to Europeans in obtaining a knowledge of the various languages of this great Empire. With every translation of the Scriptures into a new Language, it is intended to give a Grammar of that language, if none already exist.<sup>21</sup>

Initially, the main focus was to be on Indian languages, notably Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindustani, Marathi, Oriya, Telegu and Gujerati. However, Carey also promised to turn his attention to "the translation of the scriptures into the Tibet, Bootan, Burmah, Assam, Malay, and Chinese languages, as soon as our funds shall enable us to undertake these works." He added that there would be no great difficulty in acquiring the necessary linguistic expertise, "particularly in the Tibet Language, which has already been cultivated by the Romish Mission".

Carey had already begun work on a Bengali Bible translation in the 1790s, and before 1806 the Baptists had already prepared New Testaments in Bengali, Marathi and Oriya.<sup>22</sup> By May 1806 they had begun work on Hindustani, Persian, Sanskrit, Gujarati, Telegu and Punjabi versions. Over the following next six years, they embarked on further translations in Assamese, Balochi, Braj Bhasha (a Hindi dialect), Burmese, Chinese, Kanarese, Kashmiri, Maldivi, Nepali and Pashtu. Carey himself played a leading role in these translations, and prepared grammars in Bengali, Sanskrit, Marathi, Punjabi, Telegu and Kanarese, as well as compiling dictionaries in Bengali, Sanskrit and Marathi.

This extraordinary output would not have been possible without the assistance of native-speaker Indian pandits who in many cases prepared the first drafts of

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<sup>21</sup> Carey, William et al. 1806., p. 8

<sup>22</sup> For an overall evaluation of the Baptists' literary work see Potts 1967, pp. 79-113.

translations before they were reviewed and corrected by Carey and his team. Already in 1807, Fuller had expressed a concern that “by aiming at too much we may accomplish the less,”<sup>23</sup> and the Trio’s critics have suggested that this concern was justified. Many of the translations were hasty and of poor quality: the team might have done better to concentrate on a smaller number of higher quality translations. As will be seen, the Baptists’ contribution to the *Dictionary of Bhotanta* was exposed to similar criticisms.

### ***Renewed Baptist interest in Bhutan 1808-1811***

The Serampore mission’s relations with the government entered another difficult period after the Vellore mutiny of 1806 when rebel sepoys briefly captured the local fort and killed or injured some 200 British troops before they were themselves suppressed by British reinforcements arriving from Arcot. There were rumours that the mutiny was in part a reaction against the Baptists’ requests for funds for their Bible translation work.<sup>24</sup> Acting Governor-General Sir George Barlow responded by imposing restrictions on the Baptists’ preaching activities. Although the main restrictions were soon lifted, the authorities continued for a time to oppose the placing of new missionaries in British territory. In 1808, when Carey’s younger colleague William Robinson (1784-1853) was looking for a new field of activity, Carey wrote that he could see no prospect of finding a settlement for him within British India. He therefore suggested that Robinson might consider “an open door in a neighbouring country”, and recommended Bhote Haut, the Bhutanese town he had visited 11 years earlier.<sup>25</sup> As Carey explained:

The Bengalee language is spoken at this place, though in the Bootan territory; but the Bootan language could be acquired, and such a further entrance be finally made into Bootan and Thibet, as providence might permit. The Scriptures here could be translated into the Bootan and Thibet languages (said to be the same) which alone were worthy of a man’s whole life.

After some delays, Robinson set out for Bhote Haut in March 1810 and managed to arrange an audience with the Katma (the “principal magistrate in the place”):

After tea we discoursed with him about learning the Bhootan language, that we might see whether he entertained any jealousy on that subject.

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<sup>23</sup> Cited in Potts 1967, p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> Potts 1967, pp. 177-179.

<sup>25</sup> Correspondence between Serampore and Robinson, 1808, *PABMS* 3, p. 466.

But he appeared very free, telling us the names of several things in the Bhootan language, and saying we should learn it by a few months' application.<sup>26</sup>

Robinson and his wife established themselves at the nearby settlement of Barbaree, but in July Mrs Robinson was taken ill and then died. In despair, Robinson asked for permission to return to Serampore.<sup>27</sup> The following January, he returned to Barbaree with two missionary colleagues from Devon, Mr and Mrs Cornish, but misfortune again befell them when their house was attacked by "a band of fifty or sixty robbers, armed with spears, attacking the house, in front and on one side."<sup>28</sup> The missionaries were able to flee, and remained in hiding until daybreak. When they investigated, they found that their housekeeper and cook had been killed, and the washerman later died of his wounds.

Robinson made one more attempt to enter Bhutan in 1811. He wrote to the Katma of Bhote Haut asking for a munshi to teach him the language and for permission to ascend the hills. The Katma "first referred him to the Rajah, and afterwards wrote him a discouraging letter."<sup>29</sup> Robinson therefore relinquished the attempt to enter Bhutan, and subsequently moved to Java to help set up a mission there. His departure ended the Baptists' aspirations in the Himalayan regions for the time being.

The Baptists nevertheless retained an interest in the languages of the Himalayan region. In 1816, William Moorcroft (1770-1825), the East India Company servant and explorer, published an account of his covert journey to Western Tibet four years earlier.<sup>30</sup> This prompted Carey and Marshman to write asking whether they might have sight of any samples of the Tibetan alphabet in his possession.<sup>31</sup> Moorcroft did not have any such texts at hand, but wrote to the government Foreign Department, suggesting that he might despatch a fakir in his service to obtain them.<sup>32</sup> The government approved the suggestion and furnished Moorcroft with gifts of cloth from the government warehouse to be used as presents to local Tibetan dignitaries in return for the documents. There is no record to show that any texts were in fact obtained in this way but, as will be seen, Moorcroft

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<sup>26</sup> *PABMS* 4, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Robinson to Marshman, 27 August 1810, *PABMS* 4, pp. 158-160.

<sup>28</sup> "Bootan Mission", *PABMS* 4, pp. 266-270.

<sup>29</sup> *PABMS* 4, p. 406.

<sup>30</sup> Moorcroft 1816. For Moorcroft's life see Alder 1985.

<sup>31</sup> Carey and Marshman to Moorcroft, Serampore, 22 Feb. 1816. IOR/4/552/13386.

<sup>32</sup> Moorcroft to John Adam, Calcutta, 23 Feb. 1816. IOR/4/552/13386.

was to recall the Serampore missionaries' interest in the Tibetan language during his visit to Ladakh in the early 1820s. Meanwhile, the CMS had launched its own missionary initiative in the Himalayan region.

### 3. The CMS and the Himalayan border regions

In its early years the CMS focused more on Africa than on India because it did not feel able to defy restrictions on missionary activity imposed by the East India Company.<sup>33</sup> However, already in the early 1800s, the society established contact with a group of chaplains in Calcutta—the so-called 'pious chaplains'—who held pronounced Evangelical views, but were sponsored by the Company to minister to its European employees. Revisions to the Company Charter in 1813 made it possible to consider sending missionaries to India, and the pious chaplains—notably Daniel Corrie (1777-1837) and Thomas Thomason (1774-1829)—formed the nucleus of the CMS Corresponding Committee which was to supervise its work in Bengal.

Also in 1813, the CMS recruited four young Lutherans who had studied at the missionary training school of Johannes Jänicke (1748-1827) in Berlin for further training. Friedrich Christian Gotthelf Schroeter, a newly ordained Lutheran minister from Saxony was selected for India. Schroeter was destined to come into contact with Tibetan studies through the agency of a British army officer, Captain Barré Latter (1777-1822—promoted to Major in 1818).

#### *Captain Barré Latter and the Nepal war*

Captain Latter served as commander of the Rangpur Local Battalion in northern Bengal from September 1813 until his death in 1822, and played a distinguished political and military role in the 1814-1816 Nepal war. The war brought him into contact with Sikkim and—at one remove—with Tibet. These contacts stimulated his interests in Tibetan matters, and at the same time brought him to a position of influence which he was able to use to the CMS's advantage.

At the outset of the war, which was sparked by a border dispute in northern Bihar, the British were conscious of their poor intelligence networks, and worked hard to make contact with potential allies and sources of information.<sup>34</sup> In November 1814 Government Secretary John Adam wrote to David Scott, the magistrate at Rangpur, asking him to open communications with both Raja Gtsug-phud Rnam-rgyal of Sikkim and the Tibetan authorities in Lhasa: the

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<sup>33</sup> Stock 1899. See also Bray 2005.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of the British intelligence network see Bayly 1996.

objective was to solicit the Raja's support in the campaign against Nepal, and to reassure the Tibetan and Chinese authorities that the British had no designs on Tibet.<sup>35</sup> In the event the Raja contacted Latter on his own initiative and he—rather than Scott—became the main channel of communication with Sikkim. Meanwhile, in 1815 Scott did manage to send a Bengali envoy, Kishen Kant Bose, to Bhutan: he was able to help secure Bhutan's neutrality in the war, although he did not succeed in travelling on to Tibet.<sup>36</sup> Bose stayed for 18 months in Bhutan and used part of his time to compile a “grammar and vocabulary of the Bootan language” using the Bengali script.<sup>37</sup>

The exchanges between the British and the Sikkimese were friendly from the outset but impeded by language problems. For example on 4 February, Latter reported that there was no one at his base in Titalia<sup>38</sup> or in Rangpur who could read the characters—presumably Tibetan—in a letter from the Raja, and several passages had been explained differently by the people who brought it.<sup>39</sup> However, the overall message in the Raja's letter was positive: he promised to deploy 1,500 men in an alliance against the Gorkha kingdom: “Make yourself master of the Maddies, or low country, and I will conquer the hilly part.”

The main British offensives against Nepal were at four points further to the west. However, in an otherwise undistinguished first campaigning season, Latter led a successful attack on the Morung, the lowland areas immediately to his west.<sup>40</sup> In March 1815, working with the Sikkimese forces, he turned to the Gorkha-occupied fort of Nagri in southern Sikkim, but was unable to capture it.

For much of the summer of 1815, Latter was forced to withdraw from the front line because of an attack of fever, and the Sikkim campaign appears to have stalled. When he returned later in the year, he had to deal with a new problem caused by linguistic miscommunication. A British official had sent a request for hill porters in the “Sepahee language” (‘Sepoy language’—presumably Urdu), and the Sikkimese had understood it as a new call to arms.<sup>41</sup> Since Nepal had provisionally signed the Treaty of Segauli on 2 December 1815, Latter's main concern was to hold the Sikkimese back rather than urging them into action.

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<sup>35</sup> *Papers relating to the Nepaul War*, pp. 265-270

<sup>36</sup> Bose 1865; Lamb 1986, p. 34,

<sup>37</sup> David Scott to George Swinton, 21 Sept. 1821, Cooch Behar. IOR F/4/810/21274.

<sup>38</sup> Now known as ‘Tetulia’, the northernmost town of Bangladesh. Also spelt ‘Titalya’.

<sup>39</sup> Latter to Adam. 4 Feb 1815. Titalia. *Papers Respecting the Nepaul War*, p. 428.

<sup>40</sup> Pemble 1971, p. 245. Pemble gives a detailed account of the whole British campaign.

<sup>41</sup> Latter to Adam. 19<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1815. Titalia. *Papers Respecting the Nepaul War*, p. 923.

To avoid further miscommunications Latter reported in January 1816 that “some people belonging to the Siccim Rajah accompany me, for the purpose of writing and interpreting letters”, an arrangement that gave great satisfaction to the Sikkimese Kazis (ministers).<sup>42</sup> Close communications were all the more important when the war resumed in February and March 1816. Latter and the Raja’s forces joined together in a series of attacks on Gorkha forces in the southern Sikkimese hills. Latter had just issued a call to the commander of the Nagri fort to surrender when news came through of a definitive ceasefire.

In the course of the campaign Latter established a good personal relationship with the emissaries from Sikkim. In a despatch on 30 December 1815, he remarked on “the ability and sound judgement” of the Sikkimese representatives, commenting that this proved “that their nation, though scarcely known to the Europeans, does not rank low in the scale of intellectual attainment.”<sup>43</sup> The Raja of Sikkim evidently reciprocated this sense of personal respect, and in a letter to the Governor-General in early 1816, made a request that “the Major Saheb” should not be transferred until there was a definitive agreement on the revised borders of Nepal and Sikkim because he was afraid of “the various subterfuges that the Gurkhas might deploy to defraud us.”<sup>44</sup>

The Raja was able to forward British messages to Tibet, and this proved important in the summer of 1816 when news came that a senior Chinese official had descended on Lhasa with 2,000 men. The British feared that this might herald a belated Chinese intervention in their dispute with Nepal. Latter was directed to send a letter to Lhasa via Sikkim explaining the British position. The Chinese answer came back by the same route in November 1816 with the reassuring message that “all was well between the Chinese and the English.”<sup>45</sup>

The eventual boundary arrangements were to the advantage of both Sikkim and the Company. Under the Treaty of Segauli Nepal ceded the territory between the Mechi and Tista rivers to the Company. Under the subsequent Treaty of Titalia, which Latter negotiated and signed on behalf of the British on 10 February 1817, the Company ceded the hill country between the two rivers “in full sovereignty to the Sikkimputee Rajah, his heirs or successors”. In April 1817, at Latter’s recommendation, the Company issued a further *sanad* granting Sikkim a stretch of

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<sup>42</sup> Latter to Adam. 31 Jan. 1815. *Papers Respecting the Nepal War*, p. 930.

<sup>43</sup> Latter to Adam. 30 Dec. 1815. Titalia. *Papers Respecting the Nepal War*, p. 926.

<sup>44</sup> Maharaja of Sikkim to Governor-General. 1816. *History of Sikkim*, p. 109.

<sup>45</sup> Hastings 1858. Vol. 1, p. 268. On this episode see Lamb 1986, p. 35.

lowland territory in the Eastern Morung.<sup>46</sup> In return, Sikkim was to refer any dispute with Nepal or any other neighbouring state to British arbitration, and undertook to afford protection to merchants and traders from the Company's provinces. Sikkim had in effect become a British protectorate.

***Latter's invitation to the CMS***

In the summer of 1816, while the political situation was still fluid, Latter took the initiative to write to the CMS Corresponding Committee in Calcutta. He explained that his personal position offered a great opportunity to support a missionary at a crucial period in the region's history:

Owing to a particular chain of events it has so occurred that I have obtained an uncommon degree of influence over a number of Tribes hitherto unknown to us, but who possess a degree of knowledge that has surprized me. Now I am desirous that this influence should be directed in affording Facilities to the Spread of the Gospel amongst them...<sup>47</sup>

He added that it was important to take advantage of the opportunity while he himself was still in his present post: his successor would not have the same degree of personal influence and might not be so interested in the "Cause." He went on to underline the potential benefits:

The advantages to be expected from having a Missionary here are that he will be enabled to become acquainted with Languages hitherto unknown but current amongst extensive Nations who have Presses for Printing, which alone affords a great facility for circulating the Scriptures. Besides our first communication with them will, in some degree, be sanctified, and we may therefore expect that the Blessing of God will attend an Intercourse with these Nations.

The committee responded by sending Schroeter to Titalia, and he duly arrived there on 29<sup>th</sup> October. In a letter to Rev Josiah Pratt (1768-1844), the CMS Secretary in London, he described his initial impressions, including his first encounter with Tibetan orthography:

I got from some men which were sent down to us on an errand to Capt. Latter the alphabet, in the learning of which I found no difficulty, but the reading of their language seems to require great attention, as their spelling appears to be quite different from the pronunciation of a word...

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<sup>46</sup> Aitchison 1933, Vol. XII, p. 60. On the Eastern Morung, see Choudhury 1990-1991.

<sup>47</sup> Minutes of the Calcutta Corresponding Committee. 9 September 1816, Calcutta, CMS/B/OMS/C II E1/52.

However, if it be the Lord's will that his word shall now be translated into this language, he will give health, wisdom and patience.<sup>48</sup>

Latter again wrote to the committee on 9 February 1817, beginning his letter with the observation that a "number of the hill chieftains have come down to me on Public Business"—a reference to the signing of the Treaty of Titalia on the following day.<sup>49</sup> This would give him "an opportunity of introducing Mr Schroeter to them, and as it were preparing them hereafter to receive a Missionary." Latter thought that it would not yet be possible to establish a missionary in Sikkim, and that this would in any case be of little use until the language was acquired. However, he could start by making a very favourable introduction:

The intercourse which I continue to hold with the Lamas of the most considerable monasteries will, I trust, under the blessing of Divine Providence, be the means of preventing any opposition on their part and may tend to facilitate the object in view.

In the long term a missionary with the right language skills would be able to establish contact with Bhutan as well as Sikkim.

In a further letter a fortnight later, Latter assessed Schroeter's character:

Mr Schroeter is evidently not calculated for rough or hazardous work requiring personal firmness or intrepidity, but he has an uncommon talent in acquiring languages. He is indefatigable in his application and has the Cause sincerely at heart.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time, he emphasised both the political sensitivities of the situation, and the progress that they were already making with the Tibetan script:

You must be aware that we are treading upon very tender ground and that a great deal of prudence is requisite at the Outset. Hitherto, thro' the blessing of God, everything has succeeded to the utmost of my wishes. We have now got the alphabet in the Umin [*dbu-med*] and Uchen [*dbu-chen*] characters of the Thibet Language, and also the Lepcha alphabet which is a perfectly distinct character.

In mid-March 1817, Schroeter had an opportunity to visit the Sikkim hills when Latter sent him to accompany Lieutenant Weston,<sup>51</sup> a younger officer who was

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<sup>48</sup> Schroeter to Pratt, 13 Jan. 1817, Titalia. XCMS/B/OMS/II/CE/1/47.

<sup>49</sup> Minutes of the Calcutta Corresponding Committee, 31 May 1817, Calcutta. No. 6 Extract of a letter from Barre Later, 9<sup>th</sup> Feb., 1817. CMS/B/OMS/C II E1/63.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 7 Extract of a letter from Latter, 24 Feb., 1817.

<sup>51</sup> Charles Thomas Gustavus Weston (1786-1828). Phillimore (1954, p.20) records that "The boundary of eastern Nepal was surveyed early in 1817 by Weston, whose original

making the first cartographic survey of the region. Latter's military campaign had suffered from a lack of accurate maps, and he obviously hoped to fill this gap while simultaneously advancing the missionary cause. Schroeter and Weston travelled together for some six weeks from 17 March until early May 1817. From Sikkim, Weston reported on Schroeter's progress:

Mr Schroeter is coming on famously and he has already interpreted between me and a Lepcha who came to my Tent in raptures to tell me he was to go with us. He began talking to them as soon as we arrived, they brought him a Book and were quite delighted to find he could decypher, but when he began spelling they were really amazed. He is now squatted on the ground in the Sun with a dozen of them round him reading away. He gleans from every one that comes near him and they seem quite pleased. They are in and out of the Tent constantly.<sup>52</sup>

Schroeter ended his own account of the journey by expressing satisfaction that:

I have certainly eaten my bread in the sweat of my face, having been almost every morning to night under an immersion of perspiration. The result of this my journey was that I collected upwards of 300 words of the Tebitian language, and learned the character of the Limboa [Limbu] tongue, so as to read it in a short time.<sup>53</sup>

Encouraged by these beginnings, Latter wrote a further letter to Thomason in Calcutta.<sup>54</sup> The committee had suggested that Schroeter might be better employed superintending a mission school elsewhere in Bengal. Latter responded first by emphasising Schroeter's special talents and his suitability for linguistic research. Secondly, he argued that his work was of international importance because it might complement recent missionary endeavours in the Russian empire. Latter's reference to Russia was inspired by a letter from Rev John Paterson (1776-1885) in a report of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS).<sup>55</sup> Paterson had set out from Scotland to Copenhagen in 1805 and originally intended—like Carey—to sail to India in a Danish ship. However, he found alternative fields of activity first in Scandinavia and then in Russia. In 1812 he met Isaak Jakob Schmidt, an Amsterdam-born scholar who was associated with the

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map is still preserved at Calcutta, and extends into the hills some twelve miles north of Darjeeling.”

<sup>52</sup> Extract of a letter from Latter, 24 March 1817. CMS/B/OMS/C II E1/63.

<sup>53</sup> Schroeter to Pratt, 3 June 1817, Titalia. XCMS/B/OMS/I1/C E/1/64.

<sup>54</sup> Latter to Thomason, 26 June 1817, Titalia. XCMS/BOMS/I1/CE/166B.

<sup>55</sup> On Paterson, see in particular Bawden 1985, pp. 44-71.

Moravian church's settlement in Sarepta on the river Volga, and had translated St Matthew's Gospel into Kalmyk. A year later Paterson and Schmidt helped found the Russian Bible Society, which enjoyed the patronage of Tsar Alexander I. From the BFBS report, Latter learnt that there were proposals to:

... send Missionaries from Petersburg to the frontiers of China for the purpose of obtaining a knowledge of the Mandjur [Manchu] language which is supposed to have some affinity to the Mongolian or Calmac [Kalmyk]. Mr Paterson also expresses a wish that a translation of the Scriptures might be made into the language of Thibet.

Titalia's strategic location at the foot of the Himalayas offered an opportunity for cooperation with the Russian Bible Society, and Latter asked Thomason to forward copies of the Kalmyk translations of St Matthew's Gospel:

I wish to forward that and some other versions of the Scripture to some independent Chieftains in return for the books I am obtaining from them. I have told their Lamas if they will let me have their religious books I will send them some in return at which they are well pleased, and I have already received some with a promise of more.

He concluded by expressing the hope that—since printing was known throughout Tibet—its inhabitants might themselves multiply copies of the Word of God once they were made aware of it.

In November 1817, despite Latter's optimistic assessment, the Calcutta committee decided to withdraw Schroeter from Titalia.<sup>56</sup> There were three factors behind their decision. First, in view of the sensitive political situation, Latter had not allowed Schroeter to preach openly, and the committee believed that this was contrary to his primary vocation as a missionary.<sup>57</sup> Secondly, they understood that the British delegation in Kathmandu was making faster research into Tibetan, and that Schroeter's efforts were therefore redundant.<sup>58</sup> Thirdly, they had identified a new opportunity for him in Burdwan, some 40 miles north-east of Calcutta, where Captain Stuart—another evangelical British officer—had set up several village schools using funds supplied by the committee. A missionary was urgently required to superintend the schools. Latter challenged the committee's

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<sup>56</sup> Minutes of the Church Missionary Committee, 7 Nov. 1817. CMS/B/OMS/I1/C E/89; Corrie to Josiah Pratt, 25 Nov. 1817. XCMS/B/OMS/I1/C/1/1/94.

<sup>57</sup> Corrie to Pratt, 25 November 1817, River Hoogley. XCMS/B/OMS/I1/C/1/1/94.

<sup>58</sup> B.H. Hodgson, who was based at the Residency from 1820 to 1843 conducted important research into Tibetan language and literature, but did not start until much later. See Waterhouse 2004.

decision in an exchange of letters, but they refused to revoke it. Schroeter himself commented that he “could have wished to go on with” the study of Tibetan, having advanced so far as to read it with tolerable fluency.<sup>59</sup> However, he felt bound to respect the committee’s wishes and set out for Burdwan in early 1818. In the end Schroeter spent only three months in Calcutta and Burdwan. Latter felt so strongly about the importance of his work that he persuaded the British authorities to employ him directly at a salary of Rs200 a month. Schroeter secured Thomason’s confirmation that the CMS would re-employ him if the government withdrew its support, and then returned to Titalia. In February 1819, Pratt wrote to both Schroeter and the committee approving the decision. He added that he would continue to consider Schroeter to be connected with the CMS, even if he were temporarily employed by the government.<sup>60</sup>

***Latter’s collection of Tibetan texts***

Latter went out of his way to acquire the best possible collection of literary texts for Schroeter’s use, and these came from several sources. The British authorities made available the “grammar and vocabulary of the Bootan language” which, as noted above, was compiled by Kishen Kant Bose in Bhutan in 1815-1816.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, Latter sought further documents direct from Sikkim and Tibet. In a letter to Thomason in June 1817, Latter mentioned that he had told the lamas of “some independent chieftains” that “if they will let me have their religious books I will send them some in return.”<sup>62</sup> Apparently, this exchange was successful because Latter was already able to report that “I have already received some with a promise of more.”

At the same time, Latter’s search for information on Tibet went as far as Europe. Thomason reported in September 1818 that Latter had “sent to Paris to a confidential friend, a commission for a collection of books bearing on the Chinese and Thibet subject.”<sup>63</sup> This friend had “at a considerable expense and with great difficulty, actually collected and sent out a rare and curious Missionary collection as India had not [seen] before,” and these were now at Schroeter’s disposal.

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<sup>59</sup> Schroeter to Pratt, 18 March 1818, Goamalty. CMS/B/OMS/C II E2/2.

<sup>60</sup> Pratt and Bickersteth to Schroeter, 22 Feb 1819, London. CMS/B/OMS/II/E/2/52.

<sup>61</sup> G. Swinton to Captain Lockett, 24 Sept 1821, Calcutta. IOR F/4/810/21274. There is a copy of Bose’s text in the National Library, Calcutta. See Chattopadhyaya 1984, p. iii. I am grateful to Géza Bethlenfalvy for this reference.

<sup>62</sup> Latter to Thomason, 26 June 1817, Titalia. XCMS/BOMS/II/CE/166B.

<sup>63</sup> Thomason to Pratt, 24 September 1818, Calcutta. CMS/B/OMS/CII E2/25.

Giorgi's *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, which Latter mentions in his correspondence, was probably among the items collected there.<sup>64</sup> According to Latter's brother-in-law Rev R. Jeffreys, the total cost of the books from France amounted to "several hundred pounds."<sup>65</sup>

It is not clear who the "confidential friend" might have been, but a Capuchin memorandum written in 1825, refers to "un certo Lord Mac-aullii" who had turned up in Rome some years earlier looking for Tibetan Bible translations prepared either by the Capuchins or by the Jesuit scholar Ippolito Desideri.<sup>66</sup> The visitor was described as a member of the Bible Society, and the governor of one of the countries of India: this is most likely to be Zachary Macaulay (1768-1834), the father of Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859), who had been governor not of India but of Sierra Leone. Macaulay had offered to publish thousands of copies of any translations, and put them at the disposal of the Propaganda Fide. The Capuchin archivists were unable to find any such manuscripts, and suggested that they might have been sent to Paris at the request of Cardinal de Bernis (1715-1794) several years earlier.<sup>67</sup>

Even more importantly, Latter was also able to acquire two copies of a manuscript Tibetan-Italian dictionary, but these came from India rather than Europe. According to Jeffreys:

One of these copies a friend of Major Latter had already sent him, having obtained it from Bettiah, to which place the Roman Catholic Mission retreated after their expulsion from Tibet, and the other, which was the original, Major Latter was fortunate enough to discover himself in the Roman Catholic College, Patria.<sup>68</sup>

These were the dictionaries prepared by della Penna in Lhasa many years earlier.

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<sup>64</sup> CT Metcalfe, Secretary to the Government to Corrie, enclosing letter from Latter. 11 June 1821, Calcutta. CMS/B/OMS/CI1 O76/154-155.

<sup>65</sup> R. Jeffreys, 20 July 1824. In Felix, pp. 394-395.

<sup>66</sup> Jann (ed.) 1939-48. Vol. 1 pp. 991-992.

<sup>67</sup> I.J. Schmidt (1838) offers another reason for the presence of many Capuchin documents in Paris: it seems that Napoleon had taken many documents from the Propaganda Fide, and these had not been returned. I thank Isrun Engelhardt for this reference.

<sup>68</sup> H. Hosten comments in a footnote to the published version of the letter (see Felix 1912) that 'Patria' is probably a copying mistake for 'Patna'.

*Schroeter's letters from Titalia*

Schroeter's correspondence with the CMS for the years from 1817 to 1820 shows him diligently studying in Titalia. A letter in early January 1820 indicates both his determination and his continuing limitations:

I am gathering and arranging words so as to form them into a Vocabulary, which work I find dry, uninteresting, and tedious enough. However, it must be done, a foundation must be laid before the building can be erected...<sup>69</sup>

His research drew both on written texts and on local informants who were visiting Titalia from the hills. In June 1817 Latter had discussed the potential expense of hiring a qualified local assistant, and suggested that "at least 40 or 50 Rs a month will be required by any Native of Thibet capable of teaching the language."<sup>70</sup> Latter's refers to Schroeter's "teacher" in subsequent correspondence, but it is not clear what his status or background might have been, and Schroeter's letter of January 1820 again commented on the difficulty of finding well-qualified informants. He adds:

The greatest difficulty I find in getting the conjugations of the verbs, since all the people I can lay hold of to tell me something have no grammatical knowledge, and very few indeed there are who know a few words of the Hindoostanee or Bengalee languages, in which tongues alone I can make myself for the present understood to them. The work will be much easier and pleasanter to me, when I shall have gained so much ground as to be able to express myself in their own tongue, which point to gain I am in eager pursuit.<sup>71</sup>

Three months later he wrote on a more optimistic note on his progress:

... I am still going on in the pursuit of my object, namely to form a Dictionary of the Tibet Language, and so to facilitate the translation of the Word of God into that unknown tongue. I have made considerable progress since my last to you, and have got such a collection of words and phrases as will keep me employed in writing them down and arranging them for this whole year and upwards.<sup>72</sup>

The London committee in turn was interested in the information that Schroeter might be able to gather about the countries to the north: might it be possible to

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<sup>69</sup> Schroeter to Pratt, 3 January 1820, Titalia. CMS/B/OMS/C 11 O257.

<sup>70</sup> Latter to Thomason, 26 June 1817, Titalia. XCMS/BOMS/I1/CE/166B.

<sup>71</sup> Schroeter to Pratt, 3 January 1820, Titalia. CMS/B/OMS/C 11 O257.

<sup>72</sup> Schroeter to Pratt, 3 March 1820, Titalia. CMS/B/OMS/C 11 O257.

establish contact with China by that route?<sup>73</sup> They also sought information on local customs and beliefs:

If you can procure and send us any idols, or other evidences of the superstition and degradation of the natives, we shall wish to receive them. These things which may be very common and familiar to your eyes, have a great effect here, in shewing to our [...] the miserable state of those people for whom we are concerned.<sup>74</sup>

Schroeter's replied that since he did not reside in Tibet and was still unable to converse with Tibetans on religious matters, he did not know whether or when he would be able to fulfil the committee's wishes. However, he was later able to offer a more detailed report on his encounters with Buddhism:

The Tibetians as far as I have been able to enter into their creed believe Boodha to have been an incarnated God, who came into the world to teach the people the way to salvation, both by example and as a Devotee and by precept; they call him in their language amongst other names which they give him *dkon.mchog* Konch,hogh.<sup>75</sup> They make images of him and bow down before him; but not so of *rab byung dkon mchog* Rabh jhoong Konch,hogh i.e. the self existing God, for say they: Him has no man seen, and hence it would be wrong to make a picture of him. In their books the phrase *dkon mchog gsum* Kon ch,hogh soom is often found, from which some have thought that they believe a Trinity, the word "soom" meaning three, but on close inquiry I found that by *dkon mchog gsum* Kon chhogh sum they understand Boodha, the Holy law and the Devotees which make three.<sup>76</sup>

He continues with an exposition of what would then have been the novel concept of reincarnation:

They believe in Transmigration; namely that the soul when she leaves the body goes either to heaven, or is born again into the world assuming another human body or that of an animal, according to her degree of sanctity, or the multitude of good works performed.

In spite of the CMS's earlier concerns about Latter's restrictions on Schroeter's preaching ministry, he held services both for Europeans resident in Titalia and

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<sup>73</sup> Pratt to Schroeter, 21 January 1820. London. CMS/B/OMS/I1/E/2/83.

<sup>74</sup> Pratt to Schroeter, 21 July 1818, London. CMS/B/OMS/C I1 E2/15.

<sup>75</sup> Italicised words are written in Tibetan script in the original.

<sup>76</sup> Schroeter to Pratt, 31<sup>st</sup> March 1820, Titalia. CMS/B/OMS/C I1 O257.

for local Indians, and had been able to baptise a “native drummer”.<sup>77</sup> Schroeter’s letters also cover more personal matters, including an unsuccessful appeal to the London Committee to find “a pious amiable young woman” fit to be a missionary’s wife.<sup>78</sup> The committee felt unable to oblige, instead hoping and praying that the “Lord may provide you such a companion for life in India, as may meet your own wishes and the Committee’s”.<sup>79</sup> On another personal matter, Schroeter expresses concern for the health of his fellow missionaries, many of whom had died in Sierra Leone. He argued that they needed better training on medical matters, and suggested that:

... perhaps the use of Calomel<sup>80</sup> is not so well known to them as to us in the East Indies for I have suffered repeated attacks of the fever and ague in India, which perhaps in Sierra Leone without the proper Medicine might have proved fatal to me. Another thing they ought particularly to be cautioned against is the exposure to the Sun. They ought never to be without an Umbrella, as soon as they reach the shore. A European, and especially a young, healthy, strong German laughs at the idea of it, but he will soon find the ill effects of it.<sup>81</sup>

Sadly, Schroeter’s medical knowledge and experience were not sufficient to protect him from a similar fate. On 14<sup>th</sup> July 1820, only a few months after he had written this letter, he too succumbed to a fever and died.

#### 4. The search for a successor and the publication of the 1826 dictionary

The day after Schroeter’s death, Latter wrote to the CMS committee in Calcutta, concluding that he had “now rested from his labours, and we know that his works will follow him.”<sup>82</sup> It was not immediately clear who would in fact follow up on Schroeter’s labours. However, the government laid claim to his papers since it had paid his salary, and in September 1820 Latter sent a list to Calcutta. The first three items refer to the dictionary:

No.1 is a Dictionary formed from a Manuscript one in Italian and Thibetian in my possession originally composed by the Roman Catholic Missionaries at Lhasa.

<sup>77</sup> Undated letter cited in Hough 1839-1840, Book 13, p. 303.

<sup>78</sup> Schroeter to Pratt, 18 March 1818, Goamalty. CMS/B/OMS/CII E2/2.

<sup>79</sup> Pratt and Bickersteth to Schroeter, 22 Feb 1819, London. CMS/B/OMS/I1/E/2/52.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Calomel’ was a popular name for Mercury Chloride (Hg<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>), used as a purgative.

<sup>81</sup> Schroeter to Pratt, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1820, Titalia. CMS/B/OMS/C II O257.

<sup>82</sup> *Missionary Register* 1822, p.52.

No.2 is a supplement containing words not found in the above Dictionary and selected from Manuscripts furnished to Mr Schroeter by me. This work is extremely valuable being an explanation of Terms chiefly used in the Religious Books of the Thibetians. Each word besides the English explanation has the corresponding term in Bengallee annexed. This supplement with No.1 forms a complete Dictionary Thibetian and English.

No.3 is the commencement of a Dictionary English and Thibetian formed from the same materials. It only extends to the word "Bell".<sup>83</sup>

Latter's explanations clearly demonstrate Schroeter's debt to his Italian predecessors, while at the same time shedding light on the work that he had himself been able to accomplish: the bulk of the draft Tibetan-English dictionary, consisting of 74 quires of paper according to a note elsewhere in the letter, was drawn from the Italian manuscript. However, the supplement, consisting of 15 quires, was based on Schroeter's own research.

The remaining items in Latter's list were as follows:

No.4 is a Treatise on the Thibet Alphabet with Mr Schroeter's last corrections to it, tho' not copied out fairly. The Treatise is formed upon the plan of the Alphabetum Thibetanum published at Rome by the Society de Propaganda Fide but differently arranged.<sup>84</sup> It contains many explanations not to be found in the Printed Work, procured thro the aid of a Thibet manuscript on the Letters of the Alphabet in my possession.

No.5 consists of 2 Quires (or Cahiers) of Paper being the commencement of a Grammar in which Mr Schroeter was employed at the time of his decease. One of the Cahiers includes a copy of the Treatise on the alphabet. The compilation of this work would have required great labours and research. The only assistance Mr Schroeter could obtain in it was from an imperfect manuscript Grammar in my possession composed by a Roman Catholic Missionary, but which merely extends to the conjugation of one Verb.

No.6. These papers do not appear of much importance. Some of them have been embodied into the Dictionary. The rest... seem to have been copied out by Mr Schroeter for his own use and introduction.

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<sup>83</sup> Latter, 12 Sept. 1820. Enclosed in letter from CT Metcalfe, Secretary to the Government, to D. Corrie. 11 June 1821, Calcutta. CMS/B/OMS/CI1 O76/154-155.

<sup>84</sup> This is a reference to Giorgi 1762-63.

No.7 consists of a copy of Thibet manuscript belonging to me and also the rough translation of one on which Mr Schroeter was employing himself as an exercise with his teacher.<sup>85</sup>

Latter was no doubt still irritated by the CMS's earlier proposals to move Schroeter to Burdwan, and argued that the society could advance no claim to his papers since they had afforded no assistance other than agreeing to his receiving a salary from the government. He suggested that either the London Missionary Society, which had begun mission work in China, or the Baptists in Serampore would be better placed to complete Schroeter's work.<sup>86</sup>

In the event the CMS did come up with a candidate to continue Schroeter's work, and wrote to Lord Hastings, the Governor-General of India, to solicit his approval.<sup>87</sup> The candidate was Rev Benedict La Roche, a Lutheran clergyman from Basle. Hastings duly wrote that he would recommend La Roche to "the civilities and protection of the officer commanding in Rungpore"—a reference to Latter.<sup>88</sup> However, La Roche was taken ill on the voyage to Calcutta and decided to return to Britain. He died in August 1821, shortly before his ship was due to arrive in Gravesend.<sup>89</sup> The CMS then designated Revs Jacob Maisch and Theophilus Reinhardt for Titalia, and they arrived in Calcutta in October 1822, only to find that Latter had himself died the previous month.<sup>90</sup> Latter's death ended the CMS's hopes for the Titalia mission.

Latter had referred to his own Tibetan collection—the only part of his property that he itemised specifically—in a codicil to his will written in April 1822:

All my Thibet manuscripts, including the books printed in the Thibet character, are to be sent to England and disposed of in any way that my father may recommend with a view to their falling into the hands of some public Society.<sup>91</sup>

It seems that Latter was still in possession of Schroeter's papers at the time of his own death. On 16 January 1823 Adjutant General James Nicol, who was one

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<sup>85</sup> Latter, 12 Sept.1820, Titalia. Enclosed in letter from CT Metcalfe, Secretary to the Government, to D. Corrie. 11 June 1821, Calcutta. CMS/B/OMS/CII O76/154-155.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Corrie to Metcalfe, CMS/B/OMS/CII O76/154-155.

<sup>88</sup> Hastings to Lord Gambier, CMS President, 10 January 1821, Calcutta. CMS/B/OMS/CII O257.

<sup>89</sup> Dr Ramsay to Pratt 13 August 1821, Gravesend. CMS/B/OMS/CII/0172.

<sup>90</sup> Hough 1839-1840, p. 303.

<sup>91</sup> UK Public Record Office. Prob.11/1688.

of his executors, contacted the government asking for permission to send the “original Dictionary and treatise on the Thibet Alphabet prepared by the late Mr Schroeter” to England in accordance with the will.<sup>92</sup> His request was turned down. On 23 January 1823 C. Lushington, Acting Secretary to the Government, replied on behalf of the Governor General in Council requesting Latter’s executors to transmit the originals to his office, but promising to send copies of Schroeter’s manuscripts to England to be placed at Mrs Latter’s disposal.<sup>93</sup> Nicol duly forwarded the papers a week later.

In the event the rest of Latter’s collection remained in India after all: it was purchased by Rev W.H. Mill for the newly founded Bishop’s College, Calcutta, which was run by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG).<sup>94</sup> The collection, which included Orazio della Penna’s Italian manuscript dictionary, appears to have lain untouched until investigated by Fr Felix d’Anvers 90 years later.<sup>95</sup> A catalogue of manuscripts in the library which was published in 1915 mentions several other Tibetan works, including philosophical and iconographic works, and it is likely that some or most of these came from Latter.<sup>96</sup> In the 1820s such texts were rare in Western collections, and it is a matter of regret that no scholar made use of them at the time in accordance with Latter’s wishes.

Having acquired Schroeter’s papers, the government had to decide how to make the best use of them, and referred the matter to Carey in his capacity as a trusted linguistic adviser, and he duly recommended the publication of Schroeter’s text. However, it was clear that the draft dictionary could not be published as it stood, and Carey accepted the task of revising it. This was far from straightforward. As Carey reports in a letter written in July 1823:

They [the papers] consist of materials for a grammar and a dictionary of the Bhote or Tibet language. The grammar I must write from his [Schroeter’s] materials; and the interpretations of the words in the dictionary, being in the Italian language, I shall have to translate.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> British Library, Oriental and India Office Collection. Records of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India: Board’s Collections. OIOC /F/4/761/20679. January to April 1823.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Hough 1839-1840, p. 304.

<sup>95</sup> Felix 1912, p.395.

<sup>96</sup> Shastri 1915. They include a life of Padmasambhava and other religious texts as well as an incomplete Tibetan-English-Bengali dictionary prepared by Schroeter.

<sup>97</sup> Carey to John Ryland, 18 July 1823, Calcutta. In E. Carey 1836, pp. 368-369.

Also in July 1823, Carey accepted a post as official government translator with the task of translating a backlog of 18 months' worth of government regulations into Bengali.<sup>98</sup> Apparently, the Regulation of 1822 on the settlement of the land revenue was particularly onerous, and Carey thought that the first chapter of Ephesians was child's play by comparison. At the same time he was also working on his Bengali dictionary. Carey was renowned for his hard work, and it seems that "his relaxation consisted in turning from one pursuit to another,"<sup>99</sup> but he obviously was not able to devote as much attention or knowledge to the dictionary as a full-time specialist would have done.

In the end, Carey edited the grammar but delegated the work on the main dictionary to John Clark Marshman, the son of Joshua Marshman. Marshman was an excellent Bengali linguist—his own works included an abridged version of Carey's dictionary. However, he too was a very busy man, and started with no specialist expertise in Tibetan. The final product reflects these limitations.

***Moorcroft and Csoma de Kőrös in Ladakh: a missed opportunity***

By the time that the British authorities were discussing what to do with Schroeter's manuscripts, a new researcher had begun his Tibetan studies. In July 1822 the British explorer William Moorcroft—with whom Carey had corresponded in 1816—met the Hungarian scholar Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (Kőrösi Csoma Sándor, 1784-1842) in Ladakh.<sup>100</sup> Csoma had set out from Hungary two years earlier in the hope of finding information on the origins of the Hungarian race. He had hoped to cross the Karakoram from Ladakh to Turkestan, but was barred from travelling beyond Leh. Impressed by his linguistic abilities, Moorcroft encouraged him to take up the study of Tibetan.

On 8<sup>th</sup> February 1823, at almost the same time as the British authorities were discussing what to do with Schroeter's manuscripts, Moorcroft wrote an extended memorandum to Horace Hayman Wilson (1786-1880), the Secretary of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, enclosing specimens of "the various kinds of letters employed in writing and printing the language of Tibet."<sup>101</sup> Like Schroe-

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<sup>98</sup> Marshman 1859, p. 287.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> For Csoma's life, see Duka (1885), Terjék (1984) and Marczell (2007).

<sup>101</sup> Moorcroft to Secretary of Asiatic Society, 3 Feb. 1823, Kashmir. OIOC. MSS Eur G 28 Nos 48-52. Printed in: Marczell 2007. Vol. 2, pp. 7-27. See also Marczell's article, "Moorcroft's Pioneering Memorandum". In Marczell 2007, Vol. 1, pp. 26-44. For Wilson's work with the Asiatic Society, see Kejariwal 1988, pp. 118-161.

ter, Moorcroft was equipped with a copy of Giorgi's *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, and made frequent references to it, but at the same time pointed out how much more there was to be discovered, and recommended that the society take up the challenge. He followed up this memorandum with a letter to George Swinton, Secretary to the Political Department in Calcutta, commending Csoma as an appropriate person to "collect materials for a Vocabulary in Tibutan and Latin and also for a Grammar."<sup>102</sup> He requested the government to send a set of dictionaries and other research materials to assist Csoma in his work.

In a postscript written from Kashmir in May 1823 Moorcroft wrote that Csoma was already on his way back to Ladakh. However, he noted that the enterprise rested solely on Csoma's shoulders, and—perhaps recalling his correspondence with Carey and Marshman in 1816—suggested that "it might be expedient to hold out an invitation to someone of the Members of the Missionary Society at Serampoor or to a person selected by them to undertake a journey to Ladakh."<sup>103</sup>

According to Moorcroft, Csoma had agreed upon this point and promised to share his knowledge when a suitable person joined him. Moorcroft also offered to contribute Rs.500 of his own funds to support the Serampore recruit as long as he had the right temperament:

Whatever his other qualities may be, a mild conciliating disposition and the most cautious avoidance of religious controversy are indispensable to success as a contrary conduct would not only defeat the primary objects of the expedition but expose the British interests which have now taken root in Ladakh to risk of injury...<sup>104</sup>

A collaboration between Csoma de Kőrös and the Baptists—who by now had access to Schroeter's papers—would have made the best possible use of the resources available in 1823. However, the opportunity was missed. By this time Moorcroft was in any case falling out of favour with his superiors, who repudiated his attempts to promote a treaty between Ladakh and the East India Company. Csoma was later to gain recognition on his own merits but in 1823 the British authorities and the Asiatic Society knew him only from Moorcroft's letters. He was therefore left to pursue his researches independently and spent the period from June 1823 to October 1824, studying Tibetan in Zangskar.

In November 1824, Csoma arrived at the British garrison of Sabathu (near modern Simla), armed with Moorcroft's letter of recommendation. At first the

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<sup>102</sup> Moorcroft to Swinton, 24 March 1823. Kashmir. In Marzell 2007, Vol. 2, pp. 31-36.

<sup>103</sup> Moorcroft postscript. 5 May 1823. Marzell 2007, Vol. 2, pp. 36-39.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Sabathu commander was uncertain how to deal with him, and wrote to Calcutta seeking instructions. After an exchange of letters with both the government and the Asiatic Society, Csoma was permitted to return to Zangskar to continue his researches with the help of a small government grant.

Csoma's work was publicised in 1825 by two unsigned articles on Tibet in the Calcutta-based *Quarterly Oriental Magazine*. The magazine was edited by Wilson, making it likely that he was the author. The first article, "Observations on the Language of Tibet", noted that: "The extension of our political [relations] is necessarily accompanied by that of our philological relations, and the acquisition of new languages, naturally follows an intercourse with new countries."<sup>105</sup> However, it suggested that "nothing has been effected by our countrymen" on Tibetan linguistic research, and therefore offered a summary of the work of the two Paris-based scholars, Heinrich Julius Klaproth (1783-1835) and Jean-Pierre Abel Rémusat (1788-1832). The second article was a postscript, bringing the good news that Csoma was preparing a Tibetan dictionary and grammar: these works would "supply a blank in philology, and facilitate international communication".<sup>106</sup> Also in 1825 Wilson read a paper at the Asiatic Society reporting on Csoma's initial discoveries in July, and in November belatedly presented Moorcoft's letter from Ladakh on the Tibetan script.<sup>107</sup> Wilson apparently made no reference to the Serampore Tibetan dictionary project in any of these communications.

Although Wilson drew public attention to Csoma's work, the latter's biographers have castigated him for failing to give it full-hearted support. In a recent article, Peter Marczell suggested that Wilson might have wished to take over Csoma's work, possibly even publishing it in his own name, and that the publication of the Serampore dictionary implied collusion between Wilson and Carey with a similar end in mind.<sup>108</sup> At least one contemporary observer suspected similar literary skulduggery. A note in the Paris-based *Nouveau Journal Asiatique*, which was translated and published in the *Asiatic Journal*, reported that Schroeter's manuscript was about to be published and expressed the hope that "the name of the author will not be omitted in the title-page of the work, as has happened to several other productions of the same kind in India".<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Quarterly Oriental Magazine* 3, Nos.5-6. (1825), pp. 95-103,

<sup>106</sup> *Quarterly Oriental Magazine* 3, Nos. 5-6 (1825), Nos. 5-6, pp. 160-162

<sup>107</sup> Marczell 2007, Vol.2, p. 551.

<sup>108</sup> Marczell, 2007, Vol. 1, pp. 26-44.

<sup>109</sup> *Asiatic Journal*, Vol 25, April 1828.

There is no doubt that Wilson was more interested in promoting his own prestige than that of others, and Carey himself is open to the charge that he did not give adequate acknowledgement to the work of Indian Pandits in his Bible translations. However, there is no indication that he and Carey ever discussed the Serampore dictionary. For lack of better evidence, the failure to coordinate the Serampore project with Csoma's work appears to be the result of neglect rather than conspiracy.

***The published version of the dictionary***

The dictionary was published under the name of "The late Rev. Frederic Christian Gotthelf Schroeter", and consists of a four-page preface by William Carey, a 35-page "Grammar of the Bhotan Language", six pages of "colloquies"; and a 475-page dictionary. The dictionary's title—apparently referring to Bhutan rather than Tibet—may have contributed to its subsequent obscurity. The choice of title perhaps reflected Carey's own experiences on the borders of Bhutan 30 years earlier, as well as a more general European usage which was common in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries but had already faded by 1826.<sup>110</sup> In a map of Asia in the 1810 edition of the Baptist *Periodical Accounts*, "Bootan" is depicted as a swathe of territory stretching from Assam in the east to "Srinagur" in the west. The territory north of the "Sampo" (Tsangpo) river is an otherwise empty white space described as "Bood tan" or "Tibet." Carey evidently retained the same geographical conception.

In the preface, Carey clarifies that the dictionary refers to "the language of Thibet and Bhotā, but called Boutan by Europeans." In an indirect reference to the work of Moorcroft and Csoma in Ladakh, he adds that it is also the language of "little Thibet", and infers that it is spoken "throughout the whole of the region on the summit of the *Himalaya*<sup>111</sup> mountains, usually called Chinese Tartary". His next paragraph points to the limitations of the government political and commercial intelligence network in the Himalayan region, and shows how the dictionary will help rectify them:

In a political point of view, a knowledge of the countries bordering on our own territories, and of the language spoken in them, is of great importance as furnishing facilities for friendly intercourse with the people who inhabit them, and opening to us all the commercial advent-

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<sup>110</sup> See Gandolfo 2004 for a detailed discussion of the European use of 'Boutan' for 'Tibet' in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Carey's usage is at the very end of a long tradition.

<sup>111</sup> Italics as in the original text.

ages which those countries afford: while, at the same time, it affords equal facilities for discovering hostile intentions when they exist, and furnishes an intelligible medium of negotiation with the people.

Carey acknowledges the earlier work of the Capuchins: “It is highly probable that the following Dictionary was written by some of the Roman Catholic missionaries who formerly laboured in Thibet.” He does not mention della Penna, and almost certainly did not know his name. Another Capuchin legacy passes unacknowledged: the typeface is based on the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*.

Carey recognises the incompleteness of the grammar. Schroeter himself had reported on his struggles with Tibetan verb forms and, in the section on the verb ‘to be’ (p.35), an editorial note explains that “The past tenses of this verb, and the conjugation of a verb in the passive voice... are wanting in the author’s Manuscript.” In the preface (p.iii), Carey explains that he did not think himself warranted in adding to the grammar and, indeed, that his “knowledge of the Boutan language is too slight to admit of it.”

Some of the samples in the “colloquies” could have come from a traveller’s phrase book: “what is the price of that?”, “how much do you want?”, “what, is one rupee not enough?” These may have been among the “collection of words and phrases” that Schroeter had mentioned six years earlier. Other sentences clearly come from draft translations of Bible verses. For example, Jesus’s Parable of the Sower is represented with the phrases “a sower went to sow his seed,” “and some fell upon a rock.”

For better or possibly for worse, the final version of the main dictionary is more than a straight translation from the Italian, but instead reflects the interpretations of three contributors: della Penna, Schroeter and Marshman. It will be necessary to conduct a careful comparison with della Penna’s text—an important task for future research—in order to define precisely which aspects derive from whom, but a preliminary examination offers some clues. As noted above, Schroeter’s papers included a supplementary list of Tibetan religious terms, which had not been in the Italian original, together with their English and Bengali equivalents. The published dictionary contains numerous entries such “*Dra kyi rab tu byed pa las so*, the Kulee yoga, a division of time among the Hindoos” (p.160). Since Schroeter was working in Bengal, these Hindu references may have come from him or from Marshman rather than della Penna.

On the other hand, the entry for Bon, the ‘pre-Buddhist’ religion of Tibet is “*Bon po*, the name of a law which is current among the infidels” (p.241), and this perhaps reflects the orthodox Buddhist view from Sera monastery where

della Penna had studied. Similarly, the medical references—e.g. “*jigs med*, a Myrabolan, a fruit used for medicinal purposes, (*Terminalia Cheduba*)”—may reflect the Capuchins’ doctoring activities in Lhasa. However, the Latin classification would have been supplied by Carey, who was an eager botanist, and a Fellow of the Linnaean Society. The definition of *pha bong* which is described as “a kind of hard rugged stone, resembling Portland stone” (p.186) must owe something to Marshman’s knowledge of English building materials, rather than the life experiences of either della Penna or Schroeter.

One of the most distinctive features of the dictionary is the ordering of the entries, which is by the initial letter of each Tibetan word rather than the root letter. Again, the basic principle seems to have come from della Penna’s original, but apparently with some modifications. As noted above, Lo Bue points out that *rku ba* is listed under ‘ka’ in della Penna’s manuscript.<sup>112</sup> However, it falls under ‘ra’ (p. 321) in the Serampore dictionary.

The Serampore dictionary has another peculiarity in that it combines the entries for words beginning with ‘ca’ and ‘tsa’ under the same sub-heading. It does the same for ‘cha’ and ‘tsha’; as well as ‘ja’ and ‘dza’. This is contrary to the usual ordering of Tibetan letters as laid out in the accompanying grammar. The letters in each of the three pairs resemble each other (they derive from the same originals in the Indian script on which the Tibetan alphabet is based). For example ‘tsa’ is similar to ‘ca’, but modified by a diacritic ‘hook’ at the top of the letter. It is not clear whether decision to combine them in the dictionary reflects a considered judgement from one of the contributors, or whether it was a simple mistake, deriving from the appearance of the three sets of letters and reflecting the difficult circumstances in which the dictionary was produced.<sup>113</sup> Again, an examination of della Penna’s original manuscript would establish whether this ordering derives from him or from Schroeter or Marshman.

### ***Klaproth’s review***

When the Serampore first dictionary appeared, few scholars were qualified to assess it. The most thorough contemporary review—indeed what appears to be the only detailed review ever published—comes from Klaproth, one of the two

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<sup>112</sup> Lo Bue 2001, p. 90.

<sup>113</sup> Carey acknowledges the inconsistency on p. iii of the preface where he says that the letters of the third class have been mixed with the second, and that this was not observed until the printing was too far advanced to remedy it. This is itself a mistake: it is the letters of the fifth class that have been mixed with the second.

Paris-based scholars whose work Wilson had cited in 1825, and appeared in the *Nouvelle Journal Asiatique* in 1828. Klaproth begins with a note of praise, welcoming the publication of a Tibetan grammar and dictionary as an epoch-making event. However, he then proceeds to conduct an elegant demolition.

After a brief review of earlier Tibetan research conducted in France, Klaproth observes that the British had a particular interest in gathering detailed information on a country that is extremely rich in gold, and situated in the neighbourhood of their possessions. He then castigates Carey for the sweeping geographical comments in his preface, which demonstrate the limited extent of the knowledge available in Calcutta on Central Asia. However, one should be grateful to the editors because of the difficulties they had to overcome. First they did not know the language. Secondly they had no Tibetan type, and had to copy from the Propaganda Fide. The types were badly cast, and consequently broke in printing, like all those of Serampore.

According to Klaproth, these minor faults would be of little importance if the dictionary had been more complete and better edited. The ordering of the entries is generally satisfactory, even though it does not follow Tibetan alphabetical order exactly. However, it would have been helpful to have a table to guide the reader. Klaproth then offers a list of words that were not included in the dictionary, and should have been. In doing so he makes some errors of his own, including the suggestion that *Kha che*, the word normally used for Lhasa's main Muslim community, is derived not from 'Kashmir' but from the Tibetan words meaning 'big mouths'.

The dictionary's many flaws present an easy target, but it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that a sense of academic rivalry added an extra dose of acid to Klaproth's review.<sup>114</sup> Be that as it may, it has been widely quoted without further comment, starting with an English translation in the Calcutta-based *Asiatic Journal* the following year, and again and again in a series of 20<sup>th</sup> century papers on the Capuchins and their literary labours.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> In a gossip conversation shortly before his death in 1842, Csoma noted that Klaproth "pronounces excathedra, and treats the notion of any successful study of Thibetan by the English in India with ineffable contempt." See Marczell 2007, Vol. 2, p. 322.

<sup>115</sup> "Dictionary of the Tibetan Language," *Asiatic Journal* 27 (1829), pp. 431-434; Felix 1912; Jann 1935; Le Calloc'h 1987; Reifenberg 1934. However, I.J.Schmidt (1838) points out in characteristically acerbic style that Klaproth made as many errors as he corrected. I am grateful to Isrun Engelhardt for this reference.

### 5. Serampore and its successors: Csoma de Kőrös, Schmidt and Jäschke

In spite of the Serampore dictionary's imperfections, it could have served as a basis for a subsequent improved version by later scholars. This did not happen because, as discussed above, Csoma de Kőrös had already begun his own Tibetan researches, and there was no effort to connect them.

In 1826, when the Serampore dictionary was published, Csoma was in Zangskar, beyond the reach of regular communication, and unaware of developments in Calcutta. It was only when he returned to Sabathu in January 1827 that he learnt of the new dictionary, and naturally was concerned that his British sponsors would regard his own work as redundant. In his own mind, he soon became convinced that this was not the case. Writing from the Asiatic Society, Wilson had sent him a sample of nine entries from the Serampore dictionary: Csoma reported that five out of the nine words were incorrect.<sup>116</sup> However, he still did not have full information about Schroeter's work, and in March 1827, the British official H.A. Newton wrote on his behalf to Calcutta asking about:

...a vague report here respecting a [Tibetan] grammar in manuscript left unfinished by a gentleman, who died before it could be completed. It is stated that he was receiving pay from our Government at the time.<sup>117</sup>

Fortunately, Captain Kennedy, the British commander in Sabathu, was able to introduce Csoma to the British Governor-General Lord Amherst, who took a personal interest in his work.<sup>118</sup> With the agreement of the Governor-General in council, Csoma received a further grant of Rs 50 a month, and returned into the hills—this time to Kanam in Bashahr—to continue his research for another three years. He eventually came down to Calcutta in 1831 and, after several delays, his *Essay towards a Dictionary, Tibetan and English* was published in 1834.

In the preface to his dictionary, Csoma states that he did not see the Serampore dictionary until his arrival in Calcutta in 1831, and it could prove of no use "since this Dictionary had long since been ready in the same form and extent, as is it now published." It is hard to explain why Csoma had not seen the dictionary since he had been aware of its existence since 1827. Dr James Gerard, who visited Csoma in Kanam in late 1828, points to Csoma's fierce sense of inde-

<sup>116</sup> Kennedy to Wilson, 18 January 1827, Sabathu. Asiatic Society archives, reprinted in Marczell 2007, Vol. 2, pp. 135-136.

<sup>117</sup> H.A. Newton to J.H. Harrington, 21 March 1827, Sabathu. Asiatic Society archives, reprinted in Marczell 2007, Vol.2, pp. 138-139.

<sup>118</sup> Kennedy to Wilson, 3 April 1827, Sabathu. Asiatic Society archives, reprinted in Marczell 2007, Vol.2, p. 140.

pendence, and this may be part of the reason for the apparent omission.<sup>119</sup> Csoma had earlier accepted Gerard's gift of a Latin dictionary, and now accepted a Greek lexicon, but declined any other assistance. It may be that he was too proud to request a copy of the Serampore dictionary, and neither Wilson nor anyone else thought to send him one.

Csoma's dictionary shares a similar arrangement to the Serampore version, in that the entries are arranged by the initial letters of each entry rather than the root letters, albeit more consistently. However, he seems have arrived at this plan independently. In January 1827, when he returned to Sabathu from Zangskar and before he had heard of Schroeter's work, he was carrying a draft dictionary "written by a good hand, in fine capital letters of small size, arranged alphabetically".<sup>120</sup> He adds that he had not yet had leisure to write "the signification of each word in English." This description corresponds closely with the Csoma manuscript dictionary that is now at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and the word order in this text corresponds with that of the published version.<sup>121</sup> Csoma's dictionary has one more characteristic in common with Schroeter's in that it was published by the Baptist missionaries. He used a different font, but the shape of the letters still pointed to its derivation from the script of the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*.<sup>122</sup>

No further observations by Csoma on Schroeter's work survive, but a 'Dictionary of the Bootan Language', which must be the Serampore dictionary, was found in his possessions after his death in 1842.<sup>123</sup> In spite of its weaknesses, it seems that he still found it useful as a reference source.

The next in the line of European lexicographers of Tibetan was Isaak Jacob Schmidt (1779-1847), the scholar who had translated the Gospel of St Matthew into Kalmyk and worked with John Paterson in Russia. Schmidt published a *Grammatik der tibetischen Sprache* in 1839, followed in 1841 by a *Tibetisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*. He drew heavily on Csoma, without adequate acknow-

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<sup>119</sup> Gerard to Fraser, January 1829. Reprinted in: Duka (1885), pp. 79-98; Marczell (2007), Vol.2, pp. 161-186.

<sup>120</sup> Csoma to Kennedy, 18 Jan. 1827, Sabathu. Asiatic Society archives, reprinted in Marczell 2007, Vol. 2. p. 137.

<sup>121</sup> Outline of a Tibetan Dicty. Bodleian Library, Department of Oriental Books, MS. Ind. Inst.Tibet 3 (R) Malan Library. See also the review of this archive in Marczell 2007, Vol. 1.

<sup>122</sup> Schubert 1950, p. 286.

<sup>123</sup> Marczell 2007, Vol.2, p. 344. Duka 1885, p. 162, cites it as a "Bhutia vocabulary".

ledgement, but he was totally dismissive of Serampore. In the introduction to his grammar, he writes that the 1826 dictionary ‘crawls’ with mistakes and misconceptions:

Das Wörterbuch wimmelt von Fehlern, und falschen Begriffen, hat das Unnützen viel und ermangelt oft des Nothwendigen; dabei ist es völlig planlos abgefasst.<sup>124</sup>

It was left to the Moravian missionary Heinrich August Jäschke, the compiler of the authoritative *Tibetan-English Dictionary* (1881), to come to a more judicious assessment. After reviewing the difficult circumstances in which the Serampore dictionary was produced, he comments that:

... anyone who knows by experience what time and toil such a work must have cost, though its design remained unfulfilled and its object unaccomplished, will not easily be able to repress his indignation at the tone, in which this book... is recklessly and absolutely condemned by Professor Schmidt.<sup>125</sup>

Jäschke nevertheless said that his own dictionary “pursues the object and accepts the plan of the work, which was published by Mr. Schröter” in that—unlike Csoma’s dictionary—it included contemporary Tibetan usage as well as the classical language.<sup>126</sup> The Serampore dictionary had a richer vocabulary than its two immediate successors. However, according to Jäschke, Schroeter’s work:

...cannot on any questionable point be accepted as an authority, and has only value for those who are already competent, for themselves, to weigh and decide upon the statements and interpretations it advances.

Jäschke obviously did consider himself competent, and was scrupulous in acknowledging the work of his predecessors. Scattered here and there in his dictionary, there are entries marked ‘*Schr.*’, referring to Schroeter. Jäschke’s dictionary in turn has been used extensively by later scholars: through his work at least a small part of the legacy of della Penna and Schroeter has entered the lexicographical mainstream.

## 6. Conclusions and wider perspectives

The *Dictionary of the Bhotanta, or Boutan Language* is a case study of the advance and limitations of Western knowledge of Tibet and the wider Himalayan region in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although the Capuchin, Baptist and

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<sup>124</sup> Schmidt 1839, p. v.

<sup>125</sup> Jäschke 1881, p. v.

<sup>126</sup> See also the introduction to Jäschke 1871.

CMS missionaries between them represented different national and religious cultures, there are clear continuities in their work.

The first common theme is the similarities and differences in the perspectives of missionaries and government officials. The missionaries were always conscious of the need for the acquiescence, if not the outright support, of the political authorities. This applies even to the Capuchins in that one of their prime concerns was to maintain good relations first with the Regent Lha-bzang Khan until his assassination in 1717, and then in the 1730s and 1740s with his successor Pho-lho-nas. It applied also to Carey: his first instinct was to find a means of operating outside the purview of the Company, possibly even by going as far as Bhutan, but he later found many advantages in working with the establishment in Fort William. His 1806 *Proposals for a Subscription for Translating the Holy Scriptures* is characteristic in that its prime motive was evangelistic. However, he at the same time appealed to wider interests with the claim that it would promote “the diffusion of Oriental Literature” and offer new opportunities to learn the “languages of this great Empire.” He makes a similar appeal with his reference to the political importance of “a knowledge of the countries bordering our own territories” in the preface to the 1826 dictionary.

On the government side, the East India Company started by being suspicious of missionary activity, fearing that it would ultimately serve to undermine political stability. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century attitudes had begun to change both at the policy level and among individual officials. The government now saw clear advantages in drawing on missionary expertise both in education, as with Carey’s teaching at Fort William, and in the preparation of grammars and dictionaries.

The need to acquire the languages of neighbouring territories was—or should have been—apparent already in the course of the Company’s attempt to build relations with Tibet in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It became much more apparent in the course of the 1814-1816 Nepal war: Latter’s difficulties in communicating with the Raja of Sikkim and his lack of detailed knowledge of the territories immediately to his north are symptomatic of much wider limitations of British intelligence. Although Latter never says so explicitly in his correspondence with the CMS, his experiences in the war must have informed his views on the need for greater linguistic knowledge. Certainly, the government’s sponsorship of Schroeter’s work was motivated by political rather than religious considerations. The fact that it was the Governor-General in council that decided what to do with Schroeter’s papers in 1823 reflects the importance attached to them.

On a related theme, Lieut. Weston's cartographical expedition to Sikkim in 1817 was part of a much wider pattern of British map-making as a means of defining and understanding their expanding empire.<sup>127</sup> Schroeter's accompanying Weston is a nice illustration of the alignment of government and missionary interests in the acquisition of new geographical knowledge.

However, the co-operation between missionaries and officials was never without its tensions. Latter provides a personal example of growing Evangelical influence among individual officers in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century but even he—for all his enthusiasm for “the Cause”—was sensitive to the possibility that missionary activity might complicate his diplomatic negotiations with Sikkim and Tibet—hence his initial restrictions on Schroeter's preaching activities. As has been seen, Moorcroft made a similar point in 1823 when he insisted that any Serampore recruit visiting Ladakh must avoid “religious controversy” lest he undermine British diplomacy in the region.

This theme of missionary/official co-operation, accompanied by an undercurrent of tension because of conflicting interests, has many parallels, both in space and time. Imperial expansion in Russia in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century brought opportunities both for new Western knowledge of Asian cultures and for missionary research supported by government patronage. However, Tsar Alexander I's successors did not endorse his patronage of the Russian Bible Society, and Moravian Protestants in Sarepta were ultimately forbidden to conduct missionary work among the Kalmyks because this would have conflicted with the Russian Orthodox political/religious order. Similarly in British India, the government sponsored the publication of Jäschke's 1881 dictionary. However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century British officials co-operated with their Tibetan counterparts to prevent missionaries from crossing the Tibetan border lest their activities stir up popular and monastic opposition in Tibet, thereby undermining diplomatic relations between the two governments.<sup>128</sup> The interests of missionaries and officials frequently overlapped but rarely coincided precisely.

If there is one common feature which unites all the main actors in the story of the Serampore dictionary, it is a sense of excitement at the opening up of a new world of discovery. In that respect they were part of a process of cross-cultural engagement that still continues.

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<sup>127</sup> For a detailed discussion of this theme see Edney 1997.

<sup>128</sup> See Bray 1994.

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