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Tibet through a Native Lens: Charles Alfred Bell's Image-Archive and the Roles of his Photographic Interlocutors

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Abstract

This essay attempts to foreground the question of native agency in the making of the photographic archive of Charles Alfred Bell, British Political Officer for Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. It seeks to approach a new hermeneutics of British imperial archive-making vis-á-vis Tibet by assessing not only how native agency variously informed the sacerdotal, epistemic and technical content of most of Bell's photographic archive, but also how such agency was central to its very process of visual production. By examining the roles of Rabden Lepcha, Sonam Wangyal or Palhese and Kartick Chandra Pyne, apropos their contribution to Bell's visual archive, the essay shows how British imperial knowledge-construction on Tibet deployed native agency, thereafter relegating them (mostly) to archival silence. In the process, the essay demonstrates how these silences were not merely accidental, but fundamental to the process of knowledge-production on Tibet.

Keywords

photography, Charles Bell, native agency, Kartick Chandra Pyne, Rabden Lepcha, Tibet, British Raj

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Introduction

Another man comes out of the same building and walks towards the postern-gate… He is an oddly proportioned man, tall, with a small head and a pronounced nose… He enters a bookseller like others—leather-bound volumes behind the display windows… Mount and Page are maritime publishers, *the* maritime publishers of the town. James Cook is comfortable… He does not own more than a dozen of these books and charts but he has at one time or another studied more than he can recall. He is in a library of his own accomplishment.

— Nicholas Thomas (*Discoveries: The Voyages of Captain Cook*)

Nicholas Thomas begins his fascinating biography of the eighteenth-century English explorer Captain James Cook (1728-1779) through a fictionalized reconstruction of a December afternoon in 1767 at Tower Hill, London, with Cook walking into an archive of his own making. Thomas conjectures how Cook's encounter with his printer, Mount, would have likely occurred 'around this time' and Cook 'would surely have browsed Mount's stock' that, besides his own books, would have included 'a formidable number of other works' (Thomas 2018: 34).

Thomas's fictionalized positioning of Cook 'in a library of his own accomplishment' speaks to me of a different colonial setting, a different actor and a different archive, albeit with continuities within their modes of making. This other colonial archive is represented by two photographs, part of the robust visual archive on Tibet produced by Charles Alfred Bell (1870 -1945), British Political Officer for Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet from 1908-1918. The photographs were taken at Kong-kar or Gongkar in September, 1934, during Bell's trip to eastern Tibet. The images position Bell (seated at the centre in both illustrations) within an archive 'of his own making'. The first photograph [**Figure 1**] shows two figures with Bell, Sonam Wangyal or Palhese (1870-1936), Bell's Tibetan interlocutor, standing behind him, and Lt. Colonel Harnett, who accompanied him on this trip, standing on Bell's right.

The second photograph [**Figure 2**], shows another figure, a brown man, standing on Bell's left. From Bell's curating of his own photographs, we know that this person is Kartick Chandra Pyne, the professional photographer Bell had recruited from Kalimpong for his 1934 trip.[1] Bell carried two cameras with him during this trip, the Zeiss Ikon Universal Jewel Camera (model number 275, with 9 into 12 cm plates)[2] and a 6 into 6 cm German-made Franke & Heidecke (later Rollei GmbH) Twin Lens Reflex/ TLR Rolleiflex camera. Bell curated the photos from each of these cameras individually, into two sets, the J-Series and the R-Series, with occasional overlaps in content. During the 1934 trip, K.C. Pyne was Bell's professional photographer handling both his cameras, and the one responsible for producing almost the entire corpus of Bell's photographs.

The two photographs with which I begin this essay, one with Pyne, and the other without him, suggest the processes of archival erasure which remain key to its structural formulation. Bell's central position within the image bears verisimilitude to his locus as the 'maker' of this photographic archive on Tibet. However, as we shall examine in the course of this essay, Bell was merely the facilitator of this archival production, even as the archive itself became a bricolage brought together through the efforts of several other native actors and agents. In this sense, Bell placing himself centrally within 'an archive of his own making' (in this case the two photographs above) often tends to obfuscate the processes and agents behind its production.

Theorizing Indigenous Agency: Configuring Absences within the Tibet archive

Before proceeding to a fuller assessment of the roles played by the various interlocutors and agents employed in the production of Charles Bell's photographic archive, let us dwell on some of the important concerns vis-á-vis the notions of indigenous agency and archival absence that underpin this study. In questioning 'the principles and

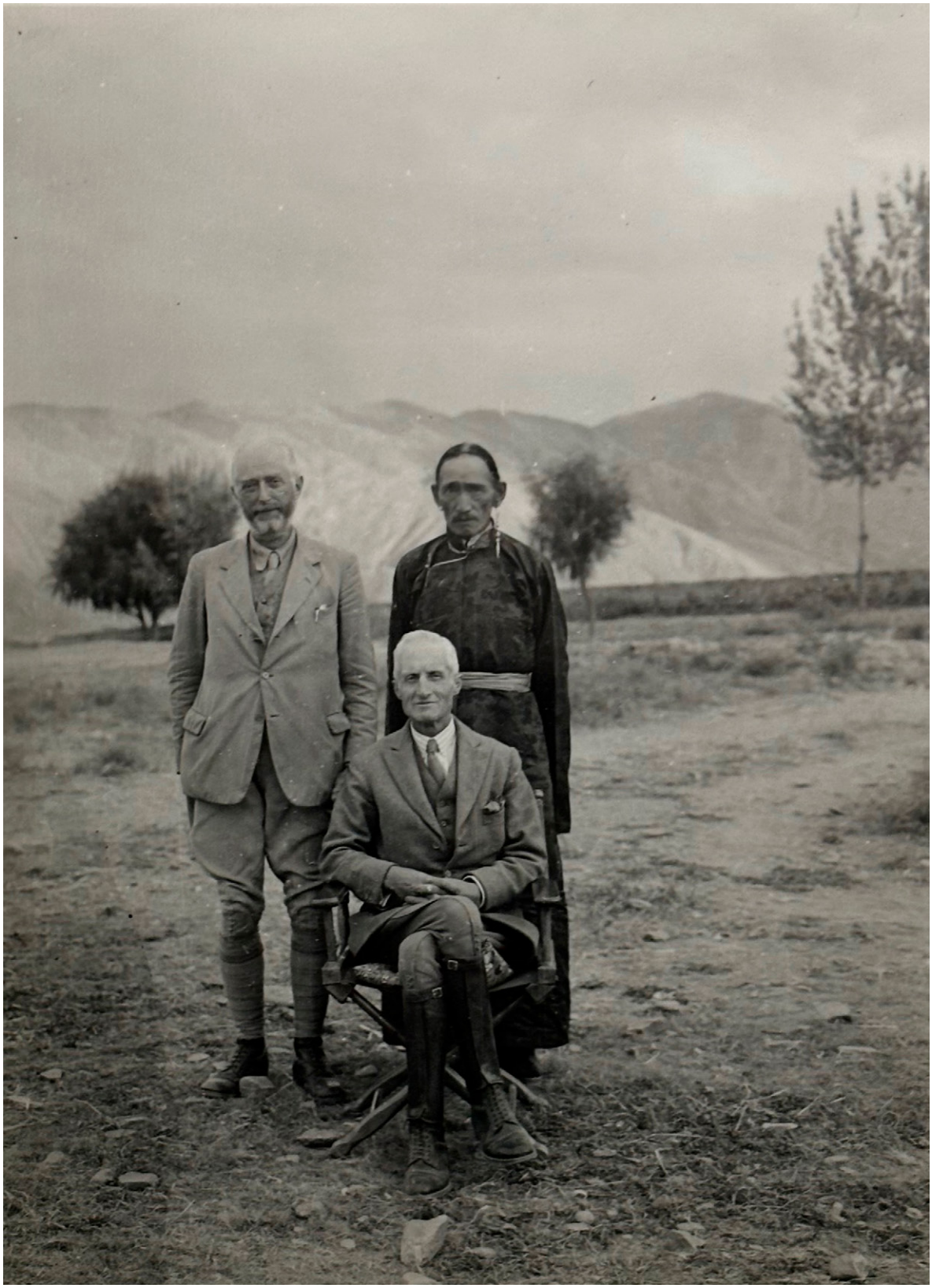


Figure 1: Charles Bell, seated, with Sonam Wangyal (Palhese) standing behind him and Captain Lt. Harnett standing on his right, Gongkar, September 1934, photographed by Kartick Chandra Pyne. From the British Library Collection: [Photo 1112/5 (488)].

Figure 2: Charles Bell, seated, with Sonam Wangyal (Palhese) standing behind him, Captain Lt. Harnett standing on his right and Kartick Chandra Pyne on his left, Gongkar, September 1934, photographed by Kartick Chandra Pyne. From the British Library Collection: [Photo 1112/5 (489)].

practices of governance lodged in particular archival forms' with regard to the Dutch colonial archive in the Netherland Indies and its discursive construction of racial taxonomies, Ann Laura Stoler looks at imperial archives themselves as 'condensed sites of epistemological and political anxiety…, both transparencies on which power relations were inscribed and intricate technologies of rule in themselves' (Stoler 2009: 20).

Stoler's examination of the processes of epistemic ordering within the colonial archive can be used to study a different set of archival processes from the British empire in India with regard to Tibet. The careers of some of Charles Bell's chief interlocutors and collaborators, such as Sonam Wangyal or Palhese, Rabden Lepcha and Kartick Chandra Pyne[3] reveal the complex interplays of British colonial power and indigenous agency. These figures, as we shall interrogate through the course of this essay, were important agents in the process of orchestrating and producing Charles Bell's photographic archive of Tibet, even as their own contributions were often not adequately credited or acknowledged.

How do we begin to approach this question of agency? In her study on the histories of nineteenth-century explorations in Africa and the Himalayas that were carried out under the aegis of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (RGS-IBG), Lowri Madeleine Jones highlights how these were 'a collective experience, in which work and knowledge was shared and exchanged' across different loci of power (Jones 2010: 14). Jones, in her appraisal of non-Western participation in these explorations, does not seek to substitute a Western archive premised on a 'celebration of a canon of European and American explorers' with a 'heroic indigene'; instead she unravels 'the more mundane ways in which 'local' circumstances, knowledge and inhabitants affected the course of exploration and its associated field sciences' (Jones 2010: 18). Taking this cue from Jones, it is important to foreground the idea that this study of Bell's visual archive is not merely a recursive exercise of uncovering indigenous agency. Rather, it aims to offer an understanding of how forms of local knowledge became constituent parts of the visual archive itself, in turn shaping and determining its epistemic form and content.

Jones describes that only a few non-European individuals are actually named in the expedition reports and maps that she examines, while 'traces of innumerable others survive in various guises', their roles 'circumscribed by their representation' (Jones 2010: 19). Bell mentioned many of his interlocutors by name, on various occasions, in his diaries, notebooks, curated lists and, sometimes, in his published books. However, such acknowledgements by Bell are not uniform (figures credited in the diaries and indexes are left out from published books), nor do they fully acknowledge the contributions of these native agents as equal (if not greater) collaborators in the process of making of his photographic collection. Further, even where they are mentioned, these figures remain delineated by their roles as Charles Bell's orderlies, informants and inferiors, locked within unequal relations of power apropos the archival production process.

Filtering out the white dialectical noise within this visual collection then becomes the crucial first step into assessing the roles and agencies of the photographers who were the main producers of Bell's images on Tibet. If these photographs can be read as colonial texts loaded with ethno-historical potential, they begin to serve then, in Bronwen Douglas's words, as 'ethnographic palimpsests', their 'language, content and silences registering traces of indigenous actions, relationships and settings'[4] (Douglas 1999: 70). Mining the archives to reconfigure these absences becomes a key step towards framing a new hermeneutics of Tibet Studies that spotlights the contribution of these non-white agents. With regard to Tibet, native agency, 'far from being exterior to the archive' (Arondekar 2009: 16-17)[5] was central to its process of making, and its sacerdotal and epistemological content was mediated through the knowledge of these figures.

One also needs to interrogate the efficacy of terms such as 'local' and 'native' when attempting to reconfigure the role of indigenous agency within this visual collection on Tibet. Emma Martin has discussed how some of the men whom 'Bell considered pure in their *local knowledge*…were valued differently because of their separateness,… were in fact highly mobile men who travelled vast distances [and] were open to far greater external influences and networks than Bell himself was' (Martin 2014: 69-70).

Building on Martin's idea, an important concern in highlighting the agency of these figures is to contest the ascription of the term 'local', that became a hermeneutic prerequisite of the process of British imperial knowledge making on Tibet through the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The delineation of certain forms of knowledge as 'local' by Western scholars, all the while retaining the sole custody over authorship (of the knowledge archive), was central to the very process of its making. Martin's conjecture that 'the objective style of the much-constrained reporting system' meant that the 'source of the information' had to be silenced (Martin 2014: 70) may be expanded into an understanding of how this silencing was not merely coincidental to or required by the objectivity demanded of British official reports; rather, it was fundamental to the dialectical foundation of knowledge produced on Tibet through this period.

To return to the two photographs with which we began this essay, the second one is among the few images within Bell's copious visual archive where K.C. Pyne actually makes an appearance.[6] His presence becomes 'inadvertently registered' in the second photograph, taken at the exact same location as the first image, at Gongkar. Pyne had forgotten to set the shutter button with the delayed action in the first photograph,[7] and thus becomes 'absent', only to make an appearance in the second. The first registers his trace through his 'silence'. One has to position these the two images palimpsestically in order to recover the photographer's trace.

Revisiting Bell's Photographic Collection: The Contributions of Rabden Lepcha[8]

I came across an image in the Print Room in the British Library. Part of Bell's curated Postcard/P-Series, the photograph shows a bare-footed middle-aged man [**Figure 3**]. At the back of photograph, scribbled in pencil in Bell's handwriting is the first name of the person 'Rabden (orderly)' along with the date the photograph was taken— November, 1921 and the location— outside Major Carey-Evans's house in Delhi.[9] Some more biographical details about this person become available from Bell's curated index for his Postcard/P, Quarter-Plate/Q and Half-Plate/H Series. Here, Bell gives us his full name 'Rabden Lepcha', his orderly, 'who was with me for 18 years and took many of my photos for me'.[10] Within Bell's copious visual collection, the few images of this person, who was responsible for producing many of Bell's photographs during his 1920-21 official mission to Lhasa, are perhaps, the only material traces that remain of this man. Very little exists in terms of biographical information about Rabden Lepcha. The possibilities of 'knowing' remain dependent on Bell's written texts (his diaries, books and notes). In the absence of ethnographic material, unlike in the case of Pyne (about whom I discuss in a subsequent section of this essay), one needs to begin the process of recovering Rabden Lepcha's contributions through a process of semantic dismantling of Bell's photographic archive.[11]

In early 1904, when Francis Younghusband's mission was halted by the Tibetan resistance,[12] at the head of the Chumbi Valley, Bell was given the task of leading a small party of men to evaluate the viability of a road from India to Tibet through Bhutan, avoiding the high mountain passes (Bell 1946: 26). Between September, 1904 and November, 1905, Bell became the person in-charge in Chumbi Valley, standing in for John Claude White (1853-1919), who was posted as Chief Political Officer for Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet between 1889 and 1908 (Bell 1924: 73). Earlier too, from May to

October, 1904, Bell had stood in for Claude White as Political Officer, filling in for the latter's absence during the Younghusband Mission, which had basically been a proxy invasion of Tibet (Bell 1924: 2). The shift from Younghusband to Bell also marked a shift from an attempted armed invasion of Tibet, towards the possibility of establishing more diplomatic ties. Bell was in favour of what he describes as a 'liberal policy' towards Tibet,[13] even going as far as to acknowledge that the Younghusband invasion of 1904 was what led to imperial Chinese aggression and a tussle over Tibet between imperial Britain and China.[14]

Figure 3: Photograph of Rabden Lepcha outside Major Carey-Evans's house in Delhi, taken by Charles Alfred Bell in November, 1921. From the British Library Collection: [Photo 1112/3 (1a)].

Between 1910-12, when the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Thupten Gyatso (1876-1933) was in exile in India, Bell had successfully cultivated friendly diplomatic ties with him.[15] It was with a view to effectuating this 'liberal policy' that involved 'gaining the confidence of the people, both lay and ecclesiastical',[16] that Bell would finally head an official mission to Lhasa in 1920 at the invitation of Thupten Gyatso, accompanied by a retinue of his Tibetan and Sikkimese collaborators (Bell 1946: 219) which included Sonam Wangyal/ Palhese, Rabden Lepcha, Sonam Wangfel Laden La (1876-1936)[17] and Rai Bahadur Norbu Dhondup (1904-1947).[18]

For Bell, photographs were a way of elucidating his observations with regard to the volumes he was preparing for European readership in England, and Bell required very specific kinds of illustrations. Bell got this opportunity for collating the visual archive necessary for substantiating his volumes during his year-long stint in Lhasa, between November, 1920 and October, 1921.[19] Prior to this, Bell had collected various photographs of Tibet and Tibetans, many of these taken by John Claude White.[20] Bell's photographs, like those of his predecessor Laurence Austine Waddell (1854-1938), were intended to serve the dual purpose of ethnographic scientism and populist seduction (of a white European readership).[21] However, unlike Waddell's visual archive, Bell's comes across as more nuanced, primarily through the ethnic semiotic imprints of his collaborator figures such as Rabden Lepcha and Palhese.

Clare E. Harris elucidates the specific nature of the Rabden Lepcha- Charles Bell collaborative relationship, through an incident when Bell required a specific image of a Nyingma priest for his book, *The Religion of Tibet* (1931). Harris writes how Bell sought out Rabden Lepcha's active cooperation in coercing the monk, 'overturning the priest's scruples and his acceptance of a photographic gift'. Harris's observations on the extent of Rabden Lepcha's role in the making of Bell's images, deserves to be quoted here:

> Charles Bell thus had the linguistic and diplomatic skills of an ethnographer and the close personal relations with

> individuals from all levels of Tibetan society that could enhance the range and nature of his photographs. The collection of images he accumulated has a more empathetic quality than those of previous British photographers, but that tone could not have been achieved without the skill and character of Rabden Lepcha. (Harris 2016: 76)

Expanding on Harris's reflection on the nature of this partnership, it becomes necessary to dwell on some of the ways in which Rabden Lepcha aided and collaborated on the production of Bell's photographs. Right from the outset of the mission, Rabden Lepcha had been appointed as the unofficial photographer of the group.[22] However, a more specific need of Rabden Lepcha's services arose whenever any particular Tibetan religious figure was the subject to be photographed.

Bell, during his later visit to Tibet in 1934, would attribute the Tibetans' unwillingness to be photographed (as told to him by Sera Drupdi, the husband of Palhese's sister) to a belief by Tibetans in the image's ability to be used as a destructive tool upon which detrimental incantations could be performed by one's enemies.[23] The assistance of his Tibetan and Tibetan-speaking collaborators was thus necessitated in order to bridge this barrier with regard to the different cultural significations of the photographic image, and obtain the consent of his photographic subjects.

In his diary entry for 11 November, 1920, Bell describes his encounter with one of the most prominent religious figures of Tibet, the eleventh reincarnation of the woman mystic Dorje Phagmo. At the time she was a twenty-five-year-old woman, whose seat was the Samding monastery.[24] Within Tibetan political and spiritual hierarchy, Dorje Phagmo's status was next only to the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. Enthused by Waddell's ethnographic descriptions of her in *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism* (Waddell 1895: 245),[25] the opportunity of taking the first-ever photograph of this high-ranking female religious figure from Tibet **[Figure 4]** was irresistible for Bell.

Both Palhese and Rabden Lepcha were tasked with arranging this photograph. Bell writes:

> At the beginning of our reception our clerks and servants, as well as Palhese bowed down before her, made their offerings to her and took her blessing, she touching each on the head with her hand.
> After I had left, she allowed Rabden with whom I had left Palhese— very willingly— to take a photo of her, asking for five copies of the result, if it turned out well.[26]

Rabden Lepcha had taken both portrait as well as landscape shots of Dorje Phagmo. Unfortunately, the photograph 'was much too under-exposed to be of any use'.[27] Nonetheless, the portrait shot became part of Bell's *The People of Tibet* (1928) where Bell describes his meeting with the 'The Thunderbolt Sow', 'the holiest woman in Tibet' whom he had the 'privilege to visit' *en route* to Lhasa accompanied by Mr. Dyer, 'our doctor from Sikkim' (Bell 1928: 165-167). Bell enthusiastically depicts himself and Dyer as 'the first white men to be received by her, indeed the first she had seen' (Bell 1928: 166). Although Bell mentions, transcribing from his diary, his clerks and servants being present on the occasion and Palhese receiving a blessing from Dorje Phagmo, he omits any reference to the photographer, Rabden Lepcha (Bell 1928: 167).

Both Palhese and Rabden Lepcha were not only agential in the production of the image, but may have also influenced its sacerdotal staging. Dorje Phagmo is photographed as sitting on an elevated religious platform, adorned by Tibetan regalia. Both Bell's collaborators were Tibetan Buddhists, and the shots were taken after both Europeans, Bell and Dyer, had departed the scene.[28] Things were assisted further by the fact that Dorje Phagmo herself desired to be photographed, an earlier attempt by Tibetans under the instructions of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama having resulted in failure.[29] The transcription, from Bell's diary to his book was accompanied by the omission of

Figure 4: Dorje Phagmo on her seat at Samding Monastery, Tibet, photographed in November, 1920 by Rabden Lepcha. [Accession number 1998.285.137.2], Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Rabden Lepcha. Within the hierarchy of his interlocutors, Rabden Lepcha was an orderly, unlike Palhese, who was a Tibetan aristocrat,[30] whom Bell often mentions in his books and whom he credits as 'an old friend' in the Preface to *Tibet— Past & Present* (Bell 1924: i).

This decision, to acknowledge Palhese while overlooking Rabden Lepcha's role as photographer, may have also had to do with the kind of readership that Bell was targeting for his books in England. Published from the Clarendon Press and the Oxford University Press, Bell's books were meant for circulation among an elite coterie of (mostly) academic readers comprising British and European Orientalists and Indologists. His omitting of the names of his collaborators from his published books, while crediting them in his personal diaries, lists and notebooks, perhaps had much to do with the complacent class attitudes prevalent among the privileged public-school Oxbridge men, who comprised his primary target readers.

The internal hierarchy that remained operative amongst Bell's collaborators, accentuated as it was by the hierarchies within British colonial bureaucracy, becomes symbolically iterated through a photograph of the Lhasa Mission group of 1920-21 [**Figure 5**], showing most of Bell's interlocutors. The photograph, part of Bell's Half-Plate/H-Series, was later published in *Tibet— Past & Present* (Bell 1924: 196). It shows Bell seated at the centre, with Lieutenant Colonel R.S. Kennedy, who replaced Dyer as the mission's chief medical officer, on his right,[31] S.W. Laden La, who is on Kennedy's right,[32] and Palhese seated on Bell's extreme right. On Bell's left are seated Tibetans deputed for the mission by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama— Kusho Lötro, one of the Dalai Lama's secretaries,[33] Netö or Tsewang Namse, who accompanied Bell as his guide from Gyantse to Lhasa[34] (on Kusho Lötro's left) and an assistant secretary. Standing immediately behind Bell, to his right, between Kennedy and him, is Rai Bahadur Norbu Dhondup. While Bell remains at the centre of the image, positioned centrally as 'author' of his own archive, both his orderlies, Purbu Lepcha (on Bell's right) and Rabden Lepcha (on his left) remain seated on the ground below him.

The same photograph of the Lhasa Mission group was also taken on a full-plate camera, on the same occasion, from a slightly different angle. This 6" by 8" photo [**Figure 6**], which is part of the private collection of Charles Bell's great-grandson, confirms that the photographer was indeed Rabden Lepcha, a zoomed-in view showing Rabden Lepcha holding the cable to the automatic shutter of a plate camera.[35]

Rabden Lepcha, in addition to numerous photographs that he produced for Bell,[36] was responsible for taking one of the most important images for Bell's book, that of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama himself. In early-1921, by which time Bell was increasingly assigning Rabden Lepcha to take his photographs (Harris 2016: 76), on 7 March, Bell instructed him to take a shot of the Dalai Lama as his procession travelled from Potala to Norbulingka, the Dalai Lama's summer palace. Light conditions being unfavourable at 7 a.m. in the morning, the enterprise was unsuccessful.[37] Bell would make another attempt to photograph the Dalai Lama, this time in his throne-room in Norbulingka, on 14 October, 1921. Bell writes in his diary entry of the day 'Rabden and I photographed the Dalai Lama on the throne in his throne-room, as he would sit when blessing pilgrims. The photos on the whole turned out well'.[38] The photograph would appear in Bell's *The Portrait of the Dalai Lama* (Bell 1946: 233) and Bell mentions that this was 'the first time that anybody has photographed him in the Holy City' (Bell 1946: 336).

The illustration was meant to evoke among Bell's readers a sense of religiosity associated with Tibet and the Dalai Lama. The photograph [**Figure 7**] thus shows Tibet's supreme leader within a sacerdotal setting, seated on his throne, 'four feet high, a seat without back or arms', the 'nine silk scrolls, representing Buddha in the Earth-pressing attitude…placed on the wall behind and

Figure 5: Lhasa Mission group, photographed sometime between end-December, 1920 and early-January, 1921.[39] [Accession number 1998.285.339.1], Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Figure 6: Lhasa Mission group, photographed by Rabden Lepcha. From the private collection of Jonathan Bracken.

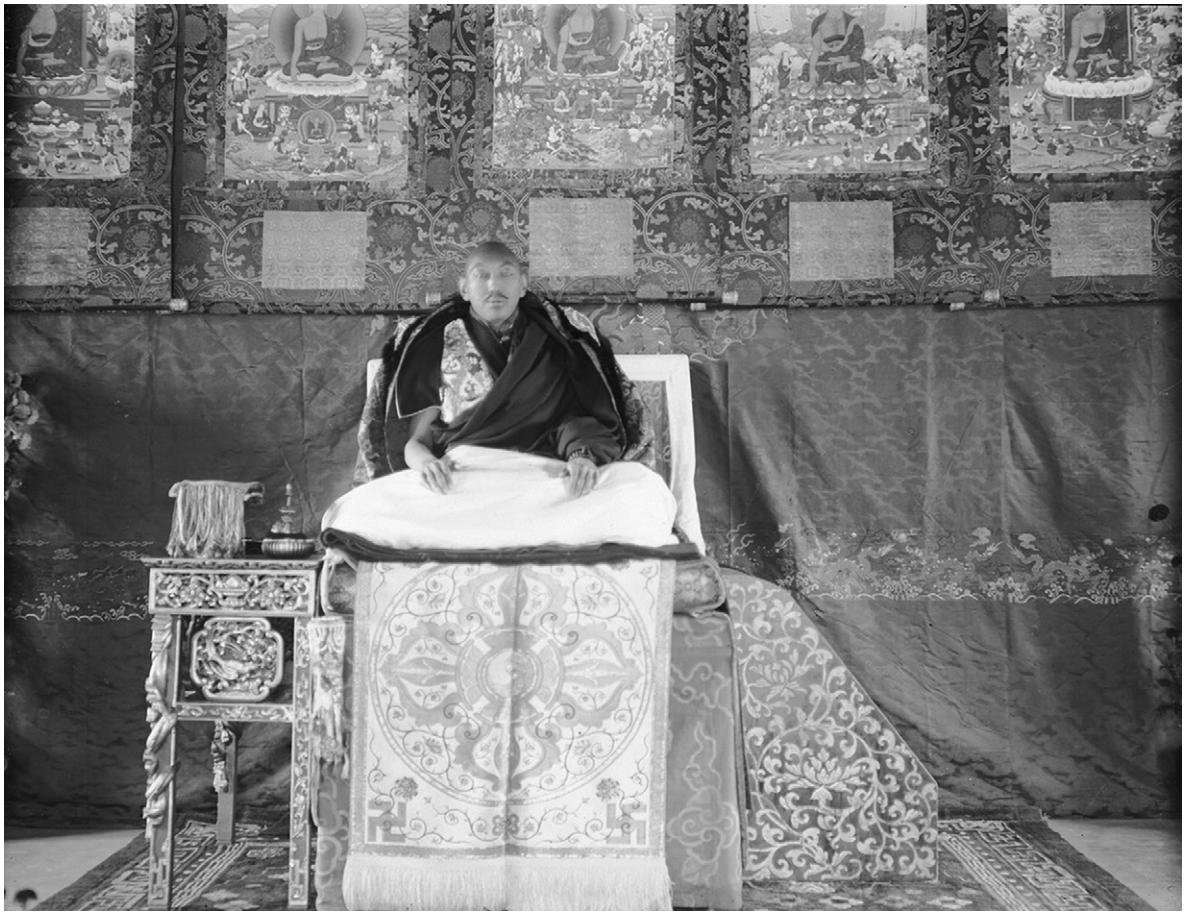


Figure 7: Ngawang Lobsang Thupten Gyatso, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama seated on his throne at Norbulingka, photographed on 14 October, 1921 by Rabden Lepcha. [Accession number 1998.285.91.1], Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

above the throne', the red silk brocade covering the wall, the 'eighteen-inch high' dais 'with a low balustrade of well-covered woodwork' on which the throne stood and 'a cloth of rich white silk, handsomely embroidered in gold with crossed dorjes (thunderbolts) hanging down in front of the throne'.[40] As in the case of the Dorje Phagmo image, the making of this photograph was not of Bell's orchestration. Instead, it was guided by the Dalai Lama himself, familiar as he was with Bell from the long hours spent with him in Darjeeling. The Dalai Lama personally supervised the arrangement of the throne-room in which the photograph was to be taken,[41] orchestrating and structuring its content and determining the way in which he wanted to be represented. We see here a veritable trace of an 'indigenous countersign' (Douglas 1999: 70) where Tibetan agency and desire begin to determine the epistemic language of the photograph, with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama directly influencing its hieratic content.

The photograph itself was likely taken by Rabden Lepcha, under Bell's instructions, although in the book, unlike the corresponding entry in his diary, Bell clearly designates himself as the photographer.[42] The hierarchical nature of their collaboration, entrenched within a colonial hegemonic machinery of power,[43] resulted in the elision of Rabden Lepcha's name as photographer from Bell's books, unlike the diaries where the name occurs often. In the absence of local commemoration, the restoration of Rabden Lepcha's agency[44] relies almost entirely on the archival clues available through Bell's diaries.

The Move to a Professional Cameraman: Kartick Chandra Pyne and Bell's 1934 Photographic Archive

In 1934, Bell once again returned to Tibet. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama, however, had died in December, 1933, and Bell would not visit Lhasa this time, travelling instead in Eastern Tibet for five months, between 12 June and 12 November, 1934,[45] before returning to Kalimpong. On this trip, Bell would hire a professional cameraman, Kartick Chandra Pyne, 'the Bengali photographer who lives at Kalimpong',[46] to accompany him.

Kartick Chandra was the middle among three brothers, the eldest, Ganesh Chandra and the youngest, Durga Chandra. Their father, B.N. Pyne had been brought from Calcutta to Kalimpong to work as an accountant for John Anderson Graham, the Scottish missionary, who, in 1900, established the school and orphanage, Dr. Graham's Homes, at Deolo Hill, Kalimpong, on hundred acres of land leased by the British India government. The three boys studied at Dr. Graham's newly established school, and later, became entrepreneurs. In the early 1900s, they established the multipurpose Kalimpong Stores **[Figure 8]** in the main bazaar area of the town. By 1912, the eldest brother, Ganesh Chandra, had acquired the license for starting the regional branch of Kodak Studios, and the Kalimpong stores began to supply Kodak film, cameras and camera equipment as well as specialize in photographic productions. Kartick Chandra, who was good in developing traditional darkroom prints from film negatives, became the main professional photographer of Kalimpong town.[47]

We may note here that at a time when photographic studios by Europeans were proliferating in Darjeeling, producing picture postcards and studio photographs,[48] K.C. Pyne was the only non-European professional photographer operating in the Eastern Himalayas.[49] Bell recruited K.C. Pyne from Kalimpong and accompanied by a Tibetan interpreter **[Figure 9]**, Pyne travelled to Tibet in 1934 as Bell's professional cameraman.

Bell, in his curated index, mentions that the photographs with serial numbers 1-35 in his Jewel/J-Series, taken mostly at Kalimpong, are by Phipraj, whereas the rest, from serial number 36-570 are all by Pyne.[50] Pyne, however, kept a log book with date-wise entries of the photographs taken by him on the Rolleiflex camera (12 images per roll of film) **[Figure 11]** While the ordering, as well as the descriptions, of the images are somewhat different, this log-book, now part of a private collection,[51] may have been the likely source for Bell's curated index of his R (Rolleiflex)-Series photographs, which are now housed in the collection of the British Library. The log-book also indicates that Pyne was the primary photographer who handled both cameras.

Pyne's log-book entry for 19 September, 1934, for instance, lists photographs taken during Bell's visit to Mindröling monastery on 19 and 20 September, 1934. Palhese had reached the monastery earlier, for a prior exchange of pleasantries and also to announce the arrival of Bell and Harnett.[52] A set of photographs in Bell's R-series (R-184 and R-185) corresponds to Entries 5 and 6 in Pyne's log-book for Film Roll 33, and shows Palhese and a monk of Mindröling monastery about to receive Bell and Harnett (approaching on horseback), with a white *kh-btags* or ceremonial scarf. Bell's own curated index has the caption— 'Arrival at Min-drö-ling Monastery. D.B. Palhese has dismounted from his pony to present the usual scarf (ka-ta) to the priest at Min-drö-ling, who has come out to welcome us. He is telling the priest that I am just riding up, both are looking in my direction'—for R-184, and— 'Palhese getting the scarf ready'— for R-185[53] **[Figure 10]**. Pyne's log-book entries for these photographs read as follows— 'Dewan bahadur talking to the lama. His khadha is hanging in his hand' and 'Sir Charles Bell arriving at Mindroling Gum-pa with Col. Harnett— on horseback—Dewan bahadur with Lama— going to receive him'. **[Figure 11]**.

Figure 8: Kalimpong Stores run by the Pyne brothers, Kalimpong bazaar, 1928.
From the private collection of the author.

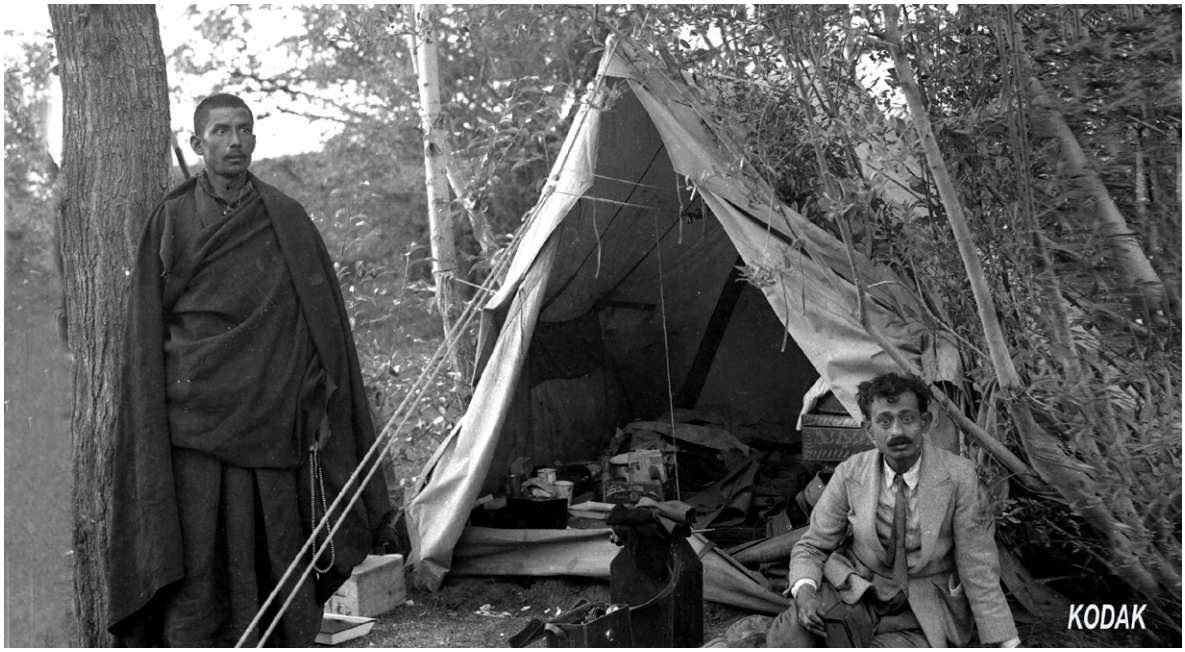


Figure 9: Kartick Chandra Pyne (right, seated) in front of a tent with his camera equipment, and his Tibetan interpreter (left, standing) *en route* Tibet, 1934.
From the private collection of the author.

Figure 10: Palhese (left standing) and a monk of Mindröling monastery (right) receiving Charles Bell and Harnett arriving on horseback, photographed in September, 1934 by Kartick Chandra Pyne. From the British Library Collection: [Photo 1112/6 (184)].

Here, the log-book entries act as ciphers indicating how the image archive was produced. The transition, from log-book (Pyne's) to curated index (Bell's), details the processes through which these photographs were produced, catalogued and entered into collection and circulation. Interestingly, neither Bell nor Pyne, in their respective entries, use the actual Tibetan term for ceremonial scarf— *kha-btags*. While Pyne transcribes the term as 'khadha',[54] Bell uses the phonetic equivalent in English, 'ka-ta.'

What may also be noted here are how the several actors involved within the making of Bell's collections become shadowy interlopers lurking around the archival margins, outlines upon which colonial knowledge is superimposed. This is reinstated by the fact that the various collections, across the different archival and museum sites in England today, carry the name of Charles Bell.[55] The newer acts of recovery (for instance, of Pyne's log-book from Kalimpong) call for an amendment of these processes of archival ordering and cataloguing.

Bell's 1934 trip to Tibet, unlike that of 1920-21, was not part of an official mission. It was impelled by Bell's desire for more photographs as illustrations for his next and last book, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama* (1946), which would be published posthumously, after his death, on 8 March, 1945.[56] Perhaps, this was the reason that drove Bell to hire a professional photographer on this trip.

The transition, from amateur cameraman (Rabden Lepcha) to a professional (Pyne), is marked through the shifting representation of a photographic subject, who recurs in both sets of visual archives. A second photograph (catalogued J-400 by Bell[57]) taken by Pyne of Dorje Phagmo

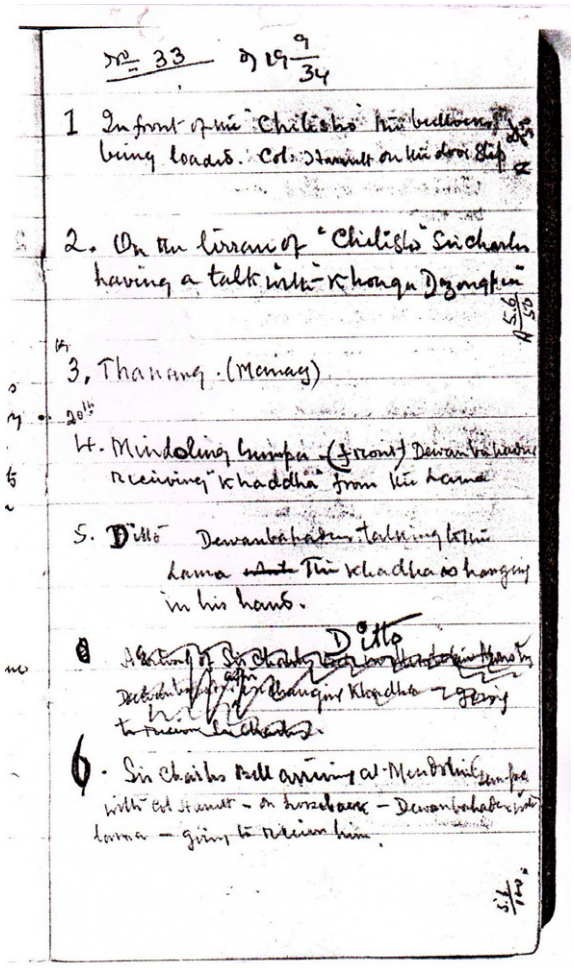


Figure 11: A page from Pyne's personal log-book of the 1934 expedition. From the private collection of the author.

[**Figure 12**], now a thirty-eight-year-old woman, becomes a part of Bell's last book (Bell 1946: 129). Unsatisfied with the previous photo of her that had been taken by Rabden Lepcha in 1921 (Bell mentioned it as being under-exposed[58] owing to Rabden Lepcha's inexperience, though he nonetheless used the photograph in his 1928 publication *The People of Tibet*), Bell wanted a better illustration this time around, by a professional cameraman. Bell met Dorje Phagmo again on 10 September, 1934. The only person who was present with Bell on both occasions, in 1921 as well as in 1934, was Palhese, all archival traces of Rabden Lepcha having disappeared after 1921. Bell describes the meeting in his diary:

> The girlish face and form of my last visit have of course disappeared. She is now thirty-eight years of age (Tibetan reckoning), of stout build, and heavily pockmarked… She moves like an old woman. Her cramped life, without proper exercise, has, no doubt, led to this condition… One may easily infer from her whole attitude and demeanour that she would long ago have gladly exchanged her position as the holiest and highest woman in Tibet for that of the wife of a simple peasant with her own family and home. She seems bored, and weary of all the fine trappings.[59]

Bell's personal reflections on Dorje Phagmo's changed appearance, between 1921 and 1934, are accompanied by a visual recording of the same. Pyne, either working independently or under Bell's direction, photographed Dorje Phagmo within a regular quotidian setting, unlike the hieratic framing of Rabden Lepcha's earlier 1928 image. Bell's own altered perception of Dorje Phagmo, as a woman who now seemed 'bored' of her religious position, and whose 'girlish face' showed signs of premature ageing, was a noticeable shift from the enthusiasm that had characterized his earlier encounter with Tibet's highest female ecclesiast. Additionally, Pyne was a Bengali who neither knew Tibetan, nor was he a practicing Buddhist. For him (unlike for Palhese or Rabden Lepcha), Dorje Phagmo was not a revered figure. The photographic image, besides the obvious tent-like setting where it was taken, becomes devoid of any sacred trace that had characterized the 1921 image. Reading the two photographs of Dorje Phagmo, the 1921 and the 1934 image, side by side, also complicates any simplistic white/non-white binary division of agents responsible for producing Bell's images. Instead, it demonstrates how different sensibilities— white European to native Tibetan to Bengali— differently inflected the production of Bell's visual archive.

Pyne was especially good with panoramic/cinematic shots. Bell writes about taking his 'first cinema exposure' on the Rolleiflex camera, under Pyne's instructions.[60] The shot being talked about is a panoramic

Figure 12: Dorje Phagmo, photographed in September, 1934 by Kartick Chandra Pyne. From the British Library Collection: [Photo 1112/5 (400)].

Figure 13: Panorama (cinematic) shot of the Samyé Monastery, photographed in September, 1934 by Kartick Chandra Pyne. From the British Library Collection: [Photo 1112/5 (447a) and 1112/5 (447b)].

photo (resulting from a combination of two or more shots) of the Samyé monastery that Bell visited at the end of September, 1934.[61] Pyne, too, took his own photograph of Samyé and the image (J-447)[62] [**Figure 13**] would also end up in *Portrait of the Dalai Lama* (Bell 1946: 129).

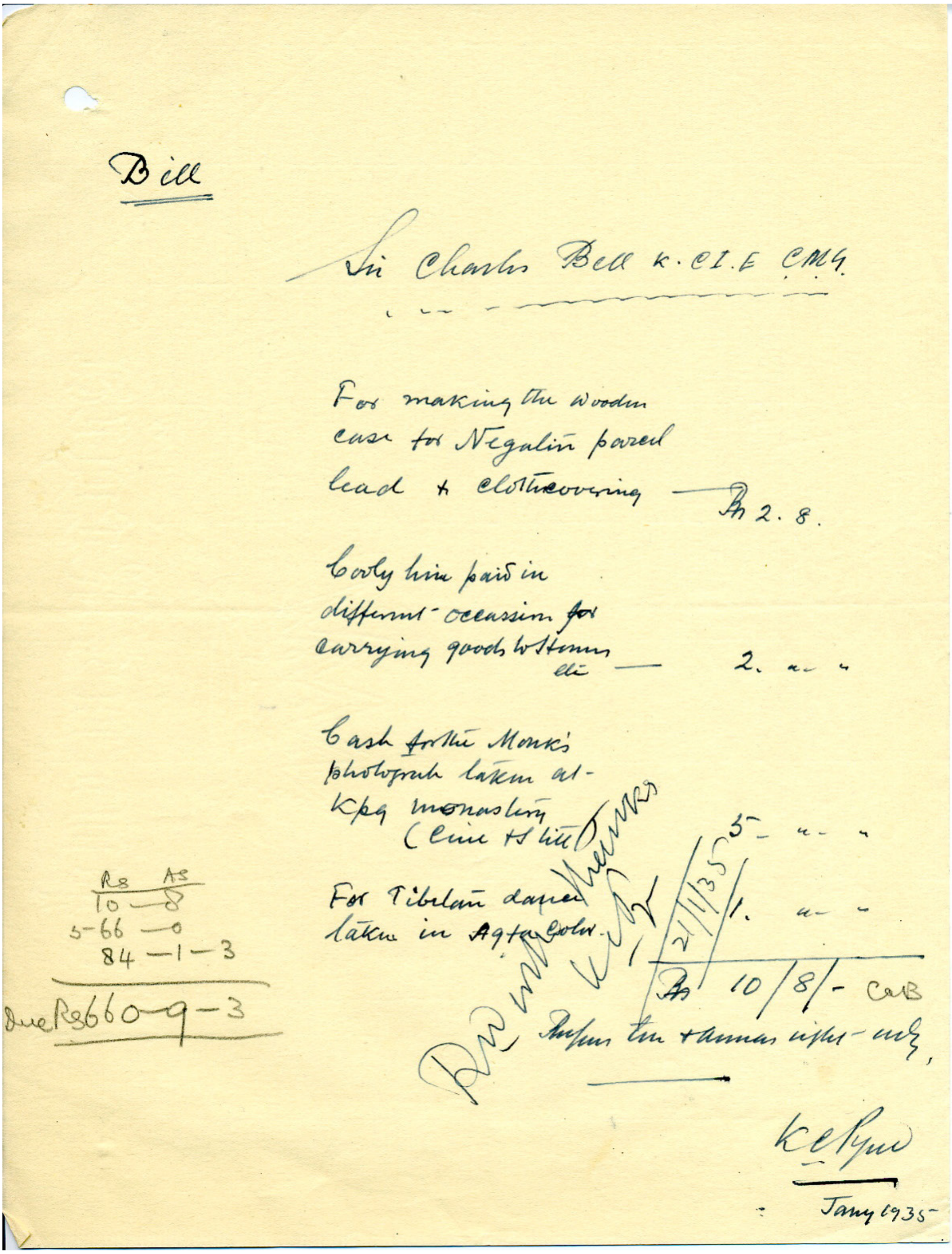
One of the more interesting illustrations that would make it to the book from Bell's 1934 trip is a photograph of a boy monk, Lhogön Kyibuk (translated by Bell as 'Inmost Happiness'), the head lama of a monastery near Penam. In Bell's book, the figure is unnamed, described only as the 'Head lama of a Monastery, aged fourteen' (Bell 1946: 373). From Bell's diary entry of 20 August, 1934, we find out that Lhogön Kyibuk was the brother of Wangdu Norbu Kyibuk,[63] one of four boys who had been sent to England in 1913 accompanied by a Tibetan plenipotentiary, Dorje Tsegyal (or Kusho Lungshar) and S.W. Laden La, to become the first-ever beneficiaries of a modern English education in England proper.[64]

In his diary, Bell also gives us the biographical details of the boy, whose ancestors, victims of the Bhutanese civil war, had fled from Bhutan to Tibet, along with Palhese's own ancestors, eight generations before, during the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama.[65] Lhogön Kyibuk's photograph [**Figure 14**] was taken by Pyne on 21 August,[66] which is the illustration that appears in Bell's book.

In a move quite uncharacteristic of Bell (the depiction of Tibetans in his books is usually more nuanced[67]), the biographical details of Kyibuk, including his name, are omitted from the published book, and he becomes reduced to a trope of Tibetan religiosity portrayed by the photograph. Pyne's name, too, is entirely left out of the book. In the case of Kyibuk's image, the archival prompts available through Bell's diaries and photograph catalogues, enable the recuperation of both the name of the photographer as well as the biography of the subject. This recursive remaking also points towards the nature of Bell's photographic archive, as a multi-agential one assembled by his Tibetan and Sikkimese collaborators such as Palhese and Rabden Lepcha, and aided by the technical expertise of his Bengali cameraman, K.C. Pyne.

Pyne would also take various photographs in and around Kalimpong town for Bell, sometimes paying the subjects for posing for the camera. A bill, signed by Pyne, to Bell, dated January, 1935, mentions paying five Rupees to the monks of Kalimpong monastery for a photograph. [**Figure 15**]. The image appears towards the end of Bell's J-Series (J-567)[68] [**Figure 16**]. Pyne's bill also mentions taking video ('cine') footage of the monks.[69]

Figure 14: Lhogön Kyibuk, photographed in August, 1934 by Kartick Chandra Pyne. From the British Library Collection: [Photo 1112/6 (81)].


Bill

Sir Charles Bell K.C.I.E. C.M.G.

For making the wooden case for Negative paced lead & cloth covering — Rs 2. 8.

Cooly hire paid in different occassion for carrying goods to Stores etc — 2. " "

Cash for the Monk's photograph taken at Kpg monastery (Cine & Still) 5 " "

For Tibetan dance taken in Agfa Color. 1. " "

Rs 10/8/- CAB

Rupees ten & annas eight only,

K C Pyne

Jany 1935

Rs As
10—8
5-66—0
84—1—3
Due Rs 660—9—3

Paid with thanks
2/1/35

Figure 15: Bill from Pyne to Bell dated January, 1935.From the private collection of Jonathan Bracken.

Figure 16: Monks photographed at Kalimpong monastery by Pyne in 1934. From the British Library Collection: [Photo 1112/5 (567a)].

Conclusion: Unravelling the Palimpsest

If Bell's photographic collection is read as an assemblage of several kinds of native knowledges, sacerdotal and technical, then each of his collaborator figures seems to play a crucial role in shaping the content, form and associated meanings therein. The epistemic content and religious setting of some of the P, Q and H-Series images were facilitated through the presence of, and inputs from, Bell's collaborators such as Palhese and Rabden Lepcha. The latter group of images (J and R-Series) relied entirely on the technical expertise of Pyne.

A transcription of some of the photographs (from Bell's substantial visual collection) from archive to book, ideologically oriented towards Bell's elite white readers, also reoriented the hermeneutic structure of the archive. It resulted in the archive's encompassment within and filtration through colonial hegemonies of power, in the process flattening out and compressing the roles of the multiple agents involved within its making, naming one sole white author and silencing all the other non-white collaborators. The process of 'recuperating' these lost voices does not merely seek to reinstate lost agency, but question the very nature of British colonial knowledge production, that not only repudiated the roles of its non-white producers and contributors, but remained hermeneutically premised on those very forms of disavowal. The rich assortment of visual material attributed to Bell is a layered archive. Its epistemic unpacking unveils these layers, and showcases instead several kinds of knowledges and expertise that Bell's collaborators brought to his photographic collection.

Abbreviations

AAS: Asia and Africa Studies
BL: British Library
NAI: National Archives of India
PRM: Pitt Rivers Museum

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Endnotes

1. 'Typescript index for Sir Charles Bell's Photographs J and R Series,' 1933-34, Box 2, PRM, Oxford, 56.

2. I thank Charles Bell's great grandson, Jonathan Bracken, for the exact model number and specifications.

3. I have been unable to ascertain the years of birth and death, from archival records, of Rabden Lepcha, Kartick Chandra Pyne as well as of some of the other figures discussed in this essay. Where unknown, these have not been mentioned.

4. Bronwen Douglas studies ethnographic images emerging out of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century maritime explorations in Oceania, by James Cook (during 1772-75), Bruni d'Entrecasteaux (during 1791-93) and d'Urville (between 1826-29), for their 'indigenous countersigns' bearing the 'oblique stamp of indigenous actions, desires and agencies on recorded imperial imaginings.' (Douglas 1999: 70)

5. My methodology of 'recuperative hermeneutics' with regard to British imperial knowledge-production on Tibet, draws on Arondekar's work on the hermeneutics of archival absences that characterized British colonial discourses on sexuality (Arondekar 2009: 1-10).

6. For instance, there is a particularly striking image of him (R-302) under a set of ice-stalactites between Gyantse and Sangang, taken on 31 October, 1934. See 'Typescript index for Sir Charles Bell's Photographs J and R Series,' 96. I thank Jonathan Bracken for bringing this to my notice. Jonathan also identified Pyne in another photograph, while looking through the negatives, from Bell's J Series (J-392). The corresponding entry by Bell in his index does not mention Pyne, and Bell only notes that the two photographs (J-391 and J-392) were taken 'in the narrow valley going up towards Karo La [pass]'. See 'Typescript index for Sir Charles Bell's Photographs J and R Series,' 43-44. The reason for Pyne's infrequent trace may be owing to the fact that on most occasions, he was the one handling both the Jewel and Rolleiflex cameras, and not among the subjects being photographed.

7. 'Typescript index for Sir Charles Bell's Photographs J and R Series,' 56.

8. I have used his full name throughout the essay, instead of referring to him only by his surname, as Tibetans or Lepchas do not have the concept of a surname.

9. Photo 1112/3(1a), Bell, Charles. 'Bell Collection: 'Photographs of Tibet and Sikkim ('P' Series)' c. 1910-1920, AAS, BL.

10. 'Typescript index for Sir Charles Bell's Photographs P, Q and H Series,' 1. To be noted here, Bell has two sets of curated indexes for his photographs. There is one index for the Postcard/P, Half-Plate/H and Quarter-Plate/Q series, which are ordered following an ethnographic typology, where the photographs are arranged under 'subject' headings, such as 'the people', 'the religion', 'arts and craft' etc. These do not

follow a numerical sequence. The other index, for the Jewel/J and Rolleiflex/R series, comprising photographs from 1933-34, is curated numerically and chronologically, based on when an image was taken.

11. This process has been one of the many impetuses of *The Tibet Album* project of the PRM, Oxford. *The Tibet Album*, <https://tibet.prm.ox.ac.uk>.

12. The mission was basically an armed invasion of Tibet. Headed by Lieutenant Colonel Francis Edward Younghusband (1863-1942), it was despatched in August, 1904, by Lieutenant-governor, George Nathaniel Curzon (1859-1925) under the auspices of the British Frontier Commission. Its purpose was to forcefully open three British trade marts at Gyantse, Yatung and Lhasa, under the terms of Anglo-Chinese Trade Regulations of 1893, agreed upon between Britain and Qing China, which considered Tibet its protectorate. Tibet itself had never been a party to this, and Younghusband's mission, which turned into an invasion, compelled Lhasa into signing the Convention in 1904 (McKay 2009: 13).

13. Telegram from Bell to Foreign Office, Simla, dated 9 May, 1921, IOR NEG F80/5e/22, AAS, BL.

14. Letter from Bell dated 21 February, 1921 to the Secretary to the Government of India, IOR NEG F80/5e/21, AAS, BL.

15. The long period of exile of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in India from 1910-12 was a result of the hostilities between China and Tibet and the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1910, that has been read as a direct consequence of Francis Younghusband's 1904 invasion of Tibet (Bell 1946: 61-130).

16. Bell's Final (Confidential) Report dated 29 November, 1921 of the Lhasa Mission, November 1920 to October, 1921, IOR NEG F80/5f, AAS, BL.

17. The biography of S.W. Laden La was compiled by his daughter, Deki Laden La nee Rhodes and her husband Nicholas Rhodes (Rhodes and Rhodes 2006).

18. For a brief biographical sketch of Norbu Dhondup, see McKay (McKay 2009: 126-129).

19. Bell would also use his photographs to vindicate his lectures such as the lantern-slide lecture given at the Royal Geographical Society in 1924 (Harris 2016: 74).

20. The albums attributed to Charles Bell and containing photographs by other British officers remain in the collection of the National Museums, Liverpool.

21. Clare E. Harris has, in her evaluation of the photographic career of Waddell in Darjeeling, and his unpublished *Types of Natives of Nepal, Sikhim and Tibet photographed by Messrs Johnston & Hoffman, Calcutta, with Notes*, remarked how photography, for Waddell, served a two-fold purpose— an evidentiary one, as a handmaiden to what was construed as ethnographic scientism, and a more popular one that catered to a European Orientalist fantasy of Tibet and the Himalayas (Harris 2012: 104). Harris also investigates how within Waddell's *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism*, published in 1895, primarily for his 'Christian British readers', photography not only served as 'the handmaiden to artistic invention' but also to Waddell's 'ideologically charged interventions'. Such interventions continued to be used to generate many myths about Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhism throughout the nineteenth century as objects simultaneously exotic and disdainful. In fact, it was through the efforts of those like Waddell that images of Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhism began to mutate from the purely anthropological specimens to 'something altogether more alluring', eventually becoming a very popular subject within 'colonial print culture, catering to the fantasies of British consumers.' (Harris 2012: 89)

22. Bell, Charles, Handwritten Diary Vol. VII, 17 November, 1920, private collection of Jonathan Bracken.

23. Bell writes that Tibetans would, for this reason, hide photographs (the few that they possessed) under their beds. Bell, Charles, Typescript Diary Vol. XVIII, 19 July, 1934, AAS, BL, 29-31.

24. In Tibet, Dorje Phagmo is considered as the highest female reincarnation, an emanation of Vajravārāhī. Chökyi Drönma (1422-1455), the consort of Thangtong Gyalpo or Chakzampa, was venerated as the first reincarnation.

25. Bell correctly alters Waddell's English translation of the Tibetan meaning of her

name, drawing upon the corresponding Sanskrit name *Vajra-Varāhī*, from 'the diamond sow' to the 'thunderbolt sow'.

26. Bell, Handwritten Diary Vol. VII, 11 November, 1920.

27. Bell, Handwritten Diary Vol. VII, 11 November, 1920.

28. Whether Palhese and Rabden Lepcha played any direct role in the actual 'staging' of the image can, at best, be only conjecture. What is certain is that both Bell and Dyer had already left the scene, leaving the work of photography to be carried out by the two interlocutors.

29. Bell, Handwritten Diary Vol. VII, 11 November, 1920. Harris studies at length how increasingly Tibetans themselves began to work as photographers (Harris 2016: 113-53).

30. For a biographical sketch of Palhese, see Martin. (Martin 2014: 84-93)

31. Kennedy was an old friend of Bell's, and had been the former medical officer and acting Trade Agent at Yatung. (McKay 2009: 68)

32. The figure is wrongly identified as David Macdonald in *The Tibet Album*, 'Lhasa Mission Group, 5 December, 2006. The PRM, <http://tibet.prm.ox.ac.uk/photo_1998.285.339.1.html>.
S. W. Laden La had replaced Achuk Tsering as Bell's personal assistant on the mission. Achuk Tsering (1877-1920) was one of Bell's most crucial cultural interlocutors. A Sikkimese Buddhist, he served as Bell's confidential clerk and worked with him for fourteen years prior to accompanying him on the 1920-21 Lhasa Mission. Tsering, unfortunately died in Lhasa on 11 December, 1920, succumbing to an attack of influenza and gout, a few weeks after the mission had reached Lhasa. He was replaced by Laden La. Bell, Handwritten Diary Vol. VII, 11 December, 1920. For a reconstruction of the biography of Achuk Tsering, see Martin. (Martin 2014: 74-84)

33. Bell, Handwritten Diary Vol. VII, 20 November, 1920.

34. 'Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet: List of Chiefs and Leading Families', IOR L/P&S/20/D216, AAS, BL, 19.

35. I thank Jonathan Bracken for sharing the photograph with me, as well as for pointing out the hidden cable held by Rabden Lepcha through a zoomed-in view.

36. The process of identification and re-attribution of Rabden Lepcha's photographic oeuvre was a detailed one and involved several methodological approaches. See Mandy Sadan's notes on methodology, *The Tibet Album*, https://tibet.prm.ox.ac.uk/tibet_methodology_Bell.html.

37. Charles Bell, Handwritten Diary Vol. IX, 7 March, 1921, private collection of Jonathan Bracken.

38. Charles Bell, Handwritten Diary Vol. XIII, 14 October, 1921, private collection of Jonathan Bracken.

39. Laden La had joined the mission, taking over as Bell's clerk, almost immediately following Achuk Tsering's death, on 11 December, 1920. Bell, through a letter dispatched from Lhasa to the Foreign Office, on 12 December, 1920, had specifically asked for the services of Laden La. See Telegram No. 48-S from Charles Bell to the Foreign and Political Department, Delhi, 12 December, 1920, in 'Appointment of Sardar Bahadur S.W. Laden La, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Darjeeling, as Personal Assistant to Mr. C.A. Bell, C.I.E. Political Officer on Special Duty in Tibet', Foreign Department Proceedings, 291-306, June, 1921, NAI. This would indicate that the photograph featuring Laden La was likely taken sometime between end-December and early-January, 1921.

40. Bell, Handwritten Diary Vol. XIII, 14 October, 1921; Bell 1946: 336.

41. Bell, Handwritten Diary Vol. XIII, 14 October, 1921; *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, 336-37.

42. In the book, although Bell mentions that Rabden was with him at the time, he writes that he took the photograph (Bell 1946: 336). The entry in the diary— 'Rabden and I'— leaves the question of authorship (of the photograph) unclear.

43. By the mid-nineteenth century, Sikkim had been reduced to a British protectorate. As Rabden Lepcha was from Sikkim and not Tibet, he was very much a colonized subject

locked within an unequal hegemonic relation of power with his English overlords.

44. This has been done through *The Tibet Album* project of the PRM, Oxford.

45. Bell, Typescript Diary Vol. XVIII, 17 November, 1934, 127. From Kalimpong, Bell would proceed to Mongolia, Manchuria and Siberia. Unfortunately, Cashie Bell, his wife, who accompanied him on these trips, died of meningitis in Beijing on 20 September, 1935. Bell, Typescript Diary Vol. XXI, 20 September, 1935 AAS, BL, 27.

46. Bell, Typescript Diary Vol. XVIII, 24 October, 1934, 113.

47. I interviewed Sanjay Diyali, grandson (adopted) of K.C. Pyne on 7 June, 2024. None of the brothers had married and they adopted a local Nepali boy from Kalimpong.

48. For a discussion of the photographic studios of Thomas Paar and Johnston and Hoffman in Darjeeling, see Harris. (Harris 2012: 90-98; Harris 2016: 38-43)

49. The Das Studio was established by Thakur Das Pradhan more than a decade later, in Darjeeling, in 1927.

50. Bell, Typescript index for Sir Charles Bell's Photographs J and R Series, 5. Unfortunately, the name of Phipraj occurs just once in Bell's catalogue and no local memory of the person survives in Kalimpong.

51. I thank Sanjay Diyali, proprietor and owner of Kodak Studios, Kalimpong, for sharing the images of Pyne's log-book with me.

52. Bell, Typescript Diary Vol. XVIII, 19 and 20 September, 1934, 40-49.

53. Bell, Typescript index for Sir Charles Bell's Photographs J and R Series, 84-85.

54. Pyne's transcription derives from the local Nepali usage of the term (Nepali, over time, has become the main language spoken in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, with Tibetan reserved mainly for monastic rituals, a fuller exploration of which is outside the scope of this present essay). Pyne's spelling of 'gum-pa' (from the Tibetan *dgon-pa*) is also borrowed from local Nepali usage.

55. In the archives of libraries and museums where I conducted research in the UK through 2023-24, including the BL, the collections (of objects, photographs, papers and notes) are all assigned to Bell. Despite recent anthropological efforts by various institutions such as the *Tibet Album Project* at the PRM, Oxford, and the Liverpool Museums, most archives in the UK have not yet adopted a 'corrective' appellative to refer to these collections.

56. Bell had intended to undertake his second trip to Tibet earlier, during the writing of his book *The Religion of Tibet*. This he indicated to Palhese during the latter's year-long visit to England in 1927-28. Bell, Charles, Handwritten Diary Vol. XIV, 3 February, 1928. He would, however, only be able to make the journey in 1934, after the publication of *The Religion of Tibet* (1931).

57. Bell, Typescript index for Sir Charles Bell's Photographs J and R Series, 44.

58. Bell, Handwritten Diary Vol. VII, 11 November, 1920.

59. Bell, Typescript Diary Vol. XVIII, 10 September, 1934, 17.

60. Bell writes that hitherto Pyne had been taking these shots. Bell, Typescript Diary Vol. XVIII, 26 September, 1934, 58-59. Although the images in the R-Series are not credited to Pyne within Bell's curating of his own visual material, it may be evidenced from Bell's diaries that Pyne had, in fact, been handling both the Rolleiflex as well as the Jewel cameras.

61. The Samyé monastery is believed to be the oldest in Tibet, established by king Tri Songdétsen/ Khri-srong-lde-btsan in the mid-eighth century.

62. Bell, Typescript index for Sir Charles Bell's Photographs J and R Series, 49.

63. Bell, Typescript Diary Vol. XVIII, 20 August, 1934, 90-91.

64. As part of a modernizing drive initiated by Bell and the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Bell arranged for four boys to be sent to England to receive an 'English' education. The teenagers, Wangdu Norbu Kyipup/Kyibuk, Khenrab Kunzang Mondong, Sonam Gompo Gongkar and Rigzin Dorje Rinchengang were sent to England in 1913, accompanied by a Tibetan plenipotentiary named Dorje Tsegyal of Kusho Lungshar (Lung Sharwa) (P.1968, IOR L/P&S/10/400, AAS, BL). The British

colonial incentive behind this 'experiment' was, to strengthen British influence on Lhasa, making use of these four boys, who would be sent back to Tibet after being adequately Anglicised and indoctrinated. This was also designed to ward off Russian influence over Tibet and woo the Dalai Lama in favour of the British, using the boys as pro-Raj emissaries. Dhondup 1984: 38-58.

65. Bell, Charles, Typescript Diary Vol. XVII, 20 August, 1934, AAS, BL, 90-91.

66. Bell, Typescript Diary Vol. XVII, 21 August, 1934, 93.

67. Harris has remarked that Bell's linguistic abilities as well as the close relationship he cultivated with many of the subjects in his photographs brought about a more ethnographic perspective to his images, in contrast to the photographs produced by many of his predecessors such as Waddell (see Harris 2016: 76).

68. Bell, Typescript index for Sir Charles Bell's Photographs J and R Series, 64.

69. Video footage was also taken during the 1934 trip to Tibet, once again, possibly by Pyne. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to look at these. The footage remains housed, under Bell's name, in the collection of the British Film Institute. <https://collections-search.bfi.org.uk/web/Details/ChoiceFilmWorks/150064496>. I thank Jonathan Bracken for drawing my attention to this information.

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