

## 3 MILITARY COLLECTING

### 3.1 Introduction

In 1905 Colonel Francis Younghusband, political leader of the 1904 Expedition to Tibet, wrote an account of his geographical findings for *The Geographical Journal*. The 1904 Expedition had 'opened up' Tibet to a Western audience and had brought the Tibet that had been cultivated in the western imagination, over the course of the nineteenth century, into direct conflict with a 'real' Tibet found in a fixed geographical location by British military forces. The tension between the two was summed up in the closing section of Younghusband's report:

'We sought, but did not find, the Mahatmas, who would lead us to more lofty peaks of light and wisdom than ever we had trod before. While I would not deny that Buddhism has done much to tame and civilise a barbarous race of demon-worshippers in Tibet, I would warn those who would look to Lhasa for any kind of higher intellectual or spiritual guidance to seek nearer home for what they need'.<sup>1</sup>

Tibet was a complex entity even when imagined, with imperial ideologies influencing a series of different responses to Tibet and Tibetan culture. The way in which British agents ultimately chose to represent Tibet both drew from and affected peoples' actual experiences. As such, 'real' experiences came into tension with ideas formed by Orientalist scholars,

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<sup>1</sup> Younghusband, "The Geographical Results of the Tibet Mission", 492.

informal studies of the 'East' such as Theosophy, and the more 'accurate' geographical knowledge of Tibet constructed by the India Survey and the RGS.<sup>2</sup>

The tension around different ideas of what Tibet was, or should be, presented itself in tandem with another tension – between old and new military practices, particularly in relation to 'loot' and the role of collecting within the military hierarchy. Such ideological frictions remained through the 1904 Expedition and its aftermath, which saw Tibet reshaped once more within British understandings of the 'East'. Post-1904, British constructions of Tibet moved even further from the fluid rationalisation of Thomas Wise and earlier Enlightenment pioneers, than they had done even in late nineteenth century missionary representations.

Whilst the missionaries examined in the previous chapter collected Tibetan material culture over a period of several decades, 1904 was a clearly defined 'moment' in the history of engagement between Tibet and the West. Crucially, the invasion of Tibetan territory by British forces was a violent one, and the processes by which objects came into the possession of British officers were largely different from the processes of negotiation, trade and reciprocity outlined in the previous chapter.

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<sup>2</sup> The imaginative landscape of Tibet was also fuelled by popular literature, including one of the most influential books of the era – Kim. Kipling's narrative clearly defined how knowledge about the 'East' was gathered and its purpose within western strategies of control, used to consolidate British hegemony in India and Tibet. Kim has been widely lauded as a key piece of literary evidence in the unravelling of British attitudes towards the 'East', and its place as part of a fantasy of imperial domination. Spiers has called Kipling the 'most influential writer of the nineteenth century' and McKay suggests that he was a particularly powerful influence on those serving in the Government of India. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, 199; McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, 77. Also see Richards, "Archive and Utopia", 104-135. Kim's importance also extends to our understanding of the collection of Indian and Tibetan material culture, for example see Black, *On Exhibit, Victorians and their Museums*, 154-156 and Abe, "Inside the Wonder House: Buddhist Art and the West", 63-106.

It is the way in which objects formed part of this short and violent military and political encounter that will form the basis of this chapter. I will begin by contextualising the role of collecting within the British military, and examine the place of the 1904 Expedition within that history. The chapter will then explore military reactions to Tibetan Buddhism and the position of male and female agencies within military collecting, which was by definition an entirely male endeavour. Whilst contextualising these issues, I will examine the network of military collectors, and their relationships to each other, their objects and to museums. Using specific examples from Scottish museum collections, I will then highlight issues such as the impact of gender on collecting practices and collecting as trophy versus collecting for academic insight. A more in-depth case study of the collection of Lieutenant Frederick 'Eric' Bailey will examine the collection from the perspective of its caretaker, his mother Florence Bailey. In contrast, I will also examine an alternative mode of collecting – the diplomatic gift. The role of 'gifts' within a military campaign so closely associated with the violence of looting is often overlooked, but the act of gift giving in this situation adds another important dimension to our understanding of the role of objects within this conflict. Finally, as in the previous chapter, I will draw together some conclusions about military collecting and its role in support of imperial ideologies, to offer some insight into how military collecting, and the expectations and intentions which military personnel invested in objects, fitted into the broader trends of constructing an idea of Tibet through objects in Britain.

## 3.2 Contextualising British military collecting: war and loot in

### India and Tibet

As Anne Buddle notes, 'war-booty and India share a long history. The word 'loot' comes from the Sanskrit *lotra*; to rob or plunder'.<sup>3</sup> Collecting, in its many guises had, by 1904, a long history of entanglement with military practices but it was in India, a land of plenty, that these methods of collecting reached new heights. Historically, the process of collecting 'loot' had acted as a method of payment for soldiers and as an incentive during punitive expeditions, wars and the process of colonial expansion and indigenous suppression.<sup>4</sup> In India particularly, in the earlier years of Company rule, military service promised rich prizes, as compensation for the risks to personal welfare, and often acted as actual payment retrospectively financing wars and expeditions.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, while the looting of monastic sites in 1904 was shocking to the moralities of the Edwardian government and parts of wider British society, those actions were part of an extensive history of military practices when faced with a hostile force of great wealth.

The looting of Srirangapatam following the Fourth Mysore War in 1798-1799 was one of the major moments in this history of violent artefact collection.

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<sup>3</sup> Buddle, "What Sharks they are: Sunset at Srirangapatam 1799", 119.

<sup>4</sup> Punitive expeditions can be characterized as short and targeted military-led reprisals for disputes, usually between bordering states, where one state considers that the other undertook an immediately punishable action. In this circumstance, loot was an important part of that punishment. The 1897 Expedition to Benin was one of the British Empire's best-known punitive expeditions of the colonial era.

<sup>5</sup> During the time of Company rule in India, prize money was a routine form of both payment and as a means of replenishing the coffers of the Company. However, following the 1857 Rebellion the army was radically reformed, coming under the control of the British government in India, who instituted formal systems of pay, reversing these practices. Stuart Allan, Curator of Military Collections, NMS, email to the author, 13/04/2011.

The Third Mysore War in 1792 had realised prize money of over £93,500 (the equivalent of £5,238,805 today).<sup>6</sup> Anticipation of the riches available in the palace of Tipu Sultan during the Fourth Mysore War was high before the battle even began, much like the anticipation of the riches held in monasteries and the Tibetan capital of Lhasa before the 1904 Expedition commenced. The objects taken from Srirangapatam were to form the basis of the museum opened at East India House, London, in 1799, including one of the most famous of all looted items – Tipu’s Tiger.<sup>7</sup> The fanfare that surrounded the entry of the tiger and other objects from the palace of Tipu Sultan into the British public consciousness could be seen as setting a benchmark for the way new cultures and art forms entered the British imagination through military interactions and the processes of collecting ‘prizes’. As Davis notes, a distinction was made between prize, which was the legitimate right of the army, and plunder, which related to individuals who committed acts against the accepted code of practice. If plundering involved individual, disorderly and predatory activity, subverting the terms of disciplined military arrangements, prize involved collective, orderly, hierarchical distribution, rearticulating the established social order of the military itself.<sup>8</sup> These distinctions, though seemingly paradoxical to modern sensibilities, were viewed as clear-cut, though largely unwritten, rules in the late eighteenth century. However, they had become far more ill defined

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<sup>6</sup> Buddle, “What Sharks they are: Sunset at Srirangapatam 1799”, 120. Currency converted using The National Archives Currency Converter, accessed 19/05/2013, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/>.

<sup>7</sup> As previously noted, Tipu’s Tiger is a carved wooden automaton, roughly life size, depicting a tiger devouring a European soldier. Inside the tiger is an organ, which when activated voices the growl of the tiger and the cries of the man. Today the tiger is located in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

<sup>8</sup> Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, 154.

by 1904. The rules governing the looting at Mysore included the stipulation that religious sites were to be left untouched and, evidence suggests, this was the case.<sup>9</sup> In 1899 these rules were written into law, through the Hague Convention, but the difficulty of reconciling military activity on the ground and governmental orders issued from Europe, was not always easy.<sup>10</sup>

By the time of the 1904 Expedition, the military had undergone extensive reform, including the official formation of the 'Indian Army' as a single entity following the Rebellion of 1858. But the governing principles of military character and the expectation of riches and adventure that a career in the military might bring were still present, if not amplified by the intervening years of imperial expedition and exploration. The fact that there was no official means of acquiring 'loot' by 1904 did not mean that the mind-set accepting this practice was extinguished: loot remained a distinctive lens through which material culture collected by military personnel was channelled into the British public consciousness, and remained important for the distinction of descriptive categories such as 'art'. As I will show later in this chapter, the category of 'Tibetan art' was solidified in 1904 because the British were able to force access to monastic sites that should have been protected by international law. Were it not for the act of looting and the flaunting of these conventions, such categories

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Article 56 of the 1899 Hague Convention states that 'The property of the communes, that of religious, charitable, and educational institutions, and those of arts and science, even when State property, shall be treated as private property. All seizure of, and destruction, or intentional damage done to such institutions, to historical monuments, works of art or science, is prohibited, and should be made the subject of proceedings'. Article 56, Section III, *Laws of War: Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague II)*, 29/07/1899. Accessed 04/12/2012, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/hague02.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/hague02.asp).

may not have been so readily understood or accepted into artistic discourse in the West with such speed.

There was not an unbroken lineage from Srirangapatam to the 1904 Expedition – many other expeditions opened up geographical and cultural spaces to the British military, and led to looting. But the Fourth Mysore War was one of the first occasions where a colonial war, and its associated cultural plunder, had a significant impact on the British public's imagination and an explicit effect on the way colonial material culture was displayed and studied.<sup>11</sup>

A contemporaneous military experience was that of the punitive expedition to Benin in 1897. As with Srirangapatam and Tibet, concern about other colonial powers and a desire to insert the British into existing trade relations, formed the backdrop to the punitive Benin Expedition. The impact of the 1904 Expedition on the British imagination and the spectacle that it created came from the looting of the Oba's palace and the find of hundreds of bronze plaques and ivory carvings.<sup>12</sup> The tensions surrounding the social value of these artefacts, which quickly entered the domain of 'art', cannot be underestimated. As Annie Coombes has noted, there was a confusing friction between praise and appreciation for the artefacts of Benin and a refusal to accredit cultural value to

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<sup>11</sup> There are many publications that recount the looting of Tipu Sultan's palace and the capture of his mechanical tiger but Davis (*Lives of Indian Images*, 143-185) offers a particularly good analysis of the tiger as a social artefact in the British imagination. The Victoria and Albert Museum (current home of the Tiger) website notes that 'The Storming of Srirangapatam unleashed a flood of prints and broadsheets. It inspired one of the largest paintings in the world, exhibited in London as a panorama. It was featured as a vast spectacular at Astley's Amphitheatre, and cut down to size for the juvenile drama. As late as 1868 it set the scene for Wilkie Collins's novel *The Moonstone*'. Accessed 15/06/2011, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/tippoos-tiger/>.

<sup>12</sup> For a comprehensive assessment of the looting of Benin and the subsequent display of the bronzes in Britain see Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*. Coombes examines how the interpretation of looted material culture 'invented' African art, and its relationship to the dominant imperial ideology of the time.

the Edo people who had made them.<sup>13</sup> Equally, the separation of the dirty and dim-witted Tibetan from the material artefacts of Tibetan (monastic) culture was a common theme around the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> The Benin Expedition, by virtue of the sale of the looted bronzes and ivories, continued the traditional military practices of funding warfare with 'prize'.<sup>15</sup> The first exhibition of the bronzes occurred at the Horniman Museum in London and was called *Spoils from Benin*, where the objects were described as 'war-booty'.<sup>16</sup> Only six years had elapsed between Benin and the 1904 Expedition to Tibet, charting a swift change in attitude: prior to 1904, the looting of perceived hostile countries was publicly acceptable and routine. In both the case of Srirangapatam and Benin, the economic gains to the British army and to individuals were substantial.

Such tensions were not just about 'art' or 'taste' but came out of the very foundations of Imperial ideologies. Hierarchies formed the basis of Victorian society and existed in many forms. When it came to designate a place in such a hierarchy for the rest of the world, Africa and much of Asia were viewed as existing somewhere near the base of a ladder of social and moral

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<sup>13</sup> Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 22.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Waddell's 1894 deconstruction of every physical element of the Tibetan Buddhist temple setting was in a detail that suggests it was worthy of such study, but his attitude to Tibetans remained resolutely negative and derogatory, even after the 1904 Expedition, as seen in his later work, *Lhasa and its Mysteries* (1905).

<sup>15</sup> Many museums bought material brought back from the Benin Expedition, including the British Museum, the Royal Museum of Ethnography in Berlin, the Mayer Museum Liverpool, the Pitt-Rivers Museum Oxford and a host of private individuals. The prices paid for these items would have covered a substantial amount of the 1904 Expedition costs.

<sup>16</sup> Plankensteiner, "The 'Benin Affair' and its Consequences", 204.



progress.<sup>17</sup> How, therefore, could a people so wholly inadequate in cultural terms, produce something that could be understood as ‘art’?

Displaying the spoils of war as imperial trophies arose in the wake of the 1904 Expedition, as Tibetan material culture metamorphosed from trophies and objects of anthropological interest into art. An example of this occurred at the officers’ mess of the Ambala Cantonment (1905) on the return of the regiment after the Expedition. Frederick Bailey, who served as a lieutenant to the 1904 Expedition force, photographed the displays. As Harris notes, Bailey’s photograph shows how Tibetan trophies of war – weapons, banners and *thangka* paintings – were seamlessly slotted into the military interior, at that time largely decorated with mounted animal heads; trophies of another kind.<sup>18</sup> This dense display occurred in a space designed to provide men with a relaxing, domestic atmosphere. Filled with objects that were directly linked to their military experiences, it showed how Tibetan material culture was both trophy and a ‘mode for experiencing Tibetan things as attractive embellishments within...the ‘Ornamentalism’ of British imperialism’.<sup>19</sup> In other words, this ‘trophy display’ was also the moment in which Tibetan material culture began to be domesticated into British interiors.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Hyam, *Britain’s Imperial Century*, 76-77.

<sup>18</sup> Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 72.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 73. Cannadine defines Ornamentalism as ‘hierarchy made visible immanent and actual...since the British conceived of their metropolis hierarchically, it was scarcely surprising that they conceived and understood their periphery in the same way, and that chivalry and ceremony, monarchy and majesty, were the means by which this vast world was brought together’. In other words, the spectacle of the officer’s mess was a visual representation of social (particularly class-based) ideologies and the way in which the rest of the world could be represented within that world-view. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 122.

<sup>20</sup> Importantly, trophy display was also a political act of domination by imperial forces. See 3.7.1 Prestige collecting, p.239.

Art, as a label for Tibetan objects, had not been a part of the missionary discourse, which had viewed Tibetan material culture variously as ethnography (though never explicitly labelled in such anthropological terms), curiosity, religious relic or useful 'specimen' evidencing Tibetan culture. Only Thomson appears to have had a notion of the artistic merit of the material he collected, but there is no explicit evidence for this.<sup>21</sup> Within the material associated with the 1904 Expedition we see tensions between racial and cultural prejudices bound up in wider imperial concerns, and the beginnings of the idea that Tibet could produce 'art' in a sense that was meaningful to a western audience. Harris estimates that approximately 5000 objects were 'collected' in various ways during the 1904 Expedition, and the context of their collection and interpretation was fundamental to the creation of the category of Tibetan art within Britain.<sup>22</sup> Concurrently, the development of Victorian aesthetic tastes had enveloped both Indian and Chinese ornamental detail,<sup>23</sup> two cultures against which Tibet could be both imperially and geographically defined. 1904 was not simply a moment in which military superiority was expressed, but the moment in which Tibetan material culture transformed in the Western imagination.

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<sup>21</sup> Thomson's appreciation of the artistic merit of Tibetan artefacts can be inferred from the collection itself, but there is no accompanying text outlining his attitudes and ideas.

<sup>22</sup> Clare Harris, lecture (31/05/2011) at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, titled '*Locating Tibetan Art: the Ethics and Aesthetics of the Younghusband Mission to Tibet*'. Also see Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 49-78.

<sup>23</sup> As Partha Mitter notes, designers such as Henry Cole (founder of the South Kensington Museum) built the study of eastern design into their new theories for the study of art and design in Britain. As such, knowledge of and interest in Indian design 'received a wide diffusion through their efforts', which was eventually incorporated into more quotidian surroundings, such as the domestic environment. Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, 224.

### 3.3 The 1904 Expedition

Within the military context there are many Tibetan objects in Scottish museums that are, in fact, not associated with the 1904 Expedition. NMS contains objects relating to the Sikkim wars of the 1880s and officers stationed in India in the early decades of the twentieth century made several more generally 'Himalayan' collections of weaponry.<sup>24</sup> These collections pose interesting questions regarding the gendered nature of collecting objects associated with warfare, which I will return to later, but will not themselves be the focus of this chapter. Instead, I will concentrate on the 1904 Expedition and the ways in which its officers utilised Tibetan material culture in different ways to take forward the construction of Tibet in the British imagination and to reposition themselves within British society.

The 1904 Expedition, though ultimately military in nature, was established, like the 1897 Benin Expedition, as a political mission to resolve trade concerns. It was also associated with the 'Great Game' – a sometimes clandestine series of political operations, largely taking place in Central Asia, which sought to covertly consolidate British global hegemony. Simultaneously, Whitehall, in efforts to protect the jewel in the imperial crown, was looking more and more to the protection of India's borders from another great empire – Russia. In 1863 1,700 miles of desert and mountains separated Russia and

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<sup>24</sup> Captain Stopford donated a Lama's robe collected during a skirmish in 1888 in Sikkim (NMS A.1890.416). Collections of weapons made by Surgeon General Biddie (NMS A.1911.1) and Lieutenant Colonel Graves (NMS A.1920.412), include Himalayan weapons, but are from officers who do not appear to have been stationed anywhere near the Himalayas. Instead they were collecting weapons from across India whilst based elsewhere on the subcontinent.

British India, but by 1883 this distance had halved.<sup>25</sup> The possibility of Russian expansion into Tibet was a major concern for the British government, who saw Tibet as the ideal buffer state between the two great empires. By the late nineteenth century there was a perceived threat of a Russian-Tibetan alliance, and as the clandestine political activities of the Great Game reached their zenith, this was considered ample reason for a militarily backed political force to enter Tibetan territory. Opening Tibet to British trading interests, it was thought, would protect Tibet and, in turn, protect the British Empire and her varied interests.<sup>26</sup>

For the officers involved in the 1904 Expedition, and interested parties watching from India and Britain, this was not just about trade or protection of the Empire's assets. Tibet was constructed as the last great unknown on the world map and Britain was now presented with the opportunity to 'open up' this last closed space.<sup>27</sup> The world was shrinking and the time of the adventuring hero of the Great Game was nearly over; once Tibet was 'opened' there would be few opportunities to enter unexplored territory or be the first to cross into a cartographical blank space. Of course, Tibet was not closed in the way that Lord Curzon, Francis Younghusband or any of the other advocates of British military forward policy proposed. The Himalayas were not a barrier to trade; in fact a well-established trade route operated from Lhasa to Kalimpong

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<sup>25</sup> Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 33.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed account of the 1904 Expedition see Allen, *Duels in the Snow*. For further information on the Great Game and Anglo-Russian relations at the time see Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*.

<sup>27</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, by this time in fact only the area around Lhasa was completely unknown, cartographically speaking. The earlier maps taken to Sikkim by Thomson, which showed Tibet as a blank space, had been largely filled in.

but the British had been unable to insert themselves into it.<sup>28</sup> Accounts from as early as the eighteenth century suggested that Tartars, Chinese, Muscovites, Armenians, Kashmiris and Nepalese were all established in Lhasa as merchants.<sup>29</sup> In a typical response of imperial self-assurance, the British refused to accept that complex trade concerns could be happily operating without the involvement of a superior western administration. Additionally, although many India Pandits had undertaken extensive survey work within Tibet, until a 'proper' British force had gained access to Tibetan territory such knowledge was largely side-lined.<sup>30</sup>

The 1904 Expedition was therefore being constructed imperially, geographically and, as we will see later in this chapter, personally. It highlighted concerns relating to Indian territorial security, trade and foreign policy, intellectual concerns about knowledge production relating to both geography and culture, and personal concerns relating to exploration, travel, adventure and societal status. Such constructions were influential on the collection of objects during the 1904 Expedition, and their further interpretation once returned to Britain.

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<sup>28</sup> Stewart, *Journeys to Empire*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, 8.

<sup>30</sup> This echoed British colonial attitudes all over the world, including far closer to home, as Amiria Henare notes: during a tour of the Scottish highlands in the late eighteenth century the botanist Joseph Banks wrote of 'discovering' an unknown land, which had in fact been inhabited for thousands of years by other British (Scottish) people. Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange*, 55.

### 3.4 Officers and gentlemen: the military persona

Military collectors formed a tight-knit community. Of the thirty-four collectors examined who were military personnel, all were obviously male, although several important donors of collections to museums were female.<sup>31</sup> All were officers and came from an upper-middle class background, usually with a family history associated with the Indian army, and a comparable series of external influences, such as education, social activities and acquaintances, affecting the lens through which they viewed Tibetan culture. These views were manifested in the collected objects brought to Scotland following the 1904 Expedition.<sup>32</sup>

It is important to acknowledge the potential impact that such a narrow collector demographic could have on collecting processes. Brian Durrans has noted that in nineteenth century India there was an almost total preoccupation amongst collectors with things made or used by men, and that loot relating to warfare constituted the most popular objects brought back from the sub-continent in the earlier part of the century.<sup>33</sup> Little had changed by the latter half of the nineteenth century. Although the collection of things made by or for women had increased, as Durrans suggests, they remained largely confined to the domestic environment.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Female relatives donated at least three collections. These thirty-four collectors include military personnel not involved in the 1904 Expedition.

<sup>32</sup> Spiers notes that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries twenty-five percent of officers were gentry, and another twenty percent had a family background of military service, both military officers and their families to deep held British values and longstanding tradition. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, 94-5.

<sup>33</sup> Durrans, "Collecting in British India", 255.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. The collection of domestic items will be discussed in the next chapter. The positioning of Tibetan material culture in the domestic environment will form part of the discussion of the Bailey collection, later in this chapter.

Distinctions between Scottish and English identities were less pronounced within the military context, in contrast to the theological and organisational distinctions visible between Scottish and English missionaries. Tom Devine argues that over time middle class Scots (the basis of the military's officer class) had adapted to the Union with England, rather than assimilated or fought against it. They had therefore retained their Scottish national identity whilst also perceiving themselves as equals of their English peers within the imperial context.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, there was no need to make English-Scottish distinctions and within the military context this equality was especially apparent. For most officers, their loyalties were tied to their regiment rather than their nation.<sup>36</sup>

An assessment of the regional background of officers shows that Scotland provided as many officers as the Home Counties, and significantly more than Northern England. Scots were particularly prominent as Generals and Colonels.<sup>37</sup> These statistics certainly suggest that Scots as a group held notable positions within the officer class and were not considered beneath their English counterparts within military hierarchy.

Military 'character' was embedded within British Victorian, and later Edwardian, society at a time when a reshaping of social patterns in Britain was occurring. At the turn of the twentieth century Britain became more urbanised and the position of the landed classes shifted. While the idea of the gentleman

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<sup>35</sup> Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000*, 285-290.

<sup>36</sup> Stuart Allan, Senior Curator of Military History at NMS, email to author 13/04/2011. Allan suggests that Scottish/English divisions were of little importance to officers serving within the Empire, when compared with Regimental divisions/loyalties.

<sup>37</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, 98.

had its basis in the landed gentry, the process of urbanisation moved the concept onto the officer who 'was born to rule and to rule well, not because of his position in landed society, but because of his inborn character'.<sup>38</sup> This notion of 'character' became fundamental to the actions of officers across the Empire.

'Character' was also central to the 1904 Expedition. McKay offers an assessment of the character of the later 'Cadre' officers as 'an elite order of imperial officials...their distinct character was no accident. It was the result of a deliberate training process designed to produce a particular type of individual, one regarded by the Raj as ideal for service on the frontier.'<sup>39</sup> Even in 1903, as the 1904 Expedition force was being formed, such distinctions of character were being made. One soldier who accompanied the 1904 Expedition noted that 'The Captain rejected any man whom he considered in any way unfit. No third class shots and no man who had been tried by court martial was to be taken on any account'.<sup>40</sup>

Those shared experiences that developed the military 'character' included early education, training, previous colonial service and family connections to the army, as well as class status. Of the seven collectors identified in this study as having been present in Tibet in 1903-1904, four had a

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<sup>38</sup> Carrington, "Officers, Gentlemen and Thieves", 95.

<sup>39</sup> McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, 77. By 'cadre', McKay refers those officers who went on to administer Tibetan-British relations after the 1904 Expedition departed Tibetan territory in the autumn of 1904. These were men in civil service roles, but many had previously held military posts.

<sup>40</sup> Diary of Private H.A. Sampson, 'From Lepong to Lhasa', 14/05/1904, [NAM 8005-149], National Army Museum Archives.



family history of service within the Indian army, all at high ranks.<sup>41</sup> In the case of Lieutenant Eric Bailey and Captain J.F.C Dalmahoy, the connection went back more than two generations.

### **3.5 Masculinity and the Female Touch: Gender and Military**

#### **Collecting**

The military environment of the early twentieth century was one of men and a particular understanding of masculinity. The concept of military 'character', shaped in part by the promotion of Christian, masculine virtues, established a framework for the military mind-set that was to prove a significant influence on both the collection and interpretation of objects from the 1904 Expedition.

Aggressive British military expansion became more prominent towards the end of the nineteenth century, when military practices began to pervade the social life of Britain's population, through organisations such as the Church Lad's Brigade and the Salvation Army.<sup>42</sup> However, it also encroached on schooling, specifically that of the well to do, through the foundations of the public school system and the army's officer class. This system revolved around what J.A. Mangan describes as 'anti-intellectualism', whereby public school boys were conditioned to strive for athleticism over intellectualism. In short, 'character was cultivated; brains were disparaged'.<sup>43</sup> Such attitudes defined many aspects of the 1904 Expedition, where Colonel Younghusband, though

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<sup>41</sup> See Appendix A for bibliographies of most of the officers mentioned in this chapter. There are thirty-four military collectors in total, with seven being positively identified as relating to the 1904 Expedition.

<sup>42</sup> Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 189.

<sup>43</sup> Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, 106-7.

intelligent, was revered by his men for being a man of action, in opposition to General Macdonald, the leader of the military escort, who was viewed as a lapdog for unquestionably obeying Whitehall's orders and being uneasy in the face of unnecessary risk.

One pastime particularly reflective of the attributes of anti-intellectualism was hunting. Warfare, the hunting of animals and the collecting of objects were all linked and John MacKenzie suggests that the act of hunting was the most perfect expression of global dominance in the late nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> It required all the attributes of manly character, such as courage, endurance, sportsmanship and resourcefulness. This explicit show of imperial male character, coupled with the scientific, scholarly aspects of zoological collection (also very much a male domain), made hunting a supreme pastime in the Victorian and early Edwardian age.<sup>45</sup>

Eric Bailey's love of hunting was well known to the 1904 Expedition force. Although large collections of objects exist in both NMS and the National Museums Liverpool, these are insignificant by comparison with his natural history collections, which comprise of hundreds of butterflies, mammals, birds and insects, as well as an extensive botany collection.<sup>46</sup>

Hunting was not, however, just about the kill. As noted above Bailey, like many other officers in colonial outposts, sent the skins and horns of his animals

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<sup>44</sup> MacKenzie, "The Imperial Pioneer and Hunter and the British Masculine Stereotype in Late Victorian and Edwardian Times", 179.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Bailey's butterflies are in the Natural History Museum London and the Natural History Museum New York. Zoological specimens are in the National Museums Scotland as well as the previously mentioned institutions. Plant specimens are in both the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, London and the Royal Botanical Gardens, Edinburgh. It is likely that other animal specimens exist in other museums.

back to London and Edinburgh for mounting and display within the family home or the officers' mess, in parallel with the weapons, curios and other collected items to be displayed domestically as trophies and souvenirs.

The leap from the collection and display of animal specimens to material culture was both short and logical. The combination of ethnography and natural history had a lengthy chronology and was characteristic of the age - a sweeping up of exotic taxonomies, both human and zoological.<sup>47</sup> Horns and heads from exotic locations, especially rare examples or new species, offered the hunter a scientific and adventurous role, which could also echo the desire for immortality reflected in the presentation of collections of material culture to museums.<sup>48</sup> New species could be named after their finder, making their physical attachment to the find even greater than was possible with material things. Additionally, the physical collection of animals could be even more dangerous and daring than the collection of objects, amplifying the masculinity of the military character.<sup>49</sup> Hunting was one of many influences brought from Britain into the colonial world and adapted to the needs of the British in differing situations. It was particularly important in the Tibetan context because the natural history of Tibet was as unknown as the cultural history, and as energetically discussed and appraised in journals, books and press both during and after the 1904 Expedition.

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<sup>47</sup> MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature*, 31.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>49</sup> For example, the Indian army pastime of pig-sticking was known to be rather treacherous and participants were often injured. See Mangan and McKenzie "Pig sticking is the Greatest Fun", 97-119.

The collection of weapons is often assumed to be symbolic of European masculine dominance and imperial superiority. Their widespread display, often formalised in rows or groups, throughout a variety of western architectural spaces, from the officers' mess in India to domestic interiors in Edinburgh, was symbolic of the corresponding ordering of colonial peoples. The collection and display of weapons by the victor (the British), especially those taken from the battlefield, was a statement about colonial superiority, more than an understanding of colonial material culture.<sup>50</sup> In other words, it was a political act.

Yet in reality, the high number of weapons and items of warfare associated with the 1904 Expedition may in fact be indicative of the spatial and temporal moment of collection, rather than a pattern of collection that can be characterised as specifically 'male'. Had female collectors had access to the 1904 Expedition route and the places from which officers collected, would they have made noticeably different collecting choices? I would argue that, judging by the ways in which women actively engaged in the display and interpretation of Expedition material (discussed later in this chapter), the answer is most probably no.

Weapons taken in battle can also be categorised as souvenirs, if we understand a souvenir, as noted in Chapter One, to be an object arising directly out of the immediate experience of the possessor.<sup>51</sup> Few experiences were likely to be more immediate (or intimate) than the stripping of bodies on the

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 71.

<sup>51</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 147.

battlefield and the taking of their means of defence.<sup>52</sup> The collection of weapons was therefore representative of several concerns, including the aggressive expansion of the British Empire, the influence of imperial ideologies on military 'character' and broader societal concerns regarding male and female identities.

These ideals, regarding the role and demeanour of a soldier, and the nature of British masculinity, were deeply embedded in both the collection and production of knowledge and the collection of things: collecting during active conflict was not a role women were able to fulfil. However, women were fundamental to the future 'life' of many military collections, including several examined in this chapter. Most of the men involved in the 1904 Expedition went on to have long lasting military careers, and their collections were deposited with mothers, sisters and sometimes wives, back in Britain. These women invested themselves in these collections in different ways; Bailey's mother bestowed a great deal of physical and intellectual energy on the collection, which will be discussed in more detail below. The sister of Captain J.F.C. Dalmahoy appears to have merely stored the collection for safekeeping until the death of her brother in 1923, after which time she organised its transfer to the RSM. Women were not only caretakers; they were active parts of a Scottish network mirroring the networks men established within regiments or during campaigns. When Florence Bailey opened her house so that visitors might see her son's Tibetan collection, an important section of those visitors were his

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<sup>52</sup> As Harris notes, following a military incursion, the bodies of Tibetans were deemed a legitimate source for the trophies of war, because the Tibetans had willingly engaged British forces. Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 58.

colleagues from the 1904 Expedition and their families. The Dalmahoy ladies made several visits to the Bailey house,<sup>53</sup> and Florence Bailey was acquainted with Mrs Campbell, whose son worked with Eric in Gyantse after the 1904 Expedition. Additionally, Major Ottley, Eric Bailey's commander during the 1904 Expedition, had sold his collection of Tibetan objects to the RSM in 1906, which Eric Bailey's parents went to see on March 20<sup>th</sup> that year. In 1908, Captain Young-Cooke and his sister also visited the Bailey family home to see the collection,<sup>54</sup> showing that a 'cadre' of families existed in Edinburgh, reflecting the relations between their children in Tibet.<sup>55</sup>

The RSM accession registers are filled with female donors known only as 'Miss x' or 'Mrs y' with no further identifying clues. These records sometimes hint that fathers, brothers and husbands were the original collectors of donations and bequests, but their own roles as long-term custodians are largely unacknowledged.<sup>56</sup> Not all these women looked after collections with a military connection, but the nomadic nature of a role within the army meant that many men left objects in the care of families at home. This role was not always passive, as the case study of Florence Bailey shows. Sometimes it was these

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<sup>53</sup> *Diaries of Florence Bailey*, 15/03/1905 and 07/04/1908, [Mss/EUR/F157/103-106], Bailey Family Papers. These were visits by Mrs Dalmahoy and her daughters. Her son John was an acquaintance of Bailey's, also mentioned in letters to his parents (*Letters from Eric Bailey to his Parents*, [Mss EUR/F157/164], Bailey Family Papers). A Miss Dalmahoy, most likely one of the unmarried sisters of J.F.C. Dalmahoy, gave twenty-five Tibetan objects to the RSM in 1927, mostly weapons from the 1904 Expedition.

<sup>54</sup> Captain Cooke-Young was one of the few British soldiers injured in the 1904 Expedition, having been attacked by a monk in Lhasa in August 1904 and seriously wounded. Young was part of the Indian Medical Service, and on his return to Britain worked for a military hospital in London.

<sup>55</sup> Just as McKay uses the term cadre to represent the shared ambitions and characteristics of the men who worked in Tibet from 1904-1947, I would suggest that their families shared similar relationships in Britain.

<sup>56</sup> For example, both Mrs Maclean and Miss Bell appear to have been custodians of their husband's and brother's respective Tibetan collections.

later 'curators' of military collections who took a far greater interest in them than the men who collected them in the first place. Without Florence Bailey's intervention, for example, it is possible that Eric Bailey's relationship with the RSM would have been quite different, and far less advantageous for the collector, showing the impact that female agency had on these seemingly inherently male collections. Therefore, whilst women were absent from the act of collecting in the military context, they were a crucial part of the processes by which these collections became known. They directed their entry into museums, retained connections to provenance and made sure collections remained cohesive groups of material, activities which remain vital contributions to our knowledge of Tibetan material culture today.

The nature of the armed forces as an organisation makes it unsurprising that officers retained close personal ties, and that their families maintained those ties with other military families, even in their absence. These networks, operating outside of formal civil or military records, often maintained by female family members, were vital to the continual entrenchment of ideas of class, race, gender, 'foreignness' and the role of 'foreign' material culture: concepts that formed the backbone of both military codes of practice and imperial ideologies. Though often less visible than male networks, female agency nevertheless brought like-minded individuals, with the additional shared experiences of their male relatives, together to share ideas and understandings about Tibet.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> C.f. Yallop, *Magpies, Squirrels and Thieves*, 162.

### 3.6 The 1904 Expedition: The role of objects

Like the 'sharks at Srirangpatam' over a hundred years earlier,<sup>58</sup> looting during the 1904 Expedition was 'institutionalised and symptomatic'.<sup>59</sup> The 1904 Expedition opened up new forms of Tibetan material culture to collectors, new ways to collect it, and new spaces for the production of knowledge about Tibet. Together, these processes reshaped the construction of Tibet in the British imagination, through the lens of military imperialism. However, this came into tension with shifting political and social attitudes of the Edwardian age. The place of 'loot' was being rearticulated within the developing imperial 'defeatist policy', which was replacing late nineteenth century (often violent) 'forward policy'.<sup>60</sup> By 1904 'loot' was no longer an easily defined term, nor a category that was always easy to come to terms with. Both Michael Carrington and Tim Myatt have focused considerable energy on the question of whether or not material from the 1904 Expedition should be categorised as 'loot', both in historical and contemporary contexts, and how such distinctions were made.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Buddle, "What Sharks they are: Sunset at Srirangapatam 1799", 119-125.

<sup>59</sup> Carrington has placed the institutionalisation of looting at the heart of late nineteenth and early twentieth century imperial concerns regarding the acquisition of Tibetan material culture during the 1904 Expedition. More recently, Tim Myatt has attempted to challenge this view but his evidence, in my opinion, appears to endorse rather than refute Carrington's claim. Carrington, "Officers, Gentlemen and Thieves", 81-82. Myatt, "Trinkets, Temples and Treasures", 123-153.

<sup>60</sup> Ronald Hyam notes that, by the end of the nineteenth century, Whitehall was concerned by the ever-advancing nature of the British Empire, and many within government wanted to focus on the defence of those areas already under the British flag, rather than continual imperial expansion. This was known as 'defeatist policy' and was in direct tension with the 'forward policy' for aggressive imperial expansion that would define the engineers of the 1904 Expedition: Colonel Younghusband and Lord Curzon. Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 257-259.

<sup>61</sup> Both Carrington and Myatt, who are two of a small number of researchers who have examined the objects associated with the 1904 Expedition, have focused largely on this question, rather than seeking to interpret the role of individual objects and the processes through which they accrued a 'history' after the 1904 Expedition, which is my focus here. (Also see Harris (*The Museum on the Roof of the World*), and Lindsay Zamponi (PhD, forthcoming).



In this study I accept that not only was looting an embedded practice within the 1904 Expedition, but that officers who took part in such activities did so knowingly. I will therefore instead focus my study on how looted artefacts were given specific roles by their collectors and examine the processes through which they accrued a 'history' after the 1904 Expedition. The biographies of objects and people reveal how objects performed a service to both military imperialism and individual military officers' personal expectations. Through an analysis of these objects and their accompanying archival sources, I will reveal both personal experiences and violent imperial practices alike.

### **3.6.1 The 1904 Expedition: looting**

Both the collection and production of knowledge advanced with the expansion of the Empire. Yet due to newly developing codes of moral behaviour, the early twentieth century saw the constraint of the physical power needed to enact such processes.<sup>62</sup> In Britain, imperial ideologies were causing the reconsideration of the place of looting as a legitimate activity within military practice, but in India many older Victorian ideals and values, that gave looting a legitimate role within military activity, were still being harboured.<sup>63</sup> Although Whitehall had been attempting to reformulate military codes of conduct, the social context in which these men operated, and the influences of both their home life and military careers in India, were often more influential on their behaviour than orders issued from London.

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<sup>62</sup> Carrington, "Officers, Gentlemen and Thieves", 82.

<sup>63</sup> Myatt, "Trinkets, Temples and Treasures", 127.

Officers collected opportunistically. They went to Tibet with the knowledge that 'loot' was available but with no predetermined sense of what it was they might actually take away with them.<sup>64</sup> It was clear that Tibetan artefacts would have a potentially high monetary value. For example, many pieces associated with the 1904 Expedition are missing semi-precious stones, suggesting these were removed for separate sale because they had discernable values.<sup>65</sup> Lieutenant W.G.T Currie had specific complaints about the limitations on a soldier's baggage, a possible reason why such removals occurred.<sup>66</sup> Loot acquired during the early stages of the 1904 Expedition, when knowledge of what material culture would be available to British forces was more limited, held significance for officers most clearly through its potential monetary value.<sup>67</sup> As the 1904 Expedition progressed into Tibetan territory, the western market for Tibetan artefacts was developed further. Enthusiasm for collecting amongst officers was fuelled by news that London auction houses were paying substantial sums for objects that had made their way back to the capital.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> For example, in a letter from Lieutenant W.G.T Currie dated 21/06/1904: 'I have got an excellent Ghourka Syce (groom) who I am relying on to get loot'. W.G.T. Currie of Christleton, Chester. Contemporary (1904) typed copies of private letters home. [The original letters have not survived]. Private collection of Roger Phillip Croston of Christleton, Chester. Clare Harris also notes the influence of Waddell's (1894) publication in the build-up of anticipation of what treasures the 1904 Expedition would uncover in Tibet. Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 64.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>66</sup> In later letters, Currie complains that the weight limit of their packs (eighty pounds) meant only small items could realistically be collected. W.G.T Currie, Private collection of Roger Phillip Croston.

<sup>67</sup> For example, General Macdonald's collection includes a brass sculpture of a flaming jewel on a lotus base (Marischal 60951), which is missing most of its semi-precious stone settings. This was a common sight as many soldiers attempted to prise the stones from the objects, rather than take the whole item.

<sup>68</sup> Allen, *Duels in the Snow*, 287 and Myatt, "Trinkets, Temples and Treasures", 125.

The plunder of monastic sites during the 1904 Expedition opened new, previously unavailable, avenues of collecting. However, although they were the first group of British imperial agents to enter the Tibetan capital, the British marched along a clearly defined and recorded route that only took them into the south and central areas of the country, along well-established pathways. Whilst missionaries had never gained entry to the heart of Tibetan territory, their work along many of its frontiers meant that missionary collections included material from southern, western and eastern Tibetan communities, all of whom exhibited differing decorative and cultural styles to their material goods. So whilst the violent strategies that enabled looting made new forms of Tibetan material culture available to western collectors, the same strategies constricted access through the following of specific routes accessible to a large military convoy, thereby homogenising Tibetan material culture further through the limited provenance of the artefacts collected.

### **3.6.2 The 1904 Expedition: loot as trophy and souvenir**

Aside from monetary gain, for many military personnel collecting on any battleground provided trophies, not only as proof of British imperial superiority, but as evidence of personal experience. In the latter sense, trophies were souvenirs, bearing little difference to those collected by tourists in Darjeeling; the distinction being their method of collection.<sup>69</sup> Understanding 'trophies' in a wider societal sense gives us a better appreciation of their place as pieces of foreign material culture in Britain *after* the 1904 Expedition ended, and

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<sup>69</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 147.

artefacts began another stage in their life history.<sup>70</sup> The more usual understanding of trophy, as evidence of imperial superiority and British domination of the 'Other',<sup>71</sup> was, as I will show, as important to the individual officer as to the military establishment at large. Eric Bailey collected many weapons off the battlefield, although these were re-taken by Tibetan forces before reaching India.<sup>72</sup> As he noted in a letter to his father, 'Most of the loot we sent down from Lhasa was stolen... some things have turned up here [Ambala] but no guns or spears'. Bailey's description shows that loot taken in battle was not considered 'stolen' but assumed to be a legitimate form of trophy or souvenir. Only when Tibetans 'reclaimed' Bailey's collected objects during the march home, after the signing of a peace-treaty, did it become an illegitimate act. 'Loot' and what items were considered legitimate acquisitions through the looting process, therefore, meant different things in different contexts. Major Ottley took items from the bodies of dead Tibetan soldiers at Guru and Captain J.F.C. Dalmahoy's collection included two very elaborate quivers and arrows, most likely taken from a high ranking Tibetan soldier after a battle (Figure 19).<sup>73</sup> These items were not only mementos of a soldier's experience, but importantly represented the glory of the collector who took

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<sup>70</sup> The long term position of these objects within Britain, particularly their place in domestic settings, has only recently been tackled, despite being fundamental to our historic construction of Tibetan culture in Britain. Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 71-77.

<sup>71</sup> Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 71.

<sup>72</sup> *Letter from Bailey to his father*, 18/01/1905, [Ms EUR/F157/165], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>73</sup> Ottley took a *gau* (NMS A.1905.355) from a dead Tibetan and Dalmahoy's collection consists of several very ornate and well-made items of warfare, including a bow case, quiver and arrows (NMS A.1927.321-322). He also acquired a large *thangka* (NMS A.1927.317), which he notes as being taken from the tent of a Tibetan general, suggesting the looting of a Tibetan camp after a battle during which he was able to acquire these items. There are many other examples; Clare Harris notes the taking of *gau* from monks during battle and the stripping of bodies by officers and 'camp followers' after the battle at Guru. Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 58.

them. In other words, an officer was entitled to such gains, which, through the lens of military imperialism were not stolen 'loot' but legitimate prize.



Figure 19: Detail of leather quiver, Captain Dalmahoy collection. © National Museums Scotland.

This is one of two quivers with exquisite painted detail and gilded metal fittings. This level of craftsmanship suggests the piece was owned by a high-ranking Tibetan. Another piece in Dalmahoy's collection was noted as coming from 'a Tibetan General'. This piece may have come from the same individual.<sup>74</sup>

### 3.6.3 The 1904 Expedition: authenticating new constructions of Tibetan culture in the West

Objects, however, were not just souvenirs or trophies in this military context, but at various times acted as referents against which one's own cultural traditions could be compared. Objects taken on the battlefield demonstrated western dominance in terms of industrial capability and the advanced design and manufacture of weapons. The removal of Tibetan material culture from monasteries highlighted western authority over what could and could not be

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<sup>74</sup> Quiver (NMS A.1927.322). Other quivers in Scottish museums with known associations to 1904 are far plainer and often have thick stitching, rather than the metal rivets seen on Dalmahoy's examples.

called 'art' when placed in juxtaposition to western examples. As officers of the 1904 Expedition developed a sense of what Tibetan 'art' was, the objects they chose to leave behind were equally important in forming a western perception of Tibetan material culture. As noted, the place of Tibetan material culture in the western understanding of 'art' was, to a large extent, created as a result of the massive scale of collecting, particularly within monasteries, and the different types of material that were available for collection due to the nature of the encounter. Harris argues that the siege of Gyantse was the moment in which such aestheticised attitudes began to be cultivated, as the force besieged the town and had time to reflect on objects acquired up to that point. When the fort was finally breached, officers entered it with clear ideas of what items they were looking for, compared to earlier more opportunistic collecting.<sup>75</sup>

Missionaries viewed the authenticity of their collections as deriving from personal contact with Tibetans and their remoteness from other European communities. This made them authorities on local material culture by default and made their collections about authentic lived experiences. Military collectors constructed 'authentic' Tibetan collections geographically: collecting directly from the 'source' (the monastery, the fort or just within Tibetan territory itself).<sup>76</sup> Authenticity for military collectors was tied more to a desire for prestige (the first to reach Lhasa etc.) than the building of relations that were somehow reciprocal in nature.

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<sup>75</sup> Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 60-63.

<sup>76</sup> Refer to 'imagined' Tibet, (Introduction, section 1.2.1, 'Real' and 'imagined': **The British Empire and the construction of Tibet**: 27), in relation to the work of the Indian Survey, the Royal Geographical Society and the general scramble for knowledge. The epistemological spaces such institutions inhabited were strongly tied to the military, through their workforce and interested parties.

However, a growing level of scholarly interest as the force progressed also reshaped collecting practices to some degree. By appointing a representative for the British Museum to the force and providing him with a budget, the British government were essentially sanctioning collecting as an activity for the military to undertake, though not necessarily in the manner it eventually occurred.<sup>77</sup> European interest in finding 'pure Buddhism' and the role of Orientalist scholarship in the construction of western understandings of Tibet had reached an impasse, due to the lack of available primary source material in Britain. Therefore one of the key objectives for L.A. Waddell was the collection of texts for British libraries, which were concurrently constructing 'real' Buddhism far from Tibetan and Indian territory.

Waddell amassed over 2,000 volumes, which formed the bulk of his 'official' collection, later sent to Britain and distributed amongst leading libraries and museums.<sup>78</sup> Waddell's official title on the 1904 Expedition was 'P.M.O of Force and Antiquarian Collector of Buddhist Knowledge and Curios for the British Museum'.<sup>79</sup> His remit, then, was the collection of both tangible artefacts and a less tangible 'knowledge' regarding the objects and the practices in which they were used. British forces were therefore demarcating which objects were Buddhist and which were not. Through western domination of such categorisations vernacular or 'popular' Buddhist practices, which took place outside the monastic setting, were extracted from representations of Tibetan

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<sup>77</sup> Waddell was appointed due to his knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan language. Refer to Introduction, section 1.2.3, 'Knowing' Tibet: constructing Tibet through the process of collecting: 39.

<sup>78</sup> Carrington, "Officers, Gentlemen and Thieves", 104.

<sup>79</sup> P.M.O stands for Principal Medical Officer, which was the main capacity in which Waddell was employed.

Buddhism. Only the past, with its purity of knowledge, could be authenticated in western, scholarly eyes. Yet even Waddell, the knowledgeable scholar who worked within anthropological methodologies, was apparently quite happy to follow his fellow officers in the looting of monastic sites, and was seen by many other officers as one of the worst offenders.<sup>80</sup> His later disposal of the collection between several British institutions was, according to Myatt, no less indiscriminate and unscholarly than those of his less academically minded colleagues.<sup>81</sup>

The evidence therefore suggests that, certainly during the early stages of the 1904 Expedition, a sense of scholarly enlightenment was perhaps lacking. Even those individuals identified as having a more academic sense of purpose often related to their Tibetan collections in a variety of ways, dependent on circumstance.

However, after the 1904 Expedition ended there is evidence that some collectors examined in this thesis (and many across the 1904 Expedition as a whole), did develop a genuine interest in a variety of European and non-European cultures, particularly material culture. I suggest that whilst some had previously cultivated such interests, such as Major N.V.L. Rybot, for others the 1904 Expedition was a catalyst for scholarly research. E.H.C Walsh, Assistant Political Officer to the mission, would become heavily involved in the

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<sup>80</sup> Because his 'collection' was officially sanctioned, Waddell was often able to get first pick of items that were considered fair 'prize', though these circumstances of collection were certainly dubious. Allen, *Duels in the Snow*, 145.

<sup>81</sup> Myatt notes that when the collection was divided between Britain's leading museums and universities and the India Office, volumes of the same work were not kept together. Additionally, Waddell did not seem to take into account the material those institutions already had when organizing the dispersal of objects and books. Myatt, "Trinkets, Temples and Treasures", 131.



establishment of the Patna Museum, including the 'discovery' of one of its most important sculptural pieces, the *Didarganj Yaksi* (an incident that I will return to later).<sup>82</sup> Eric Bailey's interest in Tibetan material culture was to grow in parallel with his engagement with Tibet (through the Political Service), and Major Rybot's particular way of collecting in Tibet, which included detailed studies of some of the objects he acquired, was likely influenced by his life-long interest in history and archaeology.<sup>83</sup> Even the military leader of the 1904 Expedition, General Macdonald, took a long-term interest in his collection, though he did not actively pursue scholarly ambitions. The documentation accompanying Macdonald's collection, bequeathed to the Marischal Museum in Aberdeen, shows that he had been aware of the cultural significance of the objects he collected and had made sure that documentation recounting this information remained with the collection throughout his lifetime.<sup>84</sup>

Objects clearly had a wider role, beyond authenticators of personal experience or trophies of war. The 1904 Expedition, on the one hand, seemed to debunk certain imaginatively constructed ideas about Tibet, such as the streets being paved with gold, or that some higher truth existed in the

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<sup>82</sup> See Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, 3-6. Davis opens with an account of E.H.C. Walsh, who in 1917 removed the *Didarganj Yaksi* sculpture from an Indian village, where it had been found and reinstated as an object of worship, for 'preservation' as a specimen in the Patna museum. This action is symbolic of early twentieth century British attitudes towards archaeological and other specimens of 'art history' and their placement within a static, historical, western-driven artistic hierarchy.

<sup>83</sup> Rybot had an interest in the history of the Island of Jersey, where he was born. When he retired in 1920 he put all his energies into the *Société Jersiaise*, of which he was president, and wrote many books on the Island's archaeology, geography and history. He was also elected a member of the Society of Antiquaries in London. Today he is remembered as an important figure in Jersey's modern history and in the study of the Island's long and illustrious past. With thanks to Gareth Syvret, *Société Jersiaise*, for information on Rybot. Email to author, 30/11/2012.

<sup>84</sup> Macdonald had handwritten individual descriptive labels for each piece, which explained both their form and function.

monasteries of the Tibetan capital, waiting for a superior European force to uncover it.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, the view of Tibetan Buddhism as grotesque and superstitious was amplified, particularly by the influx of certain types of objects into Britain, such as those made of human bone, sculptures of deities that were deemed monstrous or related to 'devil worship', and an increase in already known forms of objects associated with 'superstitious' practices of degenerate Tibetan Buddhism such as *gau*, *phurba* (ceremonial dagger) and *dril-bu* (bell).<sup>86</sup> Even as these objects were given the new title of 'art', they continued to be linked to ideas of which British scholars remained weary.

The 1904 Expedition brought out two seemingly contrasting sets of intentions and desires. The desire to physically open up Tibet to British imperial interests through conflict was juxtaposed with the seemingly more sedate opportunity to uncover the 'truth' about Tibet through scholarly study, collection and observation. In fact, many of the men who collected Tibetan material culture during the 1904 Expedition followed both paths simultaneously, with no conscious sense of this paradox. This was, of course, symptomatic of imperial attitudes and ideas about Britain's right and ability to 'know' the rest of the world, by whatever means they felt appropriate.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> As Younghusband himself noted, it was not a 'dream city' but 'a city built by men' and 'its streets were not paved with gold, nor were its doors of pearls. The streets were indeed horribly muddy'. Younghusband, "The Geographical Results of the Tibet Mission", 490.

<sup>86</sup> These types of objects had been collected prior to 1904, but the ability of the 1904 Expedition force to collect from within monasteries, the heart of Tibetan Buddhist practice, allowed a greater variety of aesthetic styles to be seen by the public, and many objects which would not otherwise have been in any sort of public domain (in Tibet or Britain) were suddenly available for all to see.

<sup>87</sup> Refer to how Egypt was made 'knowable' in the late nineteenth century. Introduction, section 1.2.3, 'Knowing' Tibet: constructing Tibet through the process of collecting:37.

### 3.6.4 The 1904 Expedition and Tibetan Buddhism

In the Introduction, I suggested that by 1904 'Tibet' was largely synonymous with 'Tibetan Buddhism', and the construction of Tibet in the western imagination took place within this frame of understanding.<sup>88</sup> Missionaries had had intermittent access to monasteries, although not within Tibet's borders, and certainly not without the cooperation of their residents. The collection of objects from inside monasteries undertaken by the missionary H.F. Ridley was, therefore, a very different encounter from that experienced by military collectors, and both sides engaged with monasteries and their inhabitants in very different ways.

Objects looted from monasteries during the 1904 Expedition typified the contradiction discussed in the previous section: British officers were entering Tibetan monasteries for the first time, literally opening new doors to knowledge about Tibet as a country, Tibetans as a people, and monasteries as the houses of Tibetan Buddhist knowledge. But in order to access this knowledge in both its intellectual and material form, force was necessary because of the resistance by monks who lived there and guarded Tibet's physical treasures. Approximately 280 objects relating to the 1904 Expedition can be identified in Scottish collections, out of a total of 400 objects collected by military personnel. Of these, seventy can be attributed to monasteries, and most are likely to have been looted.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Refer to Introduction, section 1.3.3, Britain and the 'discovery' of Tibetan Buddhism: 52.

<sup>89</sup> See appendix F, which breaks down objects collected by military personnel by type. This categorisation is based on the RSM's early twentieth century card catalogue system, which was not in use in 1904 but offers a systematic approach to breaking down the collection.

An important outcome of the 1904 Expedition was the cementing of the image of Tibetan monks, already partly formed by missionary accounts and travel narratives but now verified by military officers 'on the spot'. Waddell's widely read book of 1894, based on research in Darjeeling, presented Tibetan Buddhism in a stereotypical, derogative manner. As one of the most vehement disparagers of Tibetan Buddhism, Waddell's vision saw little improvement after 1904. An example of his continuing negativity towards Tibetan Buddhism can be seen in the following description of *Karma*:

'The ethical value of this doctrine of retribution, or *Karma*, is heavily discounted by the pious fraud which assigned such superior influence to the services of the Lama-priests, who are here credited with the power of ameliorating the destiny of sinners, even if already in hell, should their earthly relatives offer the Lama gifts and employ them to do costly rites and sacrifice for this purpose'.<sup>90</sup>

Overall, Waddell saw the practices of Tibetan Buddhist monks as 'deep-rooted devil-worship and sorcery'.<sup>91</sup> So whilst there did exist a 'religion' called Tibetan Buddhism, many of the practices that Waddell outlined as taking place within and beyond the monastic setting were in fact of a 'superstitious' nature, as examined in the previous chapter and outlined by the anthropological field book *Notes and Queries*.

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Additionally, it appears to have been influenced by the classificatory assumptions established by the 1904 Expedition, such as the separation of 'popular' and 'monastic' Buddhism and post-1904 representations of 'Tibetan Buddhist art'.

<sup>90</sup> Waddell, *Lhasa and its Mysteries*, 222.

<sup>91</sup> Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism*, xi.

Whilst Tibetan society operated within a framework the West would categorise as 'feudal', the monks and the peasantry they were said to oppress, were often bonded by familial ties and families often relied on monastic settlements for many of their physical and spiritual needs.<sup>92</sup> Yet, as Allen notes, members of the 1904 Expedition tended not to appreciate the complexity of the system, instead reading the situation as one in which the monastic orders were responsible for Tibet's position as an oppressed and backward nation,<sup>93</sup> an attitude entirely consistent with British experiences being constrained by imperial ideologies. The Dalai Lama, it was believed, as the head of this feudal and oppressive order, had refused to meet with Younghusband, *forcing* the 1904 Expedition to go to Lhasa in order to resolve Britain's concerns. For British officers, this represented the 'proof' of the misuse of monastic power.

Waddell's 1894 study of Tibetan Buddhism, as Harris observes, had placed Tibet firmly within a colonial framework of documenting the visible aspects of a culture in great detail and with great care, despite the overall attitude to that culture being overwhelmingly negative.<sup>94</sup> The discovery of new forms of Tibetan material culture through the 1904 Expedition were filtered into this framework, allowing the Empire to make them 'known' for British audiences. Ideas regarding objects' economic or aesthetic values or their academic interest were then placed in juxtaposition to the racial and cultural prejudices that existed against Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhism.

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<sup>92</sup> Carrington, "Officers, Gentlemen and Thieves", 105.

<sup>93</sup> Allen, *Duels in the Snow*, 57.

<sup>94</sup> Harris, *In the Image of Tibet*, 25.

The prejudices of the military against Tibetan Buddhism, and the monastic orders specifically, did not just stem from an abhorrence of the unknown, or racial discrimination towards non-Europeans. British understandings, or misunderstandings, of hierarchy and wealth were incompatible with Tibetan social relations, particularly in terms of monastic hierarchy.<sup>95</sup> Monasteries, and their wealth, were not 'owned' by the monks who lived in them in the way that British agents understood ownership and wealth and, as noted, the relationship between monks and the surrounding population was far more mutually conducive than the British acknowledged or accepted. In short, attitudes towards Tibetan monks were deeply influenced by the concerns embedded within imperial ideologies, namely those of class, gender, race and the relationship between 'religious' and 'secular' practices and functions. These influences established a static, ahistorical and wholly negative opinion of Tibet's monastic orders, which in turn fixed attitudes towards contemporary Tibetan Buddhism as an 'inauthentic' manifestation of a much purer and older authentic 'religion'. When Major Ottley donated a ceremonial apron made from bone, which he had acquired from Gyantse monastery, he was keen to note its provenance as 'belonging to the Abbot of the Monastery'.<sup>96</sup> Ottley therefore made the assumption that the apron was the property of the head of the monastery. This may have been a straightforward misunderstanding of the relationship between people and objects in that setting, or he may have been

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<sup>95</sup> Similar problems had occurred in India, where the British administration had attempted to shoehorn Indian systems of hierarchy into the mold of their own. See Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 41-42.

<sup>96</sup> Ceremonial bone apron (NMS A.1905.352+A-E). This bone apron is accompanied by additional pieces for wear on the arms, legs and head.

using his knowledge of such misunderstandings to inflate his own prestige and the value of his acquisitions. For Ottley the item was likely to have added significance because the man he recognised as its 'owner' was also hierarchically superior within that setting, reflecting British obsessions with both principles of ownership and principles of status, for 'others' as well as themselves.

### **3.7 Collecting during the 1904 Expedition: uncovering collector intent**

As the previous chapter demonstrated, missionaries generally gave little regard to the fate of their collections once out of their hands, and also desired less long-term personal connection to the objects themselves. In contrast, the roles that military collectors ascribed to their objects were often developed over a longer period of time and cemented connections between collector and object, rather than removing them.

Of particular significance was the fact that the Expedition force developed a systematic methodology for gathering, distributing and, ultimately, interpreting and valuing Tibetan material culture. Waddell, as Official Collector and Antiquarian to the Force, was charged with leading the Collecting Committee, whose role was to assign the most important finds to the 'official' collection and to distribute the rest amongst the members of the force.<sup>97</sup> As this committee was made up of 'experts' who were able to appraise officers'

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<sup>97</sup> Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 62.

collections, their views on the objects they presented to officers, and objects brought to them for appraisal, were highly influential on the way in which officers distinguished the purpose and value of items within their collections.<sup>98</sup> Unlike missionaries, therefore, military collectors not only became experts themselves, through the course of the 1904 Expedition, but had other scholars to help them tread the careful path towards a tasteful, aestheticised response to Tibetan material culture.

In the next section I will analyse two distinct ways in which material from the 1904 Expedition was made to perform by collectors. I am going to use the term 'prestige collecting' to describe a particular type of connection between object and collector, which relates closely to the collection of trophies discussed above. I will also look at collecting for the advancement of knowledge, examining how taking part in the 1904 Expedition influenced collectors' responses to their Tibetan collections, from a scholarly perspective.

### **3.7.1 Prestige collecting**

Collecting for prestige links ideas of trophy and souvenir hunting in the heat of battle to the later and more planned process of transferring collections to museums. Through this process, objects had the potential to become memorials

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<sup>98</sup> The influence of the Collecting Committee will be outlined in below in the case of Major Rybot (p.237) and General MacDonald (p.264). Eric Bailey also notes the dividing up of spoils at Gyantse in a letter to his father, where he notes 'They found an idol factory at the Jong and the idols were divided amongst the officers'. 16/04/1904, [Mss EUR/F157/164], Bailey Family Papers.



to their collectors and were given new meanings, based on associations created outside the Tibetan context.<sup>99</sup>

Anecdotal evidence from the 1904 Expedition suggests that the overwhelming majority of men who collected did so in this vein of prestige collecting, and it is certainly dominant within the collections now in Scottish museums.<sup>100</sup> How these men interpreted the material culture of Tibetan Buddhism (which, as noted in the introduction, became inextricably linked with the Expedition's notion of Tibetan 'art') offers an idea of the broader consensus held by those involved in the 1904 Expedition, and the relationship between collecting and the 'anti-intellectualism' of the military mind-set. As noted, military collectors generally upheld the dichotomy that missionaries had cultivated – between 'pure' Tibetan Buddhism found in monasteries and the 'superstitious' practices of many lay Tibetans.<sup>101</sup> Military interest in Tibetan 'superstition' and in collecting objects that evidenced its existence, fed into both racial prejudices and the act of prestige collecting, but had little to do with individual scholarly interests in Tibetan Buddhism.

A breakdown of the objects in Scottish museum collections known to be associated with the 1904 Expedition shows that the most popular items were weapons and objects associated with Tibetan Buddhism, found both within, and

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<sup>99</sup> Pearce, *On Collecting*, 232.

<sup>100</sup> This is based mostly on tid-bits of information regarding objects found (and methods of acquisition and general attitudes towards them) in general volumes on the 1904 Expedition and private papers. E.g. Allen, *Duels in the Snow*: 124, 224-5; Carrington, "Officers, Gentlemen and Thieves"; Myatt, "Trinkets, Temples and Treasures"; *letter from W.G.T Currie*, 21/06/1904, Private Collection of Roger Croston and *Letter from H.S. Mitchell to his sister Sylvia*, 02/06/1904, [NAM 2006-12-60-18-1], National Army Museum Archive.

<sup>101</sup> Access to monasteries could have opened up British understandings about the relationships between monasteries and the people who lived around them, but of course the nature of the 1904 Expedition focused attention elsewhere.

outside of, the monastic setting. These were objects of confrontation, taken from the battlefield, or as loot after Tibetans ‘abandoned’ their monasteries.<sup>102</sup>



Figure 20: Copper and brass ewer, Major N.V.L. Rybot collection. © National Museums Scotland.

The Ewer itself records it’s own provenance prior to Rybot’s intervention.<sup>103</sup>



Figure 21: Sculpture of the Bodhisattva Vajrasattva alongside an annotated photograph, Rybot Collection. © National Museums Scotland.

The annotations include notes from both Waddell and Rybot. The cloth mantra and wax seal adhering to the left shoulder of the sculpture in the photograph is now missing.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Several monasteries, most significantly Gyantse, were looted following their ‘abandonment’. At Gyantse the perceived treachery of the Tibetans, who had initially surrendered (an honourable act) before recapturing the Dzong (fort) and holding the British to a long siege and intense fighting, blurred the lines between prize and loot. When the Tibetans did finally retreat from the Dzong, their bold confrontation with the British was considered grounds for collecting ‘prize’. For more information on the siege of Gyantse see Landon, *The Opening of Tibet*, 253-271.

<sup>103</sup> Copper ewer (NMS A.1954.320).

They were souvenirs of specific moments, such as particular battles, places, or people. For example, Major Rybot's collection includes a copper ewer 'obtained on 23 June 1904, Niru Kangma, Tibet' (Figure 20).<sup>105</sup> For Rybot, who didn't give such specific provenance for any other objects he collected, this piece was clearly important. Furthermore, the object retains another provenance, bearing a Tibetan inscription, which translates as 'brightly shining, newly made (for or in) the gon khang (of the) Tsuglakhang (Jokhang)'.<sup>106</sup> The Jokhang refers to the temple at the centre of the Gyantse monastic complex, with the ewer likely coming from one of the chapels of the protector of the Jokhang, of which there were several.<sup>107</sup> Rybot also collected a series of sculptures from the *dzong* (fort) and monastery at Gyantse, which he allowed Waddell to examine and provide a series of notes about. Both the objects and Waddell's annotated photographs later came into the possession of the RSM (Figure 21).<sup>108</sup> However, there is no record of the inscription on the ewer being translated or recorded, suggesting that its importance to the collector was less as a piece of Tibetan cultural heritage, to be interpreted and understood within

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<sup>104</sup> Sculpture (NMS A.1954.314). Photograph: N.V.L. Rybot Accession File, Department of World Cultures, NMS Archive.

<sup>105</sup> From the description on the NMS documentation system 'Adlib' for the ewer. This description originally comes from a handwritten card, based on information supplied by Rybot fifty years after he collected the object.

<sup>106</sup> With thanks to John Clarke, Asian Department, Victoria and Albert Museum, for the translation. Email to the author 11/07/2011.

<sup>107</sup> The initial assessment of this object's provenance came courtesy of John Clarke, Victoria and Albert Museum (Email to the author 11/07/2011), who suggested it may refer to the Lhasa Jokhang. However, further discussion with Clare Harris suggests it is more likely to be the Jokhang at Gyantse, although placed within a similar context (Discussion 04/09/2013).

<sup>108</sup> Major N.V.L. Rybot donated six sculptures with corresponding annotated photographs. (NMS A.1954.311-316).

its cultural context (as the sculptures were), and more as a souvenir of the experiences of the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1904.<sup>109</sup>

The difference in approach to these sets of items evidences Harris's argument that the long siege at Gyantse was a turning point, during which the Expedition force transitioned from a state of ignorance about Tibetan material culture to one of connoisseurship and more defined collecting standards and tastes.<sup>110</sup> In other words, collecting moved from the realms of trophies, loot and the spoils of war to the collecting of art, undertaken with specific knowledge and particular 'tastes'. Rybot's sculptures fitted into the latter category, having been collected from the Palkhor Choede Monastery in Gyantse around the time of the siege. How Rybot acquired his sculptures is unknown. They may have been looted in the same manner as earlier material, even if their eventual interpretation was effected by the practices of the collecting committee, or they may have been legitimately purchased.<sup>111</sup> Rybot's differing response to these two types of items, acquired in different circumstances, highlights his progression as a collector and the specific role of prestige collecting.

Other collectors, including Ottley, Bailey and Walsh also kept records of where and when some of their items had been found or taken. The quantity of

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<sup>109</sup> On the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1904 an additional force reached Gyantse to relieve the men under siege. It appears that Rybot was part of that force. On the way (on the 23<sup>rd</sup>) they battled Tibetan forces at Kangma, where presumably the ewer was acquired. Whether Rybot ever had the inscription translated and knew of its provenance is unclear. This is the only piece he collected that has a specific collecting date associated with it. See Ottley, *With Mounted Infantry in Tibet*, 133-134.

<sup>110</sup> Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 58-63.

<sup>111</sup> There is some evidence that the monks at the Palkhor Choede sold objects to officers. Harris highlights the case of an officer called Shuttleworth who presented a book cover to the Victoria and Albert Museum with a clear commentary on the fact that it was purchased (Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 67). Landon also notes that monks were willing to sell objects from within monasteries, something he witnessed later in the Expedition. Landon, *The Opening of Tibet*, 298.

objects involved suggests taking weapons off the battlefield and sculptures from 'abandoned' monasteries was a standard part of trophy hunting. Retaining such provenance was an important part of prestige collecting, linking the collector to an important, recorded event that would elevate their status by association. Bailey's collection included a flag, taken from the Tibetan General Ledhing, at the battle over the wall at Chumishengo.<sup>112</sup> The flag was later framed, and hung in the hallway of the family home in Edinburgh, amid the weapons and animal heads he had also collected. Its placement, at the centre of the home, in such a prominent position and flanked by other markers of masculine endeavour, lent it an aura of both a trophy and as a symbol of male dominance.<sup>113</sup> Importantly, it is the only battlefield trophy in this study to retain a link to its original, Tibetan, owner. This widespread 'trophy display' of weapons, often formalised in rows or groups, throughout a variety of the Empire's architectural spaces – from the officers' mess in India to domestic interiors in Edinburgh – was a political act, representative of the way in which imperial ideologies constructed a corresponding ordering of colonial peoples. The display of Bailey's battlefield spoils followed this well-known trope for making statements about imperial superiority and domination.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Flag (NAM 41(886)). The flag is now in the collections of the National Army Museum (NAM). The NAM's records note the flag 'belonged to a General Ledhing, who was killed when both sides were firing at each other over the wall at Chumishengo. There are several holes in the flag'. NAM [Accession File NAM 41(886)], NAMA.

<sup>113</sup> *Diary of Florence Bailey*, 22/04/1905, [Mss EUR/F157/103, Bailey Family Papers. The accession file for the flag includes the note 'the flag belonged to a General Lheding, who was killed when both sides were firing at each other over the wall at Chumishengo. There are several holes in the flag'. National Army Museum Accession File [NAM 41886], National Army Museum Archive.

<sup>114</sup> For a fuller description of the trophy method of display, see, Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 71.

Mostly absent from these collections are books or writings, textiles, and personal and domestic items associated with ordinary Tibetans. Military collectors in general, and those who practiced prestige collecting in particular, had far more focused ideas about worth than their missionary counterparts, despite having a wider pool of objects to choose from. Objects with more scholarly associations, such as books, were collected by Waddell who had a particular remit for such activities. Such items do make up small contributions to some of the collections in Scottish museums, but are generally distinctive by their absence in this context.<sup>115</sup>

One object type, which appears to have deeply interested military personnel, and can be strongly linked to prestige collecting, was the *gau*. Twenty-two *gau* in Scottish museum collections come from the 1904 Expedition. As a class of object, they received a considerable amount of attention from the 1904 Expedition force, especially during the battle at Guru where, it was believed, British forces proved that Tibetan prayer was no match for western industrial might. At Guru Tibetans were shot down as they walked away from the battlefield, believing they could escape unharmed. Waddell later questioned prisoners and surmised that the lamas had led their men to believe the amulets they were given would make them impervious to bullets – accounting for why Tibetan soldiers carried *gau* and failed to run away (Figure 22).<sup>116</sup> Perceval Landon, correspondent for *The Times* newspaper who accompanied the 1904 Expedition, also noted that when questioned, prisoners

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<sup>115</sup> Book covers, on the other hand, are well represented, as their aesthetic appeal as objects d'art was clearly evident to military officers collecting during the 1904 Expedition.

<sup>116</sup> Waddell, *Lhasa and its Mysteries*, 173-174.

revealed that the *gau* had not worked because Tibetans did not know about the nickel in the bullets, and had only protected themselves against the other metals.<sup>117</sup>

The *gau* collected from bodies on the battlefield were trophies of British superiority, both military and intellectual. The British response to Tibetan relations with these amuletic devices was one of contempt; such objects were symbolic of a perceived intellectual weakness that must exist in a people who believed a small metal box could stop bullets. Many of the British soldiers were devoted followers of Protestant doctrine, believing they were doing 'God's work', but none were likely to have put their trust in God over an Enfield rifle.<sup>118</sup> *Gau* attested both to Tibetan weakness and British dominance - perhaps none more so than those bearing witness to the failure of Tibetan superstition. A *gau* collected by Ottley, described as 'found after the action at Guru', has the mark of a bullet hole that ripped through it, which must have then entered the man wearing it and, most likely, killed him (Figure 23).<sup>119</sup> Such objects held a position as trophies, and later as items of prestige, because they cut to the very heart of Tibetan cultural practice, and ridiculed it. The catalogue entry for that object reads; 'charm box... believed to ward off bullets',<sup>120</sup> showing that such

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<sup>117</sup> Landon, *The Opening of Tibet*, 130. Waddell noted that 'the lamas afterwards excused themselves on the plea that they had given only a charm against leaden bullets, whereas ours contained some silver in their composition, and hence the charms proved ineffectual on that occasion'. Waddell, *Lhasa and its Mysteries*, 174-175).

<sup>118</sup> After the battle at Guru, Younghusband wrote to his wife 'I am absolutely in God's hands fulfilling some hidden purpose of his'. Allen, *Duels in the Snow*, 89.

<sup>119</sup> On the basis that many such objects were collected through the stripping of bodies on the battlefield, it is unlikely that this object's original owner survived.

<sup>120</sup> *Gau* (NMS A.1905.355+A-B).

associations, and the views of these collectors, would remain fixed in museum records.

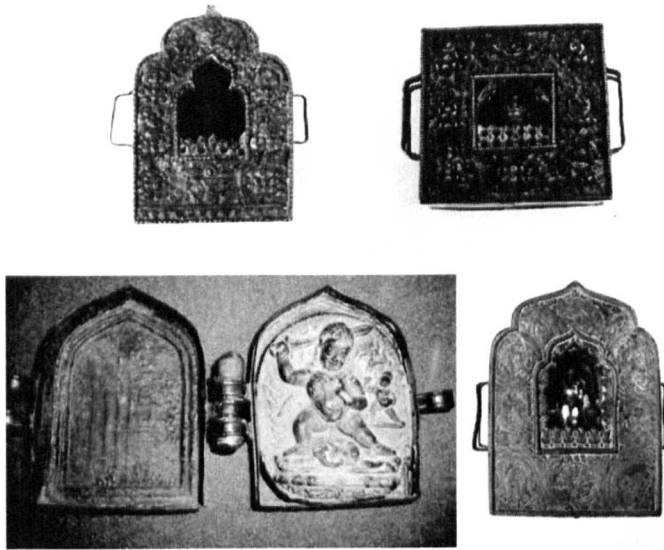


Figure 22: A selection of *gau* collected during the 1904 Expedition. © National Museums Scotland and Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen.

The bottom left example shows the *tsa-tsa* inside, believed to protect the wearer. Others held rolls of prayers, pieces of cloth and grains and seeds.<sup>121</sup>

Major Ottley's collection is archetypal of prestige collecting, and Ottley stereotypical of the British military mind-set of the late Victorian age. Charles Allen describes Ottley as 'a flame haired Irishman with a powerful streak of derring-do about him',<sup>122</sup> and suggests that Ottley was regarded by Tibetans as the most remorseless of the British officers, referring to him as 'the nightmare'.<sup>123</sup> His collected objects reflected his belief in military authority and British masculinity, turning objects of Tibetan Buddhism into trophies of war.

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<sup>121</sup> Top left Bailey collection (NMS A.1909.429), top right Duncan Metcalf Morison collection (NMS A.1964.165), bottom left General Macdonald collection (Marischal 61937), bottom right Captain Bruce Turnbull collection (NMS A.1974.87).

<sup>122</sup> Allen, *Duels in the Snow*, 44.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.



Ottley's collection, established within the trope of prestige collecting by the collector, would become further embedded in that category when it entered the RSM in 1905. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Five, the relationship between Ottley and his collection was cemented within the Museum's vision of the 1904 Expedition, presenting Ottley as a champion of the discovery of Tibetan Buddhist material culture, for the Scottish public.<sup>124</sup>

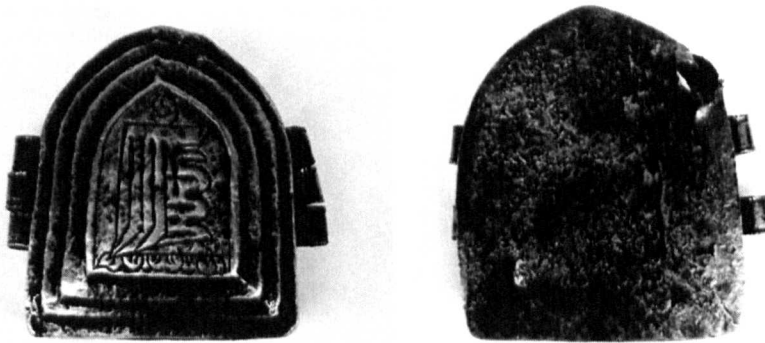


Figure 23: Gau with bullet hole, Ottley collection. © National Museums Scotland.

The *gau* was supposedly collected off a body on the battlefield at Guru with a bullet hole through it.<sup>125</sup>

Unlike the collections made by missionaries, which moved into museums almost immediately on entering Britain, many military collections remained with their collector for anything up to fifty years. In this time they built up their roles as prestige collections, further entangling the narrative that linked object and collector through the reinterpretation of the 1904 Expedition over time. The clearest example within Scottish collections comes from Eric Bailey. Bailey sent several consignments of objects to his family home in Edinburgh during the

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<sup>124</sup> See Chapter Five, section 5.4.2, Selling collections: the 1904 Expedition.: 384.

<sup>125</sup> *Gau* (NMS A.1905.355).

1904 Expedition, and continued to do so after 1904, when he remained in Tibet as a trade agent. Between 1905 and 1909 his mother Florence Bailey arranged the objects around the family home, giving them public roles in very specific ways.<sup>126</sup> Overtly, they were representations of Tibetan culture and souvenirs of the 1904 Expedition (especially the flag, the weapons and Eric Bailey's photographs). However, Florence Bailey created an important underlying narrative for the objects, which specifically spoke to the collector's (her son) worth and prestige as an individual and her place in society as the custodian of and gatekeeper to the collection.<sup>127</sup>

Whilst Florence Bailey turned this into a formal process, and recorded her experiences of working with her son's Tibetan objects, many other collections from the 1904 Expedition were similarly domesticated, forming part of a home décor. Whilst these objects continued to act as reminders of their military associations, they did so in more subtle, benign, ways.<sup>128</sup>

Indicative of the more moderate collection and display that would have been undertaken by most of the officers during the 1904 Expedition, is the small collection of objects made by Captain Bruce Turnbull.<sup>129</sup> His grandson, Michael Turnbull, remembers a telescopic trumpet standing on its end next to the front

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<sup>126</sup> The role of Florence Bailey will be analysed in the case study later in this chapter. Also see Livne, "Museum' sites in early-twentieth-century Edinburgh", 39-55.

<sup>127</sup> This tactic has been referred to by Emma Ferry 'double-display', was a widely employed strategy, but employed to particularly good effect in situations where female agency was promoted through the role of exhibitor, rather than collector. Ferry uses the example of an exhibition of women's industry held in Bristol in 1885. She notes that whilst the exhibition itself displayed dying crafts of working class women, its interpretation prioritized the role of the philanthropic middle and upper class women who put on the exhibition, thereby 'saving' these art forms. Ferry, "A Novelty Among Exhibitions", 51-67.

<sup>128</sup> Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 71.

<sup>129</sup> Various family members donated Captain Bruce Turnbull's Tibetan objects, many years after the 1904 Expedition. *Gau* (NMS A.1974.87), *cham* mask (NMS A.1968.632), boar's hide shield (NMS A.1968.633), figure of Ushnishavijaya (NMS A.1974.841).

door, and two *cham* masks over the doors leading off the hallway.<sup>130</sup> However, the large silver statue of the goddess Ushnishavijaya was stored in a cupboard and only placed 'on display' by subsequent generations.<sup>131</sup> The statue was likely acquired from the Palkhor Choede monastery at Gyantse, and whilst it may have been purchased from monks there,<sup>132</sup> I believe it more likely that this piece was acquired by force. Although taken in the heat of the frenzied collecting that occurred around the storming of Gyantse, Michael Turnbull notes that his grandfather later formed more scholarly interests in Tibet (in the years after his return to Britain) and whilst the other items he acquired were always proudly displayed in the house, the statue remained hidden away.<sup>133</sup> It was only after Captain Turnbull died, that the statue was able to go on public view. The family donated it to the Royal Scottish Museum soon afterwards in 1967. I believe that as Turnbull's view of Tibet and Tibetan culture changed, the provenance of the statue made it represent something less palatable to the collector. If this was the case, it seems that, over time, even those collectors who were less interested in Tibetan culture, came to reinterpret their actions. The long-term development of the relationship between object and collector is something that cannot be analysed in most missionary collections (with the exception of Thomson), because objects stayed with collectors for such a short

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<sup>130</sup> Cham masks were used in dances performed by monks during certain ceremonial occasions, such as the Tibetan New Year, Losar. The British knew them as 'devil dances' during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

<sup>131</sup> Information courtesy of Michael Turnbull, Captain Bruce Turnbull's grandson. Telephone conversation with the author 16/06/2011.

<sup>132</sup> Refer back to footnote 111 for evidence of items being sold to the Expedition force from the Palkor Choede.

<sup>133</sup> Michael Turnbull told the author that his grandfather would give talks on Tibet and Tibetan culture to local interested groups around Edinburgh and continued to have an interest in his experience throughout his life. Telephone conversation with the author 15/06/2011.

time. However, within military collections changes in attitude are detectable in several instances.<sup>134</sup>

Prestige collecting was not just an investment in the connection between collector and object. Many of the objects acquired in 1904 had, as noted, a high market value. Although the RSM initially offered Bailey forty pounds for his collection, after the addition of some rare pieces of armour he managed to get ninety-five pounds, over twice the original offer.<sup>135</sup> Ottley's collection cost the museum a staggering £110, for half as many pieces as Bailey sold. Ottley originally loaned the objects to the museum with additional pieces, including the robes supposedly worn by the Bhutanese envoy the Penlop of Trongsa (later King of Bhutan) during the signing of the treaty in Lhasa, and a 'votive offering of lamas ashes coated in sheet gold'.<sup>136</sup> However, only about half the collection was purchased. As the first officer to offer a collection filled with high status objects to a Scottish museum, Ottley was in a position to demand a high price. The museum spent roughly £11,700 in today's money purchasing the two collections.<sup>137</sup> What is interesting is that Ottley deemed the museum in Edinburgh as an appropriate place to deposit his collection in the

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<sup>134</sup> For example, when Bailey came to sell his collection, he asked his mother to sell to the RSM only those things he had paid for, but to keep anything he had not, which included much of the 1904 Expedition loot. *Letter from Eric Bailey to his mother Florence*, 31/08/08, [Mss EUR/F157/168], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>135</sup> Bailey purchased the armour for a man and horse (A.1909.406 and A.1909.407) in Gyantse after the RSM began to take an interest in the collection. At this time, Bailey was expanding the collection made during the 1904 Expedition with the Museum in mind. *Letters from Bailey to parents*, 02/02/1908, 03/04/1908, 07/05/1908. [Mss EUR F.157/168], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>136</sup> Royal Scottish Museum, *Loan receipt*, in Director's Correspondence, 21/05/1905, (259), NMS Archives.

<sup>137</sup> Currency converted using The National Archives Currency Converter, Based on rates from 1905 and 1910. For a further discussion of Ottley's sale to the RSM, see Chapter Five, section 5.4.2, Selling collections: the 1904 Expedition.380. These high values were in keeping with the prices being paid by other museums for objects associated with the 1904 Expedition. See Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 75.

first place. Unlike Bailey, who was local to the Edinburgh area, Ottley was Irish and had a postal address based in London. It seems likely that, as fetching a good price for his collection was of paramount importance, Ottley chose Edinburgh because the London market had already been saturated with Tibetan objects from the Expedition force. Harris notes that, despite Waddell's role, due to a personal disagreement with the British Museum he had deposited very little with that institution, which instead purchased material from other officers.<sup>138</sup> By the time Ottley was in a position to sell in 1906, it seems that London museums were so over subscribed with Expedition artefacts that they were no longer able or willing to acquire Tibetan pieces. Collectors such as Ottley, and later Rybot, had to look elsewhere.<sup>139</sup> The RSM had not taken part in the early clamour for Tibetan artefacts and in 1906 was the perfect buyer, having money to spend and no comparable objects already in the collection.<sup>140</sup> The fact that Ottley needed to actively seek out a good price highlights the most important 'value' he understood as being embedded in his collection.

Whilst collectors who practiced prestige collecting often did not participate in debates around the status of Tibetan material culture as 'art', those distinctions were still important to such practices, because they raised the economic value of Tibetan objects. Classifications were also important to the developing understanding of Tibetan material culture in museums, so for a collector who expected a collection to memorialise his own life, inserting one's

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>139</sup> Harris notes that the British Museum bought the collection of Major Iggulden (170 objects) in 1905 for £300 and then proceeded to create a new gallery to house its Tibetan treasures. There was no room for Ottley's smaller collection by 1906. *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> The RSM's engagement with Tibetan material from the 1904 Expedition is discussed in Chapter Five, particularly 5.4.2 Selling collections: the 1904 Expedition., 380.

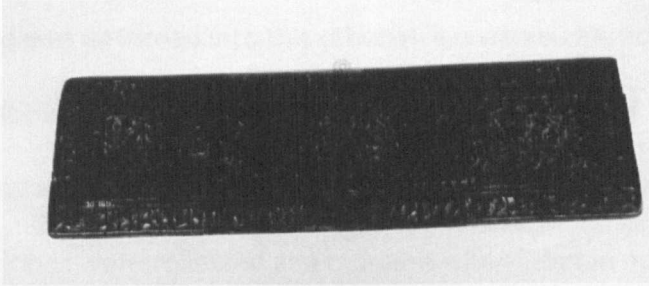
own intentions into that language and frame of understanding was important. Ottley had no interest in art, but was collecting material others placed in that category, thereby making sure his collection was inserted into those hierarchies of value.<sup>141</sup> The collection's transferal to the RSM, where it was more firmly embedded by the Museum into the category of 'Tibetan Buddhist art', cemented it as a prestige collection. This process increased the collection's economic value (as seen above), its 'authenticity', (as seen through the Museum's later representation of certain objects as marker's of Tibetan Buddhism) and therefore Ottley's authority as the collector.

Although I have suggested that prestige collecting was often distanced from scholarly interests, these two ideas were not completely opposed. I have already outlined how Rybot moved from the realm of prestige collecting into a more thoughtful and aestheticised response to his collecting activities. During the 1904 Expedition Eric Bailey had limited scholarly interests regarding material culture (although his knowledge of and interest in natural history was more extensive) but he had enough knowledge and a trained eye for value to make astute purchases in the years after the 1904 Expedition, enhancing his initial collection of battlefield 'prize'. When the son of the Maharaja of Sikkim visited Scotland in 1908, he viewed Bailey's collection at his parents' house,

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<sup>141</sup> Harris argues that the campaign saw the 'emergence of an aestheticized response to Tibet in which mission members remarked on the beauty (or otherwise) of Tibetan culture as they encountered it *in situ*, and the unprecedented mode of consumption and display that propelled its objects into the category of art upon their return'. Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 54.

commenting that ‘no amount of money could buy them [book covers] in Tibet, and people would give any amount of money for them’ (Figure 24).<sup>142</sup>



**Figure 24: Example of one of the book covers looted from Nani Monastery, Bailey collection.**<sup>143</sup> © National Museums Scotland.

Finally, in this examination of prestige collecting, I would like to allude to the idea of prestige through association. One of the larger collections of 1904 Expedition material in a Scottish museum was sold and donated between 1948 and 1964 by Dr. Duncan Metcalf Morison.<sup>144</sup> Morison was not involved in the 1904 Expedition, nor was he a military man, but appears to have collected nearly fifty Tibetan objects on the basis that they were ‘probably acquired during the Younghusband Expedition 1903-4’.<sup>145</sup> Morison does not seem to have had any relations involved in the 1904 Expedition, from whom he could have acquired the items, and without any archival evidence it is difficult to speculate why he chose to collect items associated with this moment in Tibetan history.

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<sup>142</sup> The book covers had been looted from Naini monastery. *Letter from Frederick Bailey to Eric Bailey*, 02/01/1908, [MSS EUR/F157/194], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>143</sup> Book cover (NMS A.1910.189).

<sup>144</sup> Collections of Dr. Duncan Metcalfe Morison: (NMS A.1948.231-235) and (NMS A.1964.145-185).

<sup>145</sup> Noted on each object record on the NMS documentation ‘adlib’ system.

Morison was a well-educated man, whose personal circumstances may have made travel and exploration difficult.<sup>146</sup> His ability to collect through networks of dealers and private individuals without being a 'man on the spot', was not dissimilar from scholars and orientalist active prior to the 1904 Expedition, and was an inroad into this otherwise unattainable activity. Prestige here was not about souvenir or trophy, but about the prestige of being a connoisseur and a patron of the arts. The timeline of Morison's life shows that most of these items were collected at a moment when Tibetan material culture had firmly moved from curiosity to 'art' in the western mind, and Morison therefore acquired prestige through his intellect and patronage.

### **3.7.2 Collecting for the advancement of knowledge**

Whilst prestige collecting was the dominant motivation for the majority in the Scottish museum context, there was clearly no simple dichotomy between military anti-intellectualism and amateur scholarly interest. Nor is it paradoxical that men such as Bailey, who had limited interest in Tibetan culture in 1904, would then spend a lifetime evaluating those early encounters and reconfiguring their own understandings of Tibet. Whilst imperial ideologies and military regime set a precedent for understanding in 1904, as the men who collected Tibetan material culture at that time moved beyond that moment,

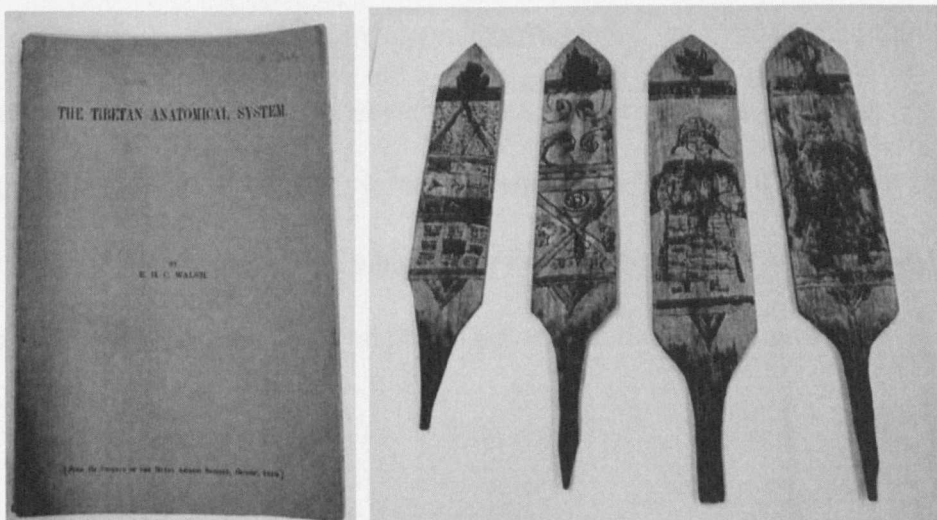
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<sup>146</sup> See Appendix A. Morison was a doctor who lost his license and spent some time in jail because of his sexuality. This would have had implications on his whole life, possibly leaving him unable to travel to somewhere like the Himalayas where a series of permits were necessary.



into other roles, other ideological spaces and changes in personal circumstance, so too did their interpretations of Tibet.

There were those who went on to become soldier-scholars, gentlemen whose role as Indian Army officers or Indian Civil Service (ICS) officials allowed them access and means to acquire, document and develop a more rigorous, academic understanding of the cultures within which they worked and lived (Figure 25). The ICS magistrate Ernest Henry Cooper Walsh became a founding member of the Patna Museum when on service in Bihar and Major Rybot retired to Jersey and undertook some of the most important archaeological excavations on the island before the Second World War. Walsh would later become the first lecturer in the Tibetan language at Oxford University, and Bailey would form a new collection, and a new connection, to Tibet when he took up the post of Political Officer to Sikkim between 1921-1928.<sup>147</sup>



**Figure 25: E.H.C. Walsh developed a lifelong interest in Tibetan and Indian culture. Walsh collection. © National Museums Scotland.**

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<sup>147</sup> This later collection, and much of the weaponry collected during the 1904 Expedition, is now in National Museums Liverpool.

His particular interests were coins and medical systems. On the left, one of the many publications he wrote about the Tibetan anatomical system and on the right, a set of wooden lathes used in a ceremony for the removal of illness from the home. These wooden items were left outside to rot or burned following the ceremony and are therefore very rare in museum collections, as items of ethnographic interest, rather than Tibetan 'art', they had no clear economic worth, another reason for such items being underrepresented in collections associated with the 1904 Expedition.<sup>148</sup>

Although the backlash to the 1904 Expedition's looting was immediate in the civic centres of India and Britain, on the frontiers of empire the soldiers of the 1904 Expedition were sometimes out of step with public opinion at home and the new shifts in social morality, which created a much more ridged distinction between looting and prize.<sup>149</sup> Some collectors, such as Ottley, appear to have disregarded these concerns, but others did re-evaluate both their collecting practices and the meanings they embedded in those collections. As noted above, Rybot's acquisition of the ewer held a very different meaning to the sculptures from Gyantse monastery, perhaps influenced by the manner in which they were collected (possibly bought versus taken) and the influence of the collecting committee. His engagement of Waddell – the 1904 Expedition's 'expert' – in the analysis of his objects cannot be written off as merely an attempt to create an economic value for items he wished to sell. In fact, of all the 1904 Expedition collectors who sold or donated to Scottish museums, Rybot had the longest relationship with his collection, not donating it until 1954,

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<sup>148</sup> Wooden lathes (NMS A.1950.266+A-D). The lathes were seen by the Tibetan material culture specialist Zara Fleming in 2008, during a visit to NMS. During her visit we had an extensive discussion about the importance of the lathes, which are rarely found within museum collections. Zara Fleming, discussion during author's time as Assistant Curator, NMS (2008).

<sup>149</sup> See Myatt, "Trinkets, Temples and Treasures", 127.

suggesting that he was developing an interest in the representation of his collection.<sup>150</sup>

In 1904 Rybot, a keen watercolourist, had sent images of the Expedition with captions on the force's activities, to publications such as the *Illustrated London News*. These promoted both the anti-intellectual military and imperial attitudes of the force, and mirrored the prejudicial attitude to Tibetans and Tibetan culture.<sup>151</sup> During the 1904 Expedition, Rybot had acquired a collection of about fifty pieces, which included a variety of object types, such as textiles, weapons, and sculpture, not all of which were associated with monasteries or particular military actions. However, apart from the six sculptures appraised by Waddell, there is little evidence of his continuing interest in his collection, beyond the fact that he kept it.<sup>152</sup> Yet Rybot, who had always had an interest in the history of his native Jersey, then went on to carry out extensive research into the history of the island and published widely on its archaeology, suggesting that he had a wider interest in the recovery and analysis of material culture, of which his Tibetan collection formed a (less significant) part.<sup>153</sup>

Despite the apparent lack of academic interest in his Tibetan collection, he retained it until 1954, when he had retired from all historical research.

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<sup>150</sup> For further information on Waddell's role in the interpretation of officers' collections during the 1904 Expedition, see: Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 62.

<sup>151</sup> N.V.L. Rybot, *Illustrated London News*, "Clearing the first Great Obstacles in Tibet: Fighting at Gyantse". Illustration of the fighting around Gyantse showing British soldiers climbing the hill to the fort. The illustration is in the style of contemporary boys adventure stories, popular at the time.

<sup>152</sup> Rybot's original collection was far more extensive than that now in NMS. He offered the Museum over fifty objects, but many of these were rejected at the time and their whereabouts are unknown. N.V.L. Rybot Accession File, Department of World Cultures, NMS Archive.

<sup>153</sup> For Information on Rybot's many publications and his work relating to the history of Jersey, see website of the Societe Jersiaise, <http://www.societe-jersiaise.org>.

Although his collection had never formed a significant part of his personal field of academic interest, he wrote to the RSM in 1954 that 'I have not offered them to the Société Jersaise because their museum is a purely local affair and, I know, would not accept them. Also, I do not like to think that they might eventually be dispersed among casual purchasers who neither appreciate nor understand them'.<sup>154</sup> The letter also contained a list of Tibetologists and prominent dealers who Rybot had shown the collection to over the years, showing he at least kept an eye on changing attitudes to Tibetan material culture, as both a scholarly and economic resource. When he finally decided to part with his collection, he didn't sell it, but gifted it to the museum.<sup>155</sup>

Both Rybot and Walsh collected to gain prestige *and* knowledge, although each of these motivations took precedence at different times in their lives. Finally, the act of donation, a lifetime after the initial collection,<sup>156</sup> cemented such personal ambitions and the memorialisation of the collector.<sup>157</sup> Whilst those who collected purely for prestige, such as Ottley and Bailey, also used the collections as commodities, Rybot and Walsh gifted their collections, and Rybot

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<sup>154</sup> *Letter from Rybot to Dr. Allan (curator at the RSM), 17/08/1954, N.V.L. Rybot Accession File, Department of World Cultures, NMS Archive.*

<sup>155</sup> It is unclear why Rybot chose Edinburgh as a final home for his collection, but it may have been because the collection contained many objects not directly associated with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries or considered Tibetan 'art'. By 1954 (when he donated the collection) the museum in Edinburgh had a varied Tibetan collection with a great deal of 'ethnographic' material, as well as those items now seen as 'art'. Rybot most likely knew that Bailey's collection was in the Museum, a collection of a similar nature, and it seemed a logical place to deposit his own Tibetan objects.

<sup>156</sup> Walsh gifted his collection in 1950.

<sup>157</sup> The importance of donation versus sale within the realm of collector memorialization is examined in Chapter Five, Section 5.4, From collector to museum: 376.

at least seemed most concerned about its future, not just as a memorial to himself, but as a tool for interpreting his experiences of Tibetan culture.<sup>158</sup>

### **3.8 Taking and giving: gifts, diplomacy and the formation of new relationships**

Despite a change in collecting practices over the course of the 1904 Expedition, this military engagement retained a deep association with the practice of looting. The excellent provenance of the Tibetan collections in Scottish museums is testament to those practices, and the ease with which military officers carried them out: the taking of prize was seen as a legitimate act in times of warfare. However, in my attempt to seek new ways of addressing such historical assumptions, and through a reading of Scottish museum collections, it becomes clear that other ways of acquiring Tibetan material culture were also active during the 1904 Expedition and in its aftermath. These alternative ways of collecting were no less important in bringing new types of objects into a western arena, though they were often less visible as part of the public perception of the 1904 Expedition. The focus of this section will be the exchange of gifts. These were part of diplomatic engagements, but viewed by British agents as having varied meanings, namely as markers of negotiation in an imperial power play and as acknowledgements of personal relations –

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<sup>158</sup> In fact, Rybot asked the RSM to donate any items they did not want to other museums, but I can find no evidence that this occurred – they are certainly not in any other Scottish museums.

markers of friendship. This was never a straightforward dichotomy and in some cases objects were forced to act in both capacities simultaneously.

Gift giving was a valuable tool of diplomacy, which was transformed into a bureaucratic process within the British Empire. Gifts were a means by which the British gathered information about colonial peoples, imperial rivals and allies alike.<sup>159</sup> Interpreting gifts, and understanding their value as objects of imperial diplomacy and personal friendship had consequences for how both giver and receiver responded to the encounter in which such exchanges took place.

### **3.8.1 Taking and giving: friendship, negotiation and bureaucracy in the British Empire**

In an attempt to redefine gift giving as a bureaucratic process, thereby allowing gifts to become tools of imperial politics, a system known as the *Toshikana* was established. The *Toshikana* was managed by a group of officers based in British India's summer capital Simla, who assessed the value of gifts, assigned them a price and then gave the receiver (a British agent) the opportunity to buy them back at that agreed value. This price was based on British market values only, and provenance was largely irrelevant. Lists of gifts were kept in order to assign further values to future gifts, so that the process was self-perpetuating. British

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<sup>159</sup> Marcel Mauss argues in *The Gift*, that 'exchanges and contracts take place in the form of presents; in theory these are voluntary, in reality they are reciprocated obligatorily'. For Mauss as with others who have followed his lead (see for example the papers in Myers (ed.), *The Empire of Things*), a 'gift' is always given with an expectation of return, leading us to popularly assert that there is no such thing as a 'free' gift. Mauss, *The Gift*, 3.

agents did not always buy back gifts after they had been valued by the Toshikana, and items were often sold off in order to pay for reciprocal gifts, or redistributed as gifts elsewhere.<sup>160</sup> The idea was that such a system would avoid accusations of bribery or reward amongst British agents in India, by providing a transparent system for valuation based entirely on economics. No gift given to a British officer, even personal items, could be kept without first being sent to the *Toshikana*, from which it might return if an agent wished to pay.<sup>161</sup>

These gifts became part of the economy of empire, released from their material culture context and from the notion that they were something inalienable and uncommoditisable.<sup>162</sup> If someone other than the initial recipient bought a gift from the *Toshikana*, it was no more a gift than an item bought at auction. This system produced a different relationship to material culture from the act of looting, but was no less important in developing British (military) constructions of Tibet.

When the 1904 Expedition ended, Eric Bailey was one of a handful of officers who remained in Tibet on behalf of the British Indian government. His first task in this role was to escort the Panchen Lama, who had been in India, to his seat in Shigatse. On February 12<sup>th</sup> 1906 Bailey bade farewell to the Panchen Lama however, their meeting and subsequent friendship instigated an exchange

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<sup>160</sup> Information regarding the *Toshikana* courtesy of Emma Martin, National Museums Liverpool. Martin's forthcoming doctoral thesis (*Charles Bell, A Collector in Tibet*) will examine the role of gift giving, and the process of the *Toshikana* in British-Tibetan relations in greater detail. Email to the author 10/10/2011.

<sup>161</sup> Although the rules were clearly laid out, and both archival and anecdotal evidence suggests these were largely adhered to, it is possible that many smaller items, or gifts from or to local ranking officials, slid under the radar of such a system.

<sup>162</sup> C.f. Miller, "Alienable Gifts and Inalienable Commodities", 91-115.

of gifts that moved between the lama's monastery at Shigatse, the trade agency at Gyantse, and the Bailey family home in Edinburgh. These exchanges and their consequent display and interpretation as gifts, amidst a collection formed largely out of looting and warfare, occupied many letters from Bailey to his parents over the course of that year.<sup>163</sup> Whilst the Panchen Lama was not the only Tibetan to bestow gifts on Bailey, his were the only ones Bailey seemed keen to recover, content to let the others be recycled into the *Toshikana* system.<sup>164</sup> That Bailey valued the Panchen Lama's friendship is shown by the fact that he was prepared to go through the process of submission and retrieval of gifts and pay their full market value, at a time when any number of similar items were entering the auction houses of London and Calcutta and would have been available for purchase.<sup>165</sup> Bailey was not the first officer to meet a Panchen Lama, or the first to attempt to make an ally of him.<sup>166</sup> However, officers of the Tibet Cadre, those men were most heavily involved in the formation of relationships between Tibet and Britain in the first part of the twentieth century, did establish personal friendships based on mutual trust and

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<sup>163</sup> See *Letters*, February to June 1906, [Mss EUR/F157/166], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>164</sup> In a letter to his mother Bailey relates how he had to sell some of the gifts he had received in order to purchase gifts he could give to Tibetans in return. There is almost no mention of individuals who presented him with gifts, although he carefully lists the values calculated by the *Toshikana*. 17/06/1906, [Mss EUR/F157/166], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>165</sup> Gifts from the Panchen Lama included a silver and copper teapot and gold thread textiles, indicative of the objects which came out of Tibetan monasteries during the 1904 Expedition. Whilst the *Toshikana* value given to gifts from the Panchen Lama may not have been excessively high, there was certainly a variety of similar items available as a result of the 1904 Expedition, probably at a variety of prices.

<sup>166</sup> As already noted (1.3.6, *Collecting the essence of Tibet: Thomas Alexander Wise and the development of nineteenth century collecting strategies: 69*), there had been prior attempts by the British to form relations with the Panchen Lama. This previous 'connection' was exploited by Younghusband, who tried to claim a continuity of memory (through the reincarnated lama). Stewart, *Journeys to Empire*, 139.



genuine affection.<sup>167</sup> Bailey's letters home reveal such affection, and show the Panchen Lama to be one of the few Tibetans at this time with whom he had an active and reciprocal friendship.<sup>168</sup> In this situation, the act of gift giving produced a tension between imperial needs (the political) and individual relations (the personal).<sup>169</sup>

Bailey and the Panchen Lama had first met in 1904, when he had visited Shigatse during the 1904 Expedition. They were the same age and appear to have got on well, Bailey noting in a letter to his father that 'he is very nice looking, rather like the statues of Buddha'.<sup>170</sup> When they met again in 1906 Bailey had a gramophone sent to him in Gyantse and he played Harry Lauder records to the Panchen Lama, who enjoyed them very much.<sup>171</sup> When the Panchen Lama, or Tashilama as Bailey referred to him, was mentioned in letters it seems mainly to have been in relation to the gifts he gave to Bailey. These gifts included a copper and silver teapot, pieces of silver, silk and other textiles. A silk scarf, known as a *kata*, a Tibetan symbol of friendship, must have been greatly valued by Bailey as he chose to buy it back from the *Toshikana*, although it had little monetary value and was a commonly found item. This suggests that

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<sup>167</sup> McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, 33.

<sup>168</sup> This is not to suggest that Bailey's superiors saw their friendship as equal. It was hoped that Bailey could use the Panchen Lama as an ally in achieving British goals. The moment the Chinese objected to Britain's newfound closeness to the Panchen Lama, Whitehall revoked Bailey's friendship and his visits to Shigatse ceased.

<sup>169</sup> This is a tension that forms an important part of Mauss's theoretical concerns with the gift, which Mary Douglas argues allows us to see how individuals may organise activities within systems, even when they appear to be acting in isolation. Conversely, we can perceive the ways in which individuals have discretionary power within or over such systems, even when they appear not to. For example, as in the relationship between the Tibetan Cadre and the *Toshikana*. Douglas, "Forward: No Free Gifts", xviii.

<sup>170</sup> Letter from Eric Bailey to his father, 11/10/1904, [Mss EUR/F157/164], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>171</sup> McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, 33. Florence Bailey also recorded the incident in her diary, 03/03/1906, [Mss EUR/F157/104], Bailey Family Papers.

the meaning of that particular *kata*, and the bond it represented between Bailey and the Panchen Lama, was its primary value. Bailey wrote to his father, 'I am not allowed to keep presents given to me by the Lama unless I buy them',<sup>172</sup> and he also commented to his mother later that year that he had 'taken some things out of the *Toshikana*'.<sup>173</sup> He also chose to reclaim the teapot, which he paid for and kept, not selling it to the RSM when they later purchased the bulk of his collection. While Bailey was happy to sell objects obtained in Tibet through looting and purchase, the value of the scarf and teapot could not be so easily ascribed. While the process of buying items back from the *Toshikana* had made them commodities of imperial politics, within the context of his sale of objects to the RSM, Bailey was able to return these items to a position as gifts of mutual reciprocity and friendship. Gifts from other officials, both Tibetan and Chinese, do not appear to have been viewed with the same reverence as those from the Panchen Lama, and both Bailey in Tibet, and his parents in Edinburgh who looked after these objects, remained mindful of the importance of the relationship.<sup>174</sup>

Clearly the social roles and values of gifts, as part of both imperial power plays and personal relations, were varied. There was a literal value, employed by the British that removed the object from its context in order to ascribe economic worth. There was an emotive value, based on the importance of the personal connection, in this case between Bailey and the Panchen Lama, and

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<sup>172</sup> *Letter from Eric Bailey to his father*, 08/04/1906, [Mss EUR/F157/166], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>173</sup> *Letter from Eric Bailey to his father*, 15/12/1906, [Mss EUR/F157/166], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>174</sup> Both of Bailey's parents often refer to the Panchen Lama as if 'Tashilama' were his first name and their son's friendship allowed for such informality of greeting. For example, 'Shall you see Tashilama before you leave?' *Letter from Frederick Bailey to Eric Bailey*, 02/01/1908, [Mss EUR/F157/194], Bailey Family Papers.

there was a social value, which linked the political and the personal, and was useful to British and Tibetan alike, establishing allegiances through material things.

When parts of Bailey's Tibetan collection were sold to the RSM in 1909 and 1910, he was quick to tell his mother, who was responsible for the logistics of the sale, to keep anything that was gifted to him.<sup>175</sup> As a result, the items from within Bailey's collection that were perhaps the most significant to the collector himself, were never open to public interpretation and never formed part of the wider British construction of Tibet.<sup>176</sup>

Bailey's gifts and his relationship with the Panchen Lama occurred after the 1904 Expedition, but were born out of it, and with those events still fresh in the collective memory. The objects associated with the Panchen Lama occupied the same space within the Bailey family home as those taken in war, and items later bought through economic negotiation. How this 'military' collection was built up revolved around conflict, but was not ultimately defined by it.

### **3.8.2 Taking and giving: gifts and diplomatic negotiation**

The relationship between Bailey and the Panchen Lama, and the role of material culture in that relationship, is perhaps atypical of both British-Tibetan relations in the immediate aftermath of the 1904 Expedition and of the role of gifts as

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<sup>175</sup> *Letter from Eric Bailey to his Mother*, 31/08/1908, [Mss/EUR/F157/168], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>176</sup> What happened to these items remains unknown. When Bailey's wife died in the late 1980s, much of the remaining Tibetan material in their possession past to Liverpool Museum, but none of the items from the Panchen Lama were there.

part of those relations. Although the instance of the Panchen Lama and Bailey can be understood as a relationship of a genuinely reciprocal nature, most gifts given by Tibetans to British officers during the 1904 Expedition were part of more tactical and political power negotiations.<sup>177</sup>

During the 1904 Expedition gifts were given by Tibetans to win favour: part of an attempt to assist Tibet's leading figures who found themselves in untenable positions when in negotiations with the British.<sup>178</sup> In the final stages of the 1904 Expedition, this practice of gift giving had two specific functions. Firstly, as a literal parting gift, symbolising the close of that chapter in British-Tibetan relations. Secondly, for all sides of the conflict parting gifts were representational of the power relations throughout the 1904 Expedition, although each party involved viewed such relations in very different ways, providing gifts with multiple and sometimes conflicting meanings.

When the 1904 Expedition ended in Lhasa, and the treaty between the British forces and Tibet's leaders was signed, several gifts of diplomacy were presented to the higher-ranking members of the 1904 Expedition. Not all these gifts were presented by Tibetans, revealing another significant actor – the Bhutanese envoy the Penlop of Trongsa, later the first King of Bhutan of the Wangchuck dynasty, Ugyen Wangchuck. The Penlop was pro-British and strove to form a relationship with both Britain and British-India. Following the 1904 Expedition, he received a knighthood, showing that his relationship with the

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<sup>177</sup> Although these was of course an element of this type of negotiation in the relationships between Bailey and the Panchen Lama, who were both representatives of their respective governments.

<sup>178</sup> For example, Myatt notes that the translator for the mission often discovered little bags of gold dust on his desk. Myatt, "Trinkets, Temples and Treasures", 141.

British during that time had been effectively cultivated. The giving of gifts formed a clear part of such relations.

General James Macdonald was the military commander of the 1904 Expedition, technically the man in charge, although the more charismatic Younghusband continually undermined him and went on to be the name that was synonymous with the 1904 Expedition.<sup>179</sup> When Macdonald's collection was bequeathed to Aberdeen's Marischal Museum in 1932, following the death of his wife (he died in 1927), it included a Bhutanese sword and a Bhutanese betel box (Figure 26 and Figure 27).<sup>180</sup> Macdonald was typical of most officer-collectors who acquired commemorative pieces from official postings. Unlike the looted items from Gyantse Dzong, associated with the ransacking of a particular place, these items were probably gifts of the Bhutanese envoy at the closing of proceedings, symbols of diplomatic unity between the two nations. This association was not recorded when the items came to the Marischal Museum, but an identical sword was given to Younghusband, and is now in the collection of the Royal Canadian Geographic Society (RCGS). When Younghusband gave the sword to the RCGS, he noted that it had been a gift from the 'Chief of Bhutan in 1904'.<sup>181</sup> The records of the Marischal Museum note the sword as 'royal' and Tibetan. The Penlop, the most likely candidate for

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<sup>179</sup> In fact, very little is known about Macdonald. Charles Allen notes that 'James Macdonald [was] a man of few words, spoken or written, and fewer friends. He left nothing in the way of private papers, so his thoughts and actions have been viewed mainly through the eyes of his critics'. Allen, *Duels in the Snow*, 6.

<sup>180</sup> The sword is currently listed as a 'Royal Sword' from Tibet, but is in fact Bhutanese. With thanks to Neil Curtis, Senior Curator of the Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen Museum Collections, for his help with access to this material.

<sup>181</sup> Information taken from an online article on the Royal Canadian Geographic Society (RCGS) website, accessed 26/11/2012, <http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/blog/posting.asp?ID=423>.

'chief of Bhutan', probably gave these swords, which are in fact Bhutanese, to Macdonald and Younghusband, as parting diplomatic gifts. These ceremonial swords are crafted with the Bhutanese thunder dragon at their centre – Ugyen Wangchuck was later known as the dragon king of Bhutan, and the thunder dragon remains a symbol linked to Bhutanese royalty.<sup>182</sup>

Macdonald's betel box probably came from the same source, as his collecting habits were largely passive: most of the objects bequeathed to the Marischal Museum appear to be Macdonald's share of Expedition loot, allocated via the collecting committee during the 1904 Expedition, but unlikely to have been collected by Macdonald himself.<sup>183</sup> This Bhutanese sword, bequeathed to the Marischal Museum as part of a relatively well documented collection, by a man who appears to have been fairly meticulous in his record keeping, exists without any reference to the Bhutanese envoy, nor does it state that this sword was a gift from him. Although Younghusband's example does retain its provenance, he was happy to give it away to the RCGS in 1930, whilst conducting a speaking tour about Everest.<sup>184</sup> So whilst Patrick French suggests Ugyen Wangchuck was one of the individuals who gained the most out of the 1904 Expedition,<sup>185</sup> perhaps he did not manage to translate this good fortune to

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<sup>182</sup> Though this exchange occurred in 1904, and he did not ascend the throne until 1907, he was already taking part in a series of disputes to assert his leadership by this time. These gifts were likely aimed at further asserting his claim in the eyes of the British, who were an important and powerful ally, eventually knighting him and further incorporating Bhutan into British imperial concerns.

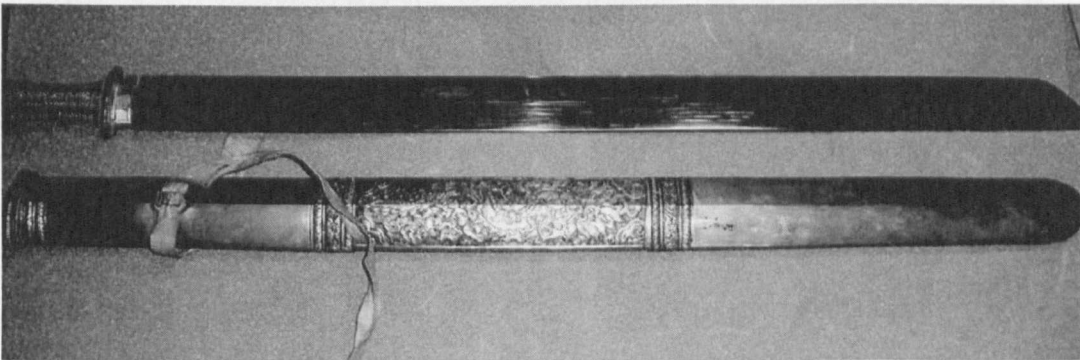
<sup>183</sup> As noted earlier, after the storming of Gyantse, a committee was set up to distribute looted objects. The committee assured the higher-ranking officers a certain number of items, even if they had not taken part in their acquisition. Carrington, "Officers, Gentlemen and Thieves", 96.

<sup>184</sup> RCGS website, accessed 26/11/2012,

<http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/blog/posting.asp?ID=423>.

<sup>185</sup> French writes of the Penlop, 'If unswerving devotion to national self-interest is the hallmark of a good diplomat, he can hardly be faulted. He exploited the Tibetans for his own benefit,

his personal relationships with members of the 1904 Expedition force. Such 'gifts', both diplomatic and personal, were always political (relating to a power play between individuals or nations) in nature. In examining the 'power which resides in the object to be given, that causes its recipient to pay it back', Marcel Mauss brings to the fore these political and economic concerns – the calculating nature of the gift.<sup>186</sup> Reciprocity came in the acknowledgement by the British of Bhutan's place in the new imperial order. Whilst the physical exchange of an object occurred between two men, they were merely vehicles for imperial political concerns. These diplomatic gifts were tangible and timely reminders of two nation's shared experiences, cementing Ugyen Wangchuck's position as 'Chief of Bhutan' in the eyes of the West. Yet as a result of his actions and his relationship between the coloniser and colonised, the position of these gifts as items of significance to their new owners was ambivalent.



**Figure 26: Bhutanese royal sword, Macdonald collection. © Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen.**

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allowing his entourage to loot their way to Lhasa.... By 1907 he was the unchallenged ruler of his country, a Knight commander of the Indian Empire, and the proud possessor of an annual subsidiary of 100,000 rupees'. French, *Younghusband, the Last Great Imperial Adventurer*, 260.

<sup>186</sup> Mauss, 2002 (1954): 4. In this context, a contemporary re-evaluation of Mauss's theoretical concerns, by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, has proved useful: Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Reflections", 259.

This, and the betel box (below) were most likely given to General Macdonald by Ugyen Wangchuck, future King of Bhutan. The centre of the sword is decorated with the Bhutanese emblem of the thunder dragon.<sup>187</sup>

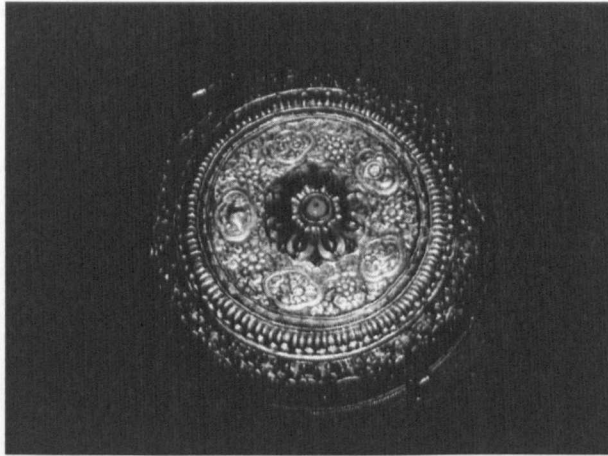


Figure 27: Bhutanese betel box, Macdonald collection. © Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen.

Another, contrasting, set of gifts, also important to review in this context, were given to both Macdonald and Younghusband. As the British forces left Lhasa following the signing of the treaty, the Tibetan Regent gave a small gilt Buddha to Macdonald, and one to Younghusband. Younghusband's Buddha became a symbol of his changing relationship with Tibet, as his attitude transformed from one of imperial superiority to gentle spiritual contemplation, including the foundation of the World Congress of Faiths. When Younghusband died, the little Buddha, which had been his most constant companion in his last days, was placed on top of his coffin during his funeral service (Figure 28).<sup>188</sup> Macdonald's Buddha remained part of his larger collection of foreign material culture, and retained its links to the 1904 Expedition, with Macdonald's original

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<sup>187</sup> Sword (Marischal 56788) and betel box (Marischal 61939).

<sup>188</sup> French traces the importance of this little Buddha in Younghusband's life. When writing Younghusband's biography, he followed the sculpture to its final resting place in a biscuit tin in the basement of the Royal Geographic Society. French, *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer*, 395-401.



label for the piece reading 'Presented by the Regent of Thibet [sic] to General Macdonald when he bade him goodbye in Lhasa'.<sup>189</sup> Macdonald's relationship with his collection appears to have evolved, with his interest in material culture growing after his retirement when he had time to reflect on its significance. His role as a high ranking officer makes it probable that he was given many gifts over the course of his career, but amongst the Marischal Museum bequest (which includes material from across his career, including both African and Indian objects) this appears to be one of the few objects to have retained a link with its giver.



**Figure 28: The gilt Buddha belonging to Colonel Francis Younghusband. © Royal Geographic Society.**

Why then, had objects associated with the Regent of Tibet, a deputy to the leader of a country that had been brought to heel by British military superiority, been given preference over those gifted by the future head of state

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<sup>189</sup> Sculpture of a Buddha (Marischal 56788). Original label written by General Macdonald.

of Bhutan, a close ally of the British government? This was partly a reflection of both social and racial attitudes, whereby the 1904 Expedition leaders would prefer to play down the role of the Penlop, whose more ostentatious gifts hinted that they had shared in victory. On the other hand, the humble Tibetan Regent's gift of an emblem iconic of his country and, more importantly, of the Tibetan Buddhist faith, could easily be interpreted as a modest way of cementing a connection between Tibet and the British Empire, and certainly Younghusband's own response to the statue suggests as much. These statues were certainly parting gifts, being handed to the two men as they marched away from Lhasa. By contrast to their own views of the transaction, for the Tibetan Regent the giving of Buddhist statues, when so many had been taken by force, was also a moment for him to stamp his own authority on what was otherwise a highly imbalanced power struggle. Making the decision to give away these objects, when nothing was to be offered in return, was a marker of his own authority, even superiority on moral, if not military, grounds.<sup>190</sup>

### **3.9 Case study: Florence Bailey – military acquisitions and the domestic space**

As noted earlier in this chapter, whilst women were absent from the military collecting process, they often found themselves responsible for collections amassed by sons, husbands and brothers who sent objects home but remained

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<sup>190</sup> Mauss argues 'to give is to show one's superiority... to accept without giving in return, or without giving more back, is to become client and servant.' Mauss, *The Gift*, 95.

abroad themselves. The collections analysed for this study show that those women developed a network of interest around these objects, moving them out of the global context of imperial politics and warfare, and into the local context of the domestic environment in Scotland. These collections were made by men in Tibet, but were often shaped into a coherent body of knowledge that represented Tibetan culture, by women in Scotland. This was part of a nationwide response to material sent back to Britain by Expedition soldiers, which saw large quantities of Tibetan material culture deposited, initially at least, in familial spaces quite removed from the context of warfare.<sup>191</sup>

The Bailey collection is an excellent example of how a group of objects crossed these boundaries between global and local, masculine and feminine, to construct an image of both Tibet, and the British agent *in* Tibet, within the British domestic environment. This collection lays open the changing interpretations of military collections, but also offers an opportunity to examine how female agency reinterpreted these collections within this new context.

The Bailey family were avid letter writers and diarists, and their personal recollections became part of the public imperial archive when Eric Bailey deposited them within the India Office collection of Private Papers.<sup>192</sup> It is because Florence Bailey, Eric Bailey's mother, can be located in the archive that we are able to piece together her relationship to his collection.<sup>193</sup> Most women

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<sup>191</sup> Harris use the example of Arthur Haddow, who sent his Expedition finds to his mother at the family home – a vicarage in Kent – for decoration. Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 71.

<sup>192</sup> [Mss EUR/F157], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>193</sup> There is of course a lengthy and necessary argument surrounding 'official' archives. Someone like Florence Bailey only has a place within them because of her class, status and her family connections to British imperial policy makers and active agents. Such archives themselves have,

who took on such roles cannot be 'located' in this way; their personal correspondences have not found their way into the public domain, and so Florence Bailey offers us a window into an otherwise largely closed world, although we must be careful not to assume any universality to her experiences. These women, like the military officers who undertook the initial collecting process, responded to Tibetan material culture in varied ways, not all of which can be retrieved for analysis. Within the home, the juxtaposition of domestic routine and global military imperialism created a space in which personal, organisation (in this case military) and imperial ideological concerns could be talked about and represented through an interaction with foreign, Tibetan, material culture.

Eric Bailey's encounter with Tibet was longer lasting than that of many of his Expedition colleagues. After his regiment returned to their headquarters in Ambala, India in 1905, he was given the task of accompanying the Panchen Lama from the Delhi Durbar back to his official seat at Shigatse.<sup>194</sup> From 1906 until 1909 he acted as a trade agent for the Indian Political Service, working variously in Gyantse and Chumbi.<sup>195</sup> His collecting had three phases, with the 1904 Expedition itself only supplying a portion of the objects he was to amass.

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as Antionette Burton notes, a role in shaping the narratives we extract from them and make political interventions into our interpretations. Official archives, such as the India Office, are 'contact zones' with the imperial past and are a gendered and political project. Therefore within the archive itself, the tension between global and local is already located. See Burton, "Archive Stories", 281-295.

<sup>194</sup> As a result of the 1904 Expedition the Panchen Lama had been persuaded to attend the Delhi Durbar, also attended by the Prince of Wales during his tour of India, as a means of establishing better contact with the outside world, particularly Tibet's neighbour India.

<sup>195</sup> 'Trade Agent' was not a political role, but it was assumed that the incumbent would nevertheless keep an ear to the ground. Gyantse in central southern Tibet was, and still is, a major trading town between Lhasa and India. The Chumbi valley lies at the southern tip of Tibet and was the area closest to India. The trading post of Yatung, where Annie Taylor was based, was nearby.

Later, he collected throughout Central Asia on a smaller scale, and with his wife Irma he re-built a Tibetan collection when posted as Political Officer for Sikkim from 1921-1928.<sup>196</sup> Though many of the objects were not acquired during a military campaign, I believe that the influence of his experiences during the 1904 Expedition, and the continuing influence of 'military character', visible in his letters home, continued to draw on ideas of prestige collecting, and keep this collection within the ideological realm of the military collection.<sup>197</sup>

As each stage of Eric Bailey's career progressed, his mother Florence Bailey recorded not only his actions and achievements, but also the objects he collected and sent to the family home in Edinburgh.<sup>198</sup> Through letters between herself, her son and her husband Frederick, objects were listed, interpreted and assigned a series of values based around authenticity, provenance and the relationship between Eric Bailey and his own collection. But it is through Florence Bailey's diaries that we gain the clearest understanding of how these objects were integrated into the domestic environment and how they were subsequently used to express ideas about both Tibet and the British Empire.

In 1904 whilst Bailey himself was still immersed in the 1904 Expedition, his mother began her own encounter with Tibet. Eric Bailey's letters give little mention to those objects collected during the 1904 Expedition itself, but Florence Bailey recorded the arrival of each box of Tibetan objects at their

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<sup>196</sup> Much of this later material is now in the National Museums Liverpool, having been bequeathed by Irma Bailey. It also appears that Irma Bailey was responsible for much of the collecting at this later time, and took an active interest in Tibetan crafts and textiles in particular. Emma Martin, Head of Ethnology, Liverpool Museum, email to author 02/02/2011.

<sup>197</sup> See this chapter, section 3.4, Officers and gentlemen: the military persona: 208.

<sup>198</sup> The family lived at 7 Drummond Place, in Edinburgh's fashionable West End district.

Edinburgh home in her diaries.<sup>199</sup> These yearly volumes consist of short entries; mostly relating to house calls and the attendance of Church and charity events. There are, however, occasional snippets of information, which suggest her interest in Tibet went beyond being the caretaker of her son's belongings.

Only weeks after its publication, she had read Landon's account of the 1904 Expedition, and a few days after that Colonel Younghusband himself, along with his wife, were guests in the Bailey house while he spoke at the Royal Scottish Geographic Society (RSGS).<sup>200</sup> Younghusband was an enthusiastic speaker and immensely popular with his troops, even if his actions created animosity with political authorities. From the inclusion of reading material in her diary, it can be inferred that for Florence Bailey it was important to appear well informed for her coming guests, especially as Younghusband was so influential on both the men in her life, and was responsible for Eric Bailey's trade agency position.<sup>201</sup> From early on, then, Florence Bailey was gathering information and creating a connection between herself, her family, Tibet and the 1904 Expedition.

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<sup>199</sup> *Dairies of Florence Bailey, 1905-1909*, [Mss EUR/F157/103-107], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>200</sup> *Diary of Florence Bailey, 04/03/1905*, [Mss EUR/F157/103], Bailey Family Papers. Perceval Landon was a journalist with *The Times* who accompanied the 1904 Expedition and reported on the looting of monasteries. He returned to Britain before the treaty had been signed in Lhasa: there have been suggestions that this was to ensure his book *The Opening of Tibet* (1905) was the first account of the 1904 Expedition to be published. Incidentally, Florence Bailey was reading the book at the same time as her son in Ambala, who approved of the book greatly. *Letter to Father, 08/03/1905*, [Mss EUR/F157/164], Bailey Family Papers.

<sup>201</sup> Colonel Frederick Bailey and Colonel Younghusband kept up a correspondence until Frederick Bailey's death in 1912 (included within [Mss EUR/F157], Bailey Family Papers). Many of the letters from Younghusband relate to Eric Bailey, advising the Colonel on how his son would best progress his career. The Younghusbands and the Baileys came from very similar family backgrounds – a mixture of Indian Army and strict evangelism. No doubt Florence wanted to cultivate the relationship between the two families, as if Younghusband's star was on the rise, perhaps her son's would rise with it.

Landon's book and the Younghusband's visit seem to have propelled Florence Bailey into the further exploration of her Tibetan connections. In March 1905 she held two large tea parties, each attended by about eighty people, at which a slide show of Eric Bailey's Expedition photographs was shown.<sup>202</sup> These were well-orchestrated events, most likely with a guest list that drew together local men and women of standing to establish a circle of people, a salon of like-minded intellectually-driven individuals, within which Eric Bailey's collection and perhaps the Empire at large, would be the object of study. The objects themselves had not arrived when these parties took place but the photographs offered an immediacy of understanding - a chance to be on the battlefield, to see the Tibetan soldiers and their outmoded weaponry, and the 'fanatical' monks, with whom the 1904 Expedition was faced.<sup>203</sup> The parties placed these photographs of Tibet within a global context but in the domestic setting, thereby paving the way for objects, which would also make this transition. Under Florence Bailey's careful curation, Eric Bailey's objects would engage this small and close-knit circle in the same manner, linking the global and the local. This was not just a case of promoting the family's interest in Tibet, or Eric Bailey's position in the Indian Political Service. Florence Bailey was establishing her own position as an authority in the absence of her son. This

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<sup>202</sup> These occurred on March 15 and 16. *Diary of Florence Bailey*, 15-16/03/1905, [Ms EUR/F157/103], Bailey Family Papers. Eric Bailey was a keen photographer and captured every stage of the 1904 Expedition. He sent the rolls of film to his mother, who had them processed. She placed the prints in red leather-bound albums with 'F.M. Bailey Tibet Album Vol. []' inscribed on the covers in gold. The photographs were arranged according to detailed lists Bailey sent her along with his letters. The albums are now in the British Library.

<sup>203</sup> Younghusband was one of many who viewed Lamas as a 'rabid fanatical obstruction' to what he was trying to achieve. The men returning from the 1904 Expedition continually propounded such views, and having gained personal experience, could be considered 'experts' of such things. Younghusband, "The Geographical Results of the Tibet Mission", 481-492.

authority allowed for an expanding social circle of local, intellectually interested parties, who may not otherwise have formed part of the Bailey's domestic scene.<sup>204</sup> This wider public engagement reshaped the Bailey's domestic space in the manner of an eighteenth century salon – creating an intellectual milieu within which she could fulfil her social aspirations.<sup>205</sup>

The first large consignment of objects arrived in April 1905, and from then on there was both a steady trickle of objects returning to Edinburgh and an equally steady stream of visitors to the house to view them. At this stage, Florence Bailey was unsure how best to describe the objects she was receiving. Through most of her early diaries objects are noted as 'things', sometimes as curios, and in one instance (after the arrival of the General's flag) as a 'trophy'. From 1907, 'curios' becomes the preferred term. By this time, Eric Bailey's 'trophies' from the 1904 Expedition were well established in the family home and her attention was now focused on finding room in the domestic space for the more carefully sourced and more thoughtful purchases that defined his tenure as trade agent. Her developing terminology suggests that, like the officers collecting in Tibet several years earlier, Florence Bailey had undergone a transformation of understanding. Though curio could be seen as a catchall word for acquired objects, it certainly had a different tone and meaning to trophy and more clarity (as something to be collected) than the term 'thing': Florence Bailey was developing her own confidence in speaking about and appraising her

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<sup>204</sup> Were it not for Florence Bailey's continual publicisation of the collection and the photographs, one can speculate that many of their more socially elite visitors may not have entered the Bailey's domestic space, even if they were people known to the Bailey's formally, outside of that arena.

<sup>205</sup> The salon being a largely domestic forum in which women played an active role in intellectual discussion.



son's collection.<sup>206</sup> As her son acquired both knowledge and kudos from being the 'man on the spot', Florence Bailey was acquiring both confidence and authority to rearticulate that knowledge, from her son and the connections his photographs and objects allowed her to make.

This collection was as much a representation of the position the Bailey family held in the world, as it was a construction of Tibetan culture for a domestic audience. The Bailey's were part of an established network of families, with a strict social code, which stretched between Edinburgh, London and the colonial world, particularly India.<sup>207</sup> These were well-to-do families with military ties going back several generations.<sup>208</sup> Born in India but educated in Britain, these families moved back and forth across the Empire building continual connections between India and Scotland.<sup>209</sup>

For Florence Bailey, the collection of animals and objects made by her eldest son presented the opportunity to elevate her family's position in this network. By creating a dynamic social space within her own domestic setting,

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<sup>206</sup> She was also attending lectures and, presumably, continued to read about Tibet and the 1904 Expedition. Officers published a number of books in the years immediately following the Expedition, such as those by Waddell, Ottley and Landon, already mentioned. In addition, the Daily Mail journalist Edmund Candler wrote an account titled *The Unveiling of Lhasa*. There were many more unpublished accounts, short magazine articles and pieces for regimental history records, which can be found in Marshall, *Britain and Tibet 1765-1947*, 319-323.

<sup>207</sup> As Service notes, there were strict rules to be observed by wealthy and socially aspiring Edwardians, at the risk of social disaster. Florence Bailey would have been particularly mindful of these. Service, *Edwardian Interiors*, 129.

<sup>208</sup> At least three of the other military collectors associated with Scottish museum collections came from identical family backgrounds – A.F. Maclean, J.F.C. Dalmahoy and Captain Walter H. Ogilvie (the latter associated with objects at the Marischal Museum) all had families with strong military ties to India and their fathers were all Major-General's. The Dalmahoy's and the Bailey's were acquainted (see letters and diaries, Bailey Family Papers).

<sup>209</sup> The Bailey's kept in touch with their friends in India, and Eric and his brother Percy mention meetings with family friends in Calcutta in their letters. There is also a letter from an unknown individual based at Government House in Calcutta to Florence Bailey who wrote 'I told him [Eric] how we had admired his wonderful collection of things and how beautifully you had arranged them', 14/02/1907, [Mss EUR/F157/144], Bailey Family Papers. Other colonial agents moving between Edinburgh and India were therefore also in touch with the family in both locations.

she was promoting her family's role within both colonial and Edinburgh society, but also giving herself an outlet for her own creative energy.<sup>210</sup> This was achieved through interpretation and contextualisation, which saw the objects take on a dual role as representations of Tibetan material culture, influenced by new forms of classification established by the 1904 Expedition (such as Tibetan 'art') and as familial and social markers.<sup>211</sup> This domestic setting, as arranged by the woman of the house, was a fluid space, in many ways less confined than the museum or library because it contextualised objects in a way that was specific to the individual and her needs. Florence Bailey connected her home to the turbulent social and political relations of the outside world against which it was so often defined.<sup>212</sup> For example the display of flags, weapons and animal heads in her hallway echoed the officers' mess her son relaxed in, in Ambala,<sup>213</sup> or the grand hall of a country estate.<sup>214</sup> Florence Bailey's gender did not stop her from taking part in the interpretation of these objects, which continued to be seen as trophies of imperialism and markers of colonial relations. Women were displaying and embellishing the world of men<sup>215</sup> and in doing so, cemented the roles of both men and women in relation to material culture collected in the military context.

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<sup>210</sup> Florence Bailey's diaries reveal she was an active participant in a range of causes, social, religious and political, including the suffrage movement, overseas missionary work and local church activities.

<sup>211</sup> See Emma Ferry's further analysis of this tactic, which she terms 'double display'. Ferry, *A Novelty Among Exhibitions*, 51-67.

<sup>212</sup> Walker and Ware, "Political Pincushions", 81.

<sup>213</sup> As noted above, the Ambala Officers' Mess was a place where Tibetan objects were arranged in a 'trophy display', and was photographed by Bailey after the 1904 Expedition. Photograph location: [1083/20(35)], Bailey Family Papers (Photographs).

<sup>214</sup> For an analysis of such displays in Britain's grand country homes, see Wintle, "Career Development", 279-288.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Kleinberg, "Gendered Space", 144.

By May 1905 most of the objects acquired during the 1904 Expedition had arrived in Edinburgh and were on display (Figure 29). Eric Bailey had sent detailed lists with his objects and Florence Bailey wrote out labels for the pieces displayed in the house.<sup>216</sup> Her diaries become filled with the visitors who came to see the collection, and their reactions to it. Whilst the physical display of the objects and their position against contemporary taste were important, it was this visitor interaction that allowed the collection to work for its 'curator' and to bring to life a vision of Tibetan culture in an Edinburgh front room.<sup>217</sup> It was also through that interaction that Florence Bailey was able to personally influence the collection. In June 1905 a Mrs Sutherland came to tea, and brought a Tibetan cup to go with a silver saucer and cover that her son had sent her, showing that Florence Bailey was beginning to take ownership of the collection and the responsibility for its development.<sup>218</sup> On June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1905 the hallway was rearranged when more animal specimens arrived, and the following two days saw Florence and Frederick Bailey undertake the rearrangement of the drawing room.

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<sup>216</sup> Although Eric sent the descriptions for the labels, the labels themselves were all in Florence Bailey's hand, giving her another physical presence within the collection.

<sup>217</sup> These objects became part of wider domestic discourse on aesthetics. The role of taste in Victorian and Edwardian attitudes to their possessions was an important part of their social construction. See Cohen, *Household Gods*, and Livne, "'Museum' Sites in Early Twentieth Century Edinburgh", 39-55.

<sup>218</sup> *Diary of Florence Bailey*, 05/06/1905, [Mss EUR/F157/103], Bailey Family Papers.

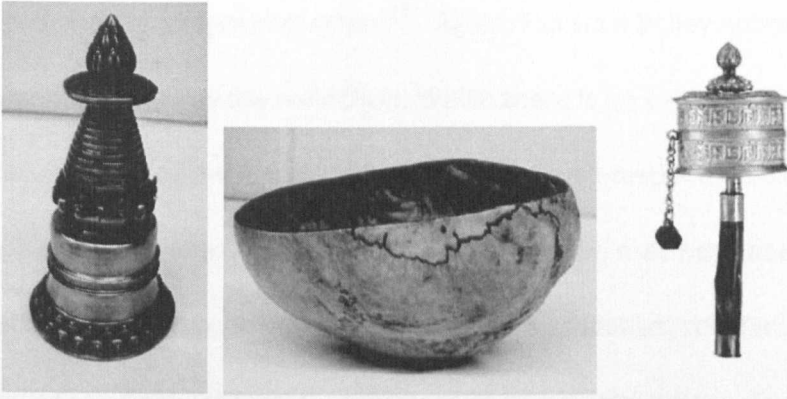


Figure 29: Chorten (reliquary), Kapala (skull cup) and prayer wheel. Bailey collection. © National Museums Scotland.

These objects are all known to have come from the 1904 Expedition due to their documentation in letters between Eric and Florence Bailey.<sup>219</sup>

Throughout May and June that year visitors who came to tea were shown the Tibetan objects as a matter of course, and all entries are recorded in a similar format; ‘Person X came for tea, showed them Eric’s Tibetan curios’. But on July 16<sup>th</sup> there was a shift, when Baron Von Hügel ‘came to see Eric’s Tibetan things’.<sup>220</sup> There is no mention of a social visit; just that Von Hügel came specifically to see the collection. I believe that this change in format is significant, representing the arrival of the collection in the public consciousness. By this time much of Edinburgh society must have seen the collection, and its interest and value would have begun to filter through to interested parties elsewhere. Although Von Hügel was not a Tibetologist, he was a prominent anthropologist and museum curator; therefore his interest in this domestic collection was something of a coup for Florence Bailey. Then, on October 11<sup>th</sup> that year the Baileys received a visit from Colonel Thomas Cadell, who like Von

<sup>219</sup> Chorten (NMS A.1910.219), Skull cup (NMS A.1909.440), Prayer wheel (NMS A.1909.442).

<sup>220</sup> Von Hügel was curator of the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. At this time he was fundraising for an ambitious building project, which would see a new museum building open in 1910. His area of expertise was the Pacific, Fiji in particular, but as curator of an established museum, he would have had a broader knowledge.

Hügel had anthropological expertise.<sup>221</sup> Again, Florence Bailey notes that Cadell came specifically to see the collection. Whilst there is no evidence that Von Hügel was in the Baileys' social circle, Cadell, as a well-respected Edinburgh local, who had also worked for the Indian Civil Service, may have been. Despite their lack of knowledge on Tibet, both men were collectors, scholars and experts in their field, with particular interests in material culture. They were authorities in a manner that Florence Bailey may have hoped both her and her son would become.

These connections to the established academic community were created through public knowledge of Eric Bailey's private Tibetan collection, as orchestrated by his mother. Her diaries record many visitors over the period 1905-1909 who saw the collections, mostly during social visits to the family: an experience that thoroughly entrenched the collection within the domestic context. Many were people they knew but some, like Von Hügel and Cadell, came specifically to see the collection. Often visitors are recorded as having found the collection 'most interesting' or 'much admired', but any specific comments were not recorded.

Through her promotion and propagation of Eric Bailey's Tibetan objects, Florence Bailey gave the collection a new life beyond Tibet and beyond its associations with the 1904 Expedition, integrating it into the Edinburgh establishment as a symbol of knowledge, cultural identity, imperial power and

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<sup>221</sup> Colonel Thomas Cadell served in the Indian Army during the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions. He was later Governor of the Nicobar and Andaman Islands, returning to Edinburgh in 1892, the same year as the Baileys. He amassed a significant collection of Andaman objects, most of which are now in NMS and Brighton Museum and Gallery.

aesthetic taste. The collection's identity up to that point, as items of prestige and male triumphalism or imperialism, was not lost or veiled by its move into the family home, but those concepts were embedded within a domestic environment, connecting global and local concerns. Florence Bailey did not sanitise the collection: setting it against a backdrop of chintz and Victorian furniture did not make items that were looted, or weapons from the 1904 Expedition, completely benign.<sup>222</sup> Instead she moulded her son's construction of Tibet to her own situation.

Her diaries suggest that her activities were successful. Not only did her social circle expand around the collection, but the ultimate gatekeeper of imperial knowledge – the museum – took an interest as, I believe, a direct result of her actions. On December 28<sup>th</sup> 1906 Mr Vallance, Keeper of the Art and Ethnography Department at the RSM, went to visit Florence and Frederick Bailey to see the 'Tibetan curios – [he was] much interested in them, would like some for museum.'<sup>223</sup> In 1907, now posted to Chumbi, Eric Bailey began collecting with the Museum in mind. Although the overall content of the collection would continue to mirror his earlier collecting activities (Figure 30), the major difference was that he was now able to collect items of a larger size than in 1904. The removal of the collection from the family home to the public museum represented the next phase in the life of these objects, and although Florence Bailey is entirely absent from the Museum's own records, her influence on the form of the collection remains. Today, as in Florence Bailey's

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<sup>222</sup> As was probably the case in other domestic situations, where the family did not take an interest in Tibetan items beyond appreciating their ornamental value.

<sup>223</sup> *Diary of Florence Bailey*, [Ms EUR/F157/104], Bailey Family Papers.

home, the collection not only forms part of a larger group of objects representing an image of Tibetan culture for the Scottish public, but remains a memorial to her son and his role in the Empire. The suit of armour collected when Eric Bailey was trade agent at Gyantse now stands at the centre of the *Discoveries* gallery in the newly redeveloped NMS.



Figure 30: Lama's papier mache hat (L) and a helmet (R), Bailey collection. © National Museums Scotland.

Both items were bought specifically for the museum after 1906, as documented in letters between Eric and Florence Bailey.<sup>224</sup>

Within the domestic environment, Florence Bailey reinterpreted Tibetan culture for the Edinburgh public. Most overtly, her handling of the collection expressed the concept of prestige collecting, highlighting her and her son's connection to the objects. Within the museum setting of the *Discoveries* gallery, the suit or armour continues to be exhibited within that framework, and has yet to reclaim its own identity, separate from the Bailey family.<sup>225</sup> Florence herself never used the term 'art' in relation to the objects that adorned her home, but the collection would certainly be seen in those terms when it was

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<sup>224</sup> Lama's hat (NMS A.1909.424) and Helmet (NMS A.1909.409).

<sup>225</sup> For further discussion on the interpretation of this object within NMS, see Chapter Six, section 6.5, Coda: 'Scotland to the World, The World to Scotland': 459.

displayed in the RSM a few years later. Her role as curator, transitioning the collection from the domestic to a public space, was therefore indirectly influential on the rise of Tibetan art within Edinburgh. The scale and breadth of her son's collection would make it foundational to the RSM's Tibetan displays into the present day.

### **3.10 Military collecting: a different engagement with Tibet**

Whilst missionary collectors constructed a vision of Tibet through sustained contact over the course of the latter part of the nineteenth century, military engagement occurred in one moment in time, over a period of scarcely a year (1903-1904). There are more Tibetan objects in Scottish museums associated with missionaries than with 1904 Expedition personnel,<sup>226</sup> yet military collectors remain a far more visible presence in these museums. This is because military personnel associated with the 1904 Expedition cultivated longer relationships with their collections *after* that moment of encounter, creating a network of interest and, crucially, building on the frenzy for Tibetan material culture that occurred in the wake of the 1904 Expedition.<sup>227</sup> Whilst missionaries cared for objects for a greater length of time in the field, often integrating them into their daily lives and later into their public work, it was through the maintenance of long-term relationships with objects in Britain, and through protracted and

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<sup>226</sup> As noted in previous chapters, there are 280 objects positively identified as being associated with the 1904 Expedition in Scottish museums and nearly 500 objects collected by known missionaries in Edinburgh and Glasgow Museums alone.

<sup>227</sup> Which, as has already been noted, Harris views as the turning point for the creation of 'Tibetan Art' in the West. Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 54.



often hard negotiations with museums, that military collectors have retained such a strong presence in the biographical record of their collections. As the Bailey collection shows, this often occurred in the familial context, where such connections could be seen by society, and objects could be embedded in established domestic routines. Yet museums' own attitudes to different types of collectors have also shaped their place within these institutions. This will be outlined further in Chapter Five, where I will argue that class hierarchies amongst both collectors, and the people from whom they collected, were highly influential on collectors' places within the museum record and had a particularly strong impact on the place of missionary collectors within museum hierarchies.<sup>228</sup>

Although I have explored two different ways in which military collectors understood Tibetan material culture – as items of prestige and items of knowledge – these were not opposing ideas, and were formed out of a singular military 'character', which took part in the 1904 Expedition. By the end of the nineteenth century the army was enjoying unprecedented popular appeal and as Spiers notes, 'this upsurge of interest was the convergence of various political, religious and cultural ideas, the propagation of pro-military images and beliefs in a variety of media, and the extensive coverage of the army and its colonial activities'.<sup>229</sup> These ideas, which included racial prejudices, class hierarchies and colonial social networks, drew in men who were willing to adhere to the imperial cause, and would therefore relate to the world beyond

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<sup>228</sup> See Chapter Five, 5.4 From collector to museum, 376.

<sup>229</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, 180.

the Empire in common ways. The fact that the officers Bailey, Dalmahey, Bell and Campbell knew each other, and that their families formed lasting social connections, was not only down to the fact that they all lived in Edinburgh. They shared a mind-set and experienced Tibet largely in the same way. This created the frame of reference within which they collected and chose objects, which drew military collectors together to form a coherent understanding of Tibet.

The violence of the 1904 Expedition was a strong influence on military personnel's collecting processes. But the variety of ways in which collecting took place— loot, purchase and gift — show that this relationship could be violent, passive and reciprocal all at the same time, and all are visible within these collections. Military collecting was not therefore completely defined by the act of plunder, though looting was pivotal to establishing different sorts of relationships between British collectors and indigenous Tibetans than had previously existed in the missionary context.

Crucially, the impact of this one moment was far reaching. Eric Bailey demonstrates that the 1904 Expedition created an arena in which Tibet could be domesticated into the British home, where objects could be widely understood as 'art', and which integrated the life of the collector and that of the object to a greater degree than had occurred previously.

The process of immortalising the collector within the collection was taken up by museums as well as the individual, drawing museums into both the act of collector memorialisation and the legitimisation of material taken under

dubious circumstances.<sup>230</sup> In 1908 the RSM Museum Guide included both a note on the 1904 Expedition, and a specific nod to the collection of Ottley.<sup>231</sup> The continued presence of missionary collectors within their collections was never as strong, underlying the relationship between the museum as a tool of imperial policy and propaganda, and the soldier who upheld imperial ideologies with far less tension than his missionary counterparts. The RSM went on to create a conventional vision of Tibet, through a process of ‘flattening out’ the rich biographical histories of objects. This firmly placed material associated with the 1904 Expedition within the realm of prestige collecting, and later as Tibetan Buddhist art, at the expense of other understandings of that particular British-Tibetan encounter. This was very much a museum process, further addressed in Chapter Five, but aided by the historic perception that such homogeneity existed amongst military collectors and their families – as explained through ‘military character’.

1904 wasn’t just the moment in which Tibet was opened to British interests, or the moment in which British-Tibetan relations changed forever; it was also a moment in which, mainly unknowingly, military personnel brought to life the category of ‘Tibetan art’ in the British imagination. Donald Lopez has argued that Tibetan art ‘arrived too late to figure in any formation of a western aesthetic of classical Asian art’ and that ‘only after 1959 [did] Tibet’s treasures... draw the sustained gaze of art historians who had neither been to Tibet nor

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<sup>230</sup> Bénédicte Savoy, in her discussion on the role of the Louvre in creating a legitimate forum in which looted art could be discussed and interpreted, notes that ‘in this way, the ‘museum’ as an institution established itself the world over as a legitimate local for captured material, as an accepted condition for the intellectual and scholarly annexation of works of art and classical culture’. Savoy, “Looting in Art: The Museum as a Place of Legitimation”, 11-23.

<sup>231</sup> Scottish Education Department, *The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh*, 23.

read Tibetan',<sup>232</sup> but the influx of Tibetan material culture into Britain as a result of the 1904 Expedition couldn't help but form new object classifications, as huge quantities of material, never seen in Britain before, entered the country. The looting of Tibet's monasteries created a category known as 'Tibetan art', specifically 'Tibetan Buddhist art'. For those Expedition officers who saw that Tibetan material culture could have a place within the western canon of 'art', conclusions were drawn almost exclusively from the material acquired in monasteries, as those were the places in which the bulk of the Tibetan material collected, that could not be clearly classified as 'weaponry' or 'battlefield trophy', was found.

The objects and associated archival evidence relating to Scottish museum collections shows that many collectors were unaware of the role their collections played in shaping wider understandings of Tibetan art, or how collections relating to the 1904 Expedition constructed an image of Tibet beyond the military context. With the exception of Major Rybot, whose knowledge of Tibetan art came through his friendship with Waddell, there is little evidence that the military collectors in this study were actively engaging in these discussions.

The military construction of Tibet was built on tensions between old and new ways of imagining Tibet, but also old and new ideas within military practice. On entering Tibet, the British force was confronted with a situation that went against historic imaginative constructs, particularly relating to Tibetan

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<sup>232</sup> Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, 135-6.

Buddhism. Thus 'pure' Buddhism remained a fantasy locked in the libraries of Europe.

Military imperialism was influenced by many of the same aspects of Presbyterian doctrine as missionary organisations, although these two organisational spaces rearticulated the place of Protestant Christianity through different ideological frameworks. Younghusband believed God was at his side, and the 1904 Expedition could be said to have a sense of 'mission' about it that was not unfamiliar to the ideas being practiced by missionaries on Tibet's borders.<sup>233</sup>

A military 'type' as a distinct collecting group, at a distinct historical moment, did exist. But the evidence of their modes of collection, display and interpretation of Tibetan material culture highlight many of the commonalities that linked missionary and military collecting, whilst also embedding certain attitudes towards Tibetan culture within British imperial ideologies.

### **3.11 Conclusions: beyond the road to Lhasa**

One of the most lasting consequences of the 1904 Expedition was the changing relationship between the three 'imagined' Tibets. The geographically imagined Tibet, which had been built into the expeditions of the India Survey, or the adventures of Great Game players and missionaries, became a cartographically reliable reality. However the imperial and personal imaginations changed dramatically post 1904. What had been sought hadn't been found; there was no

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<sup>233</sup> Stewart, *Journeys to Empire*, 221.

enlightenment or streets paved with gold and the objects brought back to Britain did not produce a rounded image of Tibetan culture. This was partly due to the military nature of the campaign. Collections were the reflections of concerns for economic gain, 'prize' and personal glory.

The 1904 Expedition legitimised new knowledge about Tibet, because it occurred at the heart of imperial activity, not on its fringes, as much missionary activity had done. The opening of monasteries and sacred spaces, the entry of British troops into Lhasa, were violent acts that challenged the direction scholarly interests had been taking. Military personnel interacted with the very things and people that scholars in Europe were writing about, not just the 'ordinary' Tibetans that most missionaries encountered. The way these military personnel constructed Tibet for imperial, organisational and personal needs, not only impacted officers themselves, but played into the wider construction of Tibet in the British imagination. Just as missionary collections fed into Britain's wider Protestant identity and the ideas that they established about British Christian relations to the rest of the world, so too the military, as an organisation, shaped a wider public role often in tandem with other popular concerns.<sup>234</sup>

The intentions of military collectors who took part in the 1904 Expedition appear much clearer than their missionary counterparts, not only more homogenous in character, but in process and personality as well. Whilst missionary and military reactions to Tibetan Buddhism did share similarities, the

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<sup>234</sup> For example, the Salvation Army brought together military and missionary ideals to work towards the improvement of local communities.

overwhelming difference between the two collector groups came in their relationship to dominant imperial concepts, particularly relating to class, gender, race and 'religion', which would influence their encounters with Tibetans. Although other missionaries would come after 1904, most notably in the 1920s and 1930s when several managed to work from within Tibet's borders, thanks to the colonial 'moment' created by military intervention in 1904, their experiences were quite different to those of their predecessors.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s missionaries not only had access to monastic sites within Tibet, but were aware of what they contained. Collections made by missionaries at this time suggest they were taking these opportunities, changing the face of missionary collecting activities. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Cunningham, of the CIM, donated four large *thangkas* to the RSM in 1946. Unlike the *thangkas* sold by Annie Taylor, which were very small and likely from a domestic setting, these large examples were probably from a monastery. (NMS A.1946.945-948).

## **4 From Collector to Museum: Tracing Biographies of Objects and People**

### **4.1 Introduction**

So far, this thesis has proposed a certain theoretical and methodological model for examining missionary and military collecting processes in regard to Tibetan material culture. This model suggests that missionary organisations and military regiments were structured to provide those who actively shared in their ideological concerns with a specific lens through which to visualise their participation in imperialist discourse and colonial practice. These two groups have presented definable and fixed points from which to examine the collection of Tibetan material culture. As a result, we can see that these groups constructed 'Tibet' in broadly consistent ways, even if within those groups particular individuals reveal more fluid and dynamic responses to such structure, offering some tensions against these collecting 'norms'.

For the missionary, as we have seen, Tibetan material culture was presented as a tool for education, for commercial activity and for utilitarian use within the home. For the military officer, Tibetan objects had commercial and personal value, but were additionally elevated from 'curio' to 'trophy and then 'art', showing that whilst both groups used Tibetan material in slightly different ways, their group characteristics were certainly not completely contrasting.

In this chapter, I wish to look at a less easily definable set of collecting practices, which operated around those previously examined fixed points of



missionary and military activity. As discussed in the introductory chapter, the majority of Tibetan material in Scottish museums came via individuals, rather than large scale purchases from auction houses, the break-up of estates or the disbandment of scholarly or commercial organisations.<sup>1</sup> The archival detail present within Scottish museum records has allowed for the unravelling of both collector life experiences and object biographies, tying them to particular moments in British imperial history. What this tells us is that within NMS alone, almost 400 objects are not associated with either missionaries or military personnel, accounting for approximately a third of the overall collections.<sup>2</sup> Although there are several larger groups of material amongst this number, most collectors donated just a few items each.<sup>3</sup> These came from a diverse group of people, including doctors, civil servants and their families, and tourists, all collecting over the course of almost a century from 1830-1920. For the purposes of this chapter, I will call them colonial collectors, in response to their relationships with established British-Indian communities and their positions as

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the Victoria and Albert Museum procured a significant Tibetan collection from the closure of the East India Company Museum. For this material, the only known 'collector' is the Company itself, and the individual biographical details of objects, and relationships between objects and people, have largely been lost.

<sup>2</sup> There are twenty-five named collectors within the NMS Tibetan collections who were not military or missionary personnel, as well as a small assortment of unprovenanced material. There are six similar collectors in the Marischal Museum (Aberdeen) and two well-known and well provenanced collections in the McManus Art Gallery and Museum, Dundee, one of whom is Thomas Wise (discussed in the opening chapter). The collectors who will be focus of this chapter were chosen for the size of their collections (over ten items), which lend themselves to analysis. All happen to have donated or sold to the NMS.

<sup>3</sup> This coming together of many small groups of material to form a whole is the basis of most museum collections, where a single donor could not be relied on. Larson and Gosden have discussed this in their analysis of the Pitt Rivers Museum collections, where they noted that over 4000 collectors were associated with fewer than ten objects each. Gosden and Larson, *Knowing Things*, 39.

British agents working within established colonial practices, which will be examined further later in this chapter.

## 4.2 Colonial collectors

Missionaries and military personnel had clearly defined and singled out 'Tibetan' material culture within their collecting processes, despite often working with or being resident near other cultural groups. By contrast, colonial collectors gathered a broad range of 'Himalayan' material, including objects from Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh and West Bengal. In this context, what made an object authentically 'Tibetan' included a broader range of understandings of the term 'authenticity' itself.

Colonial collectors did share some of the characteristics visible within missionary and military collector groups. Like military officers, many other British agents came from a long line of imperial workers, their families moving back and forth between Britain and India across the generations. Their 'imperial imaginations' were therefore already engaged with particular expectations and fantasies about Tibet, just as in the case of missionary and military collector groups.<sup>4</sup> In common with missionaries, many of these collectors lived and worked in areas bordering Tibet, and were also in close proximity to other British agents with differing strategies, emphasise and opinions about Tibetan material culture. As collectors, these individuals all remained framed by the wider imperial discourse, embodied in their actions, including the process of

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<sup>4</sup> For a recap of the discussion on 'imagined' Tibet, refer to the Introduction, section 1.2.1, 'Real' and 'Imagined': **The British Empire and the construction of Tibet: 27.**

collecting. Racial prejudice and a belief in Christian superiority were not confined to missionary discourse, nor was a concern for hierarchy and status the sole purview of the military.

If colonial collectors form a group, but are not definable through the obvious links that make missionary and military collectors into cohesive units, how do we analyse the way in which their Tibetan collections fed into the construction of Tibet within Britain? Furthermore, how can we make visible the ways in which material things were attributed specific roles by their collectors, thereby integrating them into British-Indian society and reflecting wider concerns about imperial ideologies and colonial practices?

Robert Young examines imperialism and colonialism as constituent parts of empire: imperialism as a structure of empire, bureaucratically controlled by government from a centre, developed for ideological and financial reasons, and colonialism as a structure of empire developed specifically for settlement by individual communities or for commercial purposes by trading companies.<sup>5</sup> Young argues that imperialism was a centralised project of power, somewhat abstract, whereas colonialism functioned as a physical activity, often economically driven and peripheral to central government. Therefore, whilst we can analyse imperialism as a concept, colonialism must be analysed as a practice.<sup>6</sup>

For the purposes of this study, this differentiation aids an understanding of how a varied group of British agents, with different

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<sup>5</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism*, 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

relationships to the Empire – some working for it, some within it, some attempting to subvert it – visualised their encounters with Tibetan culture.<sup>7</sup> The collectors examined in this chapter lived ‘colonially’, in terms of their relationship to empire, to one another and to Indian culture. However, their relationship with Tibetans, and more specifically Tibetan material culture, operated over a physical and cultural distance, with encounters taking place in the ‘contact zone’ of Indian territory where the British community was politically and socially dominant.<sup>8</sup> This, then, was a form of colonialism that was under a far greater influence of imperialism and is best understood as similar to the forms of colonialism witnessed contemporaneously in Africa, rather than the colonialism of Australia or New Zealand with their rapidly expanding European settler populations. For colonial collectors, living within the stable British-Indian community, often for generations, their interaction with Tibetan material culture brought Tibet into their daily enactment of colonial practices within Indian territory. The ways this was manifested are the traces now visible through the collections themselves, and the information stored in museums and archives about the collecting process. Richard H. Davis, in his biographical analysis of Tipu’s Tiger, notes that in its present location within the Victoria and Albert Museum, the viewer can no longer turn the crank and hear it roar,

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<sup>7</sup> One might say that military personnel worked for the empire, in their capacity as members of the armed services, but when not on active duty, or based in an Indian cantonment, could be understood as working within it. Missionaries worked within and against empire, dependent on the motivations of the individual, as seen in Chapter Two. Colonial collectors, on the whole, were working within empire, in roles that were colonial, rather than imperial. Only Lord Carmichael, in his capacity as Governor of Bengal, could be seen to cross that boundary.

<sup>8</sup> A contact zone can be defined as ‘a social space where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination’. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 4.

reminding them that ‘they can no longer vicariously participate in the colonial enterprise’.<sup>9</sup> What I will demonstrate in this chapter is the variety of ways in which objects were able to be of service to collectors, and how their movement through time and place recorded this ever-changing process.

In the opening to his paper *Collecting in British India: A Sceptical View*, Brian Durrans states: ‘To review even briefly what and how the British collected in India is to reflect on how much and how little is known about India through its collected artefacts’. This is certainly also true of collecting practices in Tibet, highlighted particularly in the instances, such as this, when archival material offering detailed explanations for specific collecting patterns is absent. This chapter will present a shift in the balance between textual material and objects, focusing more on the objects themselves as the main source of evidence.

### **4.3 Trials and traces: tracing biographies of objects and people**

The idea of unpacking the biographical detail inherent in objects, as outlined by Igor Kopytoff, has already been summarised in the introduction to this thesis.<sup>10</sup> I have also shown how, as Susan Pearce notes, objects are socially meaningful on many levels, and both individuals and societies attach different moral and economic values as a result of historical experience, both personal and communal.<sup>11</sup> In Chapters Two and Three, I have used specific examples to examine how objects were appropriated and reconfigured by collectors for a

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<sup>9</sup> Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, 184.

<sup>10</sup> See Introduction, section 1.4, Recounting biographies: objects and collectors: 74.

<sup>11</sup> Pearce, *On Collecting*, 16.

variety of purposes, showing the malleability of object meanings and how their biographical presence can be woven into both personal biographies and historical moments in different ways.<sup>12</sup>

In this chapter I would like to expand on that introductory premise. The idea of 'biography' as a framework for thinking about the complex social relations that form between people and things has been useful but how, in practice, do we unpack the information archived within objects? The answer is that objects have agency themselves, and whilst in the previous chapters it has been the collectors who have been the most discernable 'agents', in this chapter I will examine the reverse of this, following the objects as 'actors', to unearth collector intent. In my introduction I emphasised Christopher Steiner's reading of Kopytoff, highlighting the dangers in assuming objects have agency without people. The methodology of this chapter does not contradict that premise, but looks at the problem from an alternative angle – using the biographies of objects to uncover the biographies of people. Here, I wish to find a methodological approach whereby objects' voices can be heard without reliance on archival material and when a framework, tying collectors to certain principles, practices and organisations is impossible to envisage. At the same time, it is essential to recognise the importance of personal connections between people and objects, which can, as Sarah Byrne notes, forefront local

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<sup>12</sup> As noted, Christopher Steiner is particularly keen to highlight this malleability, showing that it is the role of the individual and the systems that are constructed to imbue material goods with significance and meaning that give objects their power, and that we must take care not to give too much power to the things themselves, thereby diminishing the significance of human agency. Steiner, "Rights of Passage", 210. This ties to Latour's own assertion that Actor-Network-Theory 'is not the empty claim that objects do things 'instead' of human actors', but that we need to make sure we explore who and what (even non-human) participates in any action'. Latour, *Reassembling the social*, 72.

agency but also encourage a deeper consideration of the face-to-face interactions between different people and between people and things.<sup>13</sup>

This approach, looking for agency in objects, as well as the collectors for whom they have a recognisable role, allies itself in some ways with Bruno Latour's actor-network-theory, particularly his suggestion that you need to 'follow the actors themselves'.<sup>14</sup> By understanding the movement of objects and the way in which they form new articulations in changing contexts, we can explore their roles as mediators in encounters between collectors and Tibetan culture. The enactment of colonial practices by collectors led to the continuous remaking of 'colonialism' as a concept and continually changed relationships between different forms of agency. Therefore the only way to clearly distinguish particular collecting processes is to follow individual collectors and their objects as they move through these changing frames of reference.

For this study, however, I will be using a particular interpretation of Latour's model, as outlined by Sarah Byrne in her concept of 'trials and traces'. Byrne offers a methodological approach for mapping these biographical relations between objects and people by following the experiences of different individuals (the trials of the collectors) to unpack the relationships and agencies inherent in collections (the traces). In conceptualising objects as traces, through which agency can be revealed,<sup>15</sup> Byrne offers a model for making salient those details Kopytoff suggests are masked by more traditional or formal ways of

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<sup>13</sup> Byrne, "A.C. Haddon's Agency as Museum Curator", 308.

<sup>14</sup> Latour, in Byrne, *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

viewing material culture.<sup>16</sup> These ‘traces’ can be found on objects themselves; through physical marking, labelling and modifications, reflecting decisions made about and around objects. But the trace can also be the actual object, its very presence at a specific place and time reflective of the agency of those involved in its movement from maker to museum.<sup>17</sup>

Through the ‘trials’ we can track associations between motivations, access, relations (including agency), intent and place. In objects we can trace authenticities, as objects mediated different responses to themselves and the situations within which they were given public and private roles. The specific examples within this thesis explore how the construction of something ‘authentic’ – not just as something material, but as an experience – was made real through objects, and how those objects helped to define the biographies of their collectors, revealing their agency in the process. I will use the examples in this chapter to trace these associations through objects and across time and space, through a series of different collectors, each of whom brings to the fore a varied set of associations, tying them to other collectors, imperial concerns, colonial practices and personal experiences; all of which were authenticated in specific ways.

Through this approach, I wish to show how colonial collectors presented many of the same concerns as seen through the collecting processes in the previous chapters, regarding race, gender, class, and definitions of ‘religion’ and ‘art’. However, these need to be revealed in different ways in order to explore

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<sup>16</sup> Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things”, 67.

<sup>17</sup> Byrne, “A.C. Haddon’s Agency as Museum Curator”, 308.



the construction of Tibet by colonial collectors, whose ideological frameworks lacks visible coherency. I will follow these biographical traces not chronologically, but through the markers left by particular experiences and ways of viewing Tibetan culture that thread together these disparate collections, thereby revealing which ‘trials’ produced the specific ‘traces’ still evident in the collections today.<sup>18</sup>

#### **4.4 Positioning collections: time and place**

As already noted, the collectors examined in this chapter operated over distance – both spatial and temporal. The earliest of those, Thomas Wise, was examined in the introductory chapter, and represents the starting point for this study.<sup>19</sup> The last moment of collecting to be explored in this thesis took place in Ladakh in about 1913, when the artist Ernest Stephen Lumsden and his wife Mabel Royds travelled through the area. However, the last collection to be transferred from collector to museum was that of Isabelle Tyrie, whose objects entered the RSM on her death in 1989. All these collectors undertook their collecting from India. Therefore I would like to begin by briefly noting some of the key moments of change within British-Indian society that had a particular impact on collecting practices and understandings of Tibetan material culture.

I suggest that there were three events that were of particular importance to this present study. The last of these was the 1904 Expedition,

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>19</sup> Refer to Introduction, section 1.3.6, Collecting the essence of Tibet: Thomas Alexander Wise and the development of nineteenth century collecting strategies: 61.

outlined in the previous chapter, which altered the meanings of 'art', 'authenticity' and 'value' in relation to Tibetan material culture. Two earlier events were, however, also important. These were the Indian Rebellion of 1857, and the building of the railway network across India through the 1880s, which linked the hill stations in West Bengal, where much of the collecting took place, to the administrative heart of British-India.

#### **4.4.1 Positioning collections: The 1857 Indian Rebellion**

Ronald Hyam suggests that the most significant social impact of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 was that British attitudes to Indian 'character' were fundamentally challenged. The 'mild Hindu' stereotype was replaced by one which was deceptive and cruel.<sup>20</sup> Although western perceptions of Indian culture had recognised India to have a 'civilisation', as documented by Thomas Wise and his contemporaries in the early decades of the nineteenth century, after 1857 it was understood as a civilisation of decline, degradation, and squalor.<sup>21</sup> The major outcome of this event, which had been a threat to British/white dominance, was the fixing of ideas about race, new ideas about the nature of racial difference, and the level of 'civilisation' it was possible for indigenous peoples to attain. If Indians could not achieve the qualities of their

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<sup>20</sup> Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 141.

<sup>21</sup> Breitenbach, "Religious Literature and Discourses of Empire", 94. This was also linked to the rising influence of Macaulayism (and Scots within the empire's political landscape, as discussed in the Introduction), which had a profound effect on British strategies for the rule of Indian subjects, creating rigid positions for both British and Indian subjects under imperial rule. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 90-93.

British rulers, then it was necessary for such rule to be reaffirmed.<sup>22</sup> As a consequence, the British populace removed itself even further from contact with its Indian subjects, increasing tensions through society's segregation. The Rebellion also brought a swift change to the political management of the Indian subcontinent, with the end of The Company's rule and the introduction of British governmental domination. This change in political and military strategy, fostered a less benign view of empire,<sup>23</sup> moving the focus of understanding the 'Other' away from the circulation of knowledge, where ideas continually flowed and changed, to a period of fixed perceptions of the Indian, and his/her associated culture, accompanied by a stronger need for a physical military presence.

In the decades immediately following the Rebellion, a view was formed of the 'basic structure of Indian society' as 'caste-ridden, village-living and princely-led', which by the last quarter of the nineteenth century was 'even more deliberately encouraged and energetically projected'.<sup>24</sup> As most of the collectors examined in this thesis were living in India, these events could not have helped but influence their attitudes to both the Indians they encountered daily, and the Tibetans they encountered less frequently. From Robert Brown, who was collecting around the time of the Rebellion in the late 1850s, to Lilian Le Mesurier collecting in 1903, the effects of this major event on perceptions and practices remained visible.

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<sup>22</sup> Hall, "Of Gender and Empire", 46-47.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 45.

#### 4.4.2 Positioning collections: connecting Darjeeling and Ladakh to imperial interests

In 1881 Darjeeling was connected to the rest of India by the arrival of the railway. Although already established as a small British community, the introduction of easy transport was the catalyst for the expansive growth of the hill station and its surrounding subsidiary stations including Kalimpong, Lebong and Kurseong.<sup>25</sup> The railway links gave a boost to planters, who established tea, coffee and cinchona estates, making the hill stations viable as residences for a wider variety of British agents, both on a seasonal and permanent basis.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the hill stations were beginning to play a more prominent political role in British-Indian life. Simla, another hill station, became the summer capital for the Viceroy of India and other high-ranking authorities within the British-Indian administration. The summer 'season' could extend for up to six months of the year, making Simla an important administrative centre. In 1879 the Governor of Bengal built the first official residence in Darjeeling, making it the province's summer capital, and a place of politics as well as pleasure. By the mid 1880s, Darjeeling was home to a vibrant British community; a site of refuge from, and surveillance of, the rest of India.<sup>27</sup>

Darjeeling is itself an association traceable through many of the collections examined across this thesis. It became a meeting point for social, intellectual and political discourse, and played a prominent position in the lives

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<sup>25</sup> Darjeeling was actually founded as a hill station in 1828. For further information on the early days of Darjeeling as a hill station, see Clarke, "The English Stations in the Hill Regions of India" 532-534.

<sup>26</sup> Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

of both collectors and collections. The relationship between this colonial 'periphery' at the edge of British-Indian territory and the British 'metropolises' of London and, in this instance, Edinburgh, was fundamental to how knowledge and objects moved around the Empire and to how objects could be acquired in the first place. Yet it was not a straightforward relationship in which metropole dominated periphery. In the context of this study Darjeeling was a major conduit allowing the flow of information to bypass London entirely.<sup>28</sup>

Even centres of power within the India, such as Calcutta, Delhi, Bombay and Simla, were relatively peripheral to most of the collecting examined in this chapter. For the collectors of Tibetan material culture now in Scottish museums, Darjeeling, Ladakh and Sikkim provided the centres of influence for both the acquisition of objects and the acquisition of knowledge about Tibetan culture. This relationship between parts of the Empire is indicative of the problems that faced imperialist policy makers in their attempts to provide a framework of power across such a vast array of territory and peoples, and shows how different areas could be both metropolises and peripheries simultaneously, when presented in different circumstances.<sup>29</sup> Culture was not just a commodity to be bartered and exchanged, but also a site of movement itself, where knowledge and objects sent representations of 'Others' (in this instance Tibet) around the globe.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> As Michael Marten notes: 'peripheries by definition are spatial or imaginary territories that cannot be completely controlled by the centre: to varying degrees they change and develop independently of the centre, and act in ways that necessitate the centre occasionally needing to re-gain or re-assert its position as the centre'. Marten, "Re-imagining 'Metropole' and 'Periphery' in Mission History", 297.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>30</sup> See for example Clifford, "Travelling Cultures", 101.

Hill stations, and Darjeeling in particular, were important places that manifested ideas about British 'traditional' life. Thanks to the temperate climate, Darjeeling offered an environment where life could revolve around the family unit, meaning that children did not need to be sent away and husbands and wives could remain together throughout the year. Whereas the British population in India as a whole was overwhelmingly male, in the hill stations women and children equalled, or exceeded, men.<sup>31</sup> Therefore the social dynamic within the hill stations was markedly different to that of the plains.

A sense of 'Britishness' was particularly acute in the hill stations, playing on the notion that these spaces were not 'Indian' at all but were entirely British creations, physically and culturally removed from the rest of India: the further removed one became from the 'Other', the nearer to home one could be.<sup>32</sup> The hill stations therefore served a particular role within imperialism's imaginative geographies, by strengthening a sense of self through distance and difference.<sup>33</sup> This was not simply a division of east and west, but divisions were also made to distinguish different types of 'Indian', which influenced ideas about economic and social advancement within the area.

Social and economic commentator Hyde Clarke identified the 'hill people' as an old and established race who were heavily oppressed by the Hindu populations, relative latecomers to the history of India. As such, he saw it the duty of the Empire to free these older 'indigenous' communities from Indian

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<sup>31</sup> Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains*, 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>33</sup> Kenny, "Climate, Race and Imperial Authority", 696.

oppression.<sup>34</sup> To many British-Indian residents and social commentators at the time, the ‘indigenous’ community (mostly Lepchas) around Darjeeling were the moral antithesis to the intractable and unfathomable subjects on the plains – the larger Bengali population.<sup>35</sup> However, the tea industry caused a huge population influx into the Darjeeling area, many of whom were not representative of the ‘hill people’ who formed the romanticised idea of an indigenous community, but were Bengalis from further south and Nepalese Ghurkhas from across the border. Labour also came in from Bhutan and Tibet, so that the community in the hills, the haven of Britishness, was in fact built on otherness.<sup>36</sup>

This ever-changing population and its varying relations with the politically dominant British population are reflected in both collecting practices and the objects themselves. A variety of agencies and ideas about ‘indigenous’ culture can be traced through the collections, bringing out the tensions that were present, but often hidden, within this ‘British’ community.

The other area of particular importance to this chapter is Ladakh. Ladakh had been incorporated into the Indian Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir in 1846, and was therefore under the indirect rule of the British, who operated a network of political postings, a diplomatic service of sorts, within the area. These men, part of the Indian Political Service, were tasked with building ties

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<sup>34</sup> Clarke, “The English Stations in the Hill Regions of India”, 562.

<sup>35</sup> Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains*, 69.

<sup>36</sup> In his statistical analysis, Clarke notes that the population of the Darjeeling district increased by 60,000 between 1872-1881, mostly as a result of labourers coming into the area to work on the plantations. Clarke, “The English Stations in the Hill Regions of India”, 559.

with the ruling elites and neighbouring states, such as Tibet and Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> There had been a major Tibetan presence in the area since the ninth century, when a Tibetan Royal Household was established in Ladakh following the breakup of the Tibetan Empire. The resulting influx of Tibetans created a Tibetan population outside of Tibet, and therefore accessible to those wishing first hand access to Tibetan culture. As I will show later in this chapter, this meant that objects collected in the monasteries of Ladakh came to be considered particularly 'authentic' representations of Tibetan culture, more so than items bought in the markets of Darjeeling. Though the market wares of Darjeeling may have been made within Tibet itself, items were considered to be manufactured for trade, and understood by collectors as pieces not necessarily for *use* by Tibetans.<sup>38</sup> These were not always tourist pieces, but by the late nineteenth century the items available in the markets around Darjeeling had been implicated as 'spurious antiques'.<sup>39</sup> Such pronouncements, and the effects of the professionalisation of ethnographic collecting practices, had a major impact on patterns of collecting, a side effect of which was to make places such as Ladakh a haven of 'authenticity'. If, as Susan Pearce notes, the 'essence of a spurious artefact... is the once-decent artefact perverted into something it is not

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<sup>37</sup> With thanks to John Bray for outlining the role of the Indian Political Service, and its differentiation from the Indian Civil Service. Email to author 22/11/2011.

<sup>38</sup> This attitude tied in to a prevailing feeling that objects made for sale in this manner were inauthentic, as the local community did not make them specifically for use. In fact, Tibetans were just as likely to buy goods from these markets and bazaars as anyone else, as part of the markets' consumer base was the Tibetan community in Darjeeling. An excellent comparison can be found in Ruth Phillips assessment of the role of 'tourist art' in North America, which was misunderstood in a similar way. Phillips, "Why Not Tourist Art?", 98-125.

<sup>39</sup> Le Mesurier, "Tibetan Curios", 261.



as a result of collecting activity',<sup>40</sup> then the meaning of Waddell's words were clear: for Waddell a *gau*, for example, purchased from a market stall, without going through the process of consecration – and therefore authentication – and placed into a 'collection', was inauthentic. This opinion was decisively influential, as seen in the collecting practices of Lilian Le Mesurier in particular, who believed that Ladakh offered an alternative to Darjeeling, which was 'of course, full of traders in more or less spurious antiquities'.<sup>41</sup>

These two areas positioned both their indigenous inhabitants and incoming British residents in very different ways. Darjeeling was a colonial centre, dominated by British culture but a space where targeting 'authentic Tibetan culture' was more difficult. By contrast, Ladakh had almost no British colonial presence, was not under direct British rule, but was considered a worthy surrogate for the 'authentic representation' of Tibetan culture in the absence of direct access to Tibet itself.

#### **4.5 Colonial collectors: biographical case studies**

In the rest of this chapter I will work through a series of short case studies, linking these varied collecting processes to the moment at which collections became integrated into the museums' construction of Tibet. Through these case studies I will revisit issues already outlined in the previous chapters, including gender, class, race, 'art', and the ways in which objects performed for their collectors, thereby integrating them into colonial practices.

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<sup>40</sup> Pearce, *On Collecting*, 294.

<sup>41</sup> Le Mesurier, "Tibetan Curios", 261.

#### 4.5.1 Isabelle Tyrie: familial ties and object legacies

In 1989 the estate of Isabelle Tyrie bequeathed a large portion of the Tibetan collections amassed by her father, Colonel David Alexander Tyrie, to the RSM.<sup>42</sup> These Tibetan items had formed part of a larger collection, gathered by Colonel Tyrie from his first appointment in India in 1888 until his death in 1946.<sup>43</sup> Colonel Tyrie had a dual role, as an agent of empire and an agent of commerce, being both an associate of the Port Gloucester Jute Manufacturing Co. Ltd., and Assistant Deputy Commissioner to the Governor of Bengal. He was also apparently a leading force in the formation of the Calcutta Scottish Volunteers, a regiment raised as part of the Indian Volunteer Force, formed in 1914.<sup>44</sup> Whilst stationed in India, the family lived in a large house near Calcutta, said to have been built by Clive of India, and spent their summer months in Darjeeling.<sup>45</sup> On his retirement, Colonel Tyrie held various board positions

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<sup>42</sup> Some of Colonel Tyrie's Tibetan items were bequeathed to Dundee's McManus Museum and Art Gallery, the Tyrie family's 'local' museum, which was also bequeathed a selection of Japanese and Chinese items from his collection.

<sup>43</sup> The Tyries left India in 1920 and Mrs Tyrie died in 1928, after which Colonel Tyrie and his daughter Isabelle continued to travel, and collect extensively, including trips to South Africa, New Zealand, Japan, the West Indies and South America. The Dundee Courier, "Dundee Loses Noted Citizen" (1946). Copy of obituary notice courtesy of Christina Donald, McManus Museum and Art Gallery.

<sup>44</sup> The account of Tyrie's involvement in the Calcutta Scottish Volunteers is documented in his obituary, but I can find no further information, so his exact role is questionable and he may not have 'formed' the regiment at all. Tyrie was the son of a Dundee shipmaster, and worked as a cashier in a jute processing plant in Dundee before he travelled to India. He therefore had strong ties to the commercial interests of his home town.

<sup>45</sup> Clive of India was of course a founding father of Company rule, and therefore an almost mythical character in the history of the empire to those who came after him. The importance of this association is clear through the fact that Isabelle Tyrie remembered this information about her childhood home, when so many of her memories appear partial. *Interview with Isabelle Tyrie* [typed transcript, original source unknown], (4-6), Isabelle Tyrie Accession File, Department of World Cultures, National Museums Scotland Archive. There is no date on the document but it appears to have taken place not long before she died (in 1989), when she was

relating to social work in the Dundee area and was actively involved in the work of the Church of Scotland, as an elder of Dundee Parish Church.<sup>46</sup>

Isabelle Tyrie never left home. Following the death of her mother, she remained with her father in their house in Dundee, which they had purchased in 1920, and lived there until a decade before her death in 1989.<sup>47</sup> An interview conducted with Isabelle Tyrie shortly before she died suggests that not only did she stay in her family home, but that following the death of her father, very little was changed within the house itself, leaving the collections he had built up in his life time *in situ*.<sup>48</sup> Isabelle Tyrie therefore became curator to the legacy of her father. As sole custodian of the collection for over forty years, she was vital to both the construction of Tibet through the collection and the construction of her father's legacy in relation to the collection. By acting as custodian of the collection and making the decision to place it in the care of a museum, she became a mediator between her father's memory and the museum.

Florence Bailey, had built up a presence for her son in his absence, promoting his collection for his, as well as for her, benefit and shifting both the collection's meaning and context (whilst simultaneously influencing its content). By contrast, Isabelle Tyrie's static unchanging vision of Tibetan material culture was built around a framework of reverence to her father, whereby objects became a series of heirlooms that had little to do with the representation of

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resident in a care home. The document seems to have been given to NMS along with the bequest of objects in 1989. The interview documents her early life in India and her time in Dundee, including the roles her father undertook in both places and the family's social circumstances.

<sup>46</sup> *Interview with Isabelle Tyrie* [typed transcript, original source unknown], (4-6), Isabelle Tyrie Accession File, Department of World Cultures, National Museums Scotland Archive.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-27.

Tibet at all. An heirloom, by its very nature weaves, through a narrative, a significance of blood relation at the expense of a larger view of history and causality.<sup>49</sup> Heirlooms then, define who one is in the historical sense, allowing objects to act as vehicles for bringing the past into the present.<sup>50</sup> By living in an unchanging setting as arranged by her deceased parents, Isabelle Tyrie's home was replicating the entropy that would also occur within the museum, as associations and agencies hidden in the collection were lost through the death of her father and the passing of time.

Yet those associations remain inherent in the collection itself and can be retrieved from within it. The Tyrie Tibetan collection at NMS comprises of sixty objects, the most prominent pieces forming part of an altar service, consisting of a portable altar table made of gilded and silvered hammered copper, two gilded ritual daggers and a gilded *dorje* (Figure 31).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Susan Stewart, 1993: 137.

<sup>50</sup> Weiner, 1985: 210. Weiner is not talking about heirlooms *per se*, but heirlooms can be inalienable objects.

<sup>51</sup> Tibetan altar service (NMS A.1990.77A-D).

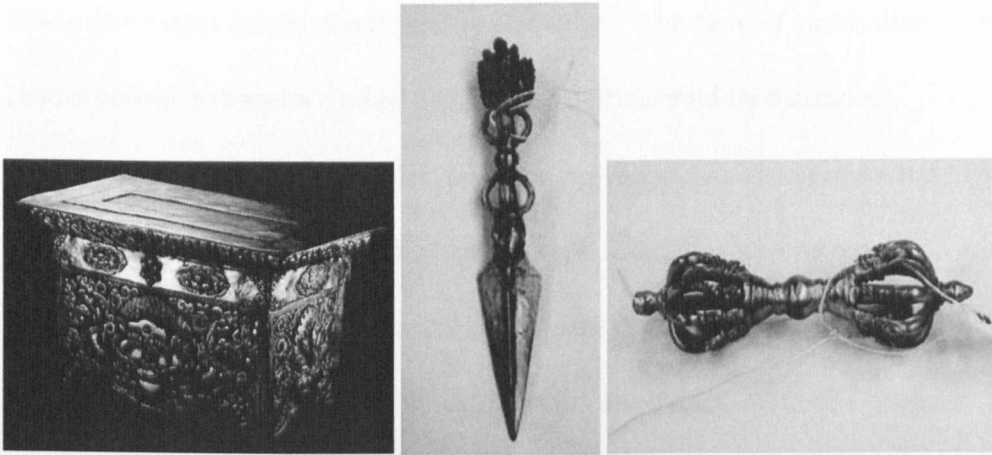


Figure 31: Portable altar, ceremonial dagger (*purba*) and *dorje*, Tyrie collection. © National Museums Scotland

These items, associated with Tibetan Buddhist practice, are found in monasteries, but also aristocratic homes with their own temple or altar room. These items were most likely made for that latter, domestic market, or for direct sale to Europeans.<sup>52</sup>

In contrast to the objects associated with Tibetan Buddhism outlined in the previous chapter, these are unlikely to have come from a monastery, and were probably acquired via a (wealthy) Tibetan home. Colonel Tyrie may even have commissioned them especially. Other objects are decorated in a similar style, such as a large copper ewer with silver and gilt panels, raised decoration, and turquoise and carnelian (Figure 32). These objects are in many ways the antithesis of the ‘Tibetan style’ outlined by Lilian Le Mesurier in her scholarly work on Tibetan design, discussed later in this chapter, which focused on the simplicity of Tibetan design, with a particular emphasis on the fact that ‘authentic’ Tibetan artefacts did not show the influence of neighbouring cultures.<sup>53</sup> However, Tyrie’s items spoke to the aesthetics of late Victorian and

<sup>52</sup> Table (NMS A.1990.77A), Dagger (NMS. A.1990.77C) and *Dorje* (NMS A.1990.77D).

<sup>53</sup> Le Mesurier’s interest in Tibetan metalwork design lay its simplicity and the use of blank spaces, a development she considered uniquely Tibetan in light of the highly detailed metalwork found in India. Le Mesurier, “Tibetan Art”, 294-301.

Edwardian tastes for the exotic and spectacular.<sup>54</sup> The type of authenticity they render visible is therefore quite different to that defined by the more academically minded Le Mesurier, who considered the inclusion of such items spurious, as they did not reflect a Tibetan style unadulterated by outside influences. Most of the collection could be considered slightly erroneous, for example the 'silver' cup stands and cup covers are in fact made of a cheaper white metal compound, and many of the semi-precious stones set into jewellery pieces are in fact either glass or small chips of turquoise and carnelian.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 32: Copper ewer, with gold and silver and semi-precious stone embellishment, Tyrie collection.<sup>56</sup> © National Museums Scotland.

This ewer is in the same distinctive Newari decorative style as many of the pieces within the Tyrie collection, suggesting that Colonel Tyrie was perhaps particularly keen on the style, and certainly did not see these items as 'inauthentic' Tibetan objects.

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<sup>54</sup> By the late nineteenth century, as Deborah Cohen notes, 'art' had entered the homes of the middle classes through the convergence of 'art' and 'commerce' and the proliferation of 'artistic' and 'exotic' possessions. Commercial establishments, such as Liberty's of London, played on this emerging taste for exotic possessions, which were becoming readily available within Britain. For the Tyries, such objects were available to purchase first hand, furnishing their very British home in India, much as their home in Britain would have been furnished. Cohen, *Household Gods*, 56-65.

<sup>55</sup> Tate, *Metallurgy Conservation Report For Collection of A.1990.59-97*. NMS conservator Jim Tate discovered that the 'silver' within the collection had extremely low silver content. Jewellery items (NMS A.1990.91-92) are examples of jewellery that has been made to look far richer than they are.

<sup>56</sup> Gilded copper ewer (NMS A.1990.85).

The decorative style itself and the processes used in the objects' manufacture are Newari.<sup>57</sup> Newari metalworkers had long been resident within Tibetan territory and were an important part of Tibet's trading network. Many of the traders the Tyries would have encountered in Darjeeling would have either been Newari or selling Newari goods. Such items were traded and used across the Himalayas, including by Tibetans, but are absent from the earlier collections of Tibetan material in Scottish museums, made by collectors who perhaps also saw Newari crafts as very much distinct from the Tibetan artefacts they were focused on collecting. Many of the objects in the Tyrie collection, including both utilitarian and decorative items, are Newari made, showing the abundance of accessible Newari material in the Darjeeling area and painting a richer, and more accurate, portrait of the Darjeeling community in the early twentieth century.

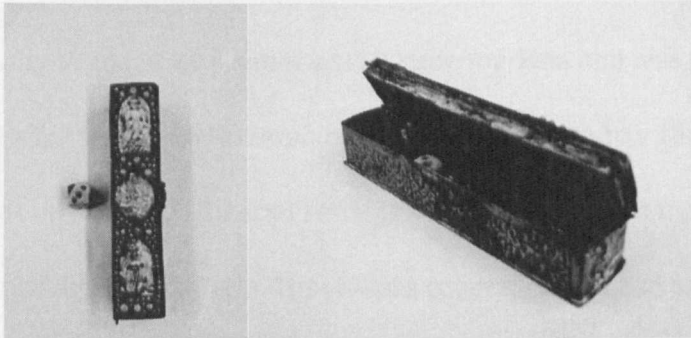


Figure 33: 'Dice box', Tyrie collection<sup>58</sup> © National Museums Scotland.

Other objects show the mixing of styles, such as a small box with a hinged lid, documented as a 'dice holder', which appears to reuse bone plaques

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<sup>57</sup> With thanks to John Clarke, Curator, Asia Department, Victoria and Albert Museum, for his help in the analysis of these objects. Newari craftspeople, originally from Nepal, travelled to and settled in Tibetan communities and were famed for their metalworking style, which was popular in Tibet. For a brief summary of Newari metalworking see: Pal, *Art of Nepal*, 81-82.

<sup>58</sup> Dice box (NMS A.1990.94+A).

similar to those found on monastic bone aprons (Figure 33). These items of ceremonial apparel, worn by monks during certain ritual proceedings, were known to have been taken by military collectors such as Ottley during the 1904 Expedition.<sup>59</sup> With the inclusion of turquoise and bone on an engraved brass box – all materials and techniques established by the collections made in 1903-1904 as being used in authentically Tibetan artefacts – this item pulls together different elements of Tibetan design to create a pastiche of a Tibetan object. Though taking its cues from post-1904 concepts of what formed Tibetan art, this ‘dice box’ is precisely the sort of item that scholars like Waddell, setting out ideals of ‘authenticity’, assumed to be spurious and inauthentic. These items were made as a result of Tibetan acknowledgement of western collecting desires. Through their subsequent development of these styles and object types, Tibetan craftspeople injected themselves into that market, making Tibetan agency visible in the formation of western ideas about Tibetan material culture. For every Waddell who shunned the curio markets and was willing to go to great lengths for ‘authentic’ Tibetan objects that were used by Tibetans, ideally from within authentic Tibetan settings such as the monastery, there were ten colonial agents like Tyrie. These were collectors who had an idea of what ‘authentic’ Tibetan material should look like, thanks to its new visibility post-1904, but were less concerned with provenance, manufacture, age or use

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<sup>59</sup> This is a strange object, which probably acquired the name ‘dice holder’ when it came into the RSM with dice inside. It is best understood as a decorative box with a hinged lid. The bone plaques on the lid have a series of small holes drilled into them, similar to those found on bone apron (NMS A.1905.352), collected by Ottley, which were probably originally a means of stringing them together. The ‘turquoise’ surrounding the plaques is of poor quality and may in fact be paste or dust particles glued together. The bone decoration may have come from a bone apron similar to Ottley’s, but repurposed with the tourist market in mind.



than their scholarly counterparts. Rather than serving a scholarly purpose, these items would become embedded in the domestic space of colonial collectors.

This type of object, often classed as souvenirs, probably made up the bulk of Tibetan objects sold to the British in Darjeeling in the early twentieth century.<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, within the material form of these objects, we see Tibetan and Newari agency come to the fore. The Tyrie collection as a whole, including those items now in Dundee's McManus Art Gallery and Museum, are all made of lesser-quality materials made to look like silver, turquoise and coral. At first glance many of the objects appear to be made using recognisably Tibetan decorative styles, but on closer inspection are in fact a mixture of styles and materials in forms that were not necessarily Tibetan at all, but paid homage to a variety of Himalayan influences.

The Newari-made altar set conforms to many of the stylistic notions within early twentieth century Britain as to what a Tibetan altar should look like, based on knowledge acquired in 1904, including its motifs, materials (which in this case are genuine silver and gold) and form. By the time Colonel Tyrie was collecting these pieces, probably post 1905,<sup>61</sup> the influx of Tibetan material from the 1904 Expedition into the area had both heightened its appeal to western collectors and, judging by the prices such items were reaching in London auction houses,<sup>62</sup> probably pushed many 'authentic' pieces out of the reach of colonial collectors living in the Himalayan foothills. Tibetan and Newari

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<sup>60</sup> Clare Harris has noted the voracity with which such items were manufactured and sold to western audiences intent on owning 'Tibetan' objects. Harris, *In the Image of Tibet*, 11.

<sup>61</sup> It is likely that the Tyries started going to Darjeeling in the summer after Isabelle's birth in 1905, as many children were removed from the heat in the summer months.

<sup>62</sup> See for example Stevens, *A Most Important and Valuable Collections of Tibetan Curios* (1905).

craftspeople appear to have been quick to fill this void, which coincided with an increased use of Darjeeling as a holiday destination for British-Indian residents, and produced items, such as the 'dice box', which were outwardly Tibetan without any of the markers of authenticity that had been expounded in the previous decade. This careful mixture of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic', and the innate understanding of the balance between the two, suggests craftspeople were creating new kinds of Tibetan objects, purely for a western market, subverting the western notion of Tibetan material culture without detection.

This collection, then, performed different roles for different individuals, and shows the multiple meanings of 'authenticity' that were evident in relation to Tibetan material culture. For Isabelle Tyrie, the objects were a legacy, illustrative of family ties and her childhood in India. As heirlooms, their position as 'authentic' Tibetan material culture was muted, in favour of their links to personal experiences. For her father, the original collector, these items were souvenirs of summers spent in the Darjeeling hills with his family, just as later pieces from China and Japan would be reminders of his extensive travels after his retirement. As representations of place, these objects were evidence of the authenticity of those personal experiences. Whilst they may have lacked many of the characteristics scholars of Tibetan material culture expressed as essential for objects to be authentically Tibetan, they were completely indicative of Darjeeling in the early twentieth century and the relationships between the sellers in the markets and their British audiences.

#### 4.5.2 Lord and Lady Carmichael

Lord Carmichael was made Governor of Madras, quickly followed by a move to Governor of Bengal, in 1911.<sup>63</sup> The position entailed spending the summer months in Darjeeling, away from the Presidency capital in Calcutta, and his appointment coincided with Colonel Tyrie's posting as Assistant Deputy Commissioner. This meant that both men were collecting in the same place, at the same time, whilst moving in the same social circles within British-Indian society. These threads of social contact, time and place offer a very different sort of 'trace' to that discussed above, which is found directly within the object. The position of the Carmichaels' objects at certain times and places, were themselves manifestations of agency and intent.

Carmichael was known as a connoisseur of the arts long before his first overseas appointment as Governor of Victoria, Australia. He had been an avid collector of Italian art and in retirement became a patron of several museums, as well as a trustee of the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery and the Wallace Collection, all in London.<sup>64</sup> He was, therefore, not just a collector of material culture but also a collector of 'art', who separated out 'ethnographic' objects and set up particular boundaries for the meaning of 'authenticity' within his Tibetan collection. This was a divergence from the Tibetan material collected by his colleague Colonel Tyrie discussed above.

Once in India, Lord Carmichael's attentions shifted to the collection of Indian art. His relationship with the art world was both private and public,

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<sup>63</sup> In February 1911 Lord Carmichael of Skirling was made Governor of Madras, transferring to the Governorship of Bengal five months later, a position he held until 1917.

<sup>64</sup> Weaver (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography 1922-1930*, 158.

extending to an interest in museums, as seen in his opening address at a Museums Conference in Madras in January 1912.<sup>65</sup> This address shows that he remained strongly tied to British museum practices, a British understanding of a museum's purpose, and the place of material culture within it. He noted how the majority of exhibits in Indian museums related to the flora, fauna and 'cultural' material of India, and that the bulk of visitors were keenly interested in depictions of their own culture, suggesting that:

'[Indian] visitors do not for the most part belong to the more wealthy classes to whose interest in other countries museums owe so much. If museums here are at all like those in Europe it will be to your interest to gain the sympathy of wealthy gentlemen who may perhaps make you presents which will add to the lustre of the museum'.<sup>66</sup>

Distinctions between art and ethnography were, at a certain level, tied to distinctions regarding class and race. 'Art' was of interest to, and in the interests of, a certain class of person: a group to whom the Carmichaels belonged. Ethnographic collections, though educationally useful, did not highlight the illustrious potential of museum exhibits and their associations with patrons, who were often private collectors themselves. In 1915 the Indian Museum in Calcutta hosted an exhibition of Carmichael's personal collection of Indian and Tibetan objects, which included such 'treasure [as] a fourteenth

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<sup>65</sup> This conference was held in Madras, January 15-17 1912, at the behest of the Government of India's Department of Education. Lord Carmichael gave the opening address and appears to have attended several of the sessions. *Address of Lord Carmichael, 15/01/1912*, [P/W 461], Pamphlet Collection, The British Library. With thanks to Mark Elliot, Senior Curator, Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, for drawing my attention to this document and providing me with a transcript.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

century gilt Buddha, a rare image of Avalokitesvara and an ancient Tibetan image of the Dalai Lama'.<sup>67</sup> Although the exact content of this exhibition is unknown,<sup>68</sup> a list of 'important objects lent in 1915' appeared in Lady Carmichael's memoirs of her husband,<sup>69</sup> and was made up entirely of sculptural pieces representing figures from the Tibetan Buddhist canon, and paintings of well-known Tibetan motifs, such as the Wheel of Life. All these items, listed within a chapter titled 'Art in India', were in fact Tibetan and came from within a very narrow field of object types that could be categorised as Buddhist art. The classification of Tibetan material culture in this way, and the range of values given to different types of material, was reflective of the impact the 1904 Expedition had on the construction of Tibetan art and the way in which interested parties had adapted and refined the framework set out by the 1904 Expedition's collectors.

Although Lord Carmichael collected the objects, the subsequent reinterpretation of his collection by his wife had particular consequences for the way in which these objects were categorised, valued and authenticated. His memoirs, written by Lady Carmichael, suggest that his (western) understanding of 'art' substantially narrowed his collecting field.<sup>70</sup> However, the objects associated with Carmichael now in the NMS hint at a broader field of interests. Lady Carmichael makes no mention of the ethnographic collections he made

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<sup>67</sup> Darwent, *The Observer*, "Mystery of the Medina".

<sup>68</sup> A catalogue was produced but I have been unable to locate a copy within the UK. The copy ostensibly held by the British Library, is currently recorded as 'missing'.

<sup>69</sup> Carmichael, *Lord Carmichael of Skirling*, 271 [footnote].

<sup>70</sup> There is in fact an entire chapter in Lady Carmichael's book dedicated to his art collecting, of which the section 'Art in India' is only a small part. For the most part, the chapter focuses on his European art collections.

when Governor of Victoria, which were presented to the RSM in 1911.<sup>71</sup> A collection of Tibetan weaponry and an extensive collection of Tibetan *cham* costumes, worn in the production of plays within the Tibetan monastic setting, are also absent from her record of his collecting activity, appearing only in a footnote regarding the ‘other’ objects Carmichael collected, which includes a mention of ‘Tibetan Devil Dance Costumes’.<sup>72</sup>

The objects show a much wider variety of collecting interests, and offer a counterbalance to the visualisation of Carmichael’s collection as ‘art’ only, a view promoted by his wife. Some of the objects from the 1915 exhibition were donated to the Indian Museum before the Carmichaels return to Britain in 1917,<sup>73</sup> but most of the remaining ‘art’ pieces were lost at sea, when a German torpedo sank the ship transporting them back to Britain.<sup>74</sup> If, in this instance, we envisage ‘trace’ as an object in a time and a place, the physical movement of the Carmichael collection and the separation of its parts, had a major impact on forms of agency and authenticity. As the ‘ethnographic’ Tibetan material had not formed part of the 1915 exhibit, it appears to have travelled separately

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<sup>71</sup> This collection mainly consisted of weaponry from various parts of Australia. Originally Carmichael gifted over 250 pieces, although many have now been deaccessioned. Carmichael Australian collection (NMS A.1911.397).

<sup>72</sup> Carmichael, *Lord Carmichael of Skirling*, 275 [footnote]. The term ‘devil dance’ was the common name for the *cham* dance in this period, reflecting attitudes to Tibetan Buddhist practice, as already described in the previous chapters. This footnote lists these costumes along with ‘ancient and European pieces’, which seems to reflect objects she was unable to position within the headings of her book, but also scholarly trends for positioning non-European cultures against ‘primitive’ moments in European history.

<sup>73</sup> Mr. J.D. Ganguli of the Indian Museum noted in 1928 that: ‘The interest taken by Lord Carmichael in Indian art was deep and sincere... As Governor of a province, he had an immense opportunity of acquiring a large collection of objects of art and curios, a substantial portion of which was handed over to the trustees of the Indian Museum at sacrifice’. In Carmichael, *Lord Carmichael of Skirling*, 269.

<sup>74</sup> The ship on which the Carmichaels’ possessions travelled to Britain was sunk in Portsmouth harbour. There were several attempts to recover the cargo, but none were successful. Darwent, *The Observer*, “Mystery of the Medina”.

from the rest of the collection, and subsequently survived to be integrated into the RSM's holdings in 1919. If the remainder of the 'art' collection had not been lost, it may also have made its way into a museum setting, but in its absence, the weapons and *cham* costumes took on the role of constructing 'Tibet', and representing the non-European Carmichael collecting legacy.

Lady Carmichael's relationship to her husband's collection was similar to Isabelle Tyrie's relationship with her father's collection – one of legacy. Lord Carmichael's memoirs offered an opportunity to recapture what had been physically lost and present some resistance to the tangible remains of her husband's collection, which constructed Tibetan culture quite distinctly from the principles he appears to have followed in his lifetime.

The traces of time and place mean that it is the less valued, less 'authentic' portion of Carmichael's collection that exists today, allowing us to analyse Carmichael's moment of encounter with Tibetan culture. By the time Lord Carmichael arrived in Darjeeling, going to see a performance of a *cham* dance was part of the common tourist trail for well-to-do Europeans taking in an Asian 'Grand Tour'.<sup>75</sup> The performances told stories from the time of Buddhism's introduction into Tibet, with the characters in the plays coming from a mixture of Bön and old Tibetan mythological traditional, hence the common name 'devil dance'.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> In 1906 the traveller Jane Duncan noted the steady stream of Europeans she came across in Ladakh on their way to Hemis Monastery to see the *cham* dance, suggesting that by the early twentieth century, Europeans were regularly part of the lay audience watching the performances. Duncan, *A Summer Ride Through Western Tibet*, 54.

<sup>76</sup> Bön, an animistic belief system, was common in Tibet before Buddhism was introduced. Tibetan Buddhism's degenerate nature, as understood by European observers, came about through the mixing of elements of the Bön tradition with Indian Buddhism. This is particularly

It is unsurprising that Carmichael visited a monastery to watch a dance, but what is interesting is that he collected what appears to be a monastery's entire set of *cham* costumes, related accessories and props (Figure 34).<sup>77</sup> These costumes, and especially the masks, were well looked after by the monasteries, with older masks being particularly revered. Masks and costumes were valuable to the monasteries both in cultural and economic terms, being an important part of Tibetan Buddhist tradition and expensive and time consuming to make and maintain. It is therefore likely that Carmichael paid a substantial sum of money to procure them. However, the masks show almost no signs of wear and were either a set only recently made for a monastery, or may even have been commissioned especially.<sup>78</sup> By contrast, although the costumes are in good condition, they had obviously been repaired just prior to Carmichael acquiring them, or may have been repaired on acquisition.<sup>79</sup> It seems possible then, that Carmichael was able to acquire the monastery's original set of costumes but not necessarily the masks. He also had the collection photographed, not in a studio, but in front of a monastery, where they were worn by Tibetans (Figure 35). The notes that remain regarding his lost collection of Indian and Tibetan objects

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evident in *cham* dance, which includes many of the wrathful deities found in Bön practices. Their dancing, seemingly grotesque, figures would easily have fitted into a European understanding of how a devil might be imagined.

<sup>77</sup> *Cham* costumes (NMS A.1919.622.1-23). The collection numbers twenty-one complete costumes plus accessories and, as far as I can determine, is the largest single collection in the UK.

<sup>78</sup> Being made of papier-mâché, signs of wear are fairly obvious (as are signs of repair), and there is little wear on any of the masks.

<sup>79</sup> During the conservation process, the head of textile conservation for NMS, Lynn Mclean, noted that several repairs had been made to the costume for the 'black hat dancer' including the replacement of silk on the sleeves with new pieces of material which showed no signs of wear. See McLean, *Conservation Report for A.1919.622.9A*, NMS Conservation Department, n.d.



indicate the importance of 'sets' of objects,<sup>80</sup> explaining his interest in adhering to a full taxonomic recording of Tibetan art, mainly through the field of sculpture. His collection of 'sets' of Tibetan and Australian weapons, and the full range of *cham* costumes, are further evidence of this practice. But the mixing of old costumes and new masks could be said to make this collection no more 'authentic' than Tyrie's dice box. Like the box, both masks and costumes were manufactured in Darjeeling so that, even if the monastery had regularly used the costumes – making them 'authentic' ethnographic artefacts –<sup>81</sup> they were moving beyond the previously defined geographical and cultural parameters of what made something authentically Tibetan, in geographical terms at least.<sup>82</sup> Not only then did Carmichael make distinctions between art and ethnography, but those two classes of objects merited differing understandings of 'authenticity' and value.

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<sup>80</sup> In fact, this appears important across his collecting concerns. Groups of metalwork, groups of paintings and sculptures were all bought and sold as 'sets' throughout his collecting career, some of which are now in the Art and Design Department of NMS.

<sup>81</sup> From 1892 *Notes and Queries* included a section on ethnographic collecting, which stated that authentic ethnographic objects were those made specifically for use. British Association for the Advancement of Science, *Notes and Queries*, 232-233.

<sup>82</sup> Akong Rinpoche, founder and late leader of Samye Ling Monastery, assessed Carmichael's *cham* collection, and has confirmed their Darjeeling Provenance. Though still made by Tibetan Buddhist monks, the mixing of old and new to create something 'complete' and the procurement of objects that had no physical ties to Tibet went against the collecting practices preached by Waddell in the years leading up to the 1904 Expedition. Akong Rinpoche, discussion during a visit to NMS 13/05/2009.

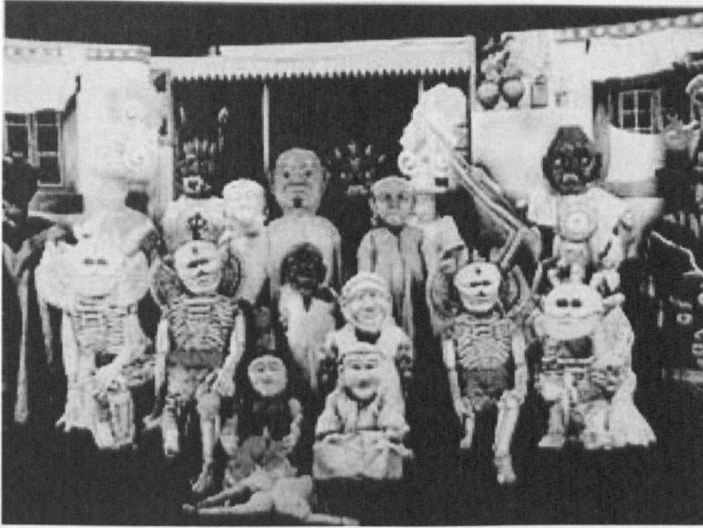


Figure 34: *Cham* costumes, Carmichael collection. © National Museums Scotland.

This image was created as part of an exhibition held at NMS in 1999 titled 'Heaven and Hell'. As part of the exhibition, Carmichael's original photograph (Figure 35) was recreated in colour, to show the vibrancy of the costumes and masks.



Figure 35: Photograph of *cham* costumes, Carmichael collection. © National Museums Scotland.

This photograph was probably taken outside Ghoom monastery, a few miles from Darjeeling. I suggest that as the largest monastery in the Darjeeling area, which was regularly visited by Europeans, it is likely to have been the monastery from which Carmichael collected these costumes.<sup>83</sup>

The objects were given an identity through the process of exchange, as different elements came together to create each *cham* costume. Carmichael believed that by completing a set, fixing broken items and capturing an image of

<sup>83</sup> Photograph (NMS A.1919.622.23). Note on reverse: 'Taken by M. Sain of Darjeeling'. It appears that this may have been taken at Ghoom monastery, but I cannot be sure.

the collection *in situ*, he had purchased something 'authentic'. Such authenticity had in fact not been made by Carmichael, but by the monks who sold him the objects. In choosing what to give (the costumes) and what to keep back (the masks) they had controlled the making of the set, and remade the idea of the *cham* costume to fit both Carmichael's notion of 'completeness' and their own desire to retain the most valuable part of the collection. These were power relations that were apparently invisible to Carmichael himself, who was caught up in his own remaking of colonial practices and domination through the wholesale purchasing of Tibetan material culture.

The two seemingly contrasting collections that Carmichael acquired – one 'art' and the other 'ethnography' – were given very different identities, both through their material form and their movement, allowing them to perform very different roles as both mediators and intermediaries.<sup>84</sup> For Lord Carmichael, the collection of Tibetan and Indian art objects was tied to his longstanding artistic connoisseurship, their identities fixed into a western framework of art history. For these objects, age, materials, form and the authenticity that was established through these values, were public markers of Lord Carmichael as a colonial tastemaker.<sup>85</sup> These were the attributes of the collection's identity that his wife wished to consolidate, through the publication of his memoirs, as she remade his collecting practices as part of his, and her, personal legacy. Carmichael's relationship with his ethnographic collections is

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<sup>84</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 79.

<sup>85</sup> Lady Carmichael, in her husband's memoirs, had noted that Australia had lacked 'art' and that one of their pastoral roles, as Governor and his wife, was the cultivation of 'taste' amongst white settlers. This role clearly moved with them to India, seen in Carmichael's interest in museums and the public showing of his private collection. Carmichael, *Lord Carmichael of Skirling*, 267.

less clearly defined. On the one hand, he completed sets of items, suggesting that he had an understanding of the subject matter, and the collection of both costumes and masks implies that 'completeness' was important. These were not, then, a random assortment of souvenirs, but were part of deliberate collecting practices. On the other hand, the ethnographic material was purposefully separated from the rest of the collection physically, but also in terms of its value and 'authenticity'. It was only through the movement of objects, and the accidental loss of items, that the ethnographic material took on a new level of importance within the museum setting, tying it to its collector in unforeseen ways. Finally, the Tibetan monks who sold and made the *cham* costumes, like the sellers in Darjeeling from whom Colonel Tyrie purchased many items, were remaking typically 'Tibetan' material culture and in doing so mediating the western response to its form, value and authenticity.

### 4.5.3 Robert Brown

Robert Brown was a surgeon in the Bengal Army, working in India around the time of the 1857 Rebellion and its aftermath, as described earlier in this chapter. Brown was probably based in Calcutta, but would have had opportunity to travel all over the Presidency of Bengal, thanks to his position as a surgeon. It was during this time that he was able to collect Tibetan and Nepalese objects.<sup>86</sup> Brown is interesting in the context of this study precisely because his period of collecting falls between the early collecting activities of

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<sup>86</sup> Despite a thorough search of the India Office Private Papers, I have been unable to find specific details of Brown's posting, largely due to the ubiquity of his name.

Thomas Wise, and the substantial changes that occurred in 1904, but he was also active at the moment in which Britain's own relationship with her empire was changing significantly, thanks to the events of 1857.

In contrast to the Tyrie and Carmichael collections, there is no archival information connected to Robert Brown or his collection, and so the traces in the objects themselves need to be unpacked in order to bring to light the collector, and his response to Tibetan material culture, as mediated by these objects. Brown collected thirteen items; three Nepalese silver and gold boxes, with intricate openwork frames and central panels of Hindu and Buddhist motifs, seven Tibetan *gau* of varying styles, two bangles, the lid of a silver vessel and a pair of Tibetan earrings in the Lhasa style (Figure 36 and Figure 37). Whilst the boxes are very consistent in their manufacture and aesthetics (shape, size and pattern), the *gau* form a discrete 'type' collection, representing the different styles of this one particular object found across Tibet and Sikkim. This narrow field of object collection suggests Brown specifically chose these items, indicating his interest in them as markers of Tibetan material culture. This also suggests that even if these were gifts from clients rather than purposeful purchases on his own part, people around him were aware of his interest in them. The collection was therefore made on remarkably similar principles to the Indian and Tibetan art collection of Carmichael, formed fifty years later, and like both collectors previously examined in this chapter, Brown focused on metalwork items.

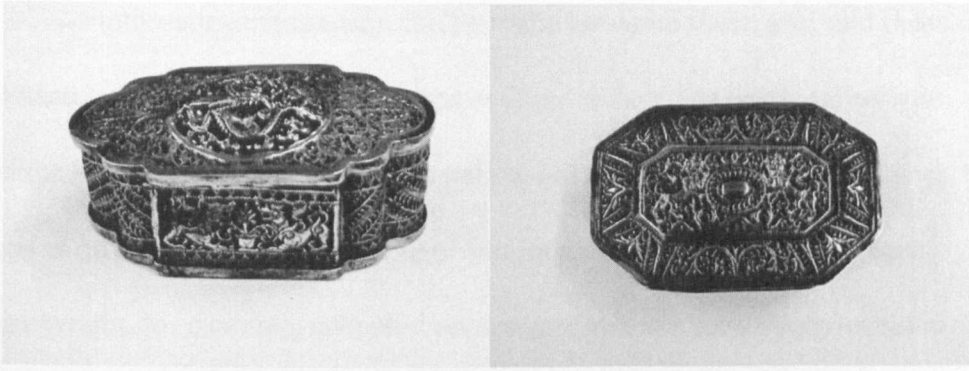


Figure 36: Silver gilt boxes, Brown collection.<sup>87</sup> © National Museums Scotland.

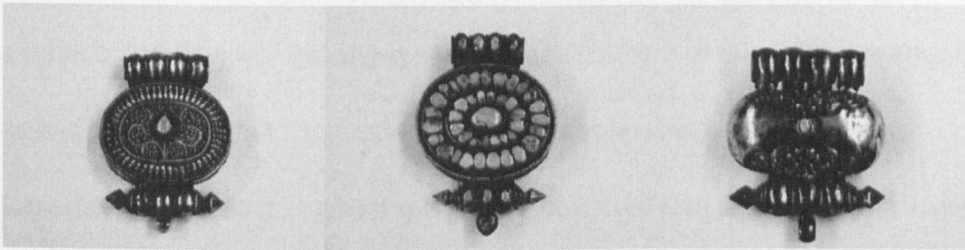


Figure 37: Three different varieties of gau, Robert Brown collection.<sup>88</sup> © National Museums Scotland.

When comparing Brown's *gau* to others held in the collection of NMS, it becomes apparent that *gau*, though an object recognised by western collectors as symbolic of Tibetan Buddhism, had additional values and differing agencies for this colonial collector. There are nearly fifty *gau* in the collections of NMS, and those collected by Brown are some of the finest in terms of materials used, quality of manufacture and quality of decorative work. This highlights the importance of aesthetics to Brown, and marks these qualities out within his notion of authenticity of metalwork design and manufacture. Brown's collection showcases the workmanship of Himalayan material culture, highlighting the ancestry of characteristics later defined within the category Tibetan 'art'.

<sup>87</sup> Silver-gilt boxes (NMS A.1928.706-7).

<sup>88</sup> *Gau*, left to right (NMS A.1928.712-713) and (NMS A.1928.720).

An interesting comparison can be made between these *gau*, and those collected by the missionaries examined in Chapter Two. For missionaries, *gau* became symbolic of the superstitious nature of Tibetan Buddhism and so the material qualities of the object were of less importance than this symbolism. Innes-Wright, for example, collected several *gau* and amulets, which included packets of prayers. These provided the 'evidence' that his work was necessary, by showing British audiences that Tibetans were still relying on such devices for protection and healing. But the quality of manufacture of missionary examples was poor, implying that their aesthetic detail was less relevant.<sup>89</sup> Another contrasting feature is that whilst missionary collected *gau* were often well worn and retained the consecrated paper prayers, *tsa-tsa* or cloth bundles that were the source of their protective abilities, Brown's *gau* have had much of this evidence of use removed. They are perfectly clean on the inside, with the exception of some inscriptions printed directly onto the metal casing (Figure 38 and Figure 39).<sup>90</sup> What this shows, is that as with the Carmichael and Tyrie collections, Brown's *gau* were interpreted through a western frame of reference to material culture and aesthetics, and their place as objects of use

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<sup>89</sup> Several of the *gau* collected by Annie Taylor and J.W. Innes-Wright are in need of repair as their soldering has failed over time, they have corroded and their decorative detail has been lost.

<sup>90</sup> Many consecrated statues and *gau*, now in museums, have had their interior contents removed by scholars and collectors, interested to see what was inside. As Harris has noted, this was to become a common phenomenon in 1904 when Expedition officers realised the high values of what was stored inside sculptures, which may themselves have had a more conservative economic value (Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 59-60). These objects could be filled, as Chandra Reedy has noted, with a variety of holy articles, depending on what was most appropriate to the situation ("The Opening of Consecrated Tibetan Bronzes with Interior Contents: Scholarly, Conservation, and Ethical Considerations" 14). Reedy's interviews with Tibetan Buddhist practitioners in the 1980s shows that for Tibetan Buddhists, the opening of sculptures and removal of contents is not only desecration, but rendered them inert (30). Thus Brown clearly had little interest in retaining the ability of these *gau* to perform a function in a Tibetan context and was happy to remove that functionality for his own purposes.

within a Tibetan context did not form part of their authenticity in the collector's mind.

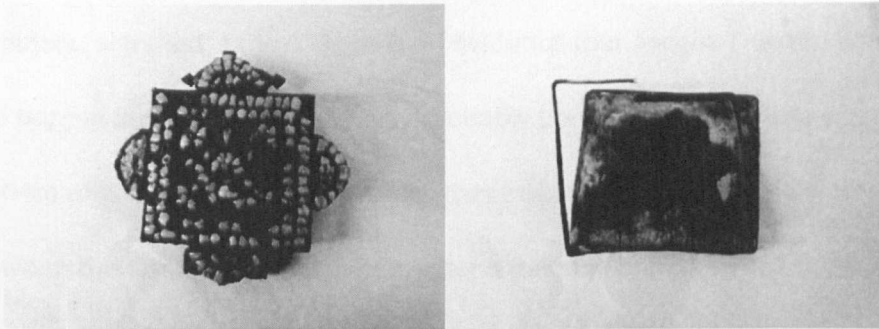


Figure 38: Example of missionary collected gau. © National Museums Scotland.

This gau was collected by Annie Taylor and shows the poor quality of workmanship to both decoration and structure.<sup>91</sup>

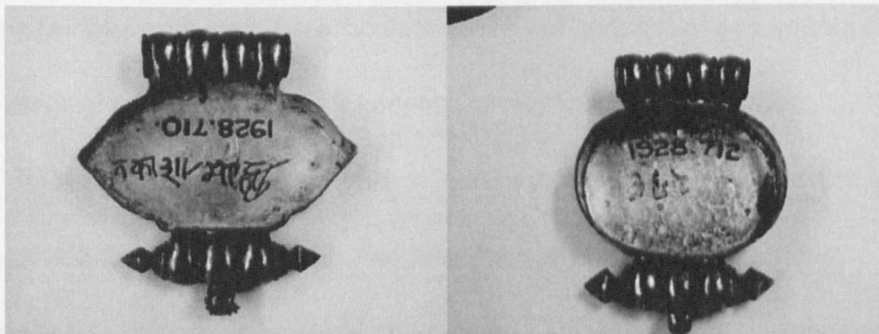


Figure 39: Gau, Brown collection. © National Museums Scotland.

The insides of the gau collected by Brown are completely clean and show no signs of use. There are small mantras painted on both in ink, but there should also be paper, cloth, a *tsa-tsa* or some other trace inside.<sup>92</sup>

In 1872, on his return to Scotland, Brown lent his objects to the EMSA. On his death in 1877 his daughter, Amelia Brown, wrote to the Museum and asked that the loan continue in her name. When she married a few years later, she again wrote to record her name change to Amelia Thexton. Then, in 1901, Thexton asked for the objects to be returned, before donating them to the

<sup>91</sup> Gau (NMS A.1896.266.6).

<sup>92</sup> Gau (NMS A.1928.710) and (NMS A.1928.712).



Museum in her own name, in 1928.<sup>93</sup> Thexton's relationship to these objects was very different to that of her father. As with the other women already discussed in this chapter, and Florence Bailey discussed previously, for Thexton these objects signified legacy. There is no evidence that Amelia Thexton was herself born in India, although she was probably born whilst her father was in the service of The Company.<sup>94</sup> Therefore these objects pertaining to his time in India, when the family was split, offered her a tangible link to an unknown familial past. In this sense, these items follow even more closely the path of the Tyrie collection, as the objects passed from father to daughter, entered a somewhat entropic state (whilst returned to Amelia Thexton) before re-entering the Museum with a rearticulated series of connections to people and place, associating them with their keepers, rather than their collectors.

Robert Brown had formed his collection at a crucial moment in British-Indian relations and although this had brought a shift in British attitudes towards India's culture and people, the high quality of the collection suggests that Brown himself was not fully immersed in the move towards such negative assessments of Indian, and other non-European, peoples. Brown's view of Tibetan and Nepalese material culture was as inherently artistic, in line with developing attitudes towards Indian material culture, which was positioned

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<sup>93</sup> Royal Scottish Museum, *Loan Register Volume I (1872)*, (121), National Museums Scotland Loans Department. An unknown museum employee added the notes in 1901.

<sup>94</sup> There is no record of an Amelia Brown in the birth records for the British in India. She may have been Jane Amelia Brown, born in Dumfries in 1858 (as an adult she lived in Dumfries). This ties in with the timing of her father's posting and suggests she saw little of her father in her childhood. Information accessed via the India Office Family History Search website, accessed 27/05/2013, <http://indiafamily.bl.uk/UI/>. Scottish births, marriages and deaths via *Scotland's People* website, accessed 27/05/2013, <http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>.

within the category of 'art' long before its Tibetan neighbours.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, though 1904 was undeniably important in the formalisation of the category of 'Tibetan art', there were colonial collectors already developing ideas about artistic integrity and authenticity in relation to Tibetan material culture from the mid nineteenth century onwards. Yet it was only after 1904 that Tibetan objects was publicly discussed, interpreted and displayed in these specific terms.

This important facet of the collection's biography was hidden from view when the collection passed to Brown's daughter, who understood the authenticity of the collection to lie in its position as a marker of personal experience. The process of re-giving the collection to the Museum in her own name, literally pasted over the traces of the object's previous identities, as labels bearing her own details were stuck to the surface of each object in 1928. This 'flattening out' of the collection's biographical detail, and how the process removed Robert Brown from the life of the collection, will be discussed in the next chapter.<sup>96</sup>

#### **4.5.4 Agnes Christison**

The colonial collectors examined so far have spanned a sixty-year period of time, but have been linked through shared experiences, expectations of and reactions to the Tibetan material culture they chose to collect. In many ways, the collecting activities of Agnes Christison appear to break that thread of

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<sup>95</sup> For the importance of Indian art as an influence on the creation of Tibetan art as a category, refer to Chapter Three, section 3.2, Contextualising British military collecting: war and loot in India and Tibet, 204.

<sup>96</sup> See Chapter Five, section 5.5.3, Loan labels: recovering legacies, 403.

continuity and yet, I will argue, her collection in fact embeds an important part of British-Indian society – the British wife, mother and home within India – that is often invisible in formal archival records. This was vital in sustaining the social and political structures that governed British-Indian society (and therefore British India), allowing the sorts of collecting we have already examined, to occur.

As with Robert Brown, Agnes Christison (nee Symington Grieve) left almost no official archival trace. Born in Edinburgh in 1848, in 1880 she became the second wife of George Watt Christison, whom she married in Howrah, India.<sup>97</sup> George Watt Christison was the General Manager of the Lebong Tea Co. Ltd. in Lebong, near Darjeeling, and also sat on the board of directors of the company, in London. The family lived in the manager's residence on the Tukvar Tea Estate, one of the oldest tea plantations in Darjeeling, which was owned by the Lebong Tea Co. Ltd.<sup>98</sup> All of the Christisons' children were born on the estate, which remained the family home until George Watt Christison's death in 1924.<sup>99</sup> Through the end of the nineteenth century, the Christison family worked within this settled, colonial environment, as they expanded the tea plantation and their family with it. In doing so, and as Darjeeling changed around them, they were able to remake their own identities as colonial agents

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<sup>97</sup> It is unclear when or how George Christison's first wife died, but the ages of his older children suggest he was married for some time before he married Agnes.

<sup>98</sup> The plantation began tea production in 1852.

<sup>99</sup> Agnes Christison died only a few years later in 1927. Information about the life of Agnes Christison via the following websites: India Office Family History Search and Scotland's People (see this chapter, footnote 94). Information about the Tukvar Estate courtesy of James Sinclair, Old Mount Hermon Students' Association. Email to author 09/11/2011.

and actors. This was a process, which for Agnes Christison at least, is reflected in her collecting.

The Christisons were a family fully engaged with British colonial life in the Darjeeling area. Like the Tyries and Carmichaels a few decades later, the Christisons were already experiencing the population mix that was the result of incoming workers to the plantations, traders crossing the Lhasa-Kalimpong trade routes and the opening up of Darjeeling as a British 'haven' from the rest of India.<sup>100</sup> Using knowledge of the way in which tea plantations were run, and the shifts that had been occurring in British-Indian relations since 1857, we can make some sensible hypotheses as to the relationship between George and Agnes Christison and the non-European residents and workers on the Tukvar Estate. C.R. Fray, writing in 1936, suggested that the plantation should be understood as 'an agricultural factory', and run in much the same way. This implies that George Christison was likely to have had one or several foremen, who engaged directly with workers, while he remained distanced from direct non-European engagement.<sup>101</sup> By contrast, Agnes Christison was the manager of a household that included six children, and she would have had daily interaction with a series of locally hired individuals within the home. This relationship between mistress and maid formed a key part of the imperial domestic ideology. As Alison Blunt notes, Indian servants were seen as the domesticated outsiders of the British imperial imagination, reaffirming imperial domesticity and the power of the family they served, but most particularly

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<sup>100</sup> Clarke, "The English Stations in the Hill Regions of India", 528-573.

<sup>101</sup> Fray, "Plantation Economy", 621.

empowering the British-Indian women with whom they had the most contact.<sup>102</sup> In Darjeeling, where servants could be drawn from a number of ethnic groups, Agnes Christison had the opportunity for regular contact with a wide range of cultures and their associated material goods.

Agnes Christison collected sixty-five objects of Nepalese, Bhutanese, Tibetan and Indian origin, as well as a few items from Japan, China and Burma. She also made a separate collection of plant samples, pertaining to the economic botany of the region.<sup>103</sup> In this study, I am going to focus on two parts of the collection – objects collected within and around the family’s Darjeeling home, and those acquired during a trip she made across India, probably accompanying her husband on business. Those objects associated with the British-Indian home are markers of personal experience, but not in the way Amelia Thexton or Isabelle Tyrie related to their fathers’ collections. Instead, they articulate the hybridity of the British-Indian life Agnes Christison was bound up in, and are an autobiographical construction of that experience. Whilst, as Mary Procida has noted, a tacit assumption has been that the construction of a community such as Darjeeling aimed at safeguarding ‘Britishness’, the very name ‘British-Indian’ suggests the hybrid of British and Asian. When it came to creating a home in the Empire therefore, homemakers such as Agnes Christison did not recreate metropolitan British domesticity.<sup>104</sup> Instead, by incorporating various elements of European and Indian cultures,

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<sup>102</sup> Blunt, “Imperial Geographies of Home”, 425.

<sup>103</sup> Christison’s plant samples are part of the Technology collections at NMS and include specimens of chinchona, tea, indigo, castor oil seeds and cedar (NMS T.1909.11.1-12).

<sup>104</sup> Procida, *Married to the Empire*, 61.

they created a domestic environment that could 'uphold the imperial ethos and facilitate the business of empire in a physical and ideological environment vastly different from Great Britain'.<sup>105</sup>

The collection is indicative of the collector's situation, rather than aiming to produce a specific construction of 'Tibetan culture'. As such it makes visible the complexity of cultural encounters that were taking place in Darjeeling at the time (as already noted through the Tyrie collection). Objects such as a woman's chatelaine with 'toilet instruments', a hair comb made of cane, a carved cigarette holder and a woven cane box (Figure 40) are very different from the items other collectors, such as J.W. Innes-Wright, were known to be collecting from the curio dealers of the Darjeeling bazaars which were, on the whole, items more readily associated with 'popular' Tibetan Buddhism. The objects Christison collected were a mixture of Nepalese, Tibetan and Bhutanese items, and were indicative of domestic routines and requirements, of both European and non-European residents. The collection also includes a cane flute, a peashooter, a wooden puzzle and two Jews harps, which, in a house full of children, are unsurprising objects of amusement. So unlike the colonial collectors previously examined, Agnes Christison was collecting for *use*, rather than merely for *display*. The objects' authenticity therefore lay not in their provenance, structure or materials, but in their representation of British-Indian life. If the collector did not purchase these items from the same curio dealers that other colonial agents were buying from, then it is more likely that these objects were specifically made for the home (or for the children) or were gifts

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<sup>105</sup> Procida, *Married to the Empire*, 61.

from the household staff, who could use such items to mediate their relations with their mistress, particularly through gifting objects to the children.<sup>106</sup> Gifts in the domestic setting were no less calculating than those exchanged during political or military actions, as described in the previous chapter.<sup>107</sup>

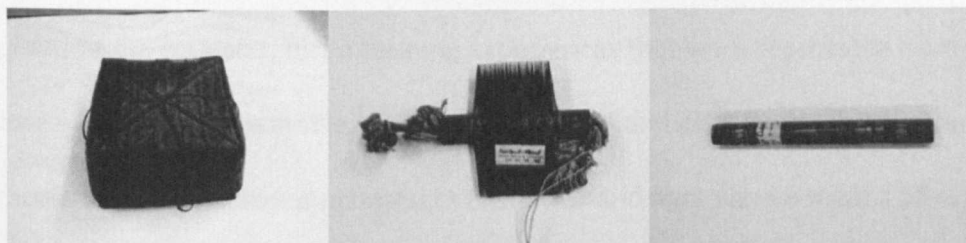


Figure 40: Three 'domestic' objects, Agnes Christison collection.<sup>108</sup> © National Museums Scotland.

The Indian objects from Christison's collection are worth examining as a counterbalance to this seemingly domestic collection. During her twenty-year sojourn in Darjeeling, it is quite likely that she travelled with her husband as he conducted his business, and they may have travelled through India during the Darjeeling winter.<sup>109</sup> The Indian objects she collected came from Peshawar, Multan, 'the Punjab', and Agra, a geographical route which leads back to Delhi

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<sup>106</sup> There is much anecdotal evidence about the close bonds that formed between household staff, particularly the 'Ayah' or nursery maid, and European children. A famous literary example can be found in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, in which the main character Mary is caught out by the disjuncture in her relationship between her Ayah in India, and the servants in her new Yorkshire home. Isabelle Tyrie recounted in her interview that her Ayah had been the only servant to live in the house with the family, showing the important role, and relationship with the family, that such women had. *Interview with Isabelle Tyrie* [typed transcript, original source unknown], 5, Isabelle Tyrie Accession File, Department of World Cultures, National Museums Scotland Archive.

<sup>107</sup> Refer back to Chapter Three, section 3.8.2, Taking and giving: gifts and diplomatic negotiation: 261.

<sup>108</sup> A woven cane box (NMS A.1909.49), a comb (NMS A.1909.46) and a cigarette holder (NMS A.1909.44).

<sup>109</sup> George Watt Christison also donated objects to the RSM, including a series of spears from Assam, another tea growing region, suggesting his business took him all over India.

and the Himalayan hills.<sup>110</sup> It may be that these objects were collected at different times, but with so many children and a large household and plantation to run, it is unlikely that the Christisons were in a position to make many extended journeys away. Most suggestive of this Indian 'Grand Tour' are a set of twelve ivory miniatures of buildings found in Agra and Delhi.<sup>111</sup> These objects epitomise the souvenir, distinguishing experiences that were reportable from those which were repeatable.<sup>112</sup> The exotic ivories and glass bead necklaces and bracelets that Christison purchased in Peshawar and Agra were a means of taking that ephemeral experience with her, as one would a photograph. These travels represented a contrast to the settled notion of 'home' that existed in Darjeeling, where there was no need to record experiences in this same, fleeting way.

Christison's two collections demonstrate contrasting responses to the experience of a place in which she settled, versus a place she passed through. When seen together, the two parts of the collection offer a more rounded biography of British-Indian colonial life, which formed around two different relationships with India: one as home and close, one as foreign and distant. When Agnes Christison accompanied her children back to Britain in the early 1890s, both parts of the collection became a reminder of place, brought together to represent her 'home' in India.<sup>113</sup> On her return to Darjeeling a few years later, her Himalayan objects no longer provided the 'authenticity' of home

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<sup>110</sup> No exact location within the Punjab is given, but this area lies between Multan and Agra.

<sup>111</sup> Miniatures made of ivory (NMS A.1909.7-18).

<sup>112</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 135.

<sup>113</sup> Christison and her younger children appear on the 1891 and 1901 census, living in London.



in India, as their identities had been removed and remade during her stay in London. This is probably the reason why, in 1909 just prior to her return to India, she donated her collection to the RSM.

#### 4.5.5 Ernest Stephen Lumsden

Since the mid-seventeenth century, the European Grand Tour had operated as a means for wealthy individuals to educate themselves about the world and, by the mid-nineteenth century, the Grand Tour began to include Asia as well.<sup>114</sup>

The travelogue of Jane Duncan, who journeyed through Ladakh in 1906, shows that by the early twentieth century a greater proportion of ordinary, albeit well off, European and American men and women were able to experience Tibetan culture first hand.<sup>115</sup> Many objects were no doubt acquired as souvenirs during these visits, kept for the same purposes as Agnes Christison's Indian ivory miniatures, or purchased through encounters such as those experienced by Colonel Tyrie in Darjeeling.

Like Agnes Christison, Ernest Lumsden should be understood as someone who engaged in the performance of colonialism, in his role as a traveller, tourist and artist. However, Lumsden's experiences as a tourist in India were captured in a contrasting set of objects to those of Christison's Indian tour, and suggest he had a very different sort of relationship with both the cultures he encountered and their material manifestations. Lumsden, and

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<sup>114</sup> Jayawardena, *The White Woman's Other Burden*, 112.

<sup>115</sup> Duncan, *A Summer Ride Through Western Tibet*. Throughout the book Duncan comments on the various European and American travellers that she meets along the way, showing the route through Ladakh to have a healthy tourist population.

his wife Mabel Royds, travelled through India and Ladakh several times between 1912 and 1927, although Lumsden most likely made this collection in 1913 during their most extensive trip. Lumsden, an etcher, and Royds, also an artist, documented their travels through their artworks, which included etchings of Hindu monuments, rituals (such as bathing in the Ganges) and scenes of markets, villages and landscapes.

Lumsden's travels represented a Grand Tour in the most traditional sense, where his experiences influenced and improved his art. That Asia should become part of such a Grand Tour and that Tibetan (largely Buddhist) material culture should be an integral part of the experience for a western artist, highlights the shift in perceptions of Tibetan culture that took place after the 1904 Expedition. However, Lumsden's collection is also reflective of another framework of understanding, one that was quite different to the methodology for 'knowing' a culture that had been developed and practiced in the nineteenth century. Lumsden, I would argue, went to Ladakh to be inspired, to connect with something intangible, and to have the sort of epiphany that Colonel Younghusband had after the 1904 Expedition reached its climax, changing the course of his life.<sup>116</sup> James Hilton's literary work *Lost Horizons* would most clearly outline this new understanding of Tibet as 'Shangri-La', an 'other worldly' place, just as Kipling's novel *Kim* had encapsulated British relations between Tibet, India and empire thirty years earlier. In other words, Lumsden was looking for something inherently personal and intangible that

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<sup>116</sup> Laurie Hovell McMillin has suggested that for the last hundred years the myth of epiphany has been so common in Anglophone travel texts about Tibet, that they would seem incomplete without one. Hovell McMillin, *English in Tibet, Tibet in English*, 3.

used the experience of encountering Tibetan Buddhism to reaffirm his own principles for living. This, of course, gave the construction of Tibet in the western imagination an entirely new perspective, highlighting the possibility that the West could learn something from Tibet, as much as Tibet could learn from the West.

Lumsden's etchings attempt to capture fleeting moments. For example, the 1922 etching *The Shrine*, shows a woman sitting at the base of a Buddhist altar, probably in Ladakh, lost in contemplative thought. The objects Lumsden collected reflect the fleeting nature of the traveller's experience, similarly difficult to capture as the woman's momentary gaze. Unlike Christison's collection of ivory miniatures, which included replicas of great monuments visited such as the Taj Mahal, Lumsden wasn't looking to literally capture the experience in material form.

He collected fifty objects from Ladakh, two thirds of which were *tsha-tsha*, the small clay votive offerings moulded and placed along roadsides, in temples, or in *gau* (Figure 41). The other items include a set of eight brass and silver spoons, small personal items such as tweezers, and a few objects relating to Tibetan Buddhist rites, such as vessels and bells.<sup>117</sup> Here I wish to focus on the *tsha-tsha*, which form a discreet group within the wider collection. *Tsha-tsha* are ephemeral, not made to last, but made to decay, to be replaced by new ones in time. The *tsha-tsha* as a votive object is only made holy after empowerment through consecration and, unlike Robert Brown's collection of empty *gau*, Lumsden's *tsha-tsha* show signs of decay, showing that they had a life as active,

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<sup>117</sup> Lumsden collection (NMS A.1924.56-111).

empowered items before collection. Though no written evidence exists to explicitly state Lumsden's reason for focusing on the collection of *tsa-tsa*, the importance of fleeting moments of encounter within 'religious' or 'spiritual' settings, as visualised in his etchings, may be the reason for his interest in visiting many of the monasteries of Ladakh. Although this can also be understood as a 'type' collection the nature of its content suggests that the collector understood its 'authenticity' in very different terms to, for example, Robert Brown. Lumsden would have easily had access to new *tsa-tsa* that had not been 'used' and were therefore in pristine condition, but chose to take those already exercising a function in Tibetan Buddhist practice. In opposition to Brown, it was their role as 'active' Tibetan Buddhist objects that created their authenticity as markers of Tibetan material culture.



Figure 41: Three *tsa-tsa*, E.S. Lumsden collection.<sup>118</sup> © National Museums Scotland.

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<sup>118</sup> *Tsa-tsa* left to right: (NMS A.1924.80), (NMS A.1924.88), (NMS A.1924.105).

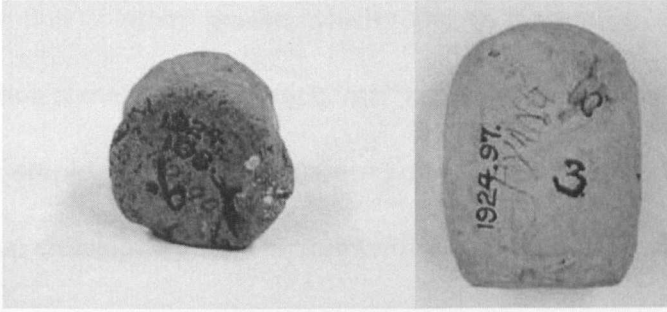


Figure 42: Records of provenance, E.S. Lumsden collection. © National Museums Scotland. These are examples of Lumsden's technique for recording provenance, with a pencil written location name written at the scene, followed by an ink number at a later date.<sup>119</sup>

Lumsden numbered his *tsa-tsa* to identify the locations in which they were collected, and also wrote a shorthand version of the place name on the reverse of each one. Through these numbers, we can retrace the route he followed through the region and see how the collection was built up. The numbers do not follow the route consecutively, for example he would most likely have travelled from Spituk to Phyang, but Spituk is represented by number five and Phyang by a three (Figure 42). The shorthand names in pencil were likely written onto the objects in the field and the ink numbering done at a later date. In contrast, the other objects in the collection – spoons, a teapot, other metal vessels – remain unmarked and seemingly unrecorded. The RSM's accession registers note that the spoons were collected in Leh, but the only other object from Lumsden that has been marked in some way is a section of faded prayer flag, which has three illegible numbers scrawled on in pencil.

This appears, then, to be a collection of contradictions. On the one hand, the collection of ephemeral objects suggests an interest in non-tangible experiences that cannot be fully recorded. On the other, this was a 'type'

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<sup>119</sup> *Tsa-tsa* (NMS A.1984.108) and (NMS A.1924.97).

collection, like that of Robert Brown, which spoke to the notion of a scientific way of collecting something very much 'real' and tangible. Not only that, but the collection employed modern techniques of record keeping of the sort used by professional anthropologists. The numbering of objects in the field, followed by a more detailed marking of the object later in ink, were techniques suggested in the handbook for ethnographic collecting *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*.<sup>120</sup> The system Lumsden developed strongly suggests he had a working knowledge of *Notes and Queries*. It is this paradox between scientific knowledge and non-recordable experiences that makes Lumsden's collection so interesting within an analysis of colonial collector intent. As noted, colonial collectors, in contrast to missionary or military collectors, were in a position to draw from different influences, understandings and methodologies. Lumsden's collection of *tσα-tσα* highlights the variety of experience created from the bringing together of two seemingly opposing ways of understanding Tibetan material culture.

Whilst there is no written evidence as to Lumsden's personal response to the intangibility he was attempting to capture in a collection of physical things, he clearly formed a deep connection to the area and was open to the various practices he encountered. Making five journeys to India, Burma and Tibet over the course of the early decades of the twentieth century, Lumsden's

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<sup>120</sup> *Notes and Queries* stated that 'At the first moment of leisure the objects should be labelled with the locality where they were obtained, and their use, and any other particulars... the best means of doing this will differ with the climate. For stone implements...write in lead pencil upon the object; pencil is far better than ink'. British Association for the Advancement of Science, *Notes and Queries*, 232.

'mind and sympathies could extend to the most 'modern' adventure'.<sup>121</sup> When viewed together, Lumsden's etchings, collected objects and the memory of his disposition, as recounted in his obituary, all suggest that his travels in India and Tibet were more than just an exercise in ticking off the itinerary of an Asian Grand Tour, and the collection of *tsa-tsa* was an integral part of marking this 'modern adventure' in a very particular way.

Lumsden's 'souvenirs' cannot be understood in the same way as Christison's. Unlike Christison, he was not resident in India and could form only fleeting relationships with the people he encountered in Ladakh. The value of Lumsden's collection lay in the way it critiqued the long established views of scholarly orientalists who had so dominated the study of Tibet at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, and yet followed the same methodology – collecting objects that were in use and collecting in a scientific manner – to construct Tibetan culture as both a 'thing' that could be touched, and something that could not.

#### **4.5.6 Lilian Le Mesurier**

The final collector I would like to examine in this chapter highlights a thread that has run through all these case studies – what it means for something (an experience or an object) to be authentic. Perceptions of the 'authentic' and the ways in which collectors responded to, and manipulated, the concept varied widely: for Isabelle Tyrie, Agnes Christison and Amelia Thexton authenticity was

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<sup>121</sup> The Times, "Obituary: Mr. E.S. Lumsden, Etcher and Painter" (1948).

about personal experience and the legacy of family memory; for Lord Carmichael and Robert Brown authentic collecting was located in the realm of 'type' collections that explored the relationship between Tibetan material culture and western understandings of authenticity in art; and for Ernest Lumsden authenticity was more loosely located in a visualisation of Tibet as something that could not, by its very nature, be made 'knowable' at all. Lilian Le Mesurier provides an excellent study to end on, because she is the only colonial collector who left a paper trail relating directly to her collecting activities, in which she explicitly outlined her position as a collector and the role she envisaged for her objects. Of all the colonial collectors, Le Mesurier followed the most 'scientific' methods of collecting, developed by the discipline of anthropology from the late nineteenth century. Her collection offers a very visible linking thread between the understandings that were created around Tibetan material culture in 1904, and the way such material would be rearticulated in the museum setting – the subject of the next chapter.

Le Mesurier not only collected, but also wrote about her collection at the moment the 1904 Expedition was taking place on another point of the Indian-Tibetan border. Although Waddell had written the influential *Buddhism in Tibet, or Lamaism*, in 1894, it was during the 1904 Expedition that the ideas on Tibetan material culture expounded in that volume were taken up by a broader British public.<sup>122</sup> In 1903 and 1904 Le Mesurier wrote two papers on the Tibetan material she had collected in Ladakh during her husband's posting

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<sup>122</sup> See Harris for further analysis of Waddell's influence on the 1904 Expedition. Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 63-68.



with the Indian Political Service.<sup>123</sup> The first was a chapter for a book on mountain travel by the mountaineer and future Royal Geographical Society President, Douglas Freshfield, titled 'Tibetan Curios'.<sup>124</sup> The second was a paper for the art magazine *The Studio*, titled 'Tibetan Art'.<sup>125</sup> In 'Tibetan Curios' Le Mesurier lists her collection in its entirety, separating objects 'used in religious rites and services' from other items, which 'though in many cases used by the Lamas, were not themselves of a sacred character' (Figure 43).<sup>126</sup> In 'Tibetan Art' she examines the history and aesthetics of Tibetan metalwork design, using three teapots from her collection as examples; items which in the first paper were categorised as 'non Buddhist' objects (Figure 44). The titles of the papers alone show a shift in Le Mesurier's relationship to her collection, as it moved from 'curiosity' to 'art' in the space of a year, and from publication in a travel book to a critical art magazine. But they also represent two different notions of authenticity: the first, authenticity of the collecting experience, and the second, the collection of 'authentic' Tibetan objects.

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<sup>123</sup> Eugene Le Mesurier worked for the Indian Political Service, as Political Assistant to the Resident of Kashmir.

<sup>124</sup> Le Mesurier, "Tibetan Curios", 261-273

<sup>125</sup> Le Mesurier, "Tibetan Art", 294-301.

<sup>126</sup> Le Mesurier, "Tibetan Curios", 263.

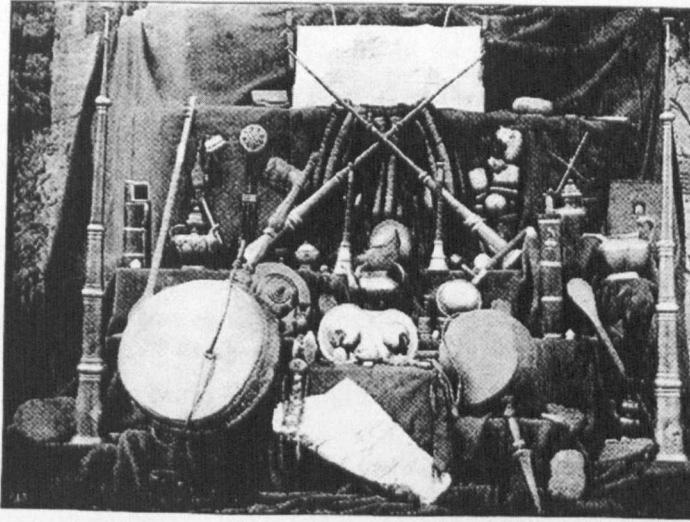


Figure 43: Cover-plate of 'Tibetan Curios', Lilian Le Mesurier collection. © National Library of Scotland.

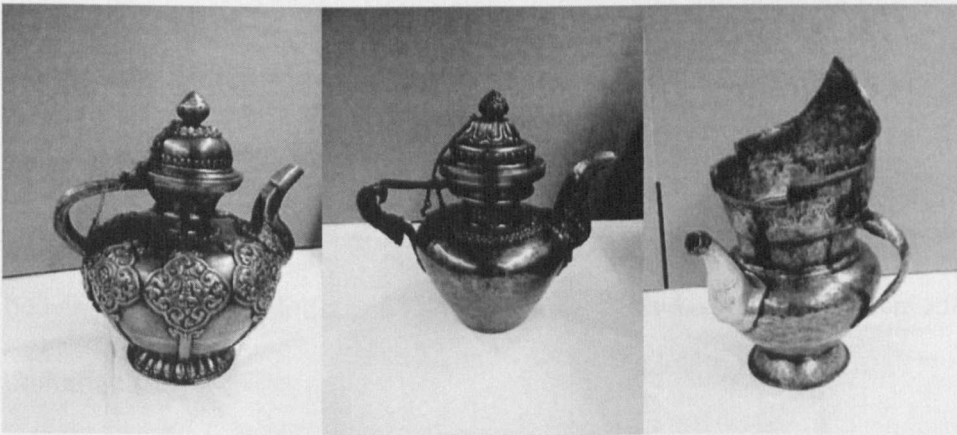


Figure 44: Three teapots, Lilian Le Mesurier collection. © National Museums Scotland. These three teapots were all analysed as part of the article 'Tibetan Art', published in 1904.<sup>127</sup>

Her collection of over 109 Tibetan objects, mostly collected in Ladakh's Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, provides the data on which these papers were based. 'Tibetan Curios' makes it clear that from the moment she started collecting, Le Mesurier had a specific idea of what it was she was trying to construct, and the correct manner in which to achieve it. She notes that her

<sup>127</sup> Teapots left to right: (NMS A.1907.441), (NMS A.1907.439), and (NMS A.1907.434).

'chief interest was the endeavour to make a really representative collection of Tibetan curios' and that, with the assistance of certain Tibetan Buddhist dignitaries she was able to make it 'as perfect as possible'.<sup>128</sup> By the following year, she was far more explicit about the definition of an 'authentic' Tibetan object: 'In determining the age and authenticity of any Tibetan vessel... two matters may be born to mind, viz., weight and join... the matter of the join is more important, as it is a valuable proof of the genuine Tibetan character of any article'.<sup>129</sup> Le Mesurier believed that the exact position of the join on Tibetan vessels (between the two metal sheets used to form the body) signalled a 'real' Tibetan piece, a trait absent from newer 'copies'. She also believed that older vessels were lighter.<sup>130</sup> In addition, she had confined herself to talking about metalwork as Tibetan art, because she believed it to be 'unique and characteristically Tibetan', whereas painting and cloth articles were considered heavily influenced by India and China or 'degenerated by contact with modern utilitarianism'.<sup>131</sup>

The ideas laid out in her papers, along with the objects themselves, reveal both the methodological approach Le Mesurier followed as she strove for authenticity within the collection, and the influences that informed her choices. Within the collection, ten objects have pencilled numbers written prominently onto their surface. These include seven stone implements and domestic utensils (Figure 45), a wooden table and two gilt bronze figures, one of the goddess

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<sup>128</sup> Le Mesurier, "Tibetan Curios", 262.

<sup>129</sup> Le Mesurier, "Tibetan Art", 298.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* It is unclear what Le Mesurier's exact definition of 'older' was, but seemingly anything manufactured before the mid nineteenth century, according to the article, was 'older'.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

Green Tara and one of Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha. The numbering is not consecutive, and ranges from 34 to 174, suggesting that other objects were likely to have been numbered and that, at one time, the collection was larger than the 109 objects sold to the RSM in 1907. The numbering system, in conjunction with her habit of collecting from within Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, suggests that Le Mesurier's collecting methodology had two major influences: the knowledge of Tibetan material culture emerging out of the 1904 Expedition, which helped publicly formulate the category of 'Tibetan art', and the professionalisation of anthropological practice, which was expressed through publications such as *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*.

*Notes and Queries*, mentioned above, offered collectors in the field a succinct 'how to' manual for collecting both physical objects and intangible cultural heritage, such as oral histories, folklore and kinship genealogies. Each section, usually only a few pages, covered a different aspect of anthropological research and was authored by an expert in that particular field. First published in 1874, the first edition did not include a section on the collection of material culture. However, by the time the second edition was published in 1892, its publishers assumed that a large part of the publication's target audience would be travellers and amateur scholars, who took an increased interest in anthropology, and wished to follow more professionalised modes of practice. The influence of this working method underpinned Le Mesurier's ideas about the function and nature of Tibetan material culture that were later expressed in her written work.



Figure 45: Two numbered stone object, Lilian Le Mesurier collection.<sup>132</sup> © National Museums Scotland.

We can see from the traces on the objects themselves that Le Mesurier adhered to the processes suggested in *Notes and Queries*, such as the correct way to number objects, but in doing so she was also aligning herself with Waddell's analysis of the 'fixtures and fittings' of Tibetan Buddhist material culture.<sup>133</sup> *Notes and Queries* was categorically a scholarly publication, although at this time the line between the amateur and the professional was still decidedly blurred. By following its principles, Le Mesurier was marking herself out from the other women examined in this chapter, shining a light on the authenticity within the object itself and the process of collecting, rather than the experience of owning the collection. She was also tackling collecting from the position of a professional collector, the majority of whom were male and so, in her own way, was subverting British perceptions of the 'scholar'. The traces left on and around the collection therefore reveal the tensions of amateur versus professional knowledge production, and the way in which it was expected that gender roles would be performed.

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<sup>132</sup> Stone bladed knife (NMS A.1907.109) and stone bowl (NMS A.1907.105).

<sup>133</sup> Harris, *In the Image of Tibet*, 12, and Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 44-47.

L.A. Waddell was part of a long history of Orientalist scholarship, which formed Buddhism as an object, the creation of which allowed the systematic definition, description and classification of cultural 'facts' about Tibet. The collection of objects and the methodology used within his work, would allow any other scholar the opportunity to categorise and contextualise their own Tibetan collections within the framework of 'Tibetan Buddhism', which he, along with other Orientalists, had assumed to be a term interchangeable with 'Tibetan culture'. One of Waddell's key assertions was for the collection of 'authentic' Tibetan articles, rather than those he considered the 'spurious antiques' of the markets and bazaars frequented by tourists and travellers. His notion of 'authentic' was tied to that of *Notes and Queries*, which stated that an ethnographic specimen was an article made for use.

Le Mesurier's collection was made largely within the monastic setting, so that even 'utilitarian' objects had a clear association to Tibetan Buddhism through their provenance. Her collection, especially as examined in her paper 'Tibetan Curios', therefore presents authentic Tibetan culture as Tibetan Buddhist culture. In keeping with anthropological practice, items made for use were particularly sought out, and she was willing to offer the monasteries new items in exchange for older ones.<sup>134</sup> These influences may explain the apparent weeding of the collection, as seen through the discrepancies in the numbering system. As noted in the previous chapter, gifts were often given to those working in military and political office, and these were not necessarily the sorts of objects Le Mesurier was happy to have present in the collection, marring its

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<sup>134</sup> Le Mesurier, "Tibetan Curios", 263.

integrity. If these items had been part of the collection originally, this might explain why they were removed before the objects were sold to the RSM. Also absent are contemporary objects, and with them the signs of life from within the monastery itself, which had a population of several thousand. The absence of items representing the very men making use of the objects she collected, and practicing Tibetan Buddhism, linked the collection very clearly to discourses about western dominance within the definition and construction of Tibetan culture. Le Mesurier, through her western authority, could represent Tibetan monastic life without including traces of the men who inhabited that space.

This brings me to the other side of the collection, which reveals the traces of local agency and mediation in the collecting process. Nearly all the objects sold to the RSM came from seven monasteries which skirt the edge of the Indus River as it runs through Ladakh, to the east of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>135</sup> Her article 'Tibetan Curios' tells us that all the objects were acquired with the assistance of men she understood to be the highest-ranking figures within these organisations, most significantly the 'head lama' of Hemis monastery and the Kushok of Spituk monastery.<sup>136</sup> Whilst Le Mesurier believed him to be of service, assisting in *her* construction of Tibet, the Kushok was *himself* a gatekeeper, allowing and denying access to objects and

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<sup>135</sup> Lilian Le Mesurier collected from the following Ladakhi monasteries: Hemis, Leh, Maulbeck, Rizong, Saspol, Spituk, and Tikse.

<sup>136</sup> The Kushok, referred to as the 'Abbot' of Spituk monastery by Le Mesurier, was both the head of the monastery and the reincarnation of Bakula Rinpoche, a disciple of Buddha. His full religious title was 'Blo bzang bstan pa'l rygal mtshan'. The Kushok the Le Mesurier's met was the eighteenth incarnation (1860-1917). With thanks to John Bray for information on the role of the Kuskok. Email to the author 19/07/2011.

information as he saw fit.<sup>137</sup> This relationship can be traced through the exchange of one particular object, a travelling shrine case containing an image of the first Bakula Rinpoche (Figure 46).



Figure 46: Shrine case containing an image of Bakula Rinpoche, Le Mesurier collection. © National Museums Scotland.

The shrine case lid slides out to reveal a complete *thangka* of the first Bakula Rinpoche. The reverse of the case lid (which can be put in place either way) is painted with a different scene, depicting wrathful imagery. The box therefore may have at one time contained a completely different image, or may not have been made for a specific image at all.<sup>138</sup>

The Kushok was prepared to part with the case itself, but not with the original *thangka* painting, and so had a copy made for Le Mesurier. From her notes on the item in 'Tibetan curios' there is no suggestion that she felt she had missed an opportunity to collect an 'authentic' article.<sup>139</sup> She had a complete

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<sup>137</sup> She notes, 'This valuable assistance had the most fortunate results for me, and I acknowledge it very gratefully'. Le Mesurier, "Tibetan Curios", 262.

<sup>138</sup> Shrine case (NMS A.1907.419).

<sup>139</sup> 'The shrine-box... is one of great age, made of wood, painted dark red and gilded. The likeness of the saint within is, however, only a copy of the original picture, this being one of the cases where the Lamas would certainly have scrupled to part with the originals'. Le Mesurier, "Tibetan Curios", 268.



object, painted by the monks and therefore fulfilling the requirements of her own notion of authenticity. But to the monastery the case, though perhaps historically interesting and of some age, was less relevant than the practice of venerating the image within it, which was sacred, having been blessed for use in the monastery and imbued with generations of prayer. So in this object, part old and part new, a series of agencies were at work. On the one hand, Le Mesurier the scholarly collector, following anthropological practices and Orientalist modes of thinking to collect a complete, and therefore authentic object, felt that her position in British-Indian society, and the relationship that it allowed her to form with the Kushok, gave her the authority to represent Tibetan culture as she understood it. The Kushok for his part was able to form a relationship with an important western ally, Lilian's husband Eugene Le Mesurier, through the support of his wife's activities, which he could assist with whilst never actually parting with the objects that he, and the monastery, considered of value and importance.<sup>140</sup>

This collection, as formed by a British woman with the assistance of Tibetan monks, mediated multiple dialogues between peoples and cultures. It allowed both parties to engage in subversions of imperial ideologies through their roles as cultural commentators and gatekeepers. For Lilian Le Mesurier, the collection reflected her notion of 'authenticity' through the field of professional collecting and a scholarly output, which simultaneously pushed

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<sup>140</sup> The Kushok was also a politically active figure, and at the time Le Mesurier was collecting from his monastery was attempting to mediate relations between British India, of whom Captain Le Mesurier was a representative, and the Maharaja of Kashmir. Information from John Bray, email to the author 6/10/2011.

against the recognised role of female colonial collectors as ‘keepers of personal experience’ rather than ‘connoisseurs of objects and art’.<sup>141</sup> Through the actions of the Kushok of Spituk, the role of Tibetans in the process of western collecting can be revealed, showing how a Tibetan sense of ‘Tibetan culture’ could be embedded within western collections through the visible and invisible ways in which roles were ascribed. Whilst Lilian Le Mesurier understood the Kushok’s role as helper, like the monks who assisted Lord Carmichael in Darjeeling, he was able to exert far more control over the process of collecting than the collector herself necessarily realised.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The above case studies, linked by experience and expectation rather than the grouping of the collectors themselves, have explored the many ways in which colonial collectors defined themselves in both their roles as collectors and colonial agents, and in their relationship to Tibetan material culture. Lilian Le Mesurier’s collecting methodology, though similar in some ways to Ernest Lumsden’s, was articulated in a fundamentally different manner. Le Mesurier, Christison, Tyrie and Thexton were all women married or born into the Empire, partaking in colonial practices, but who related those experiences to material culture through contrasting means. Equally, Lord Carmichael and Robert Brown shared an interest in the aesthetics of Tibetan material culture and the scholarship surrounding it, but through the roles played by the women in their

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<sup>141</sup> These are my own terms of distinction, which capture the differing ways in which ‘authenticity’ is mediated through a collection.

lives, the collections' biographies followed divergent paths. Yet whilst these were a disparate assortment of collectors, their experiences are linked through collecting practice and important junctures in western understandings of Tibetan culture.

The next stage in the life of these collections came when they entered the museum, and were once again rearticulated in line with a new set of expectations, experiences and needs. Lilian Le Mesurier's collecting methodology came closest to the way the museum would go on to record and interpret Tibetan objects in the early twentieth century, and Carmichael's distinctions of art and ethnography would also forge a path into the RSM's displays.

Missionary collections retained their 'missionary' identity because they entered museums in large numbers in a short space of time. The fact that over ninety percent of Glasgow Museum's collection comes from missionaries, makes it unsurprising that this focus informed the museum. In Edinburgh, the RSM had several hundred missionary objects by 1905, which were quickly followed by a tranche of donations relating to the 1904 Expedition. When the objects acquired by colonial collectors entered the RSM between 1872 and 1924, those layers of meaning, contradicting relations to material things and interplays between collectors, objects and cross-cultural encounters, were all absorbed into one arena, pushing the variety of collecting practices and constructions of Tibetan culture into a single mould. This process, which I have termed the 'flattening out' of object biography, will be the topic of the next chapter.

As a result of this process, many collections made by colonial collectors went on to sit in Scottish museums in a somewhat entropic state, with the loss of the position of both the non-European agents who formed part of the objects' biographies, and the loss of the multiple perceptions of 'authentic' collecting. The museum, as I shall demonstrate, veils the biographical details that I have shown are visible within the traces of the collections themselves. This entropy makes the objects harder to follow through the museum, where they often re-emerge with new identities and values. But, museums are themselves 'processes' rather than 'things', and create and transform vast social and material assemblages.<sup>142</sup> Whilst the fact that these 'lives of objects' have become hidden may give a sense of entropy within the museum setting, in fact the content within this very thesis has been the result of the continual re-making of object identities within its walls.

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<sup>142</sup> Byrne et al., "Introduction", 15.

## 5 TIBET AND THE MUSEUM

### 5.1 Introduction

The chapters in this thesis have focused on the relationships between individual collectors and their collections. They have followed the traces of those encounters, woven between objects and people, to reconstruct ‘Tibet’ in the West. In the previous chapter this methodological approach was developed further, to ‘follow the actors themselves’ in light of the limited archival evidence relating to colonial collectors. In this chapter I wish to examine the museum – the space objects moved into in the final phase of their biographies. The museum will be presented as collector, as artefact and as a physical and intellectual space through which people and objects move, and ideas develop. In this way, the museum is an actor and a force of movement, binding together institutional changes, personal relationships, and conventions and understandings about Tibetan material culture.

In her analysis of the role of the curator A.C. Haddon as an agent within the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Sarah Byrne takes stock of the many influences that impacted on Haddon’s day-to-day decision-making processes.<sup>1</sup> She suggests that Haddon’s actions epitomise Latour’s notion that the agent is not necessarily the source of an action, but ‘the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming around it’.<sup>2</sup> Often, as I will show, it was the actions taking place in the spaces between and around Tibetan objects -

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<sup>1</sup> Byrne, “A.C. Haddon’s Agency as Museum Curator”, 322.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the movement of other collections, the quotidian issues of space, resources and time, political and commercial concerns – that had the most influence over the paths available to Tibetan material within a museum.

We have seen objects pass from their maker to an initial owner, from that individual perhaps to one or more other persons, before making their way into the hands of the collectors in the previous chapters. With each exchange, these traces have allowed objects to accumulate biographies and retain evidence of those previous encounters.<sup>3</sup>

## **5.2 ‘Biography’ and the museum: the space around ‘things’**

This chapter will examine the paths of Tibetan objects as they moved out of the realm of the private, individual collector and into the domain of the public, heterogeneous museum. Focusing specifically on what is now the National Museum of Scotland (NMS),<sup>4</sup> I will unpack the differing, often competing, agencies that operated within the Museum, evaluating how the position of Tibetan material in this institution evolved through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The structure of this chapter will split the assessment of these competing agencies between those associated with internal museum process and those associated with external forces and public interests. Though museums are sites of encounter, they are, importantly, grounded in a concrete

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<sup>3</sup> Gosden and Marshall, “The Cultural Biography of Objects”, 174.

<sup>4</sup> National Museums Scotland is an organisation now made up of several different museums (see Appendix B for the full breakdown). The National Museum of Scotland is the organisation’s flagship Victorian building on Edinburgh’s Chambers Street, which houses the Department of World Cultures’ collections, including its Tibetan material.

space that is the museum building. This also makes them in part artefacts, which are modifiable by those around them.

Just as object trajectories changed in accordance with the situations they were placed in, museums have always had to modify how they work. Museums are often influenced by ideas stemming from beyond the institution itself, such as local and national power plays and social and economic imperatives, as well as the influence of the objects they contain.<sup>5</sup> Collectively these issues formed part of a museum's landscape, in which the knowledge a museum produced could be a continually developing force of internal and external influence. A variety of people were party to these processes of knowledge production, display and consumption; namely curators, administrators, collectors and visitors.

Interpreting museums in this way, as modifiable artefacts in their own right, which continually changed through the agency of staff, patrons and external forces, allows them to be understood as something greater than the sum of their parts.<sup>6</sup> The trajectory of Tibetan material can be uncovered by examining the moments in which it held more or less agency within the wider museum context and the moments in which it came into conflict with other concerns. In other words, how Tibetan material culture held a position within the Museum was determined by the way it intersected a variety of tensions, ruptures and projected ideological concerns within the biography of the institution.

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<sup>5</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Alberti uses a similar methodology, also based around the cultural biography of things, to examine the life history of the Manchester Museum. Alberti, *Nature and Culture*, 189.

### 5.2.1 Biographical sources

The Museum's biography can be read through varied sources. The building itself is an archive of the way in which physical space was used. Mapping the uses of the Museum's space highlights how displays were used to exhibit hierarchies of knowledge, and how Tibetan material was positioned within them.

There is an extensive paper archive associated with any museum, detailing the administration of the institution and its strategies surrounding the care and promotion of its collections. Within NMS, the institution's archive gives us clues about both the public and private activities that took place within the museum; how the people who oversaw its processes – administrators and curators – constructed a world view through the collected materials of others, whilst bending to the pressures of their stakeholders.<sup>7</sup> The Museum's archive created many layers: annual reports and guidebooks were published and publicly available, whilst directorial correspondence and minute books were not but were still representing an official viewpoint. Despite distinctions of 'private' and 'public', museum records maintained a collective view of the museum as an institution. There is an absence of documents that are not designated 'official', such as correspondence between the museum and collectors that might highlight personal preferences and collecting strategies of particular museum

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<sup>7</sup> The Museum's stakeholders included individuals (patrons, collectors, visitors, staff) but also institutions (universities and technical colleges). The government was also a stakeholder, supplying both funding and other kinds of support from the Scotch Education Board, which oversaw the RSM.



staff.<sup>8</sup> However, some official documents are quite candid, allowing us glimpses of personal intent within this organisational framework.

Equally, guidebooks available to the public show how museum practices were enacted and how encounters between objects and visitors were mediated. The practices outlined in these documents have often left traces on the objects themselves, allowing us to revisit relationships between objects and people and retrieve objects' roles in shaping our understanding of how Tibet 'sits' within the Museum today.

Collectors and museum staff were two of many vehicles through which the Museum was developed. However, over both space and time the traces of collectors often became too faint to see, or were erased completely by museum process. Consequently, the biographies of objects and collectors were, at different times and in different ways, obscured from public view. This process, which I refer to as 'flattening out', was a key development many objects went through as they passed through the Museum.

### **5.3 Titles and taxonomic divisions**

From its inception in 1854 until the first large-scale donations of ethnographic material in 1882, the Museum underwent a series of changes, both in terms of its own name, which reflected changing intellectual, social and political

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<sup>8</sup> There are small pockets of private letters, for example the Rybot collection's accession file includes a dozen letters between Rybot and the Museum. However many of the early collectors, such as Le Mesurier and Taylor, who would have almost certainly corresponded with the Museum, have no documentation connected to them beyond accession books and official reports. This is probably a consequence of mid-twentieth century museum policy, which saw the destruction of large quantities of archival material, which were not considered necessary.

concerns, and in the classification of its collections. The process by which 'ethnography' came into being, was heavily influenced by the founding doctrines of the Museum, which had a continued impact on the different ways in which Tibetan material culture was recognised as both 'art' and 'ethnography' throughout the Museum's history.

### **5.3.1 Bringing the World to Scotland: The Identity and Purpose of the 'National' Museum**

The [Industrial] Museum is not a museum of Scottish industry, but a museum of the industry of the world to Scotland.<sup>9</sup>

George Wilson (1818-1859), the first Director of the Industrial Museum, and architect of the Museum's taxonomic structure, had clear national ambitions for his new institution. As the above quote shows, Wilson wanted to bring the products of the world to Scotland, to expand Scotland's practical knowledge of lesser known places, allowing for the development of trade, industry and, consequently, imperial strength.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Wilson, *The Industrial Museum of Scotland*, 55. Wilson, the first Director of the museum, which was to become the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, spent a great deal of energy promoting his vision for Scotland's new national institution and its purpose, scope and taxonomic development.

<sup>10</sup> Geoff Swinney notes that when Wilson presented his lecture in 1857, outlining the importance of an industrial museum in the pursuit of economic development, Britain was undergoing a moment of economic instability, thanks to the Indian Rebellion and mounting political tension in North America, (which would eventually lead to the American Civil War). Swinney asserts that Wilson's insistence on tying museums as institutions of educational advancement to industrial development was an attempt to re-stabilise the empire's economic concerns, leading him to place his Industrial Museum central to imperial concerns. Swinney, "Placing and Materialising Industry and Technology", 11.

Over the next fifty years, Wilson's intentions were modified and expanded, in line with the changing requirements of industry and the changing face of the Museum's staff. However his original idea, for an institution that made available the 'industrial arts' of the world, remained a foundational principle for the Museum throughout its evolution well into the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

The majority of Tibetan material entered the Museum between 1890 and 1930, after the Museum had transitioned from the Industrial Museum to The Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (EMSA), and through its evolution in 1904 into the Royal Scottish Museum (RSM).<sup>12</sup> This time frame, as we have seen, shows that in the span of a lifetime notions of Tibet and Tibetan material culture were radically altered within British society, particularly transformed by the events of 1904. After this time clearer divisions between 'art' and 'ethnography' can be seen in western constructions of Tibetan material culture, as can stronger connections between the terms 'Tibetan culture' and 'Buddhism'.

The idea for an Industrial Museum had begun its life in 1854,<sup>13</sup> run by Wilson but under the auspices of Henry Cole's museum 'empire', which looked to spread the South Kensington (from 1899 the V&A) vision of art and industry

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<sup>11</sup> Wilson's original intention was for a collection that was based around the raw materials used in manufacturing, and the tools and processes that turned them into finished products, rather than the finished articles themselves. By the time large quantities of Tibetan material were coming into the Museum at the end of the 1890s, this focus had been shifted to the finished product, but the emphasis on articles of industrial art and technological processes remained. George Wilson, *The Industrial Museum of Scotland*, 23-25.

<sup>12</sup> See appendix B for a complete history of the institutional name changes that affected the Museum.

<sup>13</sup> The Industrial Museum did not have a building that could be accessed by the public until 1862.

across the country.<sup>14</sup> All the museums associated with South Kensington 'had a shared mission, so long as they were part of Cole's empire: to embody Prince Albert's vision of art and science combined in the service of industry'.<sup>15</sup> The use of the term 'empire' is significant: the South Kensington Museum considered itself as the 'metropole' of Britain's industrial museum network, whilst the industrial museums of Edinburgh and Dublin acted on the peripheries of that dominion. Even after the EMSA (as it was by 1901) and the V&A (as the South Kensington Museum became in 1899) ceased to have a formal connection in 1901, the idea that the museum in Edinburgh was peripheral, almost second-rate by comparison to those of London, continued. This relationship – between London and other civic centres across Britain – remains visible through the collections acquired during that period.<sup>16</sup>

There is no doubt that Wilson's vision of 'art and industry across the country' mirrored that of Cole and Prince Albert. Wilson's dual role as museum director and Chair of Technology at the University of Edinburgh, created a definition of 'technology' as 'the science of utilitarian art', thus bringing together his two spheres of influence, retaining the principles established by Cole in London and defining a process of coalescence between 'art' and

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<sup>14</sup> Burton, *Vision and Accident*, 106. Burton offers an interesting account of the spread of Cole's particular vision through his dominance of the Department of Art and Science in London from the mid-nineteenth century, and its relationship to industrial technology and advancement. For a further discussion of Cole's vision see also Yallop, *Magpies, Squirrels and Thieves*.

<sup>15</sup> Burton, *Vision and Accident*, 107.

<sup>16</sup> It was common practice for the South Kensington Museum (and later the British Museum) to purchase or take in a collection, split it to retain the better material, and send the rest of the collection to a peripheral institution. For example, the dealers Spink & Sons sold a Japanese print collection to the British Museum in 1881. The British Museum made a selection of material, and sold those items considered second rate to the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. Even today the collection in Edinburgh is often accessed by scholars wishing to research the British Museum collection, showing that, through the objects themselves, such connections remain.

'industry' for his museum in Edinburgh.<sup>17</sup> Within the Industrial Museum, Wilson's focus was not finished products, but the raw materials and manufacturing processes from which a product could be made.<sup>18</sup> When the Museum was renamed the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art in 1866, it reflected Wilson's founding concerns – for industrial process - but noted the shift from the collection of raw materials to finished products, and an additional focus on more localised, civic pride.<sup>19</sup> Its role was not, as Jenni Calder notes, to represent two different ways of looking at the world, illustrated by examples of knowledge through scientific evidence contrasted with the results of creative expression.<sup>20</sup> Instead, its aim was to present them as closely allied.

In 1904 the Museum evolved once more, this time into the Royal Scottish Museum, a name it would hold for most of the twentieth century. This new name came in as ties with the V&A were severed (in 1901) and reflected a return to an emphasis on the institution's national role,<sup>21</sup> and Wilson's vision for a universal museum.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Wilson, *What is Technology?*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-23 and Wilson, *The Industrial Museum of Scotland*, 23.

<sup>19</sup> Swinney, "Placing and Materialising Industry and Technology", 35.

<sup>20</sup> Calder, *The Royal Scottish Museum: The Early Years*, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1904*, 1.

<sup>22</sup> See Wilson, *What is Technology?* and Wilson, *The Industrial Museum of Scotland*.

### 5.3.2 Taxonomic Development: The Changing Place of Tibetan Material in the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art

In 1890, when the first Tibetan donation was recorded in an annual report, the evidence of Wilson and Cole's influence could still be seen in the classifications that were ascribed to the Museum's collections and in the way that education played a fundamental role in the Museum's activities. The weight given to the ways in which the Museum might be useful to industry and British manufacturing had placed a particularly great pressure on the importance of the physical materiality of the collections; if materials and manufacturing processes were to be studied, then the materials themselves would provide a guiding principle of collecting and cataloguing. Therefore until the creation of the Art and Ethnography Department in 1901, the collections remained broadly divided between natural sciences and human sciences (including the industrial or utilitarian arts), but within the latter category, objects were not always clearly delineated as either art or science. Instead, objects were firstly determined by their 'usefulness'.<sup>23</sup> Within this classification, objects were then divided by material: wood, metal, porcelain etc. As a result of this process, most ethnographic objects were specimens of science until 1901, within the classification of 'industrial collections'.

It was only with the Museum's formal separation from the V&A in 1901 that a separate technology department was formed, moving the emphasis on industry into a separate sphere and providing 'art and ethnography' with its

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<sup>23</sup> Wilson distinguished fine arts as those 'not useful in the sense of being indispensable' and industrial arts as 'necessary arts. The most degraded savage must practice them, and the most civilized genius cannot dispense with them'. Wilson, *What is Technology?*, 6.

own curator and a new, retrospectively prescribed, system of classification for defining objects as either art or ethnography.<sup>24</sup>

European art had always been clearly separate from the industrial collections, but 'ethnography' had not appeared as a defined category until 1882, when the University of Edinburgh transferred its ethnographic material to the Museum.<sup>25</sup> This influx of material was therefore the catalyst for change, as practical concerns of collections care and taxonomic restructuring challenged the established departmental divisions. By the time objects were decisively classified as 'ethnographic', they had already sat within a diverse array of classifications across the Museum. Certain types of metalwork, porcelain, painting and sculpture were previously designated 'art', whereas domestic goods and commonly used metalwork items were 'industrial'. The transfer of objects to the classification 'art' or 'ethnography' was a gradual process, most likely contested, erratic and partial, dependent on the personal intentions and expectations of curatorial staff. Purchases were not always accurately recorded in annual reports making it hard to trace these previous classifications precisely or how they came together to form an Art and Ethnography Department over time. However, through the late nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century, Tibet was not presented collectively as a geographic or cultural entity located in one place within the Museum.

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<sup>24</sup> Allan, *The Royal Scottish Museum 1854-1954*, 11.

<sup>25</sup> Oddly, the annual report for that year does not explicitly state that the collection had been transferred, but noted that 'some portions of our valuable and extensive ethnographical collections have been brought out and rearranged'. Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, *Annual Report for the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1882)* 587.

The Museum's pedagogical role had an additional impact on object classification. As much as the Museum was for industrialists, traders and travellers, it had a position as a place of learning for students in local schools and universities.<sup>26</sup> The relationship between the EMSA and the V&A in London had seen the Museum governed by the London-based Board of Education. But in 1901, as the two museums parted company, governance was transferred to the Scotch Education Department in Edinburgh. This change was seen as a way of 'increasing the facilities for the use of the Museum by the public, and in its organisation and staff'.<sup>27</sup> Part of this organisational change was the appointment of David Vallance as curator for the newly formed Art and Ethnography Department. Whilst ethnographic objects were commonly referred to as 'specimens', reflecting the scientific nature of ethnographic study, this new museum department created an opportunity for objects to be visualised as both art and ethnography, subjecting them to scrutiny for their aesthetic merits and cultural interest. Following the 1904 Expedition, this shift would have significant implications for Tibetan material within the Museum.

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<sup>26</sup> George Wilson noted the importance of his vision for traders, whom he offered 'a tower of refuge in commercial storms, and a castle stored with weapons for commercial warfare' (Wilson, *The Industrial Museum of Scotland*, 9). He later noted that: 'Besides those purely scientific agents, a large class of travellers of all professions aid natural history solely by sending home objects with which it is concerned. So important are the services of this class of naturalist to the cause of science'. (Ibid., 28). By the early twentieth century, the Museum would lay out rules and guidelines for the ways in which the institution might be useful to teachers and students, showing it sought to entice an expanding array of visitors. Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1911*, 1-9.

<sup>27</sup> Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, *Annual Report for the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art* (1901), 1.



### 5.3.3 Hierarchies of value: 'art' versus 'ethnography'

The Museum's annual reports show that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries collections were understood within a specific hierarchy of value. European fine and decorative arts took precedence over non-European art and ethnography in terms of curatorial attention, space within annual reports, display concerns and money set aside for purchasing. However, even though such hierarchies existed, the position of material as either 'art' or 'ethnography' (European or non-European) was not fixed, and Tibetan material culture had a place in both categories, often simultaneously, continually shifting its perceived 'value'. Therefore, by the time of the 1904 Expedition, Tibetan collections within the Museum found themselves in a slightly ambiguous position, somewhere *between* 'art' and 'ethnography' in an institution that was still struggling with its own understandings of those categories. Annual reports had stopped recording purchase prices by 1883, but until that point the largest amounts of money had always been spent on European and Classical art.<sup>28</sup> Although the actual sums exchanged were no longer listed, European art continued to gain the most attention within reports for the years around the turn of the twentieth century. For example, 1902 saw the purchase of a large group of European metalwork items from the longstanding arts patron Lord Thomas Gibson Carmichael (whose collecting was explored in the previous

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<sup>28</sup> Nearly every 'art' purchase over forty pounds made up until the 1882, when it stopped being recorded, was for European art, furniture or arms and armour. There was an occasional purchase on this scale of Japanese or Chinese material. Any purchases over twenty pounds had to be approved by the South Kensington Museum, suggesting that the focus on high value European art was likely to have been heavily influenced by the South Kensington Museum's principles for collecting. Information on the early status of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art from Geoff Swinney, email to the author, 8/03/2012.

chapter), one of many groups of items he was to sell to the Museum over the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the most important western art collection to be purchased at this time was that of Sir Noel Paton. Paton was an influential Scottish artist who had died in Edinburgh in 1901. Through his lifetime he made a significant collection of eight hundred pieces of 'European arms and armour, furniture, ecclesiastical and other art objects', which the EMSA purchased for £10,000 in 1903-1904.<sup>30</sup> The purchase was only possible through a government grant and a nationwide public subscription.<sup>31</sup> The collections of Paton and Carmichael were two of many groups of European art purchased in the years around 1900. This focus was not only indicative of curatorial interest and expertise, but of the ways in which resources were seen as best used to fulfil the Museum's educational and social obligations. The Art and Ethnography Department was overseen by a single curator (David Vallance), who had one budget – the Sir Noel Paton collection was to commandeer nearly a decade of his time to catalogue and used a significant amount of financial resources not just to buy, but to display and store. As a result, the collections within the department that fell outside of the category of 'European art' were generally given far less curatorial attention and financial assistance.

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<sup>29</sup> The Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, *Annual Report for the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1902)*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> In fact, the executors of Paton's will had placed the collection on loan to the Museum in 1902. It was only in 1904 that the full sum of money was finally raised for its purchase. The Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, *Annual Report for the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1904)*, 3.

<sup>31</sup> The Annual Report for 1904 noted that there had been a 'national rally for subscriptions'. The Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1904*, 3.

When the Museum became the RSM in 1904, its focus had shifted from *what* it was for, to *whom* it was for, catering for a broader audience of working people, as well as for its continuing use by students and scholars.<sup>32</sup> This was not just a public rebranding of the institution, but an attempt to identify and cater for a broader range of museum audiences in the twentieth century.

The malleability of Tibetan material and the difficulty of placing it in developing taxonomic frameworks was a problem being tackled across Britain. The Cranmore Museum, a private museum run by the collector Harry Beasley, placed Tibetan material in an ethnographic frame of reference, in line with the rest of his collections. The Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford also positioned Tibetan material as ethnographical, whereas the British Museum's new Tibetan displays, created post-1904, saw Tibetan material very much presented as art.<sup>33</sup> There was not a consensus as to the positioning of Tibetan material culture within museum taxonomies across Britain, an issue reflected in the life of the Tibetan collections within the RSM.

When Tibetan material became part of the Art and Ethnography Department in 1901, the disparate categories it had been placed in were combined on geographical and cultural grounds, along with all other non-European material that had previously made up the 'industrial arts' collections. However, whereas Japanese and Chinese material was considered 'art' and

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<sup>32</sup> The newly renamed institution was very much focused on the Scottish nation as a whole, as noted by the director in that year's annual report: 'The past year... has been marked by the change in name, from the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art to the Royal Scottish Museum. This change... emphasizes the position which the museum has always held as a national institution'. Royal Scottish Museum, *Report for the Year 1904*, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World*, 74.

material from Africa was 'ethnographic' in nature,<sup>34</sup> the annual reports were still inconsistent in their portrayal of Tibet. The Ottley collection, purchased in 1905, was listed as part of the 'collections illustrative of the arts of the Far East'.<sup>35</sup> Yet the 1908 report suggested that Tibet formed part of the 'ethnographical section collections'.<sup>36</sup>

We have seen in the previous chapters that collectors had clear ideas of the difference between art and ethnography in regards to Tibetan material culture. Art fulfilled an object-based desire for authenticity, was connected to personal status (connoisseurship), particular responses to aesthetics (materials, forms, details), scholarship and high economic values. As 'religious art', objects had clear provenance from monasteries and wealthy aristocratic homes, distinguishable from the 'superstitious' paraphernalia of the Tibetan nomad or trader. By contrast, ethnographic material authenticated personal responses to moments of encounter, and consisted of material that had a 'use', both practically as something utilitarian, and ideologically, as part of the collector's presentation of their imperial encounter. Within ethnographic representations of 'religious' material culture, objects were not associated with monastic Tibetan Buddhism, but with practices designated 'superstitious'. It is unclear what curatorial staff at the RSM believed the distinction between art and ethnography to be, and they may have viewed these terms as interchangeable, depending on their needs, just as collectors who sold or donated the objects to

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<sup>34</sup> These divisions were reflections of wider attitudes to race that were developing as British agents all over the world collected ever-increasing quantities of non-European material culture. Ideologies of race passed with objects into the museum.

<sup>35</sup> Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1905*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1907*, 4-10.

the Museum were want to do. This continual change of terminology and a lack of clear taxonomic structure, was indicative of the problems the Museum faced in placing Tibet within it, and of the continued problems caused by the Museum's early strategy of separating objects based on their material composition and 'usefulness'.

The social context of objects' entry into the Museum, and the way in which negotiations around either the donation or sale of objects took place, was of significance to an objects' trajectories into either the category of art or ethnography. When Innes-Wright and Taylor's collections came into the Museum in 1897, they were noted as 'large and important additions to the section of ethnography'.<sup>37</sup> Neither collector is mentioned in the report, although the Museum clearly viewed the contribution of their collections as important. On the other hand, the RSM's Minute Book for 1909 records:

'a large number of objects illustrative of the art work of Tibet...acquired with great discretion by Lt. Bailey, at present stationed at Chumbi as political officer, and were sent home to his father Colonel Bailey who has placed them from time to time as they arrived on loan in the museum. The collection is now one of the finest in existence.'<sup>38</sup>

This note, giving credit to both collector and collection, shows that even though both sets of collectors sold their items to the Museum, they were treated in very different ways within the Museum's official record. This, I suggest, was a consequence of the Museum's perception of hierarchies and

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<sup>37</sup> Industrial Museum of Scotland, *Directory of the Industrial Museum of Scotland and the Natural History Museum, Edinburgh*, 327.

<sup>38</sup> The Royal Scottish Museum, *Minute Book (1909)*, 103.

social status, and highlights the value the Museum placed on the contributions of independent and absent missionaries, versus military officers who were part of the local Edinburgh elite. In addition, this reflected on the Museum's own status, elevating its public position through associations with specific important collectors and patrons. In the next section I will examine why such differences occurred and how they were articulated in museum processes.

#### **5.4 From collector to museum**

Before objects could be categorised, accessioned, labelled and subsumed into the broader museum 'collection' a transaction needed to take place between Museum and collector. Which route was chosen had implications for the 'voice' both collector and object would be given once processed by the Museum. As shown in the previous chapters, the manner in which collectors themselves formed their collections were varied, including gifts, purchases, and looting. The Museum's relationship to donors, lenders and sellers was no less complex and varied. These relationships proved crucial to how agency, authenticity and value were invested in objects within the museum setting.

In common with most nineteenth century museums, the EMSA relied heavily on donors and benefactors for specimens and funds for practical matters, such as the redevelopment of gallery spaces.<sup>39</sup> Donations account for just under half of all Tibetan objects accessioned before 1930, and in terms of numbers of objects per grouping, purchases easily outstrip donations. The

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<sup>39</sup> Alberti's history of the Manchester Museum (*Nature and Culture*) offers a useful comparison for understanding how a civic museum of comparable size operated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

largest donation to the Tibetan collections between 1890-1930 numbered just thirty-seven objects, with only five of the twenty donated collections reaching double figures.<sup>40</sup> If the majority of items were purchased, how was this type of transaction reflected within the Museum and what did it mean for the agency of both collector and object?

#### **5.4.1 Selling collections: missionary collectors.**

Alberti suggests that 'whereas a gift ostensibly constitutes an enduring relationship, a purchase is a one-off commodity transfer, leaving no trace behind beyond a receipt'.<sup>41</sup> However, he adds, 'even purchases reveal the complex and enduring legacy of the provenance of bought specimens'.<sup>42</sup> Yet, this was not the case for all sellers at all times, showing the ambiguous position that those who sold to the Museum held within the institution's legacy and public output.

The *Annual Report for 1897* gives only a one-line mention to the Tibetan collections purchased that year. There is no mention of the sellers or their method for acquiring such material. 1897 was the year that Annie Taylor and J.W. Innes-Wright brought the Museum's Tibetan collection into being. To a collection of less than fifty items, they added 104 objects. If these two collectors tripled the Museum's Tibetan holdings, why did they remain anonymous? There are several possible reasons, relating to both the donation/sale dichotomy, and

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<sup>40</sup> A collection of thirty-seven objects from Lord Carmichael was donated 1919. This included the *cham* dance costumes discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>41</sup> Alberti, *Nature and Culture*, 104.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

to the influence of imperial ideologies regarding gender, class and race on museum practices. Both Taylor and Innes-Wright had purchased their collections. Innes-Wright was using Tibetan objects in the most commoditised manner of any in this thesis; making up lists of objects with costs and passing them on to museums for purchase approval. He was buying and selling Tibetan objects to fund his work without forming any sort of attachment to his collection.<sup>43</sup> Taylor made daily use of many of the objects she later sold to the Museum, and most likely acquired others in exchange for goods and medicines through her shop in Yatung. For Taylor these objects represented both utilitarian goods and items of exchange – commodities – even if she did form a sentimental attachment to some of them.<sup>44</sup> They were both missionaries working independently of established missionary organisations who were in close proximity to their own mission stations; neither collector was local to Edinburgh, although Innes-Wright was Scottish, and both continued to be based abroad for the rest of their careers, having no fixed, local relationship with the Museum.

It was not just a case of how these missionaries collected, but what was collected. Their collections consisted predominantly of domestic equipment, clothing and objects representing 'superstitious' traditional Tibetan practices, not easily reconciled with a western understanding of Tibetan Buddhism in the late nineteenth century. In the late 1890s Tibetan Buddhism was, as we have

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<sup>43</sup> Refer back to Chapter Two, section 2.3.3, Missionary practices: the commercial side of collecting: 139.

<sup>44</sup> For example, Taylor's hat (A.1897.320.14) is notable in several photographs of her taken in Tibet and shows signs of being heavily worn. Although not evidence of sentimentality, objects clearly stayed with her for lengthy periods of time before being shipped to Scotland, unlike Innes-Wright who appears to have dispatched objects immediately.



seen, still very much viewed through the Orientalist lens, which focused on ancient texts and library based research. These objects, which suggested a larger 'culture' beyond those narrow projections, sat uneasily within the Orientalist frame of reference. In other words, there were few sculptures or paintings and many of the objects were made from wood, stone, clay, brass, and white metals such as zinc made to imitate silver.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, that larger cultural group – the 'working' Tibetan – was reflective of a social class and a level of status that sat well below the monasteries and aristocratic homes that would provide the collecting 'base' for the 1904 Expedition: it was not just missionaries who were on the Museum's social periphery, but the people from whom they collected. In other words, missionary collections were assumed to be 'ethnographic' because they were associated with indigenous peoples who were of a 'lesser' status, and consequently a 'lesser' culture. This suggests that imperial ideologies concerning race and class were embedded deep within the acquisition process, limiting the presence of certain types of collectors *and* Tibetans within the Museum.

Yet the fact that the Museum was willing to pay for these collections, even if they were not publicly recognised as significant contributions, shows there was an invested interest in Tibetan ethnographic material. I would suggest that what this material lacked in scholarly interest, specifically relating to the retrieval of a 'pure' form of Buddhism, it made up for in an experiential

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<sup>45</sup> Taylor's collection included one painting, a small Thangka (NMS A.1897.266.1), and Innes-Wright's collection included one small moulded brass sculpture of relatively poor quality, in terms of the moulding and metal quality (NMS A.1897.319.8). The NMS 'Adlib' system notes this sculpture as 'Figure of a seated house-hold god', evidencing that missionaries were collecting from humbler, domestic settings.

authenticity (being collected 'on the spot' and consisting of functional items), linking directly to the founding principles of the institution. George Wilson's interest in utilitarianism and production was well served by missionary collectors across the globe. Therefore whilst missionary collections were of lesser 'value' within the Museum's hierarchy, they were still of necessity to its overall remit.

The purchase of these collections shows that even before the creation of the Art and Ethnography Department, the Museum was branching out, away from the South Kensington Museum model, and forging a place for itself amongst a fairly limited group of museums recognised for their contributions to ethnographic collecting.

#### **5.4.2 Selling collections: the 1904 Expedition.**

Objects from the 1904 Expedition provided a greater museum legacy for their collectors. Both Bailey and Ottley sold their collections to the RSM within five years of the 1904 Expedition and both retained a presence within the Museum after this monetary transaction, though in quite different ways. Ottley represented the first group of material to come into the RSM. The British Museum, which had played a central role in the field during the 1904 Expedition, was also cataloguing, accessioning and displaying its bounty at this time, when Ottley presented his collection, firstly as a loan and then for sale.<sup>46</sup> Despite the fact that Ottley had no connection to Edinburgh, his timing

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<sup>46</sup> See Royal Scottish Museum, *Loan Register Volume II (1905)*, (1), National Museums Scotland Loans Department.

positioned him at a key moment, when the politics of acquisition shifted to intercept Tibet's emergence within the public consciousness. This material became valuable to the RSM as a means of positioning itself amongst other leading museums that had gained from the 1904 Expedition, particularly those in London. Museums were not operating in isolation, and the RSM was reacting to how Tibetan material culture was being repositioned elsewhere.<sup>47</sup> Tibet, previously given an anonymous position amongst collections that were difficult to define and which did not fit harmoniously into the Museum's remit, came to prominence serving the Museum's national and imperial concerns. The *Annual Report for 1905* gives the following description of Ottley's contribution:

'Of the additions to the collections illustrative of the arts of the Far East, the most important is the collection acquired from Major Ottley of the 34<sup>th</sup> Sikh Pioneers, who was on active service with the Expedition to Lhasa in 1904. One of the most striking objects in the collection is a Tibetan costume made from pieces of bone elaborately carved which was used in certain primitive necromantic rites and which, apart from its ethnographical interest is a remarkable work of art. It is said to be the only complete specimen of its kind brought out of the country. Apart from the acquisition of this collection by the museum, Major Ottley presented a superb brass chorten and relic holder, also from Tibet'.<sup>48</sup>

The Museum was keen to emphasise Ottley's role in a renowned military campaign and his ability to acquire the most rare and important objects on offer, at a time when London museums and auction houses were filling with great quantities of Tibetan material. The language used – 'remarkable work of

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<sup>47</sup> See Alberti, *Nature and Culture*, 91.

<sup>48</sup> Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1905*, 3.

art' and 'relic' – also suggests that the Museum was influenced by developments in the understanding of Tibetan material culture post-1904. Additionally, it had begun to see 'Tibetan Art' as 'Tibetan Buddhist Art', which was 'religious art', to be understood similarly to European ecclesiastical art, such as that acquired through the Paton collection a year earlier. In a museum where collections spanned the world, and included many examples of European 'religious art', this additional frame of reference elevated objects that could be clearly associated in this way.

There is possible evidence that Ottley bought some of the collection at auction in London after the 1904 Expedition, and was not involved in collecting all the material personally.<sup>49</sup> Yet because of the moment in which his collection came into the museum and the politics of the acquisition, he received very different treatment to other sellers such as Innes-Wright. Like Innes-Wright, Ottley appeared indifferent to his own collection, viewing its purpose as a commodity with which to make a profit. The outcome of negotiations between Ottley and the Museum was the breaking up of the collection after its initial period as a loan, when only half of the objects were purchased in 1905.<sup>50</sup> All the objects returned, apart from the apron, had the highest monetary value and it is

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<sup>49</sup> It is likely that Ottley purchased the bone apron and the *chorten* from the J.C. Stevens auction in London in July 1905. The catalogue descriptions are identical to the museum's accession register descriptions and the star piece at the auction was a full bone apron with arm and leg panels. The Museum has a copy of that catalogue which is annotated and the description of the apron has been cut out. I have been unable to find a clean copy of the catalogue for comparison. Stevens, *Most Important and Valuable Collections of Tibetan Curios*, title page.

<sup>50</sup> Royal Scottish Museum, *Loan Register Vol. II (1905)*, 1. The items not sold included: an embroidered silk hanging from Lhasa, the robe worn by the King of Bhutan at the signing of the Treaty in Lhasa in September 1904, a series of *thangkas* and a *tsha-tsha* covered in sheet gold. Although only known from their descriptions in the RSM's Director's Correspondence, knowledge of Ottley's conduct in Tibet makes it likely that these were high value items taken from important monasteries and sites. Royal Scottish Museum, *Directors Correspondence (1905)*, Loan Receipt, (259), National Museums Scotland Archive.

likely that these were then resold to another collector or at auction.<sup>51</sup> Although Ottley had made a name for himself during the 1904 Expedition, his particularly aggressive and undiplomatic style of warfare, closely connected to the older military practices of ‘forward policy’ discussed in Chapter Three,<sup>52</sup> had a detrimental effect on his later career. He may have seen his Tibetan objects as an investment for his future, meaning that a high price was of greater importance than the integrity of the collection. Despite the Museum’s inability to secure the entire collection, the way in which the loan and subsequent sale were recorded in annual reports and RSM guidebooks gave both the collector and the collection a prominent position on the Museum’s public face.

It seems a reasonable presumption that Ottley had in fact hoped to sell all his Tibetan objects to the RSM. As a complete group they easily rivalled those of Bailey. However, the final payments made for the objects he did sell show that his own valuation of the collection was somewhat overambitious.<sup>53</sup> This implies that the Museum’s system of administration and financing could have a significant impact on a collection’s trajectory. The disarticulation of Ottley’s original grouping had the effect of allowing the objects the Museum did buy to retain their identities as ‘trophies of war’, rather than as broader markers of Tibetan material culture, precisely because certain objects remained highlighted in the absence of others. Had the entire collection stayed together, Ottley’s

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. There is a line at the bottom of the loan receipt noting that some bone items were sent to Liverpool Museum. However, Liverpool have no record of such items, so they too may have been unwilling to pay Ottley’s prices for the collection. With thanks to Emma Martin, National Museums Liverpool for checking the accuracy of this statement in the museum’s records.

<sup>52</sup> See Chapter Three, footnote 60.

<sup>53</sup> The RSM paid Ottley £110 for thirty five items, compared with Bailey’s collection which cost them £95 for nearly 120 items. Royal Scottish Museum, *Directors Correspondence (1905)*, Loan Receipt, (259), National Museums Scotland Archive.

presence within the Museum may have shifted him from trophy hunter to connoisseur, as was the case with Bailey. The first guidebook to the Museum was published in 1908, and from then until 1924 the following is recorded, almost unchanged, in each subsequent edition: 'The large and handsome chorten or relic holder, a remarkable specimen of work in brass, was presented by Major Ottley, who was one of the first of the British forces to enter Lhasa'.<sup>54</sup> Ottley's *chorten* was singled out as an object epitomising this British-Tibetan encounter and remained on public display, in direct association with its collector and that historical event, for at least thirty years.<sup>55</sup>

The *chorten* appears to be a rogue signifier. Though representative of the shift of Tibetan material culture into the realm of 'art', both object and collector were given undue prominence within the Museum. Yet when one examines the context in which the piece was acquired, it becomes a significant representation of the power plays that were occurring between the various British institutions simultaneously acquiring loot from the 1904 Expedition. In other words, the prominence given to Ottley and his object were in part about the Museum's own sense of status, and attempts to position itself in relation to more prominent institutions, particularly those in London.

The bone apron was also mentioned in the 1908 guide, in a general section about Tibet and without reference to the collector.<sup>56</sup> However the apron was a rare object, so completely indicative of the construction of Tibetan

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<sup>54</sup> Scottish Education Department, *The Royal Scottish Museums Edinburgh: A Guide to the Collections (1908)*, 23.

<sup>55</sup> *Chorten* (NMS A.1905.438). At the time of writing this thesis, the location of the *chorten* within the NMS storage facilities is unknown.

<sup>56</sup> Scottish Education Department, *The Royal Scottish Museums Edinburgh: A Guide to the Collections (1908)*, 23.

Buddhism as a degenerative practice, that it acquired its own presence within the Museum setting, and continued to do so through many runs of the guidebook.

### **5.4.3 Selling collections: the men and women ‘on the spot’**

Just as the objects sold by Taylor and Innes-Wright added quantitatively to the Museum’s Tibetan holdings in 1897, between 1907-1910 another significant increase in quantity and quality occurred. Between Eric Bailey and Lilian Le Mesurier the RSM doubled its Tibetan holdings, simultaneously raising its profile thanks to the addition of very different objects to those collected in the late nineteenth century, and which came with far greater provenance and scholarly interpretation than those acquired by Ottley in 1904.<sup>57</sup> The Museum purchased these collections, although evidence of the negotiations between collector and Museum show the Museum took a more prudent attitude than it had done when purchasing in earlier years. This was due to a changing strategy by the Museum’s curators to use purchased collections more carefully, to make more informed choices about what was accepted via sale or donation, and to allow the Museum’s impact on the shape of the collections to be greater than that of the donors.<sup>58</sup> Le Mesurier, like many of those who sold before her, had no associations with Scotland or the Museum. The *Annual Report for 1907* records that ‘the acquisition of the Le Mesurier collection, along with other specimens from Tibet, raises the Tibetan section to a level with the other

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<sup>57</sup> There were approximately 200 Tibetan and Himalayan objects in the RSM by 1907. Bailey (1909-10) added about 120 objects and Le Mesurier about 90 (1907).

<sup>58</sup> Allan, *The Royal Scottish Museum 1854-1954*, 12.

collections representing the arts of Asia'.<sup>59</sup> Her collection, although bought by her, was acquired with intellectual and artistic intentions, and under the influence of anthropological collecting methodologies. It clearly fitted into the Museum's remit to provide educational instruction but was also classifiable as 'art' within the Museum's hierarchies of value. Furthermore, the same report notes that: 'In the ethnographical section collections from Central Africa, Siam, Korea, Tibet and Peru have all been acquired during the year. These collections were all formed on the spot by responsible persons resident in these countries'.<sup>60</sup> Although the Museum was still reliant on amateur collectors, curators and keepers were beginning to refine their ideas of 'good' collecting practices, even if a definitive stance on which collections were 'art' and which were 'ethnography' had yet to be taken.

By 1907, then, 'Tibet' was taking shape as an identifiable group of material within the Museum, and not only had a place within the Art and Ethnography Department, but was being noted for its importance in the wider museum. Whilst certain objects were given undue prominence in displays and texts, a fuller range of Tibetan material was being given space within the Museum.

Bailey was seen as a responsible agent on the spot and, unlike most other collectors at this time; he did have a strong relationship with both Scotland and the Museum. Annual reports going back to 1895 show that his father, Frederick Bailey Snr., gave books to the Museum's library almost yearly,

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<sup>59</sup> Royal Scottish Museum, *Report for the Year 1907*, 10. A series of about thirty Tibetan objects from F.M. Browne came in the same year.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



often in quite large quantities.<sup>61</sup> Yet Eric Bailey himself was never publicly remembered in the way Ottley was, despite his own links to the 1904 Expedition and the larger size of his overall collection. Additionally, Bailey had been donating animal specimens since his appointment in Gyantse in 1905, which had been more thoughtfully acknowledged by the Museum's Natural History Department. Giving and selling across departments does not seem to have netted Bailey the kudos that giving and selling within the Art and Ethnography Department did for Ottley and, later, Lord Carmichael.<sup>62</sup> As noted in the pages of the minute book, only seen by museum staff, Bailey had been highly praised for his collecting activities. Yet these accolades and the recognition that Bailey had changed the shape of the Museum's Tibetan holdings were not publicly noted in either the annual reports or the guidebook.<sup>63</sup> This was a consequence of shifting social and political concerns. By 1910 when the collection was formerly purchased, the Museum's desire to promote the 1904 Expedition had been largely satisfied and, as I will show later in this chapter, attention had been turned elsewhere. Additionally, Bailey had refused to sell the Museum many of the objects directly associated with the 1904 Expedition (items deemed loot) and so the collection lacked a direct link to

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<sup>61</sup> For example, in 1896 Frederick Bailey Snr. gave the library forty-two books and pamphlets. Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, *Annual Report for the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1896)*.

<sup>62</sup> In all Bailey donated about twenty snakes and mammals to the natural science department of the museum and several large collections of insects. Some were new species which were named after him. The collection, therefore had scientific value. Andrew Kitchener, Principal Curator of Vertebrates, National Museums Scotland, email to author, 01/03/2011.

<sup>63</sup> Bailey was thanked in the 1909 Annual Report specifically for the suit of armour for the man and horse (NMS A.1909.406 and 407) with an additional note that 'further additions of specimens have been received from Tibet'. The Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1909*, 5.

that famous imperial endeavour, which had made Ottely's collection so important.<sup>64</sup> Unlike Lord Carmichael, Bailey did not have quite enough social standing to gain a place on public record due to his name alone, but his connections to the Museum and Edinburgh's establishment were enough for a more private form of recognition.

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the Museum steadily bought ethnographic material from around the world from a range of individuals and auctioneers. How that material, and the person from whom it was purchased, were later positioned within the institution could be quite a complicated process. Within the context of the Tibetan collections, collectors who sold were given little public recognition, and in some cases treated with ambivalence, but purchasing as a museum activity was hugely important and created the bulk of the Museum's Tibetan holdings. Almost no Tibetan material was bought at auction,<sup>65</sup> probably reflecting the relatively large quantities of material being offered by individuals for sale. Therefore negotiations with private individuals became a key activity for the structuring of the Museum's *own* vision of Tibet. That the Museum wanted such control over the structure of the collection shows that in regard to the objects themselves, museum staff were certainly not ambivalent, seeing the importance of their growing collection and discretely positioning it amongst larger and better publicised groups of material through negotiations of purchases.

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<sup>64</sup> See Chapter Three, footnote 134.

<sup>65</sup> Only six Tibetan objects are clearly identified as having been bought at auction: a Kukri knife (Christies, 1875), three sculptures (A. Dowell, 1894 and 1906) and a teapot (J.C. Stevens, 1905).

Ottley's prominence as a collector occurred because of the moment in which his collection entered the Museum. Although guidebooks from the period show that objects collected by Taylor, Le Mesurier and Bailey went on display, these were objects picked out of context of their moment of collection and placed within the displays for their physical properties – as 'things' representative of a place, in a gallery full of various representations of many places.<sup>66</sup>

#### **5.4.4 Donations, loans and the role of de-accessioning**

Just as sales could be made that allowed objects a continued association with their former owners, and others could be so commoditised that their collector became anonymous in the museum setting, there were also many levels of 'giving' in the field of museum donations. Gift giving is a calculating process, and the expectations of the giver can be disproportionately high.<sup>67</sup> This has been outlined in the previous chapters, such as Bailey's negotiations with the *Toshikana*, or Macdonald's politically laden statue of a Buddha, a gift from the Tibetan Regent.<sup>68</sup> Within the museum, the same processes continued to occur, building up further layers of meaning around an object. Alberti notes that, as with any gift, donation to a museum constituted a reciprocal relationship

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<sup>66</sup> This approach to display was indicative of the RSM's style and was not confined to Tibetan material, having a similar effect across other collections. I have been unable to find a single display label for the Tibetan collection on display at this time, so cannot confirm whether or not collectors names were placed on the labels. Later in the twentieth century, it was the practice to display the names of collectors who donated, but not those who sold.

<sup>67</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Reflections", 259, and Miller, "Alienable Gifts and Inalienable Commodities", 91-115.

<sup>68</sup> See Chapter Three, section 3.8.2, Taking and giving: gifts and diplomatic negotiation: 266.

between benefactor and recipient.<sup>69</sup> The way in which the Museum undertook donor cultivation is an example of such negotiations and the shifting balance of power within them.

How donor cultivation was used and presented across the Museum had implications for the place of Tibetan material culture within it. For example, the famous archaeologist Flinders Petrie and the Egypt Exploration Fund were consistently reported on from 1905 onwards:<sup>70</sup> large-scale donations received equally large praise and public attention. Herein lay the issue for Tibetan material coming into the Museum via donation, because donations did not occur on the same scale as purchases. The collections of Taylor, Innes-Wright, Bailey and Le Mesurier made up the bulk of the Tibetan collections in the RSM and all of these had been paid for, some with quite substantial sums of money.<sup>71</sup> By contrast, in the early years of the twentieth century significant additions were made to other areas of the Museum's non-European holdings by donation, particularly Africa and Oceania.<sup>72</sup> The *Annual Report for 1903* noted that the Museum was 'making considerable progress in developing the [ethnographical] collections, especially those representative of the Malayan Peninsula, British New Guinea, South Pacific, the Hinterland of the British West

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<sup>69</sup> Alberti, *Nature and Culture*, 100.

<sup>70</sup> Both the Annual Reports for 1907 and 1911 include several pages of information on new acquisitions from the Egypt Exploration Fund and Petrie, although donations came in consistently from 1903.

<sup>71</sup> As noted, the Museum paid £90 for Bailey's collection. The Le Mesurier collection was purchased for £145 (1907) and H.F. Ridley was paid £45 (1912).

<sup>72</sup> For example the 1900 Annual Report notes 'Additions to the ethnological collection of important specimens from Melanesia and West Africa'. *Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, Annual Report for the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1900)*, 2.

African Possessions and New Mexico'.<sup>73</sup> Many of these 'gifts' came from people in similar walks of life to those collectors selling Tibetan material to the RSM, but their roles as donors increased their presence and importance in the Museum's acquisition process. Thus Tibetan collections, which were generally purchased, held less prominence within the Museum's public records (both displays and texts). Nearly every annual report from 1900-1924 (the last time Tibet is mentioned specifically) notes collections of ethnographic material from missionaries, colonial agents and explorers who donated 'munificent' collections, or were themselves 'distinguished' donors, further linking the prestige of the collection with the processes of acquisition and setting the objects themselves on very particular paths within the Museum.<sup>74</sup>

Tibetan donations were quantitatively less significant than those from other areas and are only glimpsed in reports and guides noting what was coming into the Museum. The first mention of Tibetan objects occurred in the *Annual Report for 1890*, when both J.E.T. Aitchison and Captain Stoppford donated to the Museum.<sup>75</sup> Aitchison was primarily a botanist, and his obituary noted that 'science is primarily indebted to him for collecting plants and their products and local information concerning them'.<sup>76</sup> His own collecting interests

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<sup>73</sup> Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1903*, 8.

<sup>74</sup> From 1908 Gordon Neil Munro, a Scottish doctor based in the Northern Japanese province of Hokkaido donated very large quantities of Japanese archaeological material and Ainu ethnographical material from the Hokkaido area. All these gifts are mentioned and receive extensive thanks in the Annual Reports. The report for 1910 called Munro's gift 'munificent'. The Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1910*, 9.

<sup>75</sup> Aitchison offered two Tibetan objects as part of a larger Central Asian collection (NMS A.1890.957-8), and Stoppford donated a cloak 'captured' after the 1888 Sikkim War (NMS A.1890.416). It would be interesting to know whether the term 'captured' was employed at his behest or the Museum's.

<sup>76</sup> Botting Hemsley, "Surgeon-Major Aitchison – Obituary", 578.

were therefore well placed within the remit of the EMSA, even if Tibetan material culture was still largely invisible in the Museum at this time.

Only three other Tibetan donations are listed specifically in annual reports of the late nineteenth century and only with the large collection from Lord Carmichael (1919) did the collector appear in the Museum's public literature. Carmichael, as discussed previously, was predominantly a collector of European art, substantial quantities of which he sold or loaned to the RSM from 1902. He is an example of the way in which the hierarchy of 'art' and 'ethnography' played out concurrently with issues of donation versus sale, and the social hierarchies that established the position of collectors, originating communities and members of museum staff. All his large sales to the RSM are listed in the annual reports, as were his loans. He was also mentioned within the publicly available museum guidebook. Ottley and his *chorten* still had a presence in the guidebook by 1919, when Carmichael's collection came into the Museum, and Carmichael was to be the only other collector of Tibetan material to be mentioned by name in these guides. By 1919 the guides focused less on the collector, and more on the objects and their role in Tibetan society:

'The most striking Tibetan specimens are the Devil-Dancers' costumes and masks, worn by the lamas or priests when acting in their 'mystery plays'. They were given to the Museum in 1919 by Lord Carmichael. The original object of the Devil Dance was to scare away malignant spirits; hence the deliberate ugliness and awesomeness of the masks of the principal figures'.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Scottish Education Department, *The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh: A Guide to the Collections (1920)*, 21.

The nod to Carmichael as collector was a case of museum politics – Carmichael had a longstanding history with the RSM, had brought a lot of important European pieces into the Museum, as well as being a patron to several of Britain’s leading art institutions. He had held various powerful appointments within imperial governments, in India and Australia, where he not only undertook an imperial role, but a pastoral one for the local British community.<sup>78</sup> Carmichael adds to our understanding of the complex nature of donation and sale: he donated ethnographic material (not just from Tibet), but sold European ‘art’ objects. His donations may have been calculating; by donating some material with a lower monetary value, he was in a better position to seek compensation for items that the Museum would prize, particularly European fine and decorative art. Had the greater part of Carmichael’s Asian ‘art’ collection not been lost at sea, it may have had a huge impact on the relationship between both ‘Tibetan art’ versus ‘Tibetan ethnography’ and ‘Tibetan art’ versus ‘European art’ at a much earlier date than occurred in its absence.

Loans to the Museum are best discussed in relation to donations, with which they share many traits and expectations, although loans are a far more ambiguous form of acquisition. There was an assumption on the part of the Museum that loans would materialise into donations, which did occur, such as in the case of Robert Brown’s collection of *gau*. Such loans, often covering a

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<sup>78</sup> For example, he was heavily involved in the Church of Scotland’s Dr. Graham’s Homes, giving money to building work on more than one occasion. A plaque within the grounds pays homage to this.

lifetime, forced an on-going connection between collector and museum. The three groups of Tibetan material on loan to the Museum today have all outlived their collectors, and often whole lines of descent.<sup>79</sup> It is unclear whether the Museum expected Ottley to turn his loan into a donation. When he did not, and requested payment, the most expensive pieces were removed from the Museum immediately. Loans were problematic. On the one hand they required no money to be exchanged, a sort of gift. On the other hand they could quickly be commoditised by the collector, who all the while retained power over the objects. Loans that stayed in the Museum for extensive periods were also problematic. The collector could, theoretically, reclaim the objects at any time and the Museum, whilst shouldering responsibility for the physical care of collections, had no power over their trajectories. Loans like these are perhaps best seen as moments of 'cultural lag', one of the few modes of acquisition whereby entry into the museum really did render an object static and lifeless.<sup>80</sup>

Anthony Shelton notes important distinctions between collectors and museums are often economically based as:

'Museums are portrayed as economically disinterested, with public and intellectual obligations that far transcend narrow social or financial concerns and commitments.

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<sup>79</sup> These are a small group of hats from Bailey's later exploits in central Asia, Newari jewellery from Lady Carmichael and a book lent by Lady Murray in 1902 (NMS A.L.143.9. RSM Loans Register Volume I: 448). Research undertaken by the Museum to locate descendants of these collectors has been largely unsuccessful. Only Lady Carmichael's family have any knowledge of/interest in the material in the Museum in her name.

<sup>80</sup> Stocking suggests that we assume a level of 'cultural lag' for all objects entering the museum, whereas in fact objects exist in many dynamic ways within the museum. This notion of the static object is far less academically prevalent in recent years, but it is worth thinking it through to recognise that there are moments when the museum's processes really do render an object immovable, such as when they hold the ambiguous status of a 'loan'. Stocking, "Introduction", 3-14.



Collectors, on the other hand, acknowledge participation in the market to acquire material'.<sup>81</sup>

However as the pathways taken by Tibetan material at the RSM have shown, the divide between gifts and purchases was no less significant a process for both the Museum and collector, than it had been in the field. Although this chapter focuses on material coming *into* the Museum, it is worth noting that objects did on occasion move *out* of the Museum as well. Later in the Museum's history – mainly post-World War II – the de-accessioning of objects had a great effect on certain collections, with the potential to undermine their coherence. This process did not affect the Tibetan collection, which only saw the loss of items that were considered damaged beyond repair,<sup>82</sup> rather than pieces that were deemed duplicates or no longer of interest. This absence of tampering with the Museum's Tibetan holdings is itself an indication of the quiet importance these collections held. Not always collected by the most important people, or sitting at the right point within the politics of acquisition or hierarchies of value to have a large public role, these collections were at the very least allowed to remain intact when other areas were not. This continued coherence is a significant trace of their importance through the twentieth century.

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<sup>81</sup> Shelton, *Collectors: Expressions of Self and Other*, 11.

<sup>82</sup> For example, several items of clothing sold by H.F. Ridley and a scarf from Annie Taylor were destroyed because of insect damage.

## 5.5 Agency and provenance: the role of labels in retaining identity

From the beginning of the modern museum age,<sup>83</sup> a division was drawn between the space of the curator and the space of the visitor; one produced knowledge and the other consumed it.<sup>84</sup> There were labels attached to cases and pediments, guiding the visitor. However, hidden from public view were object accession labels that allowed the collector to follow the object into the museum storeroom.

Object labels allow us to track the chronology of ownership, changes in the Museum's structure and other institutional spaces where an object may have once previously formed part of a collection. They tell us about people associated with the collections, mediators, who are absent from other museum documentation, or play a less substantial role within it. Not all collections have specific labels, and this too is telling. It is perhaps unsurprising that large collections such as those of Bailey, Taylor, Innes-Wright, Le Mesurier and Christison have specific labels associating them with their collector, but so too do small groupings such as those from colonial collectors George Turnbull and A.S. Gladstone and even a single object from the missionary Henry Martyn-Clark. Conversely, other large collections such as those of Dalmahoy or Ottley, both associated with the 1904 Expedition, have no labels at all. Paradoxically

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<sup>83</sup> The museum, as Tony Bennett comments, 'acquired its modern form during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', though he goes on to note that 'it is however only later – in the mid to late nineteenth century – that the relations between culture and government come to be thought of and organised in a distinctively modern way via the conception that the works, forms and institutions of high culture might be enlisted for this governmental task in being assigned the purpose of civilising the population as a whole'. Therefore we might understand that 'age', as it affects this study, to have begun in the mid-nineteenth century. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 19.

<sup>84</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, 200. Hooper-Greenhill cites the French Revolution and the establishment of the Louvre as the birth of the modern museum.

then, whilst Ottley's name appeared in RSM guidebooks for over fifteen years, he bore no direct association with the objects he provided.

These differences show the agencies at work in the Museum and the tensions they created. Ottley had an important public role, as part of the institutional remit to engage with empire, but individual curators also had agency: privately the Bailey collection was deemed of particular importance by staff, who were able to recognise this through the attribution of labels in the private spaces of the Museum.

### 5.5.1 Ascribing agency through labels

The labels on Annie Taylor's objects are of particular interest as they offer important information about the objects themselves and provide a voice for Puntso, her Tibetan assistant who helped form the collection. The labels give credit for most of the collection to Puntso, stating that objects came from 'Puntso, per Miss A. Taylor' (Figure 47). Although certain items that belonged to Puntso are noted in the accession registers, for example 'Tibetan chief's (Puntso's) boots',<sup>85</sup> nowhere in these registers – where the curator or secretary noted down information about the objects – is Puntso mentioned as collector. This suggests several things: as the accession registers were filled in first, and the object labels added later, it is possible that the registers were based on notes or previous correspondence with Taylor, and that Taylor herself asked for Puntso's name to be added to the later labels. The labels are printed, something that would have occurred in-house and probably not too long after the

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<sup>85</sup> Puntso's boots (NMS A.1897.320.12).

collection came into the Museum, so Taylor may still have been in Scotland.<sup>86</sup> She may even have asked to approve the labels. The detail of the object descriptions on these labels far exceeds those on similar labels for other contemporary collections from Tibet, such as those for the Innes-Wright collection, suggesting that someone involved in the labelling process, either Taylor or the curator, had a particular interest in the collection.<sup>87</sup>

Although some of these labels may have been visible whilst the objects were on display, their primary use was by curatorial staff for record keeping. This was a 'safe' place for the acknowledgement of a Tibetan such as Puntso, who would have been deemed of low rank. At a time when the Museum was trying to encourage donations and sales from more 'appropriate' collectors, racial and class prejudices (Puntso was understood to be a servant), may have made it desirable for the Museum to reduce Puntso's public visibility, even if Taylor's desire was for greater recognition of her companion.<sup>88</sup> So an inconspicuous label can shed light on issues absent from the Museum's official record, but clearly important to the daily work of museum staff.

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<sup>86</sup> She appears to have been in Scotland for much of 1897 and it is unclear when she returned to Tibet.

<sup>87</sup> Pamela Babes has suggested the processes by which the objects might have acquired the addition of Puntso's name. Collectors were sometimes recalled to help label objects and finish off object descriptions, although this was not an official policy. With thanks to Pamela Babes, Collections Development Manager at NMS, email to author, 13/06/2011.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor's descriptions of Puntso position him as a servant, but a careful reading of her diaries and letters within the archives of the CIM show their relationship contained far more equality. Puntso married sometime around 1895-1896 and both he and his wife lived with Taylor, in their own quarters within the Yatung compound. It is probable that when Taylor volunteered her nursing skills during the 1904 Expedition, Puntso and his wife took over the running of the shop and mission at Yatung until Taylor's return.

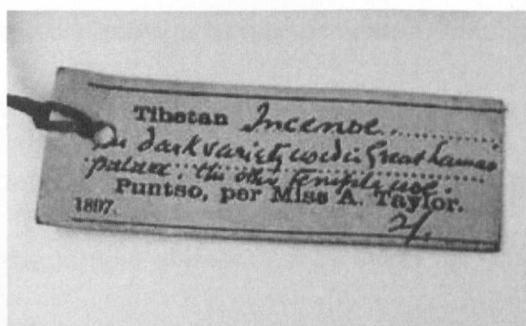


Figure 47: Label highlighting Puntso's involvement in the creation of the collection. Taylor collection, © National Museums Scotland.

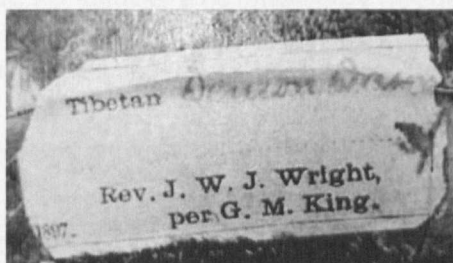


Figure 48: Labels wrongly ascribing the collector the status of a Minister, Innes-Wright collection. © National Museums Scotland.

Several other large collections have specifically printed labels, such as Innes-Wright's, which were printed with both his name and that of his mediator George M. King, who sold the objects to the Museum on Innes-Wright's behalf. Unlike Puntso, King, as a Glaswegian rather than a Tibetan agent, is mentioned in the Museum's original accession records, and was listed as the seller, rather than Innes-Wright himself. Only on the labels, which read 'Rev. J.W.I Wright, Per G.M. King', is Innes-Wright given 'top billing' as collector. Interestingly, Innes-Wright is promoted from layman to minister through these labels. Had he falsified his credentials, the Church of Scotland would have been publicly critical and made it very difficult for him to undertake his missionary duties.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Were a missionary to falsify his status and the Church find out, Church authorities would have likely undertaken a public critique of that individual, which would have cost him valuable donors

Therefore it is more likely to have been an accidental occurrence, with either his associate King or the Museum's curator assuming his status as minister. Yet had it not been for this mislabelling, unravelling Innes-Wright's biography and placing him within the context of missionary work in the Darjeeling area would have been significantly harder, and may even have been missed. His work as an independent missionary gives him a less obvious presence in official missionary archives. Therefore had his identity as a missionary not been established through the mislabelling of his collection, it could potentially have changed the entire way in which we now view missionary collections from Tibet in Scottish museums.

### **5.5.2 Labels: Tracking Object Biographies and Institutional Change**

The majority of labels are plain white, printed with the name of the collector, the words 'INV. NO.' (inventory number), followed by a space for a short object description. These labels were most likely for easy object identification and possibly for quick reference to collectors. Sometimes remnants of the gift/purchase divide remain evident, with labels reading 'presented by' or 'bought of', whilst others tell us nothing. The labels stuck to objects from Lilian Le Mesurier record no information about the objects themselves, and yet Le Mesurier found provenance and object description of particular importance and had previously labelled the collection herself (Figure 49). However, as the

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and associations in Britain, making his work almost impossible. Therefore, despite his tense relationship with the Church of Scotland, he would not have undermined them in this way. With thanks to Michael Marten, email to author, 17/04/2013.

accession book entries for these objects replicate the descriptions in her article 'Tibetan Curios', this simpler labelling may have been a sign of better record keeping more generally by the early twentieth century, which did not rely on these labels for anything greater than locating an item. Alternatively the label, stamped only 'Lilian Le Mesurier', may have been in recognition, or validation, of her role as a more scholarly collector. In some instances, then, labels conveyed collector authority over the collection, even when the collection's 'owner' had become the Museum.



Figure 49: RSM and Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art labels.

Left label from Le Mesurier collection showing collector information only. The green label is from the later Royal Scottish Museum. On the right, an earlier label from the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. Note how the right hand label says 'industrial art' in the middle, highlighting the issues of placing this Tibetan material within the overall collections.

Labels tell us something of institutional change, and the places through which objects have passed on their way to the Museum. Labels before 1904 are often red and edged with the words 'Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art', whereas after 1904 they are green and edged with 'Royal Scottish Museum' (Figure 49). These differences physically represent changes within the institution, allowing us to roughly place collections in the Museum's development without the use of archival records. Other labels are traces of

previous life histories. For example, the eight objects originally part of the Harry Beasley collection have Beasley's own labels as well as those of the RSM. Beasley initiated institutional change in his own collection at Cranmore, and this is reflected in the differing labels he used in different time periods (Figure 50). At the start of World War II, Beasley dismantled his museum, sending important objects to other institutions around Britain for safekeeping, including the RSM. He was never to restore his museum, and after his death his wife donated the objects, giving them a permanent home in Edinburgh. These objects have particularly complicated biographies, making their way through multiple European agents and institutions. These labels therefore play an important role in tracking these life histories.<sup>90</sup>



Figure 50: Two labels from the Beasley collection. © National Museums Scotland.

The first label is a 'Beasley' label, one of several variations that the collector placed on his museum objects. The second is a label denoting an object's provenance before Beasley's ownership, showing the importance of labels in recording object pathways once they entered the European market.

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<sup>90</sup> For more information on Harry Beasley and his work at Cranmore, including information on his labelling, see Carreau, "Collecting the Collector".



### 5.5.3 Loan labels: recovering legacies

I have shown how loaned objects held a difficult position in the Museum's network of object hierarchies and relationships, but loan labels can be particularly insightful in illuminating these relationships and removing ambiguities of ownership and provenance. Both the Bailey and Thexton collections initially came into the RSM as loans. In fact, the collection donated by Amelia Thexton in 1928 had entered what had been the EMSA in 1872. The Museum's Loan Register records how, following Robert Brown's death in 1877, his daughter wrote to the Museum changing the loan into her name. However in 1902 the collection was returned to Thexton, before being donated to the Museum over a quarter of a century later in 1928.<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, throughout the period of return to the family home, the loan labels that had been attached by the Museum in 1872 were not removed. When the collection was returned to the Museum, traces of that previous stay therefore remained. This is important because, as the loan and the donation were in two different names, there would have been no other means of connecting Amelia Thexton and Robert Brown, were it not for the physical traces left on the objects themselves. Long after Robert Brown had passed away, his earlier engagement with the collection remained a presence both in the Museum and in the Thexton family home. The later labels, added after 1928 are in some cases pasted over their earlier counterparts, literally cancelling out that earlier collector-museum connection.

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<sup>91</sup> Information from NMS Loans Officers Vicky Evans, email to author 12/09/2011.

As seen in the case study on the Bailey family, Frederick Snr. and Florence Bailey played significant roles in the shaping of their son's Tibetan collection. I suggested that the process of acquisition by the Museum removed traces of Frederick and Florence from the collection, as the final transactions were all made in Eric Bailey's name. However, the earlier loan to the Museum did leave a trace of Frederick Bailey Snr.: via loan labels. The Bailey collection loan labels are far larger and more conspicuous on the objects than the later labels pertaining to the purchase. Each is clearly marked 'on loan from Colonel [Frederick] Bailey', with the collector (Eric Bailey) entirely absent from any of the paperwork associated with the transaction.<sup>92</sup> These labels are a counterbalance to the Museum's official archives, which do not give a place to either of Eric Bailey's parents, despite their long-term associations with the collection.

The Museum's acquisition process was fraught with meaning. Whilst these layers were not always visible through official records or public presentation, labels offer an alternative conduit for important information otherwise lost. Museum labels are part of the evidence for the processes of Museum acquisition. Labels reveal how museum-collector relationships developed, and how objects moved through museums in a variety of ways. They offer an opportunity for hidden agencies to be recovered and can on occasion reveal the rich texture of information hidden in (and on) objects. At the beginning of the twentieth century, 'finders were rarely keepers, hunters

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<sup>92</sup> All the various loan receipts that are in the Bailey family archive from the RSM are signed by Colonel Frederick Bailey and addressed to him. See *Letters to Museums*, [Mss/ EUR/F157/298], Bailey Family Papers.

remained anonymous and it was the gatherers who achieved fame'.<sup>93</sup> By and large this appears to have been the case in the Scottish context, but interested parties within the Museum, or tenacious collectors such as Annie Taylor, provided a space for Tibetan agency, or even their own agency, in the museum setting.

## **5.6 The Museum in the world: positioning Tibet amongst multiple concerns**

The majority of this chapter has explored the competing agencies of the institution, individuals and objects through the lens of museum process. In this section, I wish to focus on external developments that impacted on the Museum, and internal forces relating to the institution's changing staff, and concerns for their visitors.

Tibetan objects formed just one group of material culture within the Museum. They competed for public recognition against other groups of material, both art and ethnographic in nature. This process continually shifted which collections were in the public eye. As we have seen, though Tibetan material had a limited profile in the Museum's official record, processes such as labelling and accessioning gave the collection and its contributors a defined presence, and coherence, within the Museum. In this section I will turn to other, often external, influences – those not determined by the Museum's processes, but which impacted on the way in which the Museum presented its collections

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<sup>93</sup> Alberti, *Nature and Culture*, 112.

with public roles. Permanent displays and temporary exhibitions included little Tibetan material, but were part of the context in which ideas about the value of art and ethnographic collections were formed, and therefore of significance to the paths Tibetan material took.

### 5.6.1 The men who ran the Museum

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a very small number of people were responsible for the processes of acquisition, display and educational engagement within the Museum. At this early stage in the Museum's life, these men mostly came from scientific backgrounds. They entered the museum space under varied external influences and with their own interests and convictions about what was important and what should be promoted by the Museum.

One non-scientist was Sir Robert Murdoch Smith, director of the EMSA from 1885-1900. Murdoch Smith came from a military and civil service background, working across Turkey and Persia. Between 1856-1859 he worked on the excavation of Halicarnassus in Turkey, followed by a period as director of the Persian Telegraph Service, during which time he acquired a significant ceramics collection for the South Kensington Museum and a collection of casts from Persepolis for the British Museum.<sup>94</sup> Murdoch Smith substantially

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<sup>94</sup> For a summary of Murdoch Smith's role as excavator and collector, as well as his relationship to the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, see National Museums Scotland Archives, *Sir Robert Murdock Smith 1835-1900*. For a fuller account of Murdoch Smith's achievements in Persia and his relationship to the South Kensington Museum and Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, see Dickson, *The Life of Major-General Sir Robert Murdoch Smith*, 329-352.

increased the EMSA's holdings of Persian material. He oversaw the redisplay of the Persian collections and the publication of a new guidebook specifically for the Persian material.<sup>95</sup>

Following Murdoch Smith, the next two directors, Frances Grant Ogilvie and James J. Dobbie, both came from scientific backgrounds. Dobbie was a chemist by training who took a particular interest in mineralogy, dovetailing with the Museum's educational remit: the RSM housed the most important mineralogy collection in Scotland.<sup>96</sup> Scotland's indigenous geology and mineralogy was an abundant source for researchers, both in terms of understanding Scotland's past and her industrial future. Although David Vallance had been given the position of curator of Art and Ethnography in 1901, he was distracted through the early years of the twentieth century by his obligations to European art, such as the Noel Paton collection.

Consequently, Tibet, with its ambiguous position in the art-ethnography-industry system of classification, was overshadowed by the personal influence of the Director of the time, and the interests of the Museum's rival institutions in London.<sup>97</sup> The re-arrangement of the ethnographic collections in 1899 was most likely the point at which the Tibetan displays outlined in the 1908

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<sup>95</sup> See Annual Reports for the years 1886-1896. Also see Murdoch Smith, *Guide to the Persian Collection in the Museum*.

<sup>96</sup> Either side of his appointment at the RSM, Dobbie worked as a Chemist and was President of the Institute of Chemistry from 1915-1918. See National Museums Scotland Archives, *Sir James J. Dobbie*.

<sup>97</sup> Even when in post in Edinburgh, Murdoch Smith continued to collect for both the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum, reaffirming the idea that the South Kensington Museum was the 'mother' institution to the smaller Scottish museum.

guidebook came into being – two years before Vallance’s appointment.<sup>98</sup>

Though reconfigured in 1905 to include the Ottley material, and again in 1910 to expand the display of the Bailey collection (particularly the armour), there were no large-scale rearrangements of this part of the collection until after World War II. This moment of stasis for Tibetan displays corresponded with moments of great change for other collections, making the path of Tibetan objects through the Museum’s public spaces somewhat haphazard.

### 5.6.2 External influences on public displays and public texts

Sadly no detailed plans of the Museum’s historic gallery layouts exist, but case numbers given in the guidebooks suggest that the greater part of Tibetan material on display was exhibited together in three cases in the Indian and Persian gallery, whilst two separate cases in other parts of the gallery held ‘smaller objects’ and musical instruments respectively.<sup>99</sup> Based on what had been collected by that time, it is reasonable to speculate that ‘smaller objects’ included *tsa-tsa*, *gau* and jewellery. If, by the time of the cases’ rearrangement in 1910, the quantitatively significant collections of Le Mesurier and Bailey dominated the displays elsewhere, supplemented by the iconic objects of the 1904 Expedition, such as Ottley’s *chorten*, then a clear distinction was forming within the public gallery between ‘art’, collected by connoisseurs, gentlemen

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<sup>98</sup> Scottish Education Department, *The Royal Scottish Museums Edinburgh: A Guide to the Collections (1908)*, 22-23.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* The guide tells us that cases 4, 29, 30, 31 and 43 held Tibetan material. Assuming case numbers ran in order, the middle three were together whilst the other two were at opposite ends of the gallery.

and scholars, and 'ethnography' collected by missionaries and travellers. Such displays were concurrently creating distinctions of 'class' between groups of objects and groups of collectors.

The early twentieth century was the moment in which the RSM began to acknowledge the importance of its ethnographic collections. Yet while the V&A offered a model for the curation of art, it did not collect ethnography. Other sources of inspiration were therefore needed and the obvious choice was the British Museum, which was 'a history museum rather than an art museum'.<sup>100</sup> The British Museum's ethnography collections were consolidated in 1870, when the department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography was formed. However it was under the keepership of Augustus Franks in the later years of the nineteenth century that the British Museum's ethnography department flourished.<sup>101</sup>

The EMSA, and later the RSM, were likely influenced by this development in ethnographic collecting. Documentary evidence suggests that in the case of clearly 'ethnographic' material, for example objects from the Pacific or Africa, the British Museum was both setting collecting standards and advising on ethnographic collecting policy.<sup>102</sup> There is no evidence within the RSM's records that the British Museum's approach to ethnographic collecting had a direct impact on Tibetan displays until 1934, when Mr. H.J. Braunholtz, Assistant-Keeper in the Department of Oriental Antiquities & Ethnography in

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<sup>100</sup> Anderson, "Introduction", 13.

<sup>101</sup> Wilson, *The British Museum: A History*, 159.

<sup>102</sup> For example, Murdoch Smith was keen to make comparisons between the British Museum's Benin acquisitions (which were considered highly significant) and the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art's purchases from that Expedition. *Robert Murdoch Smith to W.D. Webster (1897?)*, Letter Book 1891-1903, National Museums Scotland Archive.

the British Museum, came to Edinburgh to help 'revive the labels of certain parts of our ethnographical collection'.<sup>103</sup>

In fact, the RSM found its own way of positioning ethnographic material from Asia (including Tibet) in relation to the material it considered art, mainly from India and Persia, which dominated the Museum's non-European interests within the Art and Ethnography Department. The way Tibetan material was positioned in the Museum's public galleries, allied at various times with differing sets of geographical regions (generally China, India and Persia), is reflective of the 'geographical imagination' that influenced British understandings of the role Tibet played in Asia both historically and in the context of contemporary political concerns, and the influence of imperialist understandings on the Museum's displays.<sup>104</sup>

In the first guidebook (1908) Tibet is listed as an individual museum 'section', but the descriptions of various objects within the guide make strong reference to the influences of both Chinese and Indian art. By the second edition of 1910, Tibet had become part of a larger group with its geographical neighbour India, and with Persia.<sup>105</sup> Whilst the original accession registers show that Vallance was familiar with Le Mesurier's article 'Tibetan Curios', the layout of the gallery space does not show a recognition of her conclusions on the origins of Tibetan metalwork. Whilst Le Mesurier advocated the importance of

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<sup>103</sup> Edwin Ward to Sir G. F. Hull, 06/07/1934, Letter Book No. 15 (1934), (299), National Museums Scotland Archive.

<sup>104</sup> Highlighting the importance of what Peter Bishop describes as the 'geographically imagined' Tibet. Refer to Introduction, section 1.2.1, '**Real** and '**imagined**': **The British Empire and the construction of Tibet**: 27.

<sup>105</sup> Scottish Education Department. *The Royal Scottish Museums Edinburgh: A Guide to the Collections (1910)*, 1. The guidebook also comments on the metalwork decoration being 'more akin to Chinese art' and the carving 'similar to those of the art of India'. *Ibid.*, 23.



Tibetan metalwork as stylistically distinct from her neighbours, Vallance's displays and text clearly positioned Tibetan material culture within the context of the artistic traditions of India and China.<sup>106</sup> It is possible that such decisions were practical as well as scholarly. Within a limited space, with limited suitable material from Tibet to represent 'art', it may have been in Vallance's interest to promote similarities, rather than differences between non-European materials. It is unclear how large these cases were, or how much material was in them, but I would suggest that relatively few of the, by now over 500, Tibetan objects were on display. By 1916 there were eight cases of Tibetan material, spread not only across the Indian and Persian gallery, but also between galleries and at least two of those cases were used to display armour, including Bailey's horse armour mounted on a figurine.<sup>107</sup> Tibet was physically fragmented within the Museum's public space, even if it was gaining a position as a specific grouping of material behind the scenes. This was in contrast to China or Egypt, which had their own galleries, or India and Persia, which shared one large coherent space where objects were clearly designated as 'art'.

### **5.6.3 The influence of audiences: 'purposeful students and sightseers'**

'It has been possible to make a broad distinction between the purposeful student and the sightseer. For the one there is required such a systematic arrangement and co-ordination of

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<sup>106</sup> See Le Mesurier, "Tibetan Curios", 261-273.

<sup>107</sup> Scottish Education Department. *The Royal Scottish Museums Edinburgh: A Guide to the Collections (1916)*, 25.

material as will facilitate the acquisition of ordered knowledge; for the other, an arrangement that brings in a certain amount of realism'.<sup>108</sup>

The Museum provided for a range of audiences. Broadly, in the early twentieth century, technological and industrial collections had the greater educational remit. Ethnography also had educational uses (through the presentation of 'external realities') and offered entertainment for 'sightseers', whilst art fell somewhere between the two, often ordered by 'type' for viewing by knowledgeable connoisseurs and unknowledgeable viewers alike.

Throughout the first decades of the twentieth century the Museum ran a lecture series, given by curatorial staff to both university and secondary school students, most of which were based on the scientific and natural history collections, in line with the concerns of local educational institutions.<sup>109</sup> The needs of the colleges became key factors in the development of educational resources. From 1907 emphasis was placed on mineralogy, mining techniques and models of equipment, tied to Heriot-Watt College's establishment of a mining department in 1913.<sup>110</sup> There is no evidence that the Tibetan collections were routinely considered part of the educational expertise the Museum could offer students, who were more concerned with industrial and natural science collections. It is more likely that Tibetan material culture fitted into the

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<sup>108</sup> Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1911*, 3.

<sup>109</sup> In the early years of the Museum an enclosed walkway between the university's natural sciences departments and the natural sciences section of the Museum allowed easy access to the collections for students and staff. The bridge remains today but is now blocked off.

<sup>110</sup> Heriot-Watt University website, accessed 03/05/2012, <http://www.hw.ac.uk/about/reputation/history.htm>.

Museum's other remit – to provide 'realism' for the casual visitor, although how successfully it achieved this aim was not recorded.

However, even the Art and Ethnography Department was subject to internal and external pressures from patrons and audiences. As noted, hierarchies existed between collections, visibly codified through the annual reports and guidebooks. Public generosity favoured the sciences, particularly the natural sciences, with lists of large collections of insect and animal specimens coming into the Museum as donations almost every year. This was tied to Scotland's wider role in the British Empire: the objects and animals of empire may not have initiated the Museum (as they did other civic and colonial museums), but it was certainly consolidated by them.<sup>111</sup> The Art and Ethnography Department was equally indebted to the Empire, but far greater quantities of natural history specimens found their way to the Museum through this avenue than human material culture. Public interest in natural science and industry was followed by an interest in European art and the expensive and time-consuming process of purchasing the Sir Noel Patton collection is a good example of the multiple 'distractions' within the Museum for both staff and visitors. This is echoed in the lack of written detail accompanying many of the Tibetan objects that entered the Museum in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>112</sup> This was the moment in which material collected during the 1904 Expedition flooded into the European market, particularly the auction houses

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<sup>111</sup> Alberti, *Nature and Culture*, 94.

<sup>112</sup> It should be noted that the larger collections did appear to be given more attention and their records are fuller than those for smaller groups of objects. This may have been in part a concession by the Museum staff to appear more interested in the collections of people like Bailey, who continued to donate important material to the Natural History collections over a twenty-year period.

and dealers of London. Despite the extensive publicity of such auctions, and the RSM's clear ability to purchase material, only a handful of purchases were made in this manner, suggesting attentions were firmly focused elsewhere.

#### **5.6.4 Scholarship and spectacle: the importance of Egypt and Africa**

Two important examples of other object trajectories that affected the path of Tibetan material culture within the Museum were the African and Egyptian collections. Both of these collections dominated the Museum's non-European displays of art and ethnography at the moment when the majority of Tibetan material was entering the RSM. Egyptian archaeology was in its heyday in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reaching its peak in 1922 with the excavation of Tutankhamun by Lord Carnarvon and Howard Carter. The RSM had strong links to the public interest in Egypt, through both the Egypt Exploration Fund and the later work of archaeologist Flinders Petrie and the British School of Archaeology in Egypt.<sup>113</sup> Petrie was a significant public figure working in a field of high public interest, which the RSM bought into. The Museum published a separate guide to the Egyptian collections in 1903, the same year the Egypt Exploration Fund started yearly donations of material from its excavations. The pages of the annual reports detailed not just the objects coming into the Museum, but the digs themselves and the people involved in

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<sup>113</sup> Petrie excavated across Britain and the Near East. In 1892 he became Professor of Egyptology at University College London and a key player in the Egypt Exploration Fund. In 1906 he severed ties with the Fund, creating the British School in Egypt, based at University College London. In 1913 he sold his private collection of Egyptian material to UCL, which created a museum in his name. Drower, *Flinders Petrie: A Life in Archaeology*, 295-317.

them.<sup>114</sup> The Museum noted that its decision to refit the Egyptian Gallery was directly influenced by the increase in subscribers to the Exploration Fund in the Edinburgh area,<sup>115</sup> showing the ways in which public interest and public money were a fundamental influence on the trajectories that collections took.<sup>116</sup>

Within the ethnography collections, Africa more generally, and an exhibition on the life of David Livingstone in particular, formed part of a new attempt to provide for the 'unscientific sight-seeing visitor'.<sup>117</sup> The exhibition was to become the most significant element of the Britain-wide centenary celebrations that were held that year in Livingstone's honour.<sup>118</sup> The Museum took a central role in this process of commemoration and memorialisation of a great national hero at a moment when the Museum's director was actively seeking a way to further engage the casual visitor. Therefore through the conduit of David Livingstone and the strong presence of the Church of Scotland in that region of the African continent, Africa, and African material culture was able to resonate with a broad Scottish audience at a time when the Museum was looking to move beyond its remit as a place for scholarly instruction.

Scotland had a history of a strong missionary presence in Africa, and Scottish explorers had been singled out for their achievements and collections

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<sup>114</sup> See for example Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1906*, 6.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>116</sup> There was also a connection to museum politics. In Petrie's first year of operating the British School, Edwin Ward, assistant of the Art and Ethnography Department at the RSM, accompanied him. Ward would later become keeper and then Director of the Museum. Under Ward's leadership, the Museum retained strong links with the School and was able to secure several highly significant finds thanks to its financial contributions to Petrie's work. In fact, Egypt was one of the few areas in which the Museum funded fieldwork. Drower, *Flinders Petrie: A Life in Archaeology*, 311.

<sup>117</sup> Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1910*, 11-13.

<sup>118</sup> Worden, "Introduction: Exhibiting Livingstone", 1.

in several of the annual reports in the early twentieth century.<sup>119</sup> From the late 1880s Scotland's connection to British colonialism in Africa, largely through missionary work, brought increasing numbers of objects into the Museum, pushing the continent further into the public eye.<sup>120</sup> The guidebooks show that the inclusion of larger African displays side lined not only the Tibetan collections in particular, but also the more major collections from Asia and the Middle East that had enjoyed significant public view.<sup>121</sup> Along with Tibet, India and Persia were moved further from the central hub of the Museum.<sup>122</sup> Livingstone became a national hero after his death in 1873, but the exhibition also linked to Edinburgh's wider missionary heritage – only two years earlier the World Missionary Congress had gathered in Edinburgh, and included a reception for 4000 delegates within the RSM.<sup>123</sup> Although the earliest Tibetan collections had come from missionaries, those collectors had worked independently, or sometimes in conflict with larger missionary organisations both in the field and in Britain, whereas much of the Scottish missionary work carried out in Africa was being undertaken by the CoSFM, which linked the Church of Scotland,

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<sup>119</sup> Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1906*, 7-8.

<sup>120</sup> Livingstone himself was considered a 'patron saint of imperialism and the ideal Protestant missionary', making him the perfect public figure for extensive representation within an institution which brought the world to Scotland. Ross, *David Livingstone: Mission and Empire*, 240.

<sup>121</sup> This change reflected the changing popular interests Scotland had in the British Empire. Whilst Indian trade and aesthetics remained important, the influence of Missionary organisations on the lives of ordinary Scots was being reflected in popular museum displays, such as at the RSM. It was not just Tibet that was pushed further out of sight in this process, but the position of the whole of Asia within the Museum was adjusted.

<sup>122</sup> The 1916 guidebook shows that the Indian and Persian gallery space, which included the Tibetan displays, was partly given over to enlarging the African displays as part of the 1912 Livingstone exhibition and in light of its popularity, the African displays were permanently expanded. Some Tibetan material, along with Indian material, was placed in a new 'Arts of Asia' gallery, which was further up the building in a less public area. Scottish Education Department, *The Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh: A Guide to the Collections (1916)*, 24.

<sup>123</sup> Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1910*, 2.

Edinburgh and Africa directly through a host of political, social and economic ties. These important connections entered the Museum through the Livingstone exhibition, which aimed to use objects from the Museum's own African collection, alongside objects associated directly with Livingstone, to form a series of biographical displays about the missionary, and contemporary displays about 'progress' in Africa.<sup>124</sup> Even within the centenary celebrations, the Museum was looking to the future, and Scotland's place within it.

Tibetan material culture (and Asian material culture more generally) was not indicative of the 'savagery' Livingstone encountered in Africa, and could not be used to promote 'progress' in the same way. Likewise, the Egyptian model of in-depth scholarship to arouse public interest required a level of fieldwork that could not be achieved in Tibet. The non-European collections that loomed large in the Museum did so because they sustained interest, and were about looking forward as much as looking back. The moments in which Tibetan material came into the Museum were often overshadowed by these more vocal public needs, more forceful interests of curatorial staff, or merely fell outside of the presupposed purpose of the Museum as an educational institution. Outside forces often dictated interests through the use of funds in an organisation where money and visitor numbers were a constant source of concern.

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<sup>124</sup> Worden, "Introduction: Exhibiting Livingstone", 3. See also Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1912*, 7. The Museum also sent 1000 copies of the exhibition catalogue to school children in Africa (Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, *Report for the Year 1913*, 20) and a large proportion of the educational material relating to the exhibition was aimed at school children in Edinburgh, including a host of lectures on the 'life of Livingstone'.

## 5.7 Conclusion

Shelton suggests that 'against the world of human passions and foibles, the museum presents itself as an idealised bureaucratic regime exercising a detached mastery over legitimate narratives it attaches to its holdings'.<sup>125</sup> The reality was that the Museum as a space where ideas and objects negotiated with each other and with the public, was activated by such passions and foibles of museum staff and audiences, often not dissimilar to those of collectors themselves. So whilst the movement of objects out of the collectors' orbit and into that of the Museum was often problematic and complex, generally it was resolvable, even if such resolutions were subtle or subversive.

The institution, like the collector, was influenced by external pressures but able to forge its own path. There is no essential museum; the museum is not a pre-constituted entity produced in the same way at all times.<sup>126</sup> A variety of factors such as internal interests and ambitions and external community needs, as well as donors, collectors and relatives of those involved in acquiring collections, shaped the museum in Edinburgh. These all placed demands on museum staff, who trod a complicated path through museum politics and social pressures. There were factors particular to the Scottish context, and the moments in which Tibetan material culture came into the Museum, interwoven with a host of internal and external events. Ultimately, Tibetan material culture was publicly muted amongst a myriad of louder concerns, which were very much products of the specific time and place of their encounter.

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<sup>125</sup> Shelton, *Collectors, Expressions of Self and Others*, 12.

<sup>126</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, 191.



Museums have in the past been accused of rendering objects static and unmoving, halting object's trajectories and, therefore, their biographies.<sup>127</sup>

'Behind the scenes' Tibet remained a genuine concern to Museum staff, who eventually created a coherent collection out of a mosaic of transactions and negotiations with a variety of collectors. Yet for the public, certainly post-1904, Tibet was left in a somewhat entropic state. Once the spoils of 1904, both in terms of objects and the ways in which they could be interpreted, had entered the Museum, the vision of Tibetan material culture as two spheres - 'Tibetan Buddhist art' and 'ethnography' was actively maintained into the twenty-first century. These distinctions were attached to hierarchies of value within the Museum's public space, where art was given a more prominent position.

Many collectors had historically brought objects to the Museum in the hope of providing a personal legacy, whilst others saw an economic opportunity. Yet for most collectors their stories, preserved somewhere in institutional memory, were largely erased from public presentation.<sup>128</sup> Paradoxically, it was often the object – that material form given agency by people - that retained the greater 'voice' within the Museum. Bailey's horse armour remained on display through the early twentieth century, along with Ottley's ubiquitous *chorten*, possibly being removed at the end of the 1920s. Even at this point in time, the guidebook tells us that the Tibetan collection was

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<sup>127</sup> For a critique of early museum histories see Hooper-Greenhill (*Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*) and Alberti (*Nature and Culture*).

<sup>128</sup> See Shelton, *Collectors, Expressions of Self and Others*, 17.

an 'important' one, although not why or for whom.<sup>129</sup> By the 1930s the Tibetan collection was made up of around 800-900 objects – nearly the full complement of objects currently in the NMS. When compared in size with the Indian collections (c. 3,000 objects) and those from China (c. 8,000 objects) it was not an insignificant amount of material, despite the logistical difficulties incurred in the early twentieth century in obtaining Tibetan objects compared with those from India or China.

In the mid 1920s Tibetan material was once again reunited in a series of cases on the second floor, far from the hub and hustle of the Museum's main public galleries. But the guidebook shows that these displays hardly differed from those created twenty years previously.<sup>130</sup> Tibetan material culture retained a small public presence in the Museum throughout the early twentieth century, eventually shrinking to just one case in the post-war years.<sup>131</sup> Those same two-dozen objects remained on display, static and unchanging, a construction of Tibetan culture that met few of the intentions and expectations of the collectors who had acquired the objects in the first place, and which clearly created a vision of Tibet as specifically ahistorical, and the home of 'Tibetan Buddhist Art'.<sup>132</sup> The Museum, with its own construction of 'Tibet' had

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<sup>129</sup> See for example Scottish Education Department, *The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh: A Guide to the Collections (1924)*, 23.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> At the time of my arrival as a Museum employee in 2005, this one case of objects was all that was on public display from Tibet. According to my colleague Jane Wilkinson, who had been an employee of the Museum for thirty years by that point, this one case had been unchanged during her entire employment, and was probably installed in the 1960s. Jane Wilkinson, discussion with author, 2010.

<sup>132</sup> The case of Tibetan material sat within a gallery containing Chinese and Japanese ceramics on one side, and Islamic ceramics and metalwork on the other. The case was adjacent to the Japanese material and contained only metalwork items. This was in part due to environmental conditions, as the gallery was sensitive to changes in light and temperature. The items within

flattened out the rich texture and detail developed through these objects' biographies and linked to the varied ways in which collectors had given objects public roles. Museum processes were indirectly responsible for suppressing such detail, but it has been possible to recover some of this information through an interrogation of the processes themselves.

Despite limited public engagement with Tibetan material culture, the Tibetan collections remained a significant, if quiet, presence within the Museum. The collection continued to develop post-1930, but the foundations had been laid, and objects that were acquired later were taken on cautiously, to maintain the integrity of what was already there. In 1954, when Major Rybot decided to donate his collection of 1904 Expedition material, the Museum instigated a debate with the collector regarding the value of certain objects to the Museum's holdings as a whole. It was no longer good enough that the material had a well-known provenance and associations with imperial endeavours had ceased to be at the core of the Museum's principles. In the end, the RSM only took in half the Rybot collection to plug gaps in the overall holdings, rather than to honour an imperial agent as an individual collector.<sup>133</sup>

In the twenty-first century Tibet has its strongest presence and most secure position within the Museum, which has once again evolved, this time into the National Museum of Scotland. This newest institutional change has

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the case all related to Tibetan Buddhism, including several *gau*, a ceremonial ewer, an incense burner and several sculptures of Buddhist deities.

<sup>133</sup> The Museum's records contain a complete list of Rybot's collection, which clearly shows the items the Museum chose not to take. The concerns that had guided the purchase of the Ottley collection fifty years earlier had clearly shifted. The Museum's interest was in the objects and their representation of Tibetan material culture, not in the representation of Scotland's concerns as part of an imperial infraction. *Letter from Rybot to Dr. Allan (curator at the RSM)*, 17/08/1954, N.V.L. Rybot Accession File, Department of World Cultures, NMS Archive.

again shifted the role of the Museum and the uses of the objects within it, presenting the opportunity to once more unpack the Tibetan collections in intellectually and physically different ways.