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Explaining the Dalai Lama to the Tibetans:
Basil Gould's Report on the Enthronement of the 14th Dalai Lama

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For many centuries, foreign visitors to Tibet have been fascinated by the Dalai Lamas and their system of reincarnation. This becomes clear already in early examples such as the report of Ippolito Desideri (1684–1733), included in Peter Schwieger's book *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China*.¹ The British colonial officers who visited Tibet in the first half of the 20th century, serving a different emperor much further west, were no exception. The remarks below concern one example of this fascination with the Dalai Lama system and with Tibet in general. It is from the period in the first half of the 20th century when—after the end of the Qing dynasty—Tibet was politically independent, but foreign nations maintained a lively interest in the region. Two large and powerful neighbours, China and British India, were hoping to extend their influence onto the plateau. Moreover, rumours were circulating about attempts to establish closer ties between Tibet and Russia. In this context, British India was keen to establish trade relations with Lhasa and draw Tibet into the orbit of the British Raj, making it less amenable to potential influences and advances from other sides.

By pure chance, I came across an unexpected document of these Anglo-Tibetan interactions. A little while ago Karen Syrett, archivist and curator at the British Academy, wrote to me to inquire about a Tibetan blockprint in the Mortimer Wheeler Archive (reference no. MWA/1/23) that she was trying to identify.² When I examined the text it turned out that, frustratingly, the blockprint was incomplete, and the first two folios including the title page were missing. Fortunately, however, the colophon contained the information needed to identify the author and learn about the circumstances of its composition. The end of the blockprint reads (fols 28b–29a):

(fol. 28b, 3ff) *lha gnas sa la 'phos dang cha mtshungs pa'i //*
lha ldan zhing gi{s} mi'i lo rgyus dang //
lha gcig 'gongs sa'i mdzad rnam cha tsam bcas //
lha sar 'bras spyi blon chen 'gol lo 'tas /

¹ “He [Desideri] wrote about the children who had been identified as *trülkus*: [“]All of them manage in the same way to behave with a certain external composure, gravity, and dignity proper to holy persons, which causes great astonishment[“].” Desideri could not explain this phenomenon other than by assuming that “the Devil should be the chief editor and perpetrator of this fraud...” Quoted from Schwieger 2015: 14.

² I would like to thank the British Academy for allowing me to use this text for the present article. In addition to the copy from the archives of the British Academy, I have consulted a digital version of the same blockprint that is available on TBRC (see footnote 4 for further details).

*bkod (4) pa'i rnam dkar dkar po'i sa bon las //
lha mi'i rnam 'dren 'dren mchod mchod yon zung //
zhabs zung rtag brtan brtan g.yo'i snod bcud kun //
bde skyid 'od snang snang bas khyab par shog //*

*(5) ces gangs ljongs skyabs mgon rgyal dbang sku phreng bcu bzhi pa chen po thog mar ngos 'dzin
rtsad gcod zhu lugs dang / khri phebs skor sogs brjod phyogs sna tshogs la brten / dbyin gzhung (6)
'bras spyi blon chen sar 'bi sil 'gu lo ta si'i em 'ji'i si'i ayi i'i nas rang gi dngos su mthong ba
dang / rgyus can sa nas khungs dag go thos byung rigs lcags 'brug zla 3 (7) pa'i nang dbyin yig thog
deb bkod bgyis pa da lam ra ni chos nyid rdo rje dang / lcang can gung zur bsod nams rgyal po
gnyis nas bod yig tu phabs bsgyur gyis 'bras spyi gong gsal nas gong sa (fol. 29a) (1) skyabs mgon
chen po'i mtshan snyan skye bo mchog dman kun gyi bde blag tu rtogs pa'i phyir du bod gzhung gi
thugs rjes lha ldan du par pas gсар (2) du bskrun pa'o // // sarbamangalam //*

The history of the people of Lhasa,
which is like heaven on earth,
as well as the deeds of the sole lord, the Dalai Lama,
have been composed in Lhasa by the Political Officer in Sikkim (*'bras spyi blon chen*), Gould (*'gol lo ta*).
From the entirely virtuous seed of this composition,
may those who welcome and worship the leader of gods and men,³ both the clerics and the lay patrons,
obtain a pair of “steady feet” [i.e. a long life], and may the inanimate and animate world, the container and the contained [i.e. the world and its inhabitants],
be pervaded by the light of well-being and happiness.

This account of the discovery, investigation, invitation, and enthronement etc. of the protector of the snowland, the great Fourteenth Dalai Lama, was composed in English by the Political Officer in Sikkim, *sar 'bi sil 'gu lo ta si'i em 'ji'i si'i ayi i'i*, based on his own observations and the information he had heard, in the 3rd month of the iron dragon year. It was recently translated into Tibetan by Rāni Chos nyid rdo rje and Lcang can *Gung zur Bsod nams rgyal po*, and the [account] of the aforementioned Political Officer in Sikkim was newly printed in Lhasa through the kindness of the Tibetan government, so that the fame and glory of the Great Protector [the Dalai Lama] might be more easily understood by people great and small. May all be well!

Fortunately the information of the colophon made it possible to track down a complete version of this blockprint on TBRC⁴ so that I could also verify the Tibetan title: *Lhar bcas srid zhi'i gtsug rgyan gong sa rgyal dbang sku phreng bcu bzhi pa chen po ngos 'dzin zhu tshul dang / gser khrir mnga' gsol sogs mdo tsam bkod pa bzhugs so //* “A brief account of the recognition, invitation, and

³ This epithet usually refers to the Buddha, but in this context it may also refer to the Dalai Lama (many thanks to Dr Lama Jabb for this suggestion).

⁴ www.tbrc.org, no. WIKG12176. This is a Zhol blockprint of 29 folios, identical with the one from the Wheeler archive. Martin: 178, no. 439 moreover mentions an “ ‘Impression from blocks preserved at the Namyal Institute of Tibetology’ (Gangtok 1972), in 29 folios,” which is likely to have been produced from the same printing blocks, but I have not seen this version and therefore cannot confirm this.

installation on the golden throne etc. of the highest crown jewel of existence [i.e. *samsāra*]—including the gods—and *nirvāṇa*, the sovereign, the great Fourteenth Dalai Lama.”

The author mentioned in the colophon, “*sar ’bi sil ’gu lo ṭa si’i em ’ji’i si’i ayi i’i*,” is no other than Sir Basil Gould, C.M.G., C.I.E.,⁵ (1883–1956), who was the British Political Officer in Sikkim from 1935 to 1945, and about whom more will be said later.⁶ The iron dragon year in which the text was composed corresponds to 1940, the year of the enthronement of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, at which Basil Gould was present. The work was then translated into Tibetan by Rāṇi Chos nyid rdo rje (1897–1994), the sister of Chos rgyal Bkra shis rnam rgyal of Sikkim, and the Tibetan aristocrat and intellectual Lcang lo can Bsod nams rgyal po (1897–1972).⁷ The dates of the translation and the publication in blockprint format are not given.

The information contained in the colophon raises several questions. First, what was the English original on which this Tibetan text is based? And second, why was this report translated into Tibetan and published in Lhasa with the support of the Tibetan government? Why would the Tibetans need an Englishman to explain the Dalai Lama institution to them?

The first question—about the English original of this Tibetan text—has a straightforward answer. Basil Gould was in Lhasa in 1940 on the occasion of the enthronement of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, and he published three accounts of this event in English: (a) in 1941 under the title *Report [...] on the discovery, recognition and installation of the fourteenth Dalai Lama*, (b) in 1946 under the title “The Discovery of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama”, and (c) in 1957 within the book *The Jewel in the Lotus: Recollections of an Indian Political*. These three accounts are similar, but not identical.

A close comparison shows that the Tibetan text is beyond doubt a translation of Basil Gould’s 26 pages long *Report on the discovery, recognition and installation of the fourteenth Dalai Lama* published in New Delhi in 1941.⁸ The Tibetan title “A brief account of the recognition, invitation, and installation on the golden throne etc. of the highest crown jewel of existence—including the gods—and *nirvāṇa*, the sovereign, the great Fourteenth Dalai Lama” corresponds in its nucleus to the title of the *Report* of 1941, with the addition of an honorary title for the Dalai Lama which the Tibetan version adds to satisfy the demands of etiquette and style. The identity of the two texts can be confirmed by a comparison of the section headings within both texts, which clearly correspond,

⁵ C.M.G. stands for Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George, C.I.E. for Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire. Gould’s official position was “Political Officer in Sikkim and British Political Representative in Tibet and Bhutan”.

⁶ Gould had been British Trade Agent in Gyantse in 1912–13; in 1913 he accompanied four young Tibetans who were sent to England to receive a British school education (see Gould 1957: 27–30, Shakya 1986), and in 1935 he became “Political Officer in Sikkim”. For a sketch of his life see Bechteler [2004]: 36–37; for a full autobiographical account of his time as political officer see Gould 1957; for an overview of the exact chronology of British India’s officers in Tibet see McKay 1997: 228–37.

⁷ See Martin 1997: 178, no. 439; for a biography of Lcang lo can see Bskal bzang grags pa 2012. Further information will be provided further down.

⁸ I am very grateful to Dr Burkhard Quessel (British Library) for giving me access to a copy of this report kept in the British Library, reference no. IOR/L/PS/20/D224.

subject to a few changes in style and honorific register and sometimes also in content. These headings also give a good overview of the contents of the report:

1. Tibet and the Tibetans (*bod dang / bod pa'i le'u*)
2. The Government of Tibet (*bod gzhung gi le'u*)
3. The Dalai Lama (*rgyal ba sku phreng spyang ras gzigs kyi sprul pa yin skor gyi le'u*)
4. Death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (*rgyal ba sku phreng bcu gsum pa zhing du gshegs tshul gyi le'u*)
5. The Tashi Lama (*pañ chen rin po che'i le'u*)
6. Signs and Portents (*rgyal ba'i yang srid skor thog ma'i rtags dang mtshan ma'i le'u*)
7. The Wise Men Set Out (*phyogs mthar yang srid rtsod gcod du phebs pa'i le'u*)
8. Arrival of the New Dalai Lama (*rgyal ba'i yang srid rgyal khab tu byon tshul gyi le'u*)
9. The Real Facts of the Discovery (*yang srid des brnyed lugs sgro bkur bral ba'i le'u*)
10. Ransom (*rgyal ba bod du gdan zhu'i slog cha'i le'u*)
11. The Fourteenth Dalai Lama (*rgyal ba sku phreng bcu bzhi pa'i le'u*)
12. The Return to the Throne (*gser khir zhabs sor 'khod pa'i le'u*)
13. The Chinese Delegation (*rgya gzhung sku tshab kyi le'u*)
14. The British Delegation (*dbyin gzhung sku tshab kyi le'u*)
15. Tibetan Ceremonial (*bod kyi dga' ston sogs kyi gnas lugs kyi le'u*)
16. Driving Out the Old Year (*lo mjug dgu gtor gyi le'u*)
17. New Year's Day (*dgung sar gyi le'u*)
18. Visit to the Dalai Lama (*rgyal ba'i mjal kha'i le'u*)
19. Other Visits (*rgyal blon khag dang mjal 'phrad bzhus pa'i le'u*)
20. The Dalai Lama's Family (*rgyal ba'i yab gzhis sku ngo'i le'u*)
21. The Holy Walk (*lha sa'i gling skor ba'i le'u*)
22. Entry of the Dalai Lama into the Potala (*rtse po tā lar rgyal ba thog mar byon pa'i le'u*)
23. The Procession (*chibs bsgyur chen mo'i le'u*)
24. The Ser-Thri-Nga-Sol (*gser khir mnga' gsol gyi le'u*)
25. The First Day (*khri phebs nyin dan po'i le'u*)
26. The Ceremony (*khri phebs mdzad sgo'i le'u*)
27. Gifts from England and India (*dbyin gzhung dang / rgya gar gzhung nas legs 'bul zhus pa'i le'u*)
28. New Year Ceremonies (*dgung gsar mdzad sgo'i le'u*)
29. About the Dalai Lama (this chapter heading is omitted at the end of the Tibetan text and replaced by a concluding sentence)

A closer reading reveals that the translation is very close to the original, while also introducing some small, but significant changes. It is of course possible that the translators used a manuscript of Gould's *Report* that was slightly different from the published version. I currently have no way of verifying this. Moreover, as we will see further down, the Tibetan translation went through an editing process in Lhasa, and we cannot be sure which changes were introduced by the translators and which were introduced by the editors. For the purpose of this article, I shall restrict myself to

comparing the Tibetan blockprint with the published English version (Gould 1941) as it stands, without considering issues of its textual history in more detail.

The small changes introduced in the Tibetan translation are quite interesting because the gentle adaptations seem to reveal the different tastes, etiquette, and backgrounds of the audiences to whom the English and Tibetan versions were addressed. I shall give a few examples. Some of these changes are not very significant in themselves because they do not change the contents of the account, but were merely made to conform to the conventions of Tibetan etiquette. Thus, due to norms of courtesy and style, the beginning and the end of the text were embellished with the traditionally required opening and dedication verses. Folio 1b begins with the following auspicious opening stanza, which was added by the translators:

The Great Scholar who, in order to alleviate the suffering of all beings,
was born from an ocean of pure limitless compassion,
he who is Padmapāṇi, of great loving-kindness,
may his toe nails be adorned with the head [i.e., I bow down to him] in deep devotion.⁹

The Tibetan text also makes sure that the details of the *Report* conform to the Tibetan conventions of hierarchies and ranks; it lists monk and lay officials according to their rank and uses the correct Tibetan honorific forms and titles, even where the English text does not. It also seems to avoid remarks about the young Dalai Lama that may have been perceived as lacking in respect, such as for example the repeated remarks about the “strong will” of the young Dalai Lama that were certainly not meant to be derogatory by the author, but may have been considered inappropriate in Tibetan.¹⁰

Some changes seem to be intended to soften or gloss over remarks that seemed odd or unflattering. Gould was writing at a time when the world did not worry about Orientalism yet, and his *Report* exhibits a curious combination of genuine respect and warm-hearted sympathy for the Tibetans with some uncomfortably exoticising comments. Moreover, some remarks were so specifically addressed to a Western readership that they would not have made sense in Tibetan. Such passages were either rephrased or omitted by the translators. Gould’s short chapter on “Tibetan ceremonial” may serve as an example. The original reads:

The Tibetans are amongst the most natural people in the world. It is the same with their dress, ceremonies, and buildings. While there is a prescribed apparel for each rank and for many different occasions, there is usually no exact pattern or design which must be followed : ceremonies progress with the same naturalness and ease as the flow of a stream ; the Potala is entirely intimate with its surroundings and purpose.

⁹ Fol. 1b: *rab 'byams skye dgu'i gdung ba sel ba'i phyir // rab dkar tshad med snying rje'i chu gter las // rab 'khrungs brtse chen phyag na pad dkar 'chang // rab gus dwangs pa'i zhabs sen spyi bo'i rgyan //* The Tibetan text also adds some poetic dedication verses at the end (fol. 28b); these have been quoted above together with the colophon.

¹⁰ E.g. Gould 1941: 23, omitted in the Tibetan version fol. 26b.

Sometimes one may aim at preserving the Tibetan naturalness by a choice of words. Thus “The Return to the Throne” has been preferred to “The Installation” [of the Dalai Lama]. In the same way “The Great Temple” or “The Temple” is perhaps a better rendering than “The Cathedral” for what the Tibetans call “The House of the Great Altar” or “The House of God”,¹¹ which, older than the Potala, continues to be the centre of much of the religious and political life of Tibet. What counts for most in the ceremonies which take place at Lhasa is the atmosphere of awe, joy, reverence, love, exaltation, and not seldom fun, which surrounds them.¹²

In Tibetan, the complicated paragraph on the English rendering of Tibetan terminology is missing and the whole section was reduced to the following two sentences:

Within this world, the Tibetan people are free of any pompousness (*rgyas spros med pa*) in the way they dress, their ceremonial, and their buildings. At festivals etc. they are without formality and proceed as peacefully and gently as the flow of a stream; in the same way, the Potala is like the most exquisite adornment.¹³

The translators have also omitted confusing or misleading statements such as the Dalai Lama being the “High-Priest and King of Tibet” or that “it is believed in Tibet that Queen Victoria was the Yangsi [*yang srid*, reincarnation] of the goddess Palden Lhamo”.¹⁴

Some remarks that may have seemed slightly unflattering were gently modified. For example, Basil Gould’s general introduction on “Tibet and the Tibetans” (Gould 1941: 1–2) says about the Tibetan people: “There is very little in the way of secular education, much superstition, and a stoic outlook on life.” In the Tibetan rendering this phrase is given a more positive tone: “Lay people mainly pursue their education in a religious context. They are strong in discursive thinking/superstition (*rnam rtog*). They appear very undemanding when enduring hardships.”¹⁵ The term used for “superstition”, *rnam rtog*, is known from Buddhist philosophy where it designates discursive thinking; it therefore has a broader application than “superstition” and could even be understood in a positive sense.

Some terms and concepts do not have exact equivalents in Tibetan. For example, Gould speaks about the “distinctive culture, language, art, religion, and system of government” of Tibet, which in the Tibetan rendering becomes “knowledge (*yon tan*) and sciences (*rig gnas*), language (*skad*), customs (*lugs srol*), religion (*chos*), and legal system (*khriims lugs*)”.¹⁶ A word for “art” is conspicuously missing, presumably because the concept of “art as such” was alien to Tibet; crafts

¹¹ Gould is obviously talking about the Jo khang.

¹² Gould 1941: 11–12.

¹³ Fol. 13b, 1–2: *bod kyi mi de 'dzam gling nang nas cha lugs spro tshul dang de bzhin khang khyim / dus kyi dga' ston sogs la rgyas spros med pa rang bzhin zhi 'jam chu bo dal 'bab lta bu de 'i dbus rtse po ta la 'di bzhin rgyan gyi phul byung lta bu /*

¹⁴ Gould 1941: 3, Tibetan translation fol. 5a.

¹⁵ Fol. 3b,3–4: *khyim pa phal cher chos phyogs kho na 'i yon tan la 'bad stsol byed pa / sems la rnam rtog chen po / dka' dub bzod la chog shes che bar snang /*

¹⁶ Gould 1941: 1, Tibetan translation fol. 1a.

and artistic skills (*bzo rig pa*) would normally be included in the Tibetan “sciences” or “disciplines” (*rig gnas* “fields of knowledge”), but are not mentioned as a separate item here.

The festivities surrounding the Tibetan New Year and the enthronement of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama evoke some curiously Christian associations in Gould, which have mostly been omitted in the Tibetan rendering. For example, the attitude of the *spyi khyab mkhan po* (a high-ranking monk-official) towards the young Dalai Lama, who was in his care, is described in the following way:

With the Chikyab Khenpo, as at the reception a few days before, one felt the atmosphere, and almost the music, of “Unto us a son is born.....and the Government shall be upon his shoulders”.¹⁷

In his effort to describe the return of the reincarnated boy to the throne of the Dalai Lamas, Gould refers to the British Royalty as well as to Christian sentiments:

Probably there is no ceremony in the Western world which is at all nearly equivalent, but there are affinities to many ceremonies which we know. There are elements of the assertion by all of their duty towards their God-King, and of the God-King’s duty towards his people ; of a long drawn out “God Save The King. Long Live The King” ; of mystical union and of mutual society help and comfort ; and most certainly of communion and of joy and thanks-giving. The scene carried one back also to the great Durbar at Delhi,¹⁸ when King George and Queen Mary sat to receive the homage of those who were already their loyal subjects and to uplift them by their presence. But it was inevitable that thought should travel also to another Child, already God incarnate when, lying in a manger, He was offered gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, or when he first visited the Temple which was already His.¹⁹

The Tibetan text cuts this explanation short:

There is no exact equivalent in the countries of Europe, but it is partially similar when the King pledges to protect his subjects like his children, and the subjects that they will honour the King like a God; and the custom of the subjects making the auspicious prayer: “May the [three] Jewels give their blessing for a long life of the King!”²⁰

Some details related to Britain and Western culture must have seemed too unfamiliar to be rendered in Tibetan. For example, Gould makes reference to “Kusho Changopa” being one of “the old Rugbeians”, “known in Rugby as Ringang”. This refers to the fact he was part of a group of four Tibetan boys who had been sent to England by the 13th Dalai Lama to receive a British education. Gould had been assigned to accompany them on their way from India to England and

¹⁷ Gould 1941: 14, omitted on fol. 16a of the Tibetan translation.

¹⁸ This refers to the Durbar of 1911 at which King George V and Queen Mary were officially celebrated as Emperor and Empress of India, about half a year after their coronation in England.

¹⁹ Gould 1941: 17.

²⁰ Fol. 19b, 1–3: *de kho na nyid dang mthun pa'i lugs srol yu rob zhes phyi gling rgyal khab khag la med kyang / ha lam cha mthun lta bu yod pa'i thog rgyal pos mnga' 'bangs bu bzhin skyong bab dang / 'bangs nas rgyal po lha bzhin bskur ba'i dam tshig phyogs srung dang 'brel rgyal po sku tshe ring po 'byung phyir dkon mchog nas byin rlabs stsol cig ces 'bangs nas smon lam bzang po 'debs pa'i srol yod 'dug /*

to make sure that they found their place in a suitable institution. They studied at the private boarding school of Rugby and became therefore known in English as the “Rugby boys”. The reference to Rugby is omitted in the Tibetan version, presumably because it would not have meant anything to Tibetan readers.²¹

The translators have also slightly shortened the elaborate description of a children’s party hosted by the British Mission at their residence in Lhasa, the Dekyi Lingka. The list of footage and movies presented in the “cinema show” for the children and other Tibetan guests included “The King and Queen’s tour in Canada and the United States, and some shots of Balmoral Castle and the Gardens”, “followed in close competition by Charlie Chaplin, Mickey Mouse, Do you like Monkeys ?, and Kodachrome scenes of Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan.” Out of these, unfamiliar items such as Charlie Chaplin, Mickey Mouse, and “Do you like Monkeys” were eliminated in the Tibetan version, while the King and Queen, their castle and their travels must have sounded more familiar and are included in the translation.²²

Finally, some of the events described in Gould’s account were fraught with political and diplomatic complications, as indicated by Gould himself in an introductory paragraph in which he states:

There has been a lack of unanimity in accounts of the discovery, recognition, and installation of the new Dalai Lama. The following account is based on what the writer has been told by men who were closely concerned in the actual events and on what he himself has seen.²³

The “lack of unanimity” alludes to a Chinese account of the installation of the Dalai Lama, which differs in several major respects from Gould’s *Report*.²⁴ Already in the years preceding the enthronement, there had been certain tensions between the British and the Chinese sides, and divergent political objectives and interpretations of events. One major issue during Gould’s first stay in Lhasa in 1936–37 had been a debate concerning the return of the Panchen Lama. The Panchen Lama had fled to China in 1923 and the Lhasa government felt uneasy about granting certain demands of the Panchen Lama and letting him return together with a military escort, which

²¹ Gould 1941: 23, Tibetan translation fol. 26a. For further background information see Gould 1957: 27–30, Shakya 1986.

²² Gould 1941: 24, Tibetan translation fol. 27b.

²³ Gould 1941: 1. This statement is missing in the Tibetan version. However, the statement that the report is based on Gould’s observations and on what he had been told has been integrated into the colophon quoted above.

²⁴ The Chinese account referred to is by Li Tsieh-tseng, based on the eye-witness account of the Chinese representative Wu Chung-hsin, who claimed to have played a crucial role in the enthronement ceremony of the Dalai Lama. This view is also reflected in a short reference to the Dalai Lama’s enthronement in Shen and Liu 1953: “A son of a Chinese-speaking family of the Am-Do tribe in Chinghai province was found by the regent Ra-Dreng to be the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. A Chinese mission was sent from Nanking in 1940 to supervise the new Dalai’s inauguration.” (Shen and Liu 1953: 52.) The issue is addressed in more detail in Richardson 1962: 150–54; according to Richardson, Wu Chung-hsin “professed to have satisfied himself in a private interview that the child was the true incarnation and the [golden] urn need not be used. [...] Wu also claimed that he personally conducted the enthronement and that, in gratitude, the Dalai Lama prostrated himself in the direction of Peking. Those stories, described as false by Bell on the authority of information from Gould, were categorically denied to the writer and dismissed as ludicrous by Tibetans who attended the ceremony.” (Richardson 1962: 154.) See also Goldstein 1989: 327–29 and Shakabpa 1967: 285–86. Gould 1957: 234–35 gives a relatively diplomatic presentation of this episode.

seemed like a form of Chinese military intrusion. The British Mission was involved in the negotiations, trying to strengthen the Tibetan position towards China. The matter was finally resolved unexpectedly through the death of the Panchen Lama in 1937. Gould's *Report* briefly alludes to the diplomatic difficulties connected with the Panchen Lama when he says about the year 1935 that "Apprehensions were increased by various difficulties which attended negotiations for the return to Tibet of the Tashi Lama." This sentence is omitted in the Tibetan version, be it to circumnavigate the problematic conflict with the Panchen Lama, or to avoid an open criticism of Chinese politics, or both.²⁵

Another diplomatic and political issue was what Gould calls the "ransom" that the search party had to pay for the release of the young Dalai Lama from his home region in Amdo. According to Gould the local Governor²⁶ demanded substantial sums of money for the release of the child, to be divided between the local government in Siling (Xining), the local Commander-in-Chief, the Amban, and Kumbum monastery where the boy was staying. The negotiations about these payments delayed the journey for about a year. In Gould's *Report* the whole section bears the heading "Ransom". The Tibetan rendering has rephrased this as "compensation payment for inviting the Dalai Lama to his seat in Tibet" (*rgyal ba bod du gdan zhu'i slog cha*), which does not sound quite as negative as the English expression.²⁷ The subsequent Tibetan passage dealing with this episode does not omit the account as such, but abbreviates some of the details regarding the payment.

The differences pointed out here should not give the impression that the Tibetan translation takes many liberties; overall, it is very faithful to the English original and presents a remarkably accurate rendering of Basil Gould's report on the enthronement of the Dalai Lama. The gentle changes and silent omissions seem to reflect an attempt to present the *Report* in the best possible light to a Tibetan readership. Beyond giving a detailed and precise account of the enthronement ceremonies of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, the translation also demonstrates that the British representative respects and honours Tibet and the Tibetans. It is a token of the good intentions of the British, and of the role that the Tibetan government has begun to play on the international stage.

This leads to the second, and more intriguing, question: Why was a Tibetan translation of this account produced, and why was it published as a blockprint by the Zhol par khang in Lhasa, giving it a semi-official status? It did of course make a lot of sense that a British colonial officer would report on a rare and politically important event such as the enthronement of the Dalai Lama to his own government and to a European readership, but why was this report then published in Tibetan? Why would the Tibetans need a civil servant of the British Raj to explain the Dalai Lama system and describe the Tibetan ceremonies surrounding the enthronement?

²⁵ Gould 1941: 4. From the brief paragraph in Gould's text it does not become quite clear just how complicated the issue was, but Richardson has dealt with the implications in detail, see Richardson 1962: 143–46. An insightful discussion of the episode is provided in Goldstein 1989: 252–99; see also van Schaik 2011: 198–200.

²⁶ This was General Ma Pu-feng, see Richardson 1962: 151–53.

²⁷ Gould 1941: 8, Tibetan translation fol. 10a–b. For further discussion of this episode see Richardson 1962: 151–53, Goldstein 1989: 319–24, and Shakabpa 1967: 284.

At a superficial level, a Tibetan version may have seemed desirable simply because—at least as far as we currently know—no other similarly detailed account of this important event exists in Tibetan. However, I believe that the translation and publication of Gould’s *Report* in Tibet also plays a role in the long-term diplomatic relationship between the British Mission to which Basil Gould belonged and the Tibetan government. To understand this relationship, we need to consider the history and circumstances of Gould’s presence in Lhasa. Basil Gould’s first involvement with Tibetan affairs had been his role as Trade Agent in Gyantse in 1912–13, and subsequently escorting the four young Tibetans mentioned earlier who were sent by the 13th Dalai Lama to study in England. In December 1935 he took up post as Political Officer in Sikkim²⁸ and in this role visited Lhasa three times. The first visit was from August 1936 until February 1937, when he stayed in Tibet for about half a year as part of a larger British party in an attempt to support the Tibetan government in their negotiations over the return of the Panchen Lama from China. During this time he seems to have established cordial relationships with some of the most important people in the Lhasa aristocracy and government. When Basil Gould left Lhasa, Hugh Richardson stayed behind,²⁹ equipped with a radio transmitter that enabled him to convey significant news at any time, making the British Mission *de facto* a permanent institution without ever having received official permanent status.³⁰

Gould’s second visit took place on the occasion of the enthronement of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, and it is in this context that the *Report* was written. Gould had been invited to Lhasa for the enthronement of the Dalai Lama that took place in February 1940, just after the Tibetan New Year. As Gould’s report makes clear, the enthronement itself was a big public affair, attended not only by members of the Tibetan government and aristocracy, representatives of the large monastic institutions, and the family of the Dalai Lama, but also by various foreign guests of honour: the British delegation, representatives from Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan, and a Chinese delegation. Gould describes with visible pleasure the attention and honours the British delegation was afforded by their Tibetan hosts,³¹ and he writes with some emotion about the significance of the occasion,

²⁸ An important predecessor in this office had been Charles Bell (1870–1945) who held this post from 1908 until 1919; after initially trying to establish British control over Tibetan politics, he later advocated an independent Tibet, with the implication that this meant “independent from China”. For a short biography including a description of Bell’s political involvement in Tibet see the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004 (doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/30682, accessed 19 March 2017). In many ways Bell set the tone for the politics that Basil Gould would pursue during his period of office.

²⁹ Hugh Edward Richardson (1905–2000) was in Tibet for two long periods in 1936–1940 and 1947–1950 (his exact dates of office are given in McKay 1997: 230–32). For a biography see Harrison and Shakya (eds) 2003: 148–50.

³⁰ While British colonial officers saw great advantages in a permanent representation in Tibet, the British Government in London was reluctant to support such endeavours. McKay 1997: 4–5 and 13–15 gives a brief overview of the political structures and differing priorities of Whitehall, British India, and the “Tibet cadre”. On the question of a permanent representative in Tibet and the competition surrounding the Chinese and British presence in Lhasa, see also Richardson 1962: 147–48 (presenting this episode from the British point of view) and Shen and Liu 1953: 51–52 (describing the same situation from the Chinese perspective).

³¹ For example, he writes about the reception of the British delegation: “The consideration of the Tibetan Government was shown by the appointment as “Official Guide” from Gyantse to Lhasa of Kusho Dingja, who as Dzongpon of Shigatse holds the most important District charge under the control of the Central Government ; by the excellence of the arrangements made for the journey ; and by the provision on arrival of a large guard of honour drawn from the

and about the young Dalai Lama, whom he perceives as an unusually perceptive and charismatic child.

Basil Gold returned to Lhasa one more time, in 1944, and the description of this last visit is included in the brief last chapter of his 1957 publication *The Jewel in the Lotus*. The last chapter of this book also partly answers the question about the role of the Tibetan translation of his *Report* of 1941. I quote the relevant passage here in full because it not only provides some background information about the production of the Tibetan translation, but it also gives a beautifully precise description of Tibetan printing technology:

During the interval since my second visit to Lhasa in 1940 Rani Chuni Dorje and Chang-lo Chen Kung had undertaken a labour of love and had translated into Tibetan my account of the Discovery and Installation of the Dalai Lama. I had brought the Tibetan version with me and submitted it to the Lord Chamberlain. One day there was some uneasiness in Lhasa. It had become known that on the previous day the Cabinet had been in practically continuous session from midday until far into the night. Actually they had been going through the translation word by word. They had pasted in a few small corrections. They informed me that, apart from these, one or more of them could vouch from his own knowledge for the accuracy of every word.³²

This passage not only shows the pride of the author in his intimate knowledge of Lhasa affairs, it also gives some insight into the translation process, as well as giving clues to the causes of the differences between the English and the Tibetan version.³³ As Gould states here in agreement with the colophon of the Tibetan text quoted above, the Tibetan translation was produced by Rāṅi Chos nyid rdo rje and Lcang can *Gung zur* Bsod nams rgyal po. Rāṅi Chos nyid rdo rje (1897–1994), a.k.a. Chos dbyings dbang mo, was the sister of King (*Chos rgyal*) Bkra shis rnam rgyal of Sikkim (1893–1963) and married to *Gong gzim* Bsod nams stobs rgyas rdo rje of Bhutan.³⁴ After her marriage she was based at Bhutan House in Kalimpong. Lcang can *Gung zur* Bsod nams rgyal po was a member of the Lcang lo can aristocratic family who fell out of favour in Lhasa due to his close association with the reformer Lungshar in 1934³⁵ and was banned to Kongpo. In 1936 he decided to go to Kalimpong (Darjeeling district), where he met and befriended such illustrious

Trapchi Regiment. A further gracious act was the appointment, as Official Guides for the period to be spent in Lhasa, of Kusho Kheme-se [...] and of Tsedron Gyantsen Choda...” (Gould 1941: 11.)

³² Gould 1957: 240.

³³ It should perhaps be mentioned in this context that obtaining government approval before the publication of politically important reports was a common procedure, not just in Tibet, but perhaps even more so in Britain, see McKay 1997: 214–17 on the British censorship of the accounts of civil servants of the Raj.

³⁴ Rāṅi Chos nyid rdo rje’s dates are taken from Aris 1994: 86; the same book also contains photographs of her (pp. 110 and 136). *The Bhutan Review* vol.2, no.4 (April 1994) contains a brief obituary of Rāṅi Chos nyid rdo rje; according to this, she passed away on 26 March 1994. Her husband, *Gong gzim* (or Rāja, as the British called his rank) Bsod nams thobs rgyas rdo rje (1896–1953), held several important political offices in the years 1917–1952 and was in charge of fostering the relationship between British India and Bhutan. Aris 1994: 133–34 quotes a description of the couple given by Richardson. The couple spent most of their time at Bhutan House, the seat of the Dorji family in Kalimpong.

³⁵ Lung shar Rdo rje tse rgyal (1880–1938) attempted a fundamental reform of the structure of the Tibetan government after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama, but this attempt failed and he was put under arrest and punished. For a detailed analysis of his reform movement see Goldstein 1989: 186–212 (chapter 6).

Tibetan intellectuals as Dge 'dun chos 'phel and published in the famous Tibetan language newspaper, the *Melong*.³⁶ In 1947 he was finally able to return to Lhasa.³⁷ This means that the Tibetan translation must have been completed in Kalimpong, where both Lcang lo can Bsod nams stobs rgyas and Rāṇi Chos nyid rdo rje lived at the time.

Gould's account continues with a description of the printing process:

Permission having been obtained for the account to be printed at the Potala Press, the text was first written out in uncial script on long narrow slips of transparent rice paper. It was then pasted, in reverse, onto long hardwood boards, on which skilled men carved out the letters with graving tools. These boards were then delivered to me at De Kyi Lingka and printed off at a great pace by pressing sheets of Tibetan paper down on the boards with rollers. This is a very strong beige-coloured paper, insect-proof because it consists largely of daphne bark, which is made in Bhutan and Nepal for the Tibetan market. Another copy on thin white paper was written by the best scribe in Lhasa.³⁸

Thus, while the printing blocks were prepared at the Zhol par khang at the foot of the Potala, the printing itself was carried out at the British Mission in Lhasa on Gould's initiative. In the final paragraph Gould also describes how he used the Tibetan translation of his *Report* as a gift to Tibetan officials and friends:

On a round of farewell visits I took with me gifts in the form of copies of the Tibetan version of the *Discovery and Installation of the Dalai Lama*, wrapped in golden brocade. The recipient would rise, lift the book to his forehead and reverently place it on the family altar. I also presented sets of the records of Tibetan music made by us at the De Kyi Lingka and manufactured by the Gramophone Company, Calcutta. These parting presents eclipsed any that I had ever given before.³⁹

This description forms the “grand finale” of Gould's book, followed only by a brief post-script in which he sketches Tibet's precarious situation at the time of writing. Gould's visits took place at a time when Europe and large parts of Asia were immersed in a major war, India was on the brink of independence, the British Empire nearing its end, and Mao was about to take power in China. Remarkably little of these major shifts in world politics is directly addressed in Basil Gould's account of his 1940 visit to Lhasa, which instead revels in the experience of Tibetan hospitality and British counter-hospitality, the accurate rendering of the minutiae of Tibetan ceremonial attire, the colours of clothes and the shape of hats, and the rituals and ceremonies of Lhasa.

³⁶ The full Tibetan title is *Yul phyogs so so'i gсар 'gyur me long*, in English it is often referred to as “The Tibet Mirror”. An online version is available at www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd_6981643_000/

³⁷ I thank Dobis Tsering Gyal (Lhasa Archives) for pointing me to an article on Lcang lo can's life by his brother Bskal bzang grags pa (2012). He has also provided me with PDFs of two articles in Chinese on the Lcang lo can family, one by himself discussing three *bka' gtan* documents (published in the journal *Tibetan Archives* 2013,2: 22–28, entitled *You guan xi zang gui zu shi jia jiang luo jin de san jian zhong yab zang wen tie quan wen shu* (bka' gtan) *dang an kao shu*) and one on the history of the Lcang lo can family by Bskal bzang grags pa (published in *China Tibetology* 2014,1, entitled *Xi zang jiang luo jin gui zu shi jia jian shi*). Lcang lo can's involvement in Lung shar's reform movement is also mentioned in Goldstein 1989 (see Index under “Canglocen”).

³⁸ Gould 1957: 240.

³⁹ *ibid.*: 241.

To be sure, this detailed and accurate account of Lhasa and its political scene was not purely due to the curiosity of the author. It also mirrors an attempt to establish a special relationship between the British and the Tibetans in these decades of Tibetan independence. As Clare Harris brilliantly describes in her essay in *Seeing Lhasa* much of the official life in Lhasa resonated well with the diplomatic life of the British Empire: the clear sense of social and political ranks, visible through the respective dress, jewellery, and hats; the social life in form of invitations, banquets, and parties; as well as the etiquette of exchanging gifts and courtesies were easily compatible with practices familiar to colonial officers, and seem to have suited the British civil servants very well.⁴⁰ The British Mission had plenty of free time and used it to engage with their host country: they took numerous photographs and produced some fascinating documentary footage,⁴¹ and Gould began to learn some Tibetan and together with Hugh Richardson wrote Tibetan-English glossaries and phrasebooks.⁴² The engagement with Tibetan language and culture did have a political dimension since highlighting the distinctiveness of Tibetan culture was a way of underpinning its role as an independent nation.⁴³ It also demonstrated the willingness of the British Raj to engage with this nation, to take it seriously, and support it on its political journey into independence. The British Mission was keen to establish Britain as a political friend and ally, trying to forge a relationship with Tibet that was stronger than Tibetan relations with China.

⁴⁰ Harris in Harris and Shakya (eds) 2003, in particular pp. 19-61. As Harris remarks, forging the relationship between the British Mission and the Lhasa aristocracy and government was a diplomatic process played out not first and foremost at an official political level, but on the cultural stage, and the Gould Mission did its best to highlight cultural similarities and shared perceptions and sentiments: “The photographic and textual record of British Missions to Lhasa illustrate the meeting of two elites who saw much to admire in each other; particularly those things that seemed oddly familiar.” (Harris in Harris and Shakya (eds) 2003: 47.) “The Gould Mission was both turning the lens onto the Tibetans and reflecting those markers of Britishness which would be most in tune with Tibetan values. Hence the effect was not perhaps so much to stamp an impression of cultural superiority over the Tibetans, as to provide further ways in which Britishness and Tibetanness could mirror one another.” (Harris in Harris and Shakya (eds) 2003: 61.)

⁴¹ See Bechteler [2004]: 36–42 for a record of the available material. For the photographic record see also the “Tibet Album” website of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. Some fascinating footage of the Gould Mission has been included in the BBC/BFI co-production “The Lost World of Tibet” (2008). It should also be mentioned that in addition to the photographs and documentary footage from the enthronement of the Dalai Lama, the painter Kanwal Krishna produced numerous portrait paintings on this occasion, many of which are reproduced in Gould 1946–47.

⁴² The main work, a Tibetan-English glossary called *Tibetan Word Book*, was published alongside several slim companion volumes on *Tibetan Verb Roots*, *Tibetan Syllables*, and *Tibetan Sentences*, co-authored by Gould and Hugh Richardson and published by Oxford University Press India in 1943. These publications are meant to “help ordinary people to speak Tibetan as it is spoken today in Lhasa” (Gould & Richardson 1943a: ix). *Tibetan Syllables* is a useful little handbook for those trying to learn spoken Tibetan; it lists words according to their pronunciation in the order of the English alphabet, followed by the possible Tibetan spellings and meanings these spoken words may correspond to. *Tibetan Sentences* is similar to modern holiday phrase books, with the contents designed to suit the needs of a British Civil Servant in Tibetan-speaking countries. It contains numerous commands, beginning with phrases such as: “Come quickly!”, “Take this away!”, “Shut the door!”, “Open the window!”, “Draw the curtain! (pp. 1–2), moving on to the topic of food (“The butter is not quite fresh!”, p. 9), travel (“I shall come back in 4 hours. Have tea ready.”), the weather, warfare (“This gun is very old,” p. 82), and finally closing with “It is good to get up in the early morning.” “But it is pleasant to stay in bed,” “I will go to Tibet once more,” “He is powerful,” “Good luck!” (pp. 136–37). Gould’s grammophone recordings were published slightly later; see Bechteler [2004]: 40.

⁴³ In this respect, Gould adopted a viewpoint that had already been promoted by Charles Bell before, see Harris 2012: 78. As Harris remarks, “Gould was keen to do all he could to present Tibet as an independent country by emphasising such things as a distinctive art tradition and other markers of cultural uniqueness. His successor, Hugh Richardson took this objective even more to heart by assiduously documenting the historic monuments of Tibet...” (Harris in Harris and Shakya (eds) 2003: 37.)

China never gave up its claim to Tibet, and it becomes clear from Gould's account how much the British understood themselves as the allies of the Tibetans against the threat of a Chinese takeover, as paradoxical as this may seem at a time when Britain and China were officially allied against Japan in World War II. The Chinese also clearly perceived the British presence in Tibet as an affront and did their best to undermine any British involvement in Tibetan affairs.⁴⁴ The British Mission in Lhasa thus forms part of the attempt of the British Empire to extend its sphere of influence into Tibet, or at least to prevent China from gaining too much control on the plateau, and perhaps also to prevent the Tibetan government from building closer ties with China after the demise of the 13th Dalai Lama, who had been such a strong advocate of Anglo-Tibetan relations. Highlighting the distinctiveness of Tibetan culture was a way of demonstrating that Tibet was indeed not part of China, but a culturally and politically independent entity. However, the written reports of the mission as well as the photographic and cinematographic documentation also seem to mirror a genuine curiosity and sympathy for a society that the British civil servants clearly liked and enjoyed and in which they seem to have felt very much at ease, perhaps more easily than in India, as Gould's repeated emphasis on the pleasantly uncomplicated nature of Tibetan society seems to suggest.

Gould's reports as well as other documents from this period give a glimpse of a relatively brief phase in which Tibet began to develop its own foreign relations, acting as a sovereign state on the stage of world politics. Gould's *Report* and its Tibetan rendering, checked by the Tibetan cabinet and published by the Zhol printing house, and presented as a gift from the British representative to Tibetan dignitaries, is an affirmation of this bilateral relationship between two nations, a symbolic act of mutual recognition and goodwill between two sovereign partners.

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⁴⁴ Tsering Shakya 1986: 9–11 describes how China in 1913 tried to prevent the education of the four young Tibetan students in England; Richardson 1962, chapters VIII–X gives a good impression of the tensions and mutual suspicions between China and the British during the 1930s and 1940s.

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