

With gratitude and appreciation,
this volume is dedicated to the memory of Gene Smith

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In memory of Namgyal G. Ronge

REFLECTIONS IN *THE TIBET MIRROR*:
NEWS OF THE WORLD 1937–1946

ISRUN ENGELHARDT

Abstract

The first long-lasting newspaper in the Tibetan language, entitled *Yul phyogs so so'i gsar 'gyur me long*, or *The Mirror of News from All Sides of the World*, and later known as *The Tibet Mirror*, was published in Kalimpong from 1925 to 1963 by Dorje Tharchin (*Rdo rje mthar phyin*), a Christian catechist. The newspaper, which I will refer to as the *Melong*, was also read in Lha sa, with copies even reaching Eastern Tibet. The thirteenth Dalai Lama was a subscriber. A substantial part of reporting was dedicated to world affairs, under the heading of *yul gzhan gyi gnas tshul*, or 'international affairs'.¹

In this article, I will primarily focus on international reporting from the period around the Second World War and examine Tharchin's tireless efforts to continue publishing his newspaper over the decades through

* This paper was submitted in August 2007. Related work that appeared after this date could not be incorporated into this study.

¹ Tashi Tsering. The life of Rev. G. Tharchin, missionary and pioneer. *Lungta* 11 (1998), 9–10:9: "The Mirror carried profiles of contemporary political personalities such as Gandhi, Stalin and Hitler as well as prominent Tibetans. It also reported on the doings of the great military powers, developments in weapons, and the latest scientific discoveries and inventions. Important international events such as the Olympic Games as well as the anniversaries of the Indian Empire were also reported."

adversity and difficulties, letting him speak for himself as often as possible.² Perhaps this article will serve as encouragement to examine this unique historical source of almost forty years of twentieth-century Tibetan history in more detail.

The First *Melong*

With the following editorial Tharchin Babu (Mthar phyin sba bu, 1890-1976), as he was affectionately called, launched the very first issue of the first enduring Tibetan-language newspaper *Yul phyogs so so'i gsar 'gyur me long* (*Mirror of News from All Sides of the World*) in Kalimpong, the town on the border of Sikkim, in October 1925.³

² Since the papers of Tharchin's estate are not currently available to the public, I must restrict myself to the information I was able to find in *The Melong* itself and other sources available to me. Should the bulk of the Tharchin papers ever become available for public access, some events may require re-examination in the light of the new information. In addition, I was unable to find a complete set of issues of *The Melong* for the period under examination; despite extensive and valuable collections in specific libraries, some issues cannot be found yet. The years of the war and immediate post-war period in particular show many gaps. Furthermore, the occasionally modest printing quality frequently presents an obstacle to legibility. However, Paul Hackett at Columbia University has collected a near-complete run of issues of the Mirror and hopes to launch the archive online in the near future.

³ Tsering Shakya 2004. *The Emergence of Modern Tibetan Literature—gsar rtsom*. PhD thesis, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 17, remarks: “It is interesting to note that, either by design or coincidence, the name of Tharchin's paper was exactly the same as the first newspaper founded by the giant of the Bengal Renaissance, Rammohun Roy's Sambâd kaumudî (The Mirror of the News).” I am very grateful to Tsering Shakya for generously allowing me to quote from his as yet unpublished PhD thesis.

Reason: These days, India, China and European countries large and small print newspapers (*kha bar ka ka si*)⁴ in their own language, and are therefore able to get their news every day; for example international war or peace, the state of the business market, new discoveries of scientific processes, epidemics, natural catastrophes and so on. This gives the general public the opportunity to express their opinion in letters to the editors.

Because we, the people of the Tibetan Snowland, do not have such a paper in our own language, I Kunuwar Tharchin and a few friends in Kalimpong believe that this can greatly benefit the Tibetans. It is also a source of pride for other peoples that we have our own language and script. That is my assumption.

Because this newspaper has never existed before, I ask you knowledgeable people to think carefully and deeply on this topic. If you believe that it will really benefit us Tibetans, please order it through mail post. I can send it through *wi pi pi* [= V.P.P. = Via Post Paid].

Initially it will be a 1-page newspaper, so that within one year 12 pages will be published. Each page will cost 1½ annas, totalling 1 Rs 6 annas per year, or 1½ Rs. If you don't want to pay V.P.P., please pay 1½ Rs. in advance. From now on, I will send the newspaper without delay and safely each month. Let me express once more that I would like this newspaper to carry all news from other countries. To be of use to monks and lamas, it will include

⁴ Parshotam Mehra kindly informed me that 'khabr' in Hindi/Urdu means 'news,' singular or plural; 'akhbar' is the word for a newspaper; 'kabasi' to my mind is a corruption of 'kaya' 'si' i.e. 'what is'. In other words 'what is the news?.'

information on how the Buddhist religion is (or was) practised in India in times of its progress and downfall; to be of use to business people, information on where items are produced and where the market is good; to be of use to aristocrats, a range of different news; to be of use to sick people, information on different medicines and cures; to be of use to children, lectures and other texts for educational purposes. This is what I intend to offer [the reader]. I also hope that knowledgeable people will give me their views and opinions. From next year onward I hope to publish 2 pages. This first page is free of charge. To buy this newspaper “Melong,” please sacrifice your 1½ Rs. and don’t be miserly. To ensure the newspaper progresses, please send your views and thoughts.

Sent from Kalimpong, Polhol Tundram [Pol Hill Hall], Registration Nr. 1, Account Nr. 1, Nr. of page 1. Sent 1st October 1925 from Kalimpong.⁵

Tharchin

Who exactly was Tharchin? Tharchin was born in 1899 in Poo in Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh. As an orphan, he was baptized by the Moravian missionary T. Schreve. After training as a teacher, he came to Kalimpong in the 1920s and worked for the Church of Scotland.⁶ The most vivid

⁵ *Melong* X, 1, October 10, 1925, front page. For a facsimile, see *Lungta* 11 (1998), 12.

⁶ For a detailed biography of Tharchin, see: H. Louis Fader 2002 and 2004. *Called from Obscurity: The Life and Times of a True Son of Tibet, God’s Humble Servant from Poo Gergan Dorje Tharchin. With Particular Attention Given to his Good Friend and Illustrious Co-laborer in the Gospel Sadhu Sundar Singh of India.* 2 vols., Kalimpong: Tibet Mirror Press. However, there seems to have been an earlier biography referred to in Dawa Norbu’s obituary: Tharchin passes away.

description we have comes from the Japanese Hisao Kimura. When Kimura arrived in autumn 1945 in Kalimpong, looking for work, he was told by a Mongolian artist living there that he should approach Tharchin Babu for help first:

“Who is he?” “A very strange man. But a very good one. He owns the newspaper here. It’s the only Tibetan newspaper there is, and it goes from here to Lhasa and Sikkim.... everywhere there are Tibetans to read it.”

“What is so strange about him?”

“His religion. He is Tibetan... well no, Kinauri, but that’s almost the same. They call him Kunu Tharchin because he’s from somewhere called Kunu on the other side of Nepal. But he has the same religion as the English. Can you imagine that? A Tibetan but not a Buddhist. But he’s open-minded, not like the missionaries. He often uses his printing press to print maps and guides of the holy places of India for pilgrims. Everyone who comes through meets him, and some learned scholars and high lamas stay with him every year.” . . .

In spite of his religious beliefs I was to learn that he was committed to the welfare and independence of Tibet, and though I did not know it at the time, he had extensive contacts with the secret world of British intelligence—with which he willingly cooperated as long as it was for the benefit of Tibet.⁷

Tibetan Review 11(1976), 13, which states: “His official biography was completed by his close friend, James Deshpande. Two-thirds of the biography has already been printed.” However, unfortunately I was unable to find any trace of this.

⁷ Hisao Kimura 1990. *Japanese Agent in Tibet: My Ten Years of Disguise*. London: Serindia Publications, 135–36.

Form and Appearance

The format of the monthly newspaper in modern journalistic style varied from roughly equivalent to A3 size to smaller A5 size weekly editions. Throughout its entire publication, the number of pages also depended on the financial resources and time available for each issue. After the introductory phase, Tharchin generally published four pages, increasing gradually to an average of eight pages. Despite paper shortages during and immediately after the war, some issues extended to 20 pages. The longest was probably the 30-page “Silver Jubilee Number” from December/January 1950/1951. As far as I was able to ascertain, Tharchin did not add the English title of *The Tibet Mirror* until relatively late, from 1948.⁸

From September 1954 to January 1955, Tharchin even attempted to publish weekly editions, *Gza' 'khor ri'i yul phyogs so so'i gsar 'gyur me long*, with the additional English title *The Weekly Tibet Mirror*.⁹ He explained that he had been asked by many to publish it weekly.¹⁰ However, this may have been too ambitious, since the next issue after that did not appear until October 1955. Despite repeated bouts of illness, Tharchin continued to publish the *Melong* until November 1963.¹¹ Still in 1964, he tried to publish it again, however, his good intentions finally proved insufficient.¹²

⁸ *Melong* XIX, 1,2 from December 1950–January 1951. At the very beginning the additional English title was *The Tibetan Newspaper*, then from at least issue I, 3 onward *The Tibetan Monthly Newspaper*. This then changed for about twenty years, from III, 2(1928) at the latest until February 1948, when the paper carried no additional English title. From XVI, 5, March 1948 onward Tharchin added in Latin letters: *Yulchog Sosoi Sargyur Melong (The Tibetan Newspaper)*.

⁹ *Melong* XXII, 5–XXIII, 2.

¹⁰ Tharchin to Richardson on August 23, 1954, Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 41, fol. 203v.

¹¹ The last-known *Melong* issue was XXVIII, 8, November 1963.

¹² Tharchin to Richardson (correspondence in English) on August 3, 1964: “Since

Often the date on the title page does not coincide with the actual date of publication. Occasionally, different dates appear on different pages of a single issue¹³ or the news items printed in the paper show later dates than the date of the issue.

Tharchin reported on the gradual progress of technology and the various types of printing presses used for publication in the “Silver Jubilee Number” of 1951. Including a facsimile of the front page of the first issue, he explained that it “was first printed with an old Roneo duplicator in October 1925, the duplicator was so kindly presented by the late Reverend Dr. J.A. Graham C.I.E.,¹⁴ whose kindness is always remembered.” Further facsimiles showed the front page of the newspaper after the next improvement, “printed with an old lithographic hand press in September 1928, which was also obtained through the kind favour of the late Rev. Dr. J.A. Graham C.I.E.,” and the “front page of the first copy of the Tibetan newspaper printed on a treadle machine with hand setting types, which was obtained and installed on 22nd March 1948.”¹⁵

last December I could not bring out my newspaper due to bad health as well as lack of funds. Besides now there are several papers are [sic] published in Tibetan. But I got many enquiries and asked to continue it, as they like my paper better than others. I am trying to bring it out again.” Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 41, fol. 226v.

¹³ Particularly striking is *Melong* X, 12, where the date printed on the title page is November 11, 1939, and on the inside pages February 9, 1940.

¹⁴ For a brief biographical sketch on Graham, see Jamyang Norbu. Graham of Kalimpong. *Lungta* 11, 34–35. See also James R. Minto 1974. *Graham of Kalimpong*. Edinburgh: William Blackwood.

¹⁵ *Melong*, “The Silver Jubilee Number,” being the issue XIX, 1–2 from 1st December and 1st January 1950/51, unnumbered pages.

Specific Characteristics of the *Melong*

The special and innovative character of the newspaper is aptly described by Tsering Shakya:

There is no doubt Tharchin regarded the paper as his attempt to bring Tibet into the modern world as he saw it. The border regions and specific locations like Kalimpong in the foothills of the Himalayas were important contact zones between colonial modernity as experienced in India and in Tibet . . .

Tharchin had acutely recognised the importance of location: Kalimpong was the centre of Indo-Tibetan trade, and pilgrims, merchants and prominent exiled Tibetan aristocrats frequented the hill town. This fact alone ensured the success of the paper, and travellers returning to their homeland would often take copies back with them....

Kalimpong as the hub of Indo-Tibetan trade is reflected in the content of the paper . . .

The attempt to produce a newspaper for Tibetan readers, circumventing traditional textual standards, required a community receptive to new ideas and a producer who could command an audience. The problem for the missionaries was that they could not penetrate the conservatism and suspicion of the locals. Walter Asboe's *kye lang ag-bar* and August Hermann Francke's *la dvag kyi pho nya* suffered from the parochialism of their construction and the very title of the papers lacked the pan-Tibetan dimension, tending to appeal to the educated literate class which consisted mainly of the religious community. In the construction of *The Tibet Mirror* there was an attempt to appeal to the pan-Tibetan region. The use in the title of "me

long” (mirror) is in itself a very clever device, the word “mirror” being of enormous significance in Buddhist culture as an object associated with ritual offering.

The mirror is also associated with magical properties and is used in divinations . . . Therefore, Tharchin’s choice of name for the paper reflected the indigenous mindset and avoided the geographical limits implied by the titles of the earlier newspapers.

The Tibet Mirror was influential in the formation of new thinking among the Tibetans. The very creation of the paper subverted the prescribed notions of text. By this I do not mean the paper’s Christian origin or the editor’s religious affiliations. What is interesting is the appearance for the first time of text that attempted to provide a new source of information and challenged existing attitudes towards the printed word... On the second page, Tharchin regularly reported stories from different Tibetan areas such as Bhutan and Ladakh, as well as news he received from traders and pilgrims from eastern Tibet: his paper thereby became the reflection of a notion of the geographical spread of the Tibetan speaking population beyond the immediate political area administered by Lhasa.¹⁶

History of the *Melong*

When Tharchin recalled the history of the newspaper around 1946, he had this to say about it [writing in the third person about himself]:

After about a year’s time, he received a letter from the late Dalai Lama saying that he was getting the the paper and

¹⁶ Tsering Shakya 2004, 18–23.

was very glad and added to continue it and send more news, which would be very useful to him (D.L.) The letter was accompanied by a sum of Rs. 20/- as a present.... This encouraged him to carry on with the work. (cf. Figure 11)

And in a personal interview the thirteenth Dalai Lama on December 5, 1927, the Dalai Lama promised to help him in future.

The paper was started with fourteen paid subscribers at the inception which now gradually began to swell to 50. He used to send about 100 copies for free distribution among the Tibetan officials.¹⁷

However, the subscribers didn't send their payments properly. Therefore, he had to send copies mostly for free and thus, due to a lack of funds, couldn't publish his newspaper as regularly as he would have wished.¹⁸

The paper's readership was probably much larger than its modest circulation, since each issue was read by several people. Some copies seem to have reached the West at an early stage. Johannes Schubert for example, the Tibetologist in Leipzig, appears to have had a subscription to the *Melong* by 1935 at the latest,¹⁹ since he mentions the paper approvingly in

¹⁷ Dorje Tharchin ca. 1946–1947. Brief history of the Tibetan newspaper (in English). Dorje Tharchin Papers, Columbia University. Copy courtesy of Paul Hackett. See also Dawa Norbu 1975. G. Tharchin: pioneer and patriot. An interview with Tharchin Babu. *Tibetan Review* 10(December), 18.

¹⁸ Fader 2004, 283.

¹⁹ Johannes Schubert on October 3, 1950 in a letter to Joseph Francis Rock, then in Kalimpong. Information thanks to Manfred Taube.

an article in *Artibus Asiae* and describes the contents of the latest issue including the picture on the title page.²⁰

And even the fourteenth Dalai Lama wrote:

My tutors read of the progress of the Second World War, which had started in the year I was taken to Lhasa, in a Tibetan newspaper which was published in Kalimpong in India, and they told me about it. Before the end of the war, I was reading it myself. But few world events affected us in Lhasa.²¹

What Subjects Were Reported?

Almost every country or continent was included in the paper's reports, except Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Comparisons, as far as possible, of the international political news in the *Melong*, which specified places (e.g. London, Delhi, Washington or Chunking) and dates of origin

²⁰ Johannes Schubert 1935. *Tibetische Literatur in modernem Gewande*. (Mit einem Exkurs über tibetische Zeitungen). *Artibus Asiae* 5(1), 95–98. He refers to *Melong* VII,12, September 9, 1934. Even as early in 1926 the first issue was exhibited by Johan van Manen 1926. *Tibetan newspapers. Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, N.S. 22, XXXII–XXXIII.

²¹ Tenzin Gyatso (Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, fourteenth Dalai Lama) 1962. *My Land and My People: The Autobiography of His Holiness The Dalai Lama*. David Howarth (ed.) London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 50. See also, the Dalai Lama in Thomas Laird 2006. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*. London: Atlantis Books, 290: "There was a Tibetan paper published in Kalimpong and this was the only Tibetan source of news in Tibetan. Through this monthly newspaper *Sargyur Melong* (Tibetan Mirror), I saw some pictures, and I was very eager to read it." And in a letter from Tharchin to Hugh Richardson on November, 14, 1963, Tharchin quotes from a letter of the fourteenth Dalai Lama to him: "I read your paper from my childhood and I like it to read very much." Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 41, fol. 224v.

with the corresponding editions of the Calcutta *Statesman* and London *Times* show that a number of news items were indeed largely similar to those in the London *Times* and thus reflected the English point of view and Allied politics.²² However, the brief news reports maintained a relatively neutral position. The negative attitude towards the Axis Powers was principally expressed in the paper's cartoons and caricatures.

Widely read and well-informed, Tharchin adopted a perspicacious and concerned editorial stance, repeatedly attempting to warn his readers of the imminent war (*rang skyobs sa rang srung*).²³ (Figure 1)

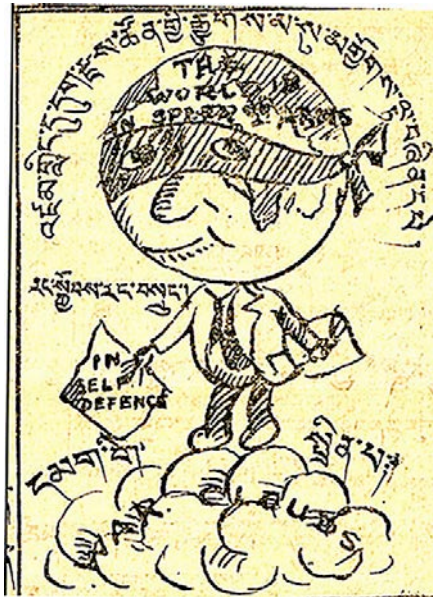


Figure 1 War clouds: in self-defence

²² For example: *Melong* XI, 7, February 5, 1943, 4: From Washington, January 7, 1943 on Roosevelt = *The Times*, January 8, 1943, 4; same page: from London, January 10, 1943, on Rostow = *The Times* January 11, 1943, 4; XI, 9, March–April 1943, 3 from Dehli, March 3, on Burma = *The Times* March 8, 1943; page 10 from London, March 26, 1943 on Japan = *The Times*, March 27, 1943, 3.

²³ *Melong* X, 4, December 22, 1938–January 21, 1939, 5; See also X, 8, June 18, 1939, front page; and later, XII, 9, April 1944, front page.

Shortly before war broke out, he wrote an editorial urgently warning his readers of the impending Apocalypse (*'jig rten gyi mtha' ma'i lhas*), and quoting the *New Testament*.²⁴

The *Melong* contained information on all the scenes of battle in North Africa, the Soviet Union and the bombing campaigns in England and Germany;²⁵ as events progressed, it began to focus on the war against Burma, which represented a direct threat to India, and on the war in the Pacific.

Western Travellers and Scholars

In addition to news of world politics—and repeated reports of the British officials who had dealings with Tibet²⁶—Tharchin even reported on foreign travellers, explorers and scholars who visited Tibet and came through Kalimpong, for example Prince Peter of Greece, Giuseppe Tucci, Ernst Schäfer, A.T. Steele, Johan van Manen, and Marco Pallis.²⁷

²⁴ *Melong* X, 10, July 17, 1939, front page: Matthew 24, 3–14 and 2 Timothy, 3, 1–5.

²⁵ It was somewhat touching to find reported even in this rather small Tibetan newspaper exactly those air raids on Berlin that destroyed the present author's family home. *Melong* XI, 7, February 5, 1943, 3.

²⁶ For example: Richardson. *Melong* IX, 4, August 7, 1937, 4; XII, 4, November–December 1944, 2; XII, 6, January, 1944, 4; XIV, 3, December 1945, 2; Gould and Richardson: X, 5–6, February–March 1946, 3; Hopkinson. XIII, 4, December–January 1944–1945, 2; XIV, 5–6, February–March 1946, 9.

²⁷ For example: Prince Peter of Greece. *Melong* X, 4, December, 24, 1938, 4; Giuseppe Tucci. X, 7, April 20–May 20, 1939, 7; Ernst Schäfer. X, 8, June 1939, 3; X, 7, April 20–May 20, 1939, 7; Theos Bernard. IX, 7–8, January 2, 1938, 12; A.T. (Archibald Trajan) Steele. XIII, 8, April 1945, 2; Johan van Manen. XI, 9, April 4, 1943, 6; Marco Pallis. XV, 9, July 1, 1947, 2.

Heinrich Harrer, for example, very gratefully acknowledges in his diary of March 3, 1946 the timely and supportive article in the *Melong* about him and Peter Aufschnaiter:

Today the new issue of the Tibetan newspaper arrived, which says that we arrived as beggars in Lhasa and are staying with von Thangmey [*Dgra 'dul Tshe ring Thang smad*]. Also that we have come from Kyirong while some friends of ours have gone to Nepal, that we have run away and do not want to return to Germany because the country is at war, and that we ask the Tibetans to permit us to stay because the country is so hospitable and holy.—This article is excellent for us, because there is nothing negative in it; quite the contrary, it is written in an even more imploring tone than we ourselves used when presenting our request to the Tibetan government.²⁸

Himalayan Expeditions

It is surprising that Tharchin repeatedly carried reports of foreign expeditions to the Himalayas, since the Tibetans evidently had no particular interest in the subject, as the words of the fourteenth Dalai Lama show:

I have sometimes been asked if we followed the attempts of the British to climb Mount Everest with interest. I cannot say we did. Most Tibetans have to climb too many mountain passes to have any wish to climb higher than they must; and the people of Lhasa, who sometimes climbed for pleasure, chose hills of reasonable size, and, when they

²⁸ *Melong* XIV, 4, January 1946. This issue couldn't be found yet.

came to the top, burned incense, said prayers, and had picnics.²⁹

And the Japanese Tokan Tada, who lived in Lhasa during this period, even writes:

Prior to this, around 1916 [?], the British Mountain Climbers Association planned to scale Mt. Everest, and applied for permission to the Tibetan government. Naturally, neither the Dalai Lama nor his ministers could understand the reason why these foreigners wanted to climb the mountain. It was interesting to note they did not even realize that Mt. Everest was within Tibetan territory.³⁰

Nonetheless, the *Melong* frequently contained reports of the international expeditions to Mount Everest,³¹ Nang sga phar sbath,³² Jo mo lha ri,³³ and Gangs chen mdzod lnga.³⁴ In the context of the Everest expeditions, Tharchin's primary concern seems to have been with the problem of names for Mount Everest, which Tharchin calls *gangs mthon mthing rgyal mo*,

²⁹ Dalai Lama 1962, 50.

³⁰ Tokan Tada 1965. *The Thirteenth Dalai Lama*. Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 72.

³¹ For example: *Melong* VII, 1, January 26, 1933, 6; VIII, 5, July 19, 1936, 8; IX, 9, March 3, 1938.

³² There is even a whole page on the 1937 tragedy of the German expedition at Nang sga phar sbath, emphasising the losses of the Sherpas, in *Melong* IX, 3, July 7, 1937, 3.

³³ Ascent of Jo mo lha ri by Spencer Chapman in *Melong* IX, 2, June 6, 1937, 2.

³⁴ On the German mountaineer Paul Bauer's expeditions to Gangs chen mdzod lnga, *Melong* VI, 2, July, 16, 1931, 4; VI, 3, Aug 13, 4; VI, 4, November 10, 1931, 6; IX, 9, March 3, 1938, 2.

‘The Snowy Azure Queen’.³⁵ Yet much later, in 1954, the repeated obvious misspellings of Gangs chen mdzod lnga would move him to actually make a handwritten correction in English.³⁶

Tharchin attempted at all levels to supply his readers with information above and beyond that concerning approaching events, and constantly strove to provide background information and explanations of interconnections. In addition to the reports mentioned elsewhere,³⁷ he also included a broad range of news content, such as: 1) front page with large photo of New York;³⁸ 2) the occasional obituary column (*sko ba’i gnas tshul*), including the death of Pius XI on February 10, 1939;³⁹ 3) the eruption of Vesuvius (*me ri*) in Italy, with an informative drawing and explanation.⁴⁰

³⁵ On Tharchin's discussion of the various names of Mount Everest, e.g. *Melong* VII, 3 March 27, 1933, 5; VII, 4, April 26, 1933, 3; VII, 6, June 24, 1933, 3; See also Bhuchung K. Tsering 1985. Mi Ti Gu Ti Cha Pu Long Na. *Tibetan Bulletin* (October–November), 20. The most detailed discussion is in Johannes Schubert 1956. Mount Everest—Das Namensproblem. In Helga Steininger and Ulrich Unger (eds) *Sino-Japonica*. Festschrift André Wedemeyer. Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 148–69.

³⁶ *Melong* XXII, 12, November 24, 1954, 10.

³⁷ Jamyang Norbu. “Newspeak and new Tibet: The myth of China's modernization of Tibet and the Tibetan language,” www.tibet.ca/en/newsroom/wtn/3183 Jamyang Norbu, “Newspeak and New Tibet: The Myth of China’s Modernization of Tibet and the Tibetan Language,” www.tibet.ca/en/newsroom/wtn/3183 (accessed June 20, 2011); Jamyang Norbu. ‘NEUSPRECH’ und das Neue Tibet: Der Mythos von der Modernisierung Tibets und der tibetischen Sprache durch China. *Tibet-Forum*, 2005, 66–96; René von Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956. *Where the Gods are Mountains: Three Years Among the People of the Himalayas*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 73–75.

³⁸ *Melong* XI, 5 December 12, 1942, front page.

³⁹ *Melong* X, 5, February 20, 1939, 7.

⁴⁰ *Melong* XII, 8, March 1944, 9.

Maps, Maps

To make the articles more vivid Tharchin often illustrated them with maps, photos, drawings, and cartoons. His priority was to attempt to increase the Tibetans' knowledge of world geography by providing detailed and global maps. Tharchin believed in the necessity and importance of enhancing his fellow Tibetans' understanding of the world and extending their geographical knowledge, not only by means of illustrations and photos but also with maps. He put an incredible amount of effort into creating painstaking maps crammed with information on countries and places, which ranged from large-scale world maps and overviews giving a general impression of the world to detailed maps of specific countries and regions (Figure 2).⁴¹ By transcribing geographical names into Tibetan, he certainly also played a role in standardizing foreign names in the Tibetan language, even though he himself was not always consistent in his transliterations over the years.

⁴¹ For example, *Melong* XII, 1, August 2, 1943, 8.

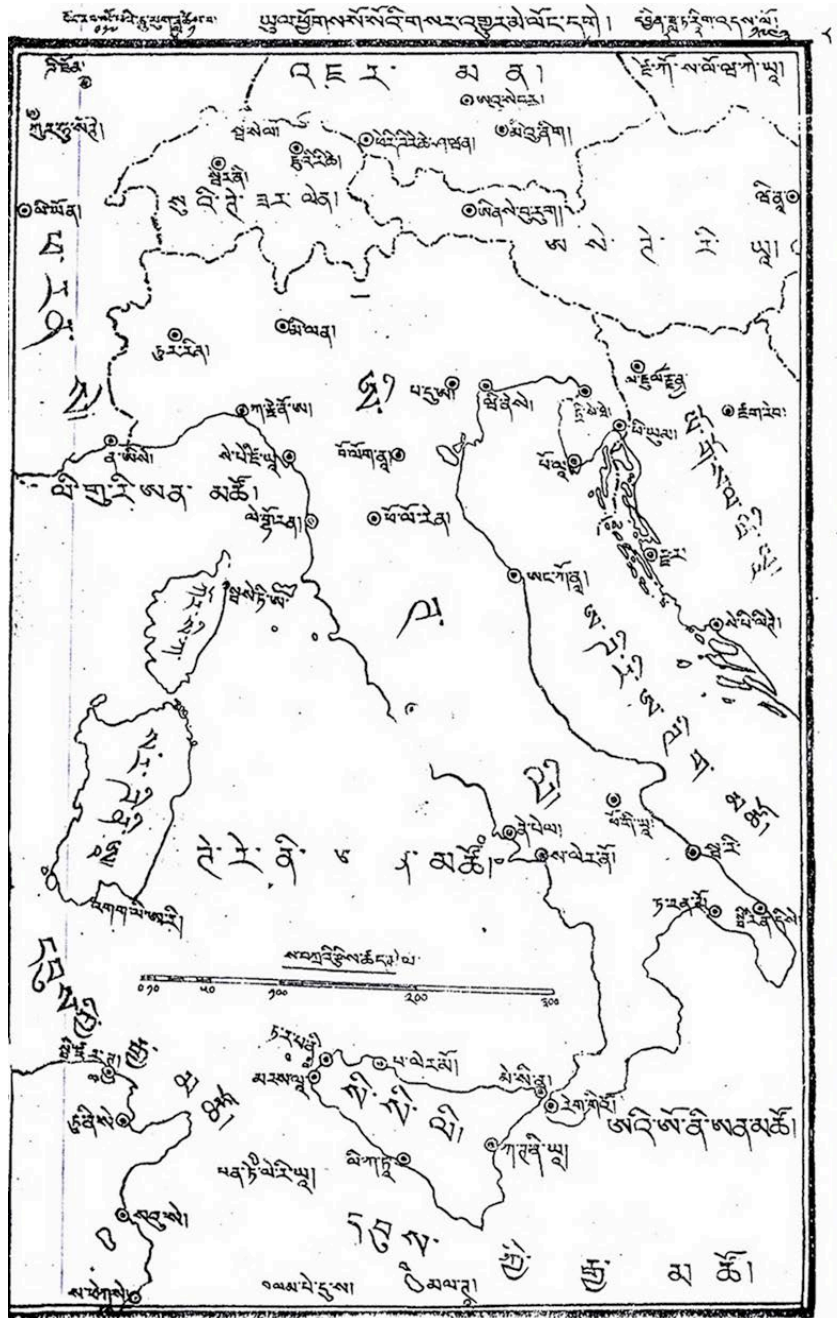


Figure 2 Map of Italy

However, the spherical depiction of the earth by Dge 'dun chos 'phel, the 'most notable contributor to the *Melong*,' in his famous essay "The World is Round or Spherical"⁴² in the *Melong* of June 1938,⁴³ (Figure 4) appears not to have been Dge 'dun chos 'phel's original idea; either he or Tharchin borrowed copiously from Flora Beal Shelton's astonishing book from 1922, '*Dzam gling rgyas bshad zhes bya zhugs so. Geography: Containing a Few Facts about Nature and the World for Tibetans*,'⁴⁴ (Figure 3). Although it seems to have remained relatively unknown in central Tibet, this highly informative geography of the world in Tibetan contains many maps, photos, drawings and lists of geographical names in both English and Tibetan. Only the occasionally strange Tibetan transcriptions of Western geographical names were not adopted by Tharchin from Shelton as he evidently transcribed the names on his map largely independently.⁴⁵

⁴² On this essay and its translation see: Donald S. Lopez Jr. 2006. *The Madman's Middle Way: Reflections on Reality of the Tibetan Monk Gendun Chopel*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 15–17. [Editor's note: On the existence of a globe at Bla brang Monastery, which may have influenced Dge 'dun chos 'phel early on, see Lobsang Yongdan's essay above in this collection of essays.]

⁴³ *Melong* X, 1, June 28, 1938, 11.

⁴⁴ Shelton, A.L. [i.e. Flora Beal] 1922. '*Dzam gling rgyas bshad zhes bya zhugs so. Geography: Containing a Few Facts About Nature and the World for Tibetans*, with translations and interpretation by Gezong Ongdö [Skal bzang dbang 'dus] of Batang and maps and illustrations nearly all drawn by Gezong [Skal bzang] Tsering, Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 31–32. Although it was Flora Beal who published the book, the name given is not hers but the initials of her missionary husband Albert L. Thus the correct name of the author would be: Mrs. A.L. Shelton. Cf. also on this book the note of Jamyang Norbu 1998. Missionary books for Tibetan children. *Lungta* 11, 24.

⁴⁵ However, it is a bit strange that even Tibetan geographical terms are frequently misspelt; cf. e.g. Shelton 1922, 114.

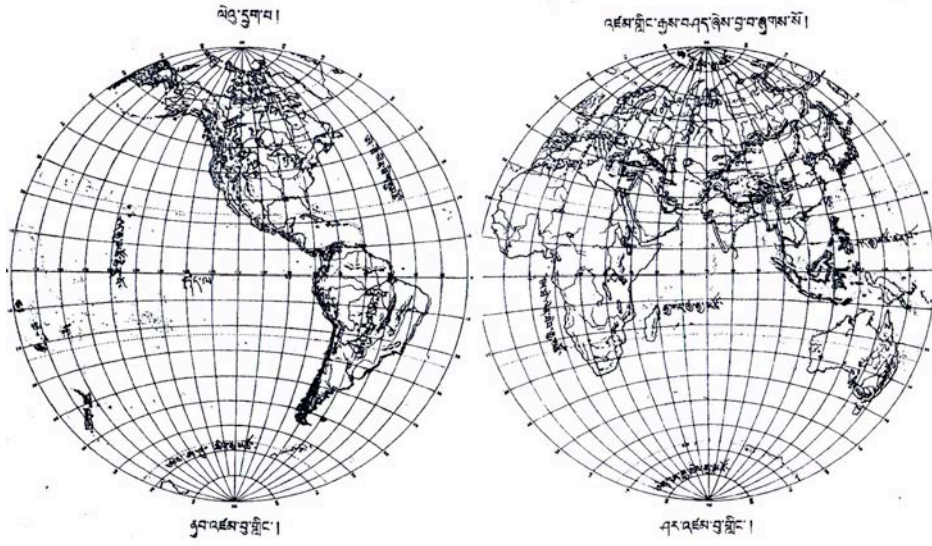


Figure 3 Shelton, World Map, 1922

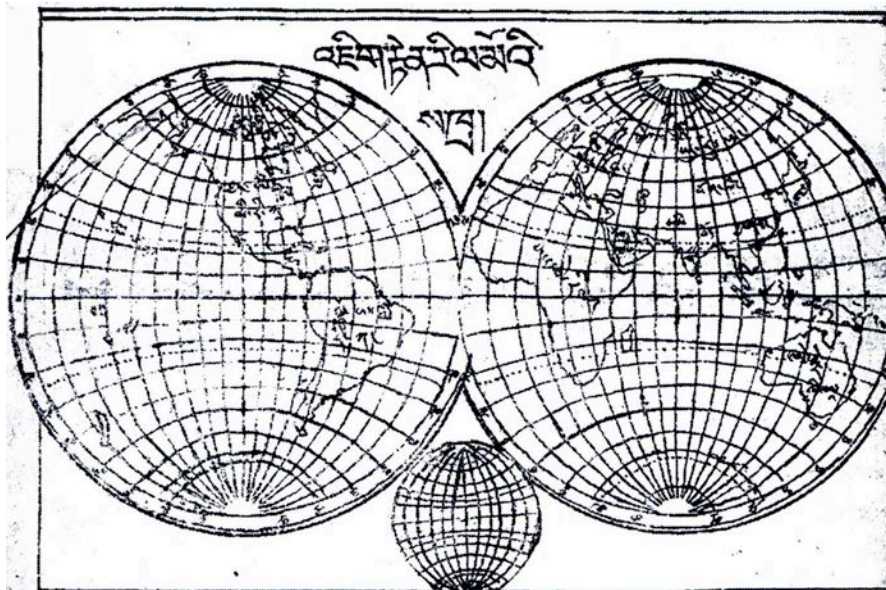


Figure 4 Dge 'dun chos 'phel, A map of the round world, 1938

In addition to the common geographical maps, during the war years a number of strategic general maps and minutely detailed maps appeared at frequent intervals to explain the progress of the war. These were often taken by Tharchin from English-speaking papers, principally the *Calcutta Statesman* and the *London Times*. However, some original world maps, including some strategic maps, for which I could not find originals in other publications, may actually have been Tharchin's own work. After the war, a world map was published depicting Buddha and Christ sitting next to each other as equals, with a brief description of the festivals of Easter and Vesak,⁴⁶ and on the occasion of the 2500th birthday of Buddha, the *Melong* included a world map of the spread of Buddhism.⁴⁷

Illustrations

Tharchin took endless care to make his newspaper as visually appealing as possible, developing new ideas and adding numerous drawings, photographs and cartoons from all areas of life. This was also a distinction between the *Melong* and the English publications I drew on for purposes of comparison, the *London Times* and the *Calcutta Statesman*. Not one of the editions I examined contained anything comparable with respect to the many illustrations.

But Tharchin appeared to have found occasionally a cheap way of simply borrowing illustrations by having artists make sketches from original photographs, e.g. a picture of Chiang Kai shek⁴⁸ and Chamberlain⁴⁹ from the Indian *Statesman*, and one of the Chinese Emperor. Thus the somewhat supercilious criticism in the *North-China Herald* is unjustified:

⁴⁶ *Melong* XVIII, 8, July 1, 1950, 7.

⁴⁷ *Melong* XXIII, 9, May 1956, 9.

⁴⁸ *Melong* IX, 10, April 15, 1938, 9.

⁴⁹ *Melong* X, 5, February 20, 1939, 3.

A Tibetan artist may be all right when he is drawing the sun, moon and stars, but he is all wrong when he tries to reproduce the face and figure of the British Prime Minister. True, the proverbial umbrella is not there, but Neville Chamberlain's face from the artist's point of view gives one the impression that it might rain at any moment. The Prime Minister looks tired and weary and the burdens of state sit very heavily upon him.⁵⁰

Tharchin evidently also adopted some photographs from the *Illustrated London News* as artwork for copying, including those of an Everest expedition⁵¹ and the insignia of the coronation of George VI and Queen Elizabeth.⁵²

During the war, the number of photographs increased considerably, presenting a comprehensive pictorial report of global events. Many issues of the *Melong* published between 1943 and 1945 largely give the impression of being illustrated war reports. It is possible that Tharchin overestimated his readers by providing detailed reports of far-distant, unfamiliar battle locations, particularly as the war seemed to the Tibetans to be so far away and to have so little effect on their lives.

⁵⁰ "News for the Lama" by an anonymous "Tibetan" author originally in the *North-China Herald*, Shanghai and reprinted in *The Living Age*, December 1939, 378.

⁵¹ For example: *Melong* VII,3, March 27, 1933, 5 from the *Illustrated London News* of April 4, 1933, 482 (the given dates are correct, cf. the remark on the printed dates above).

⁵² *Melong* IX, 2 June 6, 1937, 5 from *Illustrated London News*, May 5, 1937, 792 and 795.

From the outset, Tharchin appears to have been attracted by aircraft.⁵³ During the war years, a number of different types of aircraft were pictured in action.⁵⁴ Even the national identification marks of the aircraft were shown.⁵⁵ The functioning of parachutes was also demonstrated in photographs, some quite dramatically.⁵⁶ Pictures of ships, cruisers and destroyers were also included.⁵⁷ In some cases, these photos resemble those from the London *Times*, although even during the war years the *Times* published only a fraction of the number of photos, which appeared in the *Melong*. Several different weapon types were also presented. For Tharchin, the numerous impressive photos were still not sufficient, so that

⁵³ For example: *Melong* VI, 2, July 16, 1931, 8; IX, 9, March 3, 1938, 7; a zeppelin: V, 12, May 19, 1931, 3; later the disastrous fire of the German airship 'Hindenburg' over Lakehurst Airport, near New York, May 6, 1937, in *Melong* IX, 2, June 9, 1937, 7.

⁵⁴ A fighter plane in a nose-dive: *Melong* XI, 7, Feb 5, 1943, 8; US bombers in bombing raid, 9; aircraft carrier with aircraft, 10; Blenheim bombers: XII, 4, November 1943, 8; British bombers heading for Germany: XII, 6, January 1944, 6; British bomber: XII, 9, April 1944, 6; bomb production, 7; British Stirling bomber: XI, 4, November 11, 1942, 6; British bomber, called Hurricane (*ha ri kan*): XI, 5, December 12, 1942, 5, and aircraft manufacture, 6; assembling of the first Bristol Beaufort bomber: XI, 11, June 3, 1943, 8–9; convoy in front of US aircraft: XII, 2, September 1942, 7; a helicopter (Tib. *he li kob Tar*: XIII, 9, May 1945, 4.

⁵⁵ *Melong* XII, 11, June-July 1944, 3.

⁵⁶ Photos and functioning of parachutes, e.g. *Melong* XII, 3, October 1943, 8; parashu Te: XI, 5, Dec 8, 1942, 7; large-scale photo of parachute from below: XI, 10, May 5, 1943, 10.

⁵⁷ For example: *Melong* XI, 8, March 7, 1943, 5 and 8; XI, 10, May 5, 1943, 8; XI, 11, June 3, 1943, 10.

occasionally highly detailed drawings of aircraft (Figure 5),⁵⁸ ships and other subjects were produced for inclusion.⁵⁹

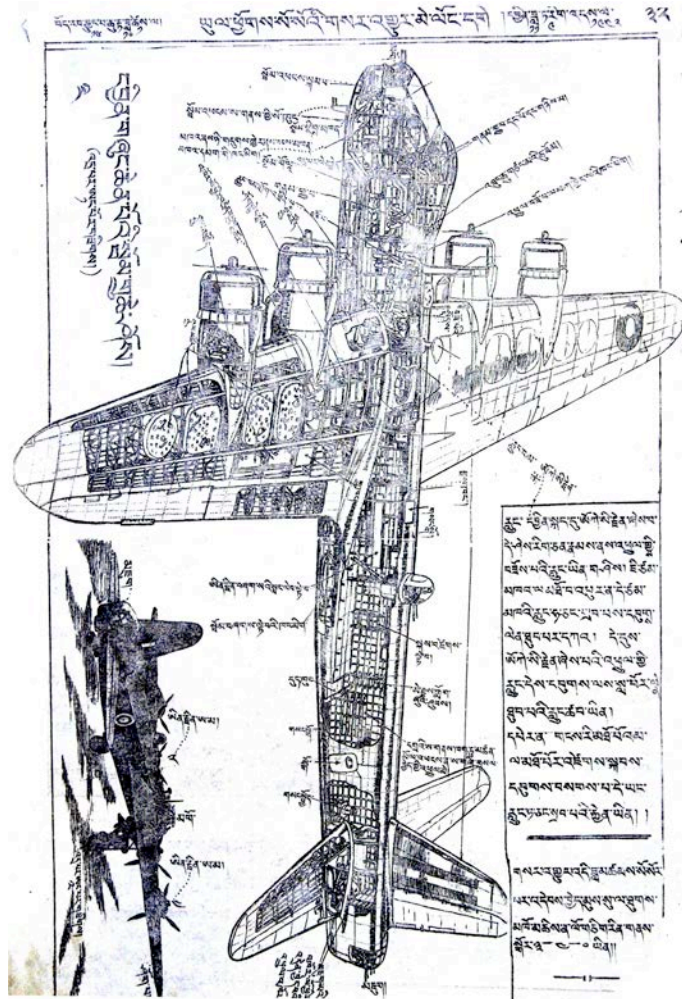


Figure 5 British bomber

⁵⁸ British bomber (*dbyin gzhung chen po'i sbom gru che shos*): *Melong XI*, 4 November 9, 1942, 8.

⁵⁹ For example: Submarine boat: *XI*, 5, December 8, 1942, 8.

Cartoons

In addition to photographs of many Tibetan and international politicians and occasional almost full-page portraits including Roosevelt,⁶⁰ Stalin⁶¹ and Churchill,⁶² there were also a number of critical cartoons, particularly featuring the alleged underhandedness of the Japanese and Hitler⁶³ (Figure 6).

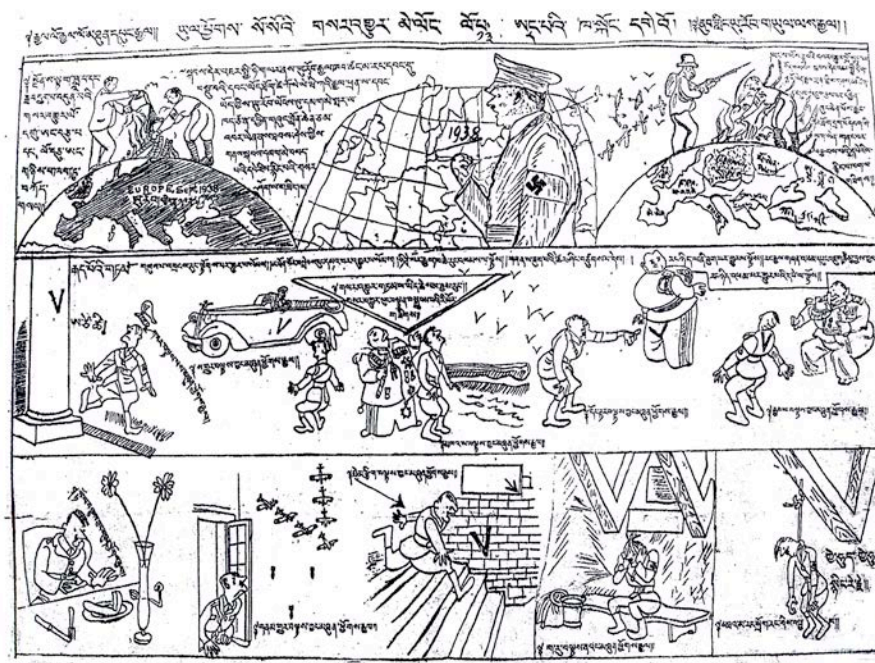


Figure 6 Hitler's rise and fall

⁶⁰ *Melong* XII, 3, October 1943, 7 (*Ro se wel*).

⁶¹ *Melong* XI, 8, March 7, 1943, 9 (*Se kra lin*).

⁶² *Melong* XI, 6, January 7, 1943, 9 (*Char cha hil*).

⁶³ *Melong*, XIII, 8, April 1945, 8–9. Already in *Melong* VIII, 7, July 9, 1936, 5 is the first drawing of Stalin and Hitler (same in X, 5, February 20, 1939, 4) on the occasion of the Olympic games in 1936. Further cartoons on Hitler are for example in IX, 10, April 15, 1938, 10; X, 2, July, 24, 1938, front page.

Despite extensive efforts I have as yet been unable to identify the artists responsible for the drawings and cartoons, although many are even signed with initials. No confirmation was found for the claim that the Belgian artist Hergé, creator of Tintin, produced some of the drawings. It is possible that Hsiao Kimura may have contributed some drawings for a brief period soon after his arrival in Kalimpong in 1945: “One day I drew a cartoon and a map about the Chinese civil war ... Tarchin was so pleased with the results that he ordered me to work in the office from then on.”⁶⁴ Although the issue of the *Melong* in which this was published has not yet been found, the two following issues actually contain two unsigned cartoons in a new, fresh style.⁶⁵

The Melong: A Christian newspaper?

How did Tharchin’s Christian beliefs affect the *Melong*, and were Christian missionary goals in evidence? As we have seen, Tharchin mentioned nothing of the kind when describing his goals for the paper in the first editorial. Apart from some initial critical statements, the Tibetans do not appear to have regarded the paper as purely Christian, to judge from sources including the many congratulatory letters by high lay and monk officials printed on the *Melong*’s 25th anniversary.⁶⁶ This view is confirmed by Tsering Shakya:

Although the paper was funded by the Church of Scotland and Tharchin himself might have argued for the utility of the paper for spreading the Gospel, in examining the content of the paper there is remarkably little attempt to carry a purely Christian message. Moreover, any

⁶⁴ Kimura 1990, 138. Paul Hackett kindly drew my attention to this passage.

⁶⁵ *Melong* XIV, 2, November 1945, 7 and XIV, 3, December 1945, 8.

⁶⁶ *Melong* XIX, 1–2, December 1950–January 1951, 9–19.

evangelical objective was completely overshadowed by the much greater significance of the paper as a new medium of cultural formation and construction of national identity. Tharchin's chief motive was to contribute to pan-Tibetan unity and the transformation of Tibet.⁶⁷

Similarly, Thubten Samphel writes: "Tharchin Babu was a Christian but, unlike *Ladakh News* [*La dvags kyi ag bar*],⁶⁸ there was no attempt to proselytise in the pages of *Tibet Mirror*."⁶⁹

The issues available to me show not only that Tharchin was extremely reticent in the *Melong* about any missionary intentions he might have had, but also that Tharchin seems to have had some difficulties with his missionary employers at the Church of Scotland because the *Melong* was possibly not Christian enough. The trigger for these difficulties was probably an article published during Tharchin's absence in Tibet with the American author Henrietta Sands Merrick,⁷⁰ who had insisted so obstinately on taking Tharchin to Gyantse as her interpreter that he ultimately had no choice but to accompany her.⁷¹ The front-page editorial draws some parallels between Buddhism and Christianity, quoting from the Sermon on the Mount and the Letter to the Romans and recounting a Buddhist parable, which however, an unsuspecting reader confused with a Biblical parable. The article created considerable problems for Tharchin on his return, and

⁶⁷ Tsering Shakya 2004, 22.

⁶⁸ On the *La dvags kyi ag bar*, cf. Hartmut Walravens 2001. The first Tibetan serials. *The Serials Librarian* 41(2), 29–38; John Bray 1988. A.H. Francke's *La dvags kyi akhbar*. The first Tibetan newspaper. *The Tibet Journal* 13(3), 58–63.

⁶⁹ See for example Thubten Samphel 2004. Virtual Tibet: the media. *Tibetan Bulletin Online* 8(5) [September–October], www.tibetwrites.org/?Virtual-Tibet-The-Media (accessed June 20, 2011).

⁷⁰ Henrietta Sands Merrick 1933. *Spoken in Tibet*. New York: Putman.

⁷¹ Cf. *Melong* VI, 2, July 16, 1931, 2.

he was forced to leave the mission for a year.⁷² The reason for this was that Dr. Graham, who was well-disposed towards Tharchin, had returned to Scotland for some time and his place had been taken by the Australian missionary Dr. Knox, who evidently regarded Tharchin's activities with deep suspicion and with whom Tharchin was unable to work—as he claims with unusual candour, again referring to himself in the third person:

A new missionary named Dr. Knox came from Australia and took charge of the missionary work from Dr. Graham in 1928. The editor had to work with him and between these two workers there were lots of misunderstandings as of a result of which, the editor had to resign his post in 1931. Then the question as to the honour of the press was [sic] cropped up, each one claiming it to be its rightful owner. Unfortunately the Rt. Rev. Dr. Graham was in Scotland as the moderator. The mission finally established its claim on the press. Then the editor had to arrange with the Mani press for the publication of the newspaper. The manager was kind enough to allow him to print the paper on his small litho hand-press. There he had to continue for about a year.⁷³

However, it is strange that the article which so offended Knox and the other missionaries appeared in one of the two issues for which Knox himself held responsibility as editor during Tharchin's absence. Tharchin expressed cautious, reserved criticism upon his return, but did not apologize for the article.⁷⁴

⁷² Cf. Fader 2004, 346–48.

⁷³ Tharchin. “Brief history of the Tibetan newspaper,” fol. 1.

⁷⁴ *Melong* VI, 2, July 16, 1931, 2.

During my examination of further issues of the *Melong*, however, I came across a whole series of page-long articles on Christian themes from the year 1937—all on the front page with one exception.⁷⁵ They are solely composed of lengthy direct quotations from the *New Testament*,⁷⁶ predominantly a number of verses from the Sermon on the Mount, without any title, introduction or details of source. This approach does not appear to fit in with Tharchin and all the other issues of the *Melong*. If Tharchin included an occasional quotation from the Bible, he either specified the source or set the quotation in quotation marks, or gave a title clearly specifying that the article was of a Christian nature. Only when I checked the small print of the masthead, printed in Tibetan, did I notice that the editor of these issues was not Tharchin, but again Dr. Knox, who was acting as Tharchin's deputy (*ngo tshab*) during the latter's absence from June to November 1937, which he spent with Theos Bernard in Lha sa. Did Knox attempt to exploit Tharchin's absence to transform the *Melong* into a more Christian paper? The very first issue after Tharchin's return, when he resumed office as editor, has a completely different tone.

Tharchin probably had to exert rather tactical caution, manoeuvring between the missionaries of the Church of Scotland, whose goodwill he needed in order to print the *Melong*, and his own intention to inform the Tibetans of world affairs. Ultimately, he wanted—and indeed needed to—sell his paper. In order to communicate Christian content to his readers, Tharchin often included good wishes for festive occasions such as

⁷⁵ Front pages of *Melong* IX, 3, July 9, 1937; IX, 4, August 7, 1937 (here p. 2); IX, 5, September 5, 1937; IX, 6, October 10, 1937.

⁷⁶ All direct quotations from the *New Testament* were taken from the Tibetan translation of the edition known as Ghoom/ Shanghai, the version edited by August Wilhelm Heyde of the translation by Heinrich August Jäschke 1933. *Dam pa gsung rab ces bya ba bzugs so/ zhal chad gsar ba'i mdo rnams ni*. Shanghai: British and Foreign Bible Society. On Tibetan translations of the Bible, see John Bray 1991. Language, tradition and the Tibetan Bible. *The Tibet Journal* 16, 28–58.

An original idea aimed at awakening interest in Christianity was the occasional inclusion of simple Christian puzzles with four or five parts designed to encourage the reader to seek the solution and explanation in the next issue. They fascinated even the young fourteenth Dalai Lama.⁷⁹

In the war issues, I found no more Christian articles apart from the obligatory Christmas and New Year greetings, probably because priority was given to the flood of urgent war news and information. It is possible that for this reason Tharchin failed to meet the expectations of the new missionary Mills, so that 1946 saw a clash between Tharchin and Mills, as Tharchin's account intimates.

In May 1946 the missionary in charge named Mr. Mills told the editor to stop printing of the newspaper and work for the mission and told [sic] the mission is not going to print in future the paper in their press so the editor had to resign from the mission work. Fortunately by that time he had a small litho hand press which he bought from Darjeeling Time Press in broken condition in 1933. He repaired it into use till last month.⁸⁰

This appears to have resulted in the birth of the "Tibet Mirror Press". for from this point onward the masthead bore the legend, "EDITED, PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY THARCHIN AT THE TIBET MIRROR PRESS, KALIMPONG."

Despite my research, I was unable to find confirmation of the claim by the German-Canadian missionary Margarete Urban, who visited

⁷⁹ For example: *Melong* IX, 3, July 9, 8; solution: IX, 4, August 7, 1937, 8; IX, 12, May 30, 1938, 4; solution: X, 2, September 24, 1938, 8. Cf. also the remark of the fourteenth Dalai Lama on this, "My childish enthusiasm for the puzzle pages . . . , " quoted in Fader 2002, IX.

⁸⁰ Tharchin. "Brief history of the Tibetan newspaper," fol. 3.

Tharchin in 1964, for Tharchin's alleged statement: "In addition to culture and politics, I always devoted a page to Christian issues,"⁸¹ nor for the claim that Tharchin's "primary objective in publishing the newspaper was indeed evangelistic."⁸²

In fact, on examination of the papers one is struck by the numerous front-page portrayals of Buddhist subjects, themes and editorials, the many pictures of the thirteenth and fourteenth Dalai Lamas, the Panchen Lama and other high-ranking Buddhist personalities and the pictures of Buddhist monasteries.⁸³ Sometimes the front pages are also framed by painstaking drawings of the eight auspicious symbols⁸⁴ or the 'seven royal ornaments' (*rgyal srid spa bdun*).⁸⁵ Among the earlier issues available to me, I found only one front page showing a relatively blond Baby Jesus and Christmas accoutrements such as candles.⁸⁶ Only considerably later, in the 1950s, could the occasional front page showing unmistakably Christian pictures be found, and an Easter edition even featured a full-page drawing of Christ on the cross.⁸⁷

It is possible that Tharchin wasn't as staunch a Christian as some have claimed, as an anecdote related by Sangharakshita suggests: "Marco

⁸¹ Margarete Urban ca. 1967. *Jesus unter Tibetern*. Berghausen: Evangelisationsverlag, 11.

⁸² Fader 2004, 258.

⁸³ For example: front pages of *Melong* IX, 7–8, January 2, 1938; IX, 10, April 18, 1938; X, 12, November 10, 1939; XI, 4, November 1942; XI, 7, February 5, 1943; XI, 8, March 9, 1943; XI, 10, May 5, 1943; XII, 5, December 1943; XII, 6, January 1944; XII, 7, February 1944; XII, 7, March 1945; XIV, 5–6, February–March 1946.

⁸⁴ *Melong* IX, 9, March 3, 1938, front page.

⁸⁵ *Melong* XII, 8, March 1944, front page.

⁸⁶ *Melong* VII, 1, January 26, 1933, front page.

⁸⁷ For example: front pages of *Melong* XIX, 10, January 1952, and XX, 2–3, May–June 1952.

Pallis confided to me his belief, that despite his connection with the Church of Scotland Mission, Mr. Tharchin was still very much a Buddhist at heart.”

Furthermore, after Tharchin had met the ‘Gyalmo Chenmo’, the mother of the Dalai Lama in 1951, he relates:

Apparently Mr. Tharchin had also been captivated by her. According to Thubden Tendzin [i.e. Marco Pallis] he had come away from a meeting with her shaking his head and exclaiming, ‘What a wonderful woman! Just think, she is the mother of *three* incarnations!’—the Great Royal Mother having given birth not only to the Dalai Lama himself but to two other sons who had also been recognized as ‘incarnate lamas’. Thubden Tendzin was inclined to think that Tharchin’s outburst showed that he was, at heart, very much a Buddhist, but personally I found this difficult to believe. So far as I could see, the editor of *The Tibet Mirror*, though amiable enough, was a victim of chronic mental confusion, and did not really know where he stood.⁸⁸

Perhaps such a harsh characterization of Tharchin is unwarranted, but there would seem to be a substantial amount of evidence to undermine the one-sided portrayal of Tharchin as unquestioningly Christian in thought and action.

⁸⁸ Sangharakshita (D.P.E. Lingwood) 1991. *Facing Mount Kanchenjunga: An English Buddhist in the Eastern Himalayas*. Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 179 and 247–48.

British Reporting and Censorship during the War

As mentioned above, we also know from Tharchin's letters to Charles Bell that he was eager to be in congruence with the policy of the British or the Government of India. The most important reason for this is probably that Tharchin regarded himself as a loyal Indian citizen and thus experienced no conflict of loyalty or interest when he wrote to Charles Bell in 1937: "PS The Tibetan officers are not doubting me and tell all, but for the sake of the British Government I am bound to inform you and also the Political Officer as I am a Loyal subject to our Government... During many years I did inform many [sic] news to Mr. D. McDonald and to Mr. Laden-La and also to Rai Bahadur and some time to P.O. [Political Officer in Sikkim, stationed in Gangtok]"⁸⁹ And some months later: "Only if I can develop this paper it may do lot of good for the Tibetan and as well as to Our Government."⁹⁰

In addition, as soon as war broke out India introduced strict press censorship, so that only reporting in line with the Anglo-Indian and Allied stance was possible. Even before the war the Government of India had released a "Regulations for Press Censorship in War, 1938."⁹¹ And immediately after the outbreak of the Second World War, the existing press laws were strengthened further by the "Defence of India Rules," which provided the colonial officials with comprehensive powers to proscribe all

⁸⁹ Tharchin to Charles Bell (correspondence in English), Kalimpong, December 25, 1937, London, British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections (henceforth quoted as OIOC), MSS. Eur F 80/130.

⁹⁰ Tharchin to Bell, Lhasa, Tsarong House, July 25, 1937, OIOC, MSS. Eur F 80/130.

⁹¹ OIOC, L/MIL17/5/4256. However, probably because of its small circulation and language *The Melong* is not listed as to "be examined by the chief press censor" on p. 25. Also it is not listed among the 51 English, 36 Urdu, 39 Hindi, 19 Tamili, 15 Gujarati, 27 Bengali and 37 foreign newspapers in the "War History 1939–1945" (secret) of the Bureau of Public Information, OIOC L/R5/295, 20.

potential threats.⁹² Tharchin also seems to have obeyed instructions concerning the ‘control of topics,’ not “emphasising enemy successes” and “[taking care] to exercise a very careful discretion about headlines and not to give any spectacular publicity to enemy successes: a decisive enemy gain could be displayed simply in the main headlines without any flourish.”⁹³

Free choice of news sources was also impossible on the subcontinent, since the news on the Indian press was permitted to come from only three legitimate sources:⁹⁴ the ‘internal news agencies,’ the Associated Press of India and the United Press of India, or the ‘external news agencies,’ the Reuters group.⁹⁵ “Though the control of the news agencies was a policy continued from the inter-war years, its scope widened between 1939 and 1945 through the introduction of new wartime legislation.”⁹⁶

Tharchin was thus also restricted to these sources for his news, together with the texts of the news programmes of ‘All India Radio,’ which were made available in the form of journals.⁹⁷ As Basil Gould, Political Officer in Sikkim, was appointed the Reuter’s correspondent on Tibet as early as 1936–1937, he could control the news himself.⁹⁸

⁹² Sanjoy Bhattacharya 2001. *Propaganda and Information in Eastern India 1939–45: A Necessary Weapon of War*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 125.

⁹³ Bhattacharya 2001, 129.

⁹⁴ On the attitudes or reactions of the newspaper editors, see also: G.N.S. Raghavan 1994. *The Press in India: A New History*. Delhi: Gyan, 95–104.

⁹⁵ Reuters “continued to supply India with most of its world news, and it continued to dominate the supply of internal news.” See Donald Read 1994. *The Power of News. The History of Reuters, 1849–1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 167–68.

⁹⁶ Bhattacharya 2001, 130

⁹⁷ Bhattacharya 2001, 76; Cf. Thorne report, 5, 11–12.

⁹⁸ My thanks to Alex McKay for this information about a file on Gould in the National Archives of India. E.g. also the following files about Gould reporting to

But in addition to reporting from the English viewpoint, Tharchin printed supplementary detailed articles with illustrations and maps in his endeavour to present the significance of England and the British Empire and accentuate the positive aspects of the Royal Family. For example, on the occasion of the coronations of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth⁹⁹ there was a world map showing the glory of the British Empire illuminating the world (Figure 8),¹⁰⁰ a brief history of the Windsors, and in 1944 photos of the young Elizabeth and her sister with their dogs.¹⁰¹

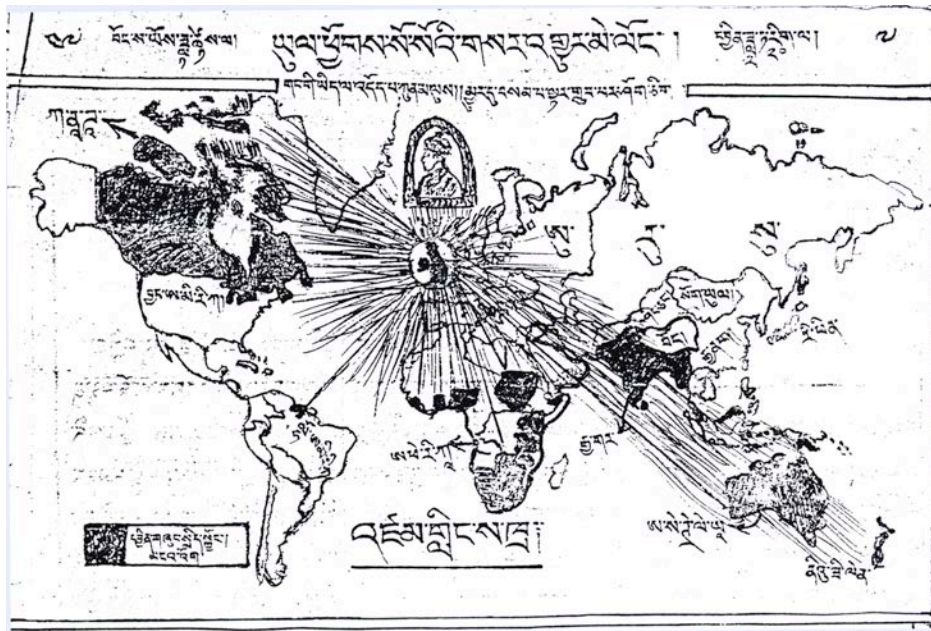


Figure 8 Worldmap of the British Empire

Reuters: OIOC, L/P&S/12/4193–6897, September 17, 1936; L/P&S/12/4178–1258, February 10, 1940.

⁹⁹ *Melong IX*, 1, May 5, 1937, 4–5.

¹⁰⁰ *Melong X*, 5, February 20, 1939, 7.

¹⁰¹ *Melong XI*, 6, November 7, 1943 and XII, 12, July–August 1944), front page.

During this period the rationing of newsprint was another effective method deployed by the British, particularly in Bengal, to ensure compliance by newspapers with the general British line. Several Paper Control Orders were passed from 1942–1944 and “allowed government to ration the commodity and direct it toward the ‘friendlier’ sections of the press.”¹⁰²

Although I am not aware of whether Tharchin was able to use the innovative teleprinter system installed in 1938 by the Associated Press of India, which within a few years had successfully established itself in India,¹⁰³ his international news was generally relatively up-to-date, at least with regard to the printed date of the issue.

British Support of the *Melong* as a Method of British Propaganda in Tibet

How did Tharchin manage to publish such copiously illustrated and lengthy issues of his newspaper during a paper shortage? The British Colonial Government was well aware of the importance and usefulness of Tharchin’s *Melong* for its attempts to repel the Chinese influence in Tibet. From early 1940, the paper could not be published for over two years owing to lack of funds and support; then in May 1942, John A. Calvin from the British Embassy in Chungking wrote in a report on Tibet to the Far Eastern Section of the British Ministry of Information, London, with a copy to Basil Gould:

In view of the relative importance of Tibet as a channel of communication and transport between India and China, and as a ‘sterile’ frontier, it was considered desirable to check

¹⁰² Bhattacharya 2001, 130. See also: *Melong* XI, 6 January 7, 1943, 12 and XI, 8, March 7, 1943, 12.

¹⁰³Cf. T. Fernandez 1954. The news agencies. In Roland E. Wolseley (ed.) *Journalism in Modern India*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 45–59: 49–50.

the propaganda position there. Sir Basil Gould, Political Agent at Sikkim and considered by many to be an authority on Tibetan affairs, and Richardson, the present Secretary to the Indian Agent-General in China, formerly resident in Lhasa for two years, were consulted, in addition to prominent Sikkimese and Chinese authorities . . .

Recommendations: It is desirable that every effort be made to increase by subsidisation the circulation of the Tibetan-language newspaper produced in Kalimpong.¹⁰⁴

Some months later, when an issue of the *Melong* was finally published after a hiatus of two and a half years, Calvin wrote, "The opportune arrival of some rather good films on the Indian War effort, and also of the Tibetan newspaper printed in Kalimpong, will also enable us to carry out a little honest propaganda."¹⁰⁵ This support was gratefully acknowledged by Tharchin:

Sir Gould, the Political Officer, who was taking great interest in the paper, took me to Delhi in July 1942. There he introduced him (the Editor) to the high officials. As a result of his kindness, he was able to bring out the paper again in August 1942. The Political Officer was kind enough to grant some subsidy and subscribed for 250 copies

¹⁰⁴ John A. Calvin, British Embassy Chungking, To: Far Eastern Section British Ministry of Information London, c.c. Basil Gould, May 21, 1942, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4605.

¹⁰⁵ Confidential: Lhasa Letter for week ending the 13th September 1942, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4201, fol 30.

to be sent to Lhasa for free distribution till the cessation of the World War No. 2.¹⁰⁶

As the subject headings of the closed files in the India National Archives demonstrate, Tharchin also received support for the purchase of a new printing press in 1944: “Purchase of a Litho Press for Mr. Tharchin, Editor of Tibetan newspaper in Lhasa.”¹⁰⁷

However, Gould was not the only official to take an interest:

On retirement of Sir Gould Mr. Hopkinson came in his place. He also took great interest in developing the paper for all the officials in Lhasa were taking great interest in it and that they were learning many things about the world, its geography, importance of education, development of industries and home industries trades wool trades agricultural in general developments and he thought that the paper was only the means of linking India and Tibet and of exchanging their views in general . . . The political department to help forwarding the bundles of paper in their mail bag to Lhasa. He also got the valuable help in distributing the paper in Mr. Richardson, Major Sheriff, Mr. Ludlow, Rai Sahib Pemba Tsering, Rai Sahib Bahadur Sonam Tobden.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Tharchin. “Brief history of the Tibetan newspaper,” fol. 3. Cf. Figure 9: http://www.dtab.unibonn.de/tibdoc/php/p_show.php?dokid=1551.

¹⁰⁷ NAI EAD (External Affairs Department—the old Foreign and Political Dept) Index 1944 No.10(60).

¹⁰⁸ Tharchin. “Brief history of the Tibetan newspaper,” fol. 3–4.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 214. Lama L. Mungyar Borje,
Lhasa Leather,
University,
Calcutta. | 215. Braho Shongkar zompa,
Cap B.P. B. P. Mulla,
Newly Baktun,
Simgachi. P.O. (Barang Assam) | 216-218. The Political Officer,
Imdibam (2)
Sadia. (Assam) |
| 219. A. Hughes Esq,
90 Michigan St's house
Hawthorn. | 220. Lama Tunzin Gyaltshan
Rimpochhe,
village Surnam,
CHINI. P.O. (Simla Hills) | 221. Lamas Diepke,
village Sid,
CHINI. P.O. (Simla) |
| 222. LT. DL. SNELL GROVE,
410 E.W.S.C.
R. Adv. B.P.O. (India) | 223. Mr Mahan Singh
Hally Lodge,
Simla | 224. Devichand (wif)
(P.O.)
Chini. P.O. (Simla) |
| 225. Naga Bhagat Ram,
Surnam
CHINI. P.O. (Simla) | 226. Mr N. ALI,
Kotgarh. P.O.
(Simla) | 227. Lama S. Thardin (P.O.)
C/o Post. Master,
CHINI. P.O. (Simla) |
| 227. Buddharoy,
Lerong Pa.
CHINI. P.O. (Simla) | 229. Lobsrang Gyaltso,
C/o Post. Master,
CHINI. P.O. (Simla) | 230. H.H. THE MAHARAJA OF RAMPUR
BUSHHR STATE,
RAMPUR. P.O. (SIMLA) |
| 231. H.H. THE Maharaja of Kashmir,
SRINAGAR.
(Kashmir) | 231. Rev. A. WEST BORG,
S.M. N. D. G. Aising
P.O. HALTUGAON. (Doolpara)
(ASSAM) | 232. Himi Chhang,
Himi monastery
Leh. P.O.
(KASHMIR) |
| 233. MUKSHI TSEWANG,
LEH. P.O. (KASHMIR) | 234. REV. W. ASBOE,
MISSIONARY
LEH. P.O. (KASHMIR) | 235. NONO S. WANGYAL LONPO,
LEH. P.O. (KASHMIR) |
| 237. NONO S. MASILBAKIMWAS,
TEHSIL,
LEH. P.O. (KASHMIR) | 237. THE RAJA SAHIB OF,
LADAKH. LEH. P.O.
(KASHMIR) | 238. THE MISSIONARY
INCHARGE,
KHALATSE. P.O.
(KASHMIR) |
| 240. HEAD LAMA LIKIR MONASTERY,
LEH. P.O. (KASHMIR)
(Kashmir) | 241. CHOSPHEL,
MAIL RUNNER
KHALATSE. P.O.
(KASHMIR) | 242. GANON MONASTERY,
LEH. P.O.
(KASHMIR) |
| 244. Prof. Roerich,
Noggar KULU. P.O.
(KANGRA) | 245. HEAD LAMA, BUDDHIST TEMPLE,
C/O P.M. KHADMANDU.
(NEPAL) | 246. LAMA TEBGYE,
BUDDHIST TEMPLE
BUDDH GAYA.
(KANGRA) |
| 248. RARI PANDORJE
PEDONG. P.O. | 249. MESSES PANEDATANG,
KALIMPONG. | 250-51. RANI SAHIB,
BHUTAN DARBAR. |
| 259. MESSRS SANDUTSHANG,
KALIM PONG. | 260. DABAR AMCHO,
KALIMPONG. | 261. MR. LITANGLA,
109 Mile. |
| 263. MR. MACHUCHI,
KALIMPONG. | 264. MR. HSINGCHI,
KALIMPONG. | 265-66. MRS. GAY,
KALIMPONG. |
| 268. THE REV. W.M. SCOTT,
KALIMPONG. | 269. THE REV. D. MC HUTCHISON,
MISSION HOUSE, | 270. J. PURDEI Esq.
Jubilee House, Himes. |
| 272. Mr Jampo Gza,
College Hates. | 273. Mr Rap-galo,
Kabjanga | 274. Y.F. LI, Esq,
PARARAM. C. P.O. |
| 276. RAJA ANGUN JAMPA PRABAN,
THAK DRUSTAN, WOOTAK,
EKSO (100) TSINTSE, Birakawa,
P.O. NAWTAN WA. (GORG PUR). | 277. LAMA GYANCHEN D,
V. SUNAMI,
CHINI. P.O. (Simla) | 275. AUTARI LAMA,
Pedong. P.O.
Pedong. P.O. |
| 279. NAGI KALI RAM,
SANJAULI. P.O. (Simla) | 280. M. S. Baghat Ram,
702 V. M. Road
Shreepur, KUFRI. P.O.
(Simla) | 278. Lhundup Dorjee Kazi
CHAKUNG KOTHI,
P.O. NAYABA ZAR. (W. SIKKIM) |
| | 281. Major G. Sheriff,
Adm. P.O. Lhasa,
Gyantse. P.O.
(Tibet) | 282. Mr. Reckersdion,
Adm. P.O. Lhasa,
Gyantse. P.O. |

282-532. To The Political officer, (Copies)
In Sikkim,
British Mission Lhasa.

Figure 9 Page from the list of subscribers, ca. 1944-45

Although the Government of India's expenditure on printing for private presses increased from 79,677 Rs. in 1939–1940 to 2,205,749 Rs. by 1943–44,¹⁰⁹ British support for the Tibetan *Melong* seems to have been somewhat meagre, according to Richardson's section on "Propaganda" in the confidential report "Tibetan Precis" from 1945: "Our activities in this field which, for want of a better word, may be called propaganda are confined to the provision of straightforward news about the war, our resources, successes, and certainty of victory. This is done in conversation, by circulating summaries of the B.B.C. broadcasts, by a Tibetan newspaper published at Kalimpong with a small subsidy, and by news films."¹¹⁰

In individual cases, British support even continued after the end of the Second World War, for example, when Tharchin had to leave the Mission in 1946. Hopkinson, the then political officer in Sikkim, was successful in purchasing a litho printing press for his newspaper from the chess fund, because Tharchin only had an old hand press, which he had acquired in Darjeeling in 1933.¹¹¹ As a "propaganda expenditure" even a "grant of Rs. 200 per month to the publication of a Tibetan newspaper for one year with effect from 1st April 1947" was provided.¹¹²

Support from the Tibetan Government

The thirteenth Dalai Lama had already recognized Tharchin's work at an early stage and supported him in 1927 by sending encouraging letters and sums in the amount of 5 and 20 rupees. Tharchin also expressed his thanks

¹⁰⁹ Memorandum on printing, August 30, 1944, War History of the Labour Department, GOI, OIOC L/R5/291, quoted in Bhattacharya 2001, 77.

¹¹⁰ Hugh Richardson 1998. Tibetan Precis (originally published in 1945 as secret: for official use only). In Hugh Richardson; Michael Aris (ed.) *High Peaks, Pure Earth: Collected Writings on Tibetan History and Culture*. London: Serindia Publications, 610.

¹¹¹ Tharchin. "Brief history of the Tibetan newspaper," fol. 3.

¹¹² NAI EAD Index 1946 FN (10) 3 and NAI EAD Index 1946 FN (10) 2, N.E.F.

in 1937 in a letter from Lha sa to Charles Bell concerning further support from the official Tibetan camp:

Here I met the Regent, Prime Ministers and the four Shapedes as they were so good to me, just before I left Kalimpong the Tibetan Government sent me Rs. 100/- as a help to my Tibetan Newspaper together with a letter saying that they are very much pleased with the paper and asking me to continue it and send regularly.¹¹³

In 1940 the Kashag sent a further sum of 100 Rs. However, the Tibetan government was not prepared to give more extensive support, as Tharchin's editorial "on his own behalf" (*sger zhu*) in August 1942 showed, the first edition of the *Melong* to appear after over two and a half years of silence; Tharchin expressed his gratitude for a letter from the Tibetan government permitting him to send out officially approved letters begging for funds, but started the editorial in similar words to those he had used for his first editorial in 1925:

With the exception of Tibet, all countries around the world, big and small, have daily or weekly news printed in their own language, expressing and propagating their political views and history, which should "refresh their minds" and also sound well [sic] to their ears.

Other concerns are: business, selling and buying . . . The main reason is to communicate what happened around the world, with information about remarkable people and their remarkable deeds, to study them and also the current

¹¹³ Tharchin to Bell, Lhasa, Tsarong House, July 1, 1937, OIOC MSS Eur. F 80/130.

events. In order to produce a Tibetan newspaper, I, Kunuwar Tharchin, spent all my money without fearing the difficulties. But being short of money myself and having sent the newspapers, it proved that many of them were also not paid for by yearly subscriptions. Last year, 1939, since the war in Europe, I was unable to publish the newspaper on time. The Government then gave me 100 Rs. in support, so that I could publish the newspaper.

The front page of the last edition shows the fourteenth Dalai Lama's enthronement ceremony and the ceremonial Regent, together with other Tibetan and foreign dignitaries in a colour picture published in the Iron Dragon Year.¹¹⁴ (Figure 10) After that I requested further support from the Government, in order to be able to publish the newspaper.

The reply was: It would be good to have the newspaper on time. The Government also gave reasonable support by issuing a document of permission (*slong yig*) entitling Tharchin to collect donations from all people under the sun, addressed to the leaders, Indians, Sikkimese, 'Brug pa, their kings and citizens, Chinese, Tibetans, Hor pa and business people who should all support the newspaper.¹¹⁵ By sending requests to various leaders and friends I have collected a little over 300 Rs. Therefore I am publishing this newspaper again. In the future I will try to publish and make it in time and without a break. I am very sorry about the delays in the past.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *Melong X*, 12, November–December 1939, front page.

¹¹⁵ The complete letter of the Tibetan Government from the 29th of the 6th Tibetan month in 1940 to Tharchin is included in Gergan Tharchin (ed.) 1956. *Letter Writers: Yik bskur mam gshag*. Kalimpong: Tibet Mirror Press, 266.

¹¹⁶ *Melong XI*, 1, August 2, 1942, front page.

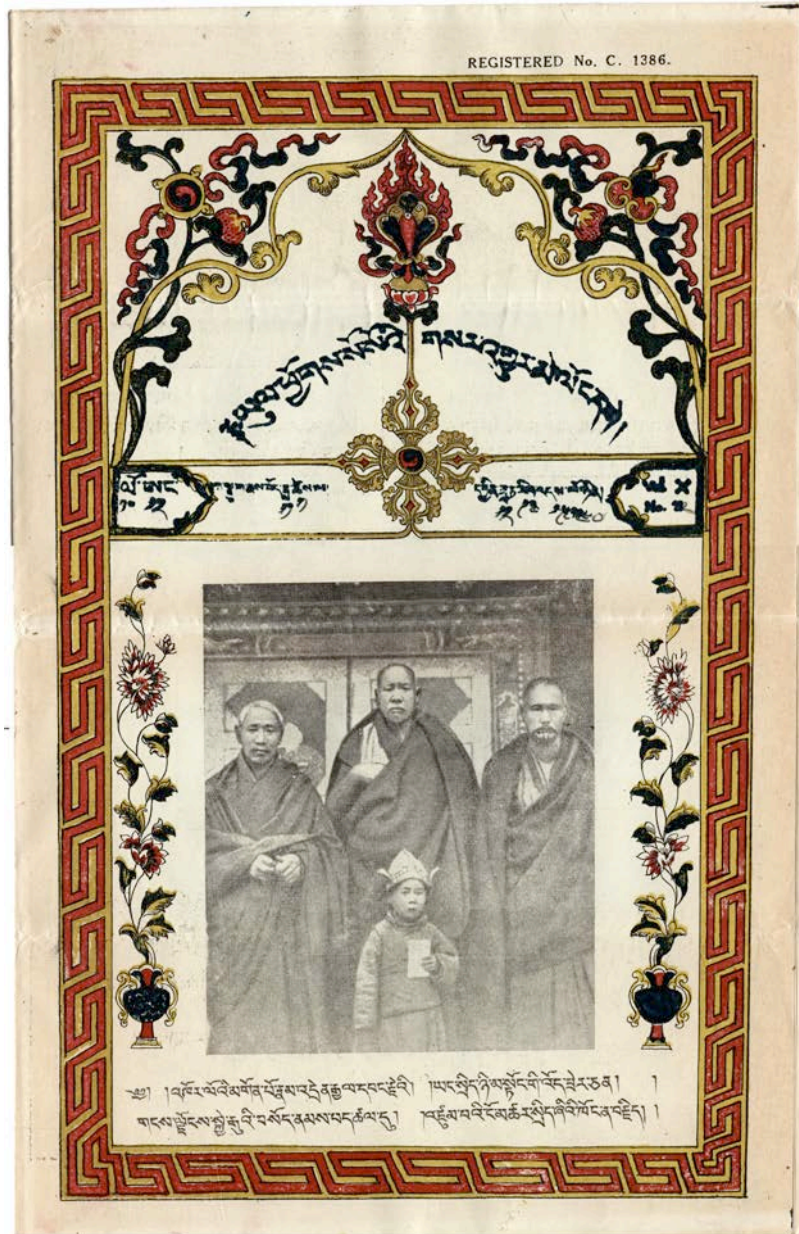


Figure 10 The young Dalai Lama

However, Tharchin's somewhat oblique formulation in Tibetan became considerably more direct in his English "Brief history of the Tibetan newspaper":

In Feb. 1940, he [Tharchin] arrived at Lhasa and replied thanking the Tibetan Govt. for the help and acquainting them with the difficulties involved in connection with the publication and requesting further substantial succour. But he received a reply saying that they could not help him directly as he was out of Tibet, but they would grant me a begging letter (Long Yik) [*slong yig*] bearing the seal of the Tibetan Govt. so that he might be able to collect subscriptions from all officials, traders who are under the heaven.¹¹⁷

This is confirmed by the observations of David Snellgrove, who had arrived in Kalimpong in December 1943:

Next I was introduced to Gergen Tharchin, who was just then engaged in publishing at his Tibet Mirror Press, the only regular Tibetan newspaper that existed at that time . . . Since 1925 he has kept it going as a loss. The Tibetan Government, although always anxious to receive copies, refuses official and financial support, unless the paper is produced in Tibet itself . . .¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Tharchin. "Brief history of the Tibetan newspaper," fol. 3.

¹¹⁸ David Snellgrove 2000. *Asian Commitment: Travels and Studies in the Indian Sub-Continent and South-East Asia*. Bangkok: Orchid Press, 19, 44.

However, in May 1945 Tharchin gratefully acknowledged a donation of Rs. 300/- from the Tibetan government together with the encouragement not to give up.¹¹⁹ Overall, financial support from official Tibetan sources was indeed modest, compared, for example, to the jewellery owned by rich aristocratic women in Lha sa, often worth up to 50,000 Rs.¹²⁰

Subscribers

But the combined support for the *Melong* from the official British and Tibetan governments was insufficient to secure publication of the *Melong*; evidently the payment practices of the subscribers throughout the decades left a lot to be desired, as Tharchin's repeated entreaties on his own behalf (*sger zhu*) make clear:

Since he started the news paper it has been 19 years. However, including this number it is actually only 13 years. What about the six years? Sometimes we didn't print. Reason: ink, paper, salaries were not enough. Why they were lacking? The countries, where the Tibetan paper is read, they were ignorant (*sang chung*) had little esteem, and disregarded it, didn't regard it as important and wanted it gratis and didn't buy regularly. However, for the last two years we could print without hindrance, in particular because of the favourable circumstances of a gift of a

¹¹⁹ *Melong* XIII, 9, May 1945, front page: "Recently in a letter of the 28th day of the 2nd Tibetan month the Tibetan Government kindly helped with a valuable order to sustain *The Melong* and not to give up, and helped this newspaper in Tibetan language to make a progress all over the country with a donation of Rs. 300/-."

¹²⁰ See for example the unpublished diaries of Heinrich Harrer and Ernst Schäfer. For full references to these, see: Isrun Engelhardt (ed.) 2007. *Tibet in 1938–1939: Photographs from the Ernst Schäfer Expedition to Tibet*. Chicago: Serindia Publications, 30 and 251n87.

“begging letter“ (*slong yig*) from the Central Tibetan Government and also its not minor (*mi dman*) annual gift in the same way, like that.¹²¹

Despite support from the Government of India Tharchin complained of rising prices of newsprint and occasional paper shortages:

These days paper in India is very scarce and was previously imported. Due to the war it didn't arrive. The Government uses it on her own . . . The paper used right now—500 pages—was bought before the war and was 7.-Rs. per sheet. In between it rose to 15-Rs. and was also not readily available. These days it is 51.-Rs. and also not available. The Government of India gives only 30% of the paper stock for public use. Therefore all the learned and kind people must understand the situation and send money in time.¹²²

Frequent technical problems with the various printing presses were also occasional obstacles to the punctual appearance of the paper.¹²³ To increase his subscribers' motivation, Tharchin repeatedly reprinted the letters from

¹²¹ *Melong* XII, 12, July–August 1944, 2; similarly *Melong* XI, 11, June 3, 1943, 12.

¹²² *Melong* XI, 6 January 7, 1943, 12. See also XI, 8, March 7, 1943, 12.

¹²³ *Melong* XIII, 8, April 1945, 2: “Machines are too old, therefore a delay. With studious adventure the editor bought a new machine in Calcutta and the paper can appear again”; *Melong* XIII, 11–12, July–August 1945, 15; *Melong* XII, 1, August 2, 1943, 2.

the thirteenth Dalai Lama in facsimile as confirmation of the official recognition for the *Melong*.¹²⁴ (Figure 11)

In addition, the unreliability of the postal service in Tibet caused problems for Tharchin; sometimes not even half of the newly published issues reached their subscribers by mail,¹²⁵ which understandably did not increase their willingness to pay for their subscriptions. Perhaps subscribers had become accustomed to the occasional availability of the paper free of charge during the war and were uninterested in resuming their paid subscriptions when the war was over, as Tharchin mentioned to Richardson in 1954:

I am trying to continue my Tibetan news paper in spite of the C. Communists objections to read it, but still the paper goes and now the Tibetan public knows the value of the paper and I am getting many letters to be published in my paper, but they never send the subscription and they are still thinking to get it freely as they use to get during war time. I am under great difficulties getting on, but do not know how long I can do so.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ *Melong* X, 12, November-December 1939, 7. See also XVI, 5, March 22, 1948, 1-2.; XVII, 1, October 1, 1948, 7; XIX, 1-2, December 1950-January 1951, 5,7; and also in Tharchin 1956, 261-62.

¹²⁵ “But it was strange that the copies despatched had reached the destination not more than half the number, having being lost in the Tibetan post office.” Tharchin. “A brief history of the Tibetan newspaper,” fol. 2.

¹²⁶ Tharchin to Hugh Richardson, Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 41, 12 July 1954, fol. 202v; similarly: on August 23, 1954: “I am getting still lot of letters from Tibet to publish my paper, but the paper is not being able . . . self support it, as I do not get the Subscription.” fol 203v.

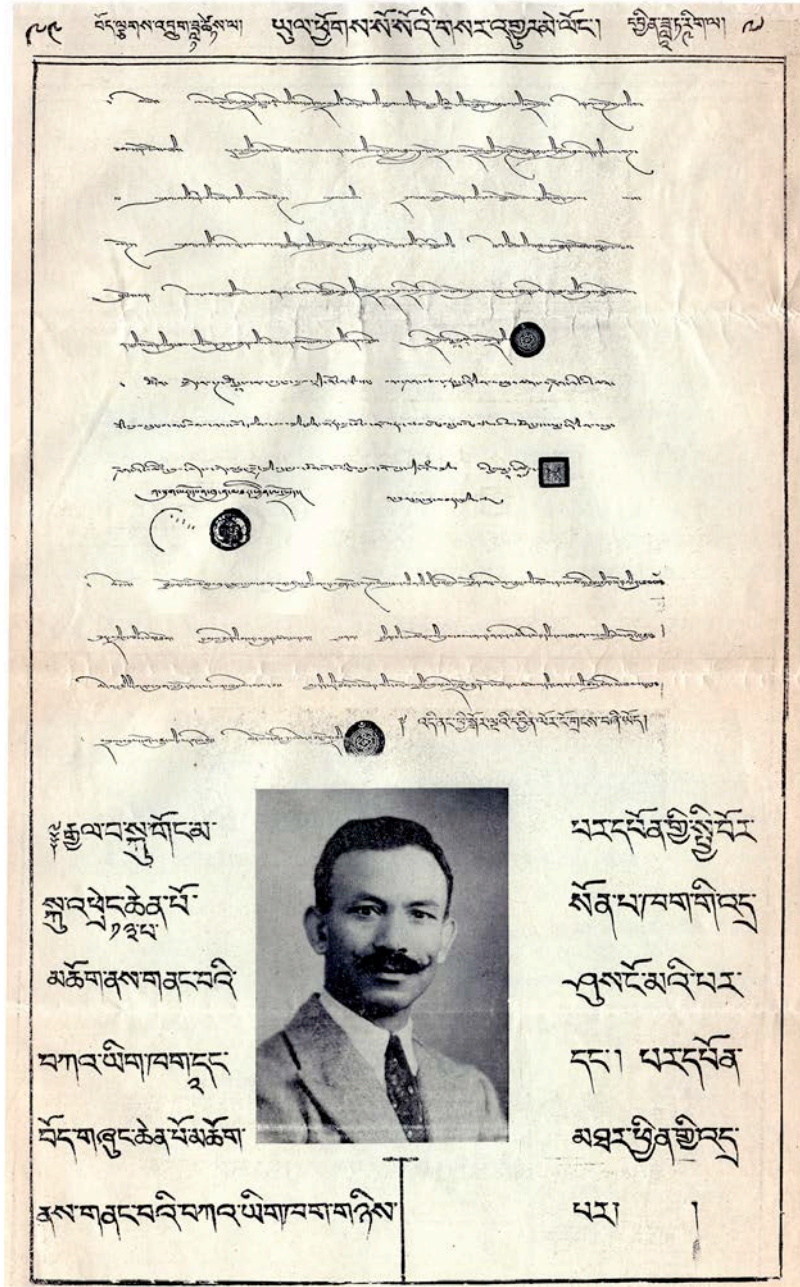


Figure 11 The thirteenth Dalai Lama's letters to Tharchin

Impact?

What effect did Tharchin actually achieve with his *Melong* during the period examined here? Did he achieve his goal of improving the Tibetans' knowledge of world affairs? As early as 1937, he had written to Charles Bell:

I am sorry as I could not published my news paper for a year and also sometimes not in time, the reason is by lack of funds As there are not many subscriber . . . At present the Tibetans are not taking much interest in papers, but hope in time to come they know the value of the paper and some other learned persons may come to publish a better paper in Tibet itself.¹²⁷

Another letter to Bell written some months later in Lha sa sounds more optimistic, yet is filled with plans which would never come to fruition:

Some of the officials are very much interested to modern ideas and they are keen to knows [sic] and learn more and more, but in the same time still they are afraid of the Monks and lamas. But I met many educated and highly [sic] class monks and they are also interested. They all asked me to write something on the present development of the world or difference countries and especially about our government, about sciences laws.

I was able to get 500 subscribers to my small News Paper from next year, of course I am doubtful whether I can get the money from them all. All the Trulku and Khenpos

¹²⁷ Tharchin to Charles Bell, Kalimpong February 16, 1937, OIOC, MSS. Eur F 80/130.

of SER DRE GA SUM [the three large monasteries around Lha sa] asked me to send and many other monks also asked the same and they said that they have not seen and heard about the News paper at all. I think if I am able to get some helps and print 1000 copies and send to every monastery for a year or two f[r]eely I am sure it will do good for them and also for the paper in future. Also if I get contributions of articles for different subjects that may do good for Tibet it will be very good for me . . . The Regent Prime minister and the Shapedes are all very much interested.¹²⁸

Despite Tharchin's persistence and efforts in supplying clear, interesting information and including the support from external sources, the paper's achievements in expanding the Tibetans' knowledge of world affairs appears to have been modest, as this confidential report of Hugh Richardson to Basil Gould, Political Officer in Sikkim, in July 1944 demonstrates:

2. On the whole, there seems to be little radical change since I was last here in 1939. The alarms of 1942 and 1943 have passed, leaving the mass of officials as ignorant of anything outside their limited purview . . .

There can be no doubt that the Tibetans have a genuine feeling for their independence; but consciousness of their own material weakness, ignorance of the world opinion and lack of access to the world press, complacent apathy bred by centuries of isolation from the active world, reliance on British help . . .

¹²⁸ Tharchin to Bell, Lhasa, Tsarong House, July 25, 1937, OIOC, MSS. Eur F 80/130.

13. I have been trying to prepare the ground for an attempt to stir the Tibetan Government from their apathy, by giving some information on present conditions in China, and by explaining the importance of world opinion.¹²⁹

In addition, the confidential letter of George Sherriff from Lhasa immediately after the end of the war, in May 1945, describes a situation as if the *Melong*, with its extensive reporting of the Second World War, had never even been read in the previous years:

8. The reaction of the officials of Lhasa to the defeat of Nazi Germany has been remarkable for its absence. The majority have no knowledge of the course of the war, or of its causes; some still do not know of Germany's unconditional surrender: victory of either side becomes accordingly a matter of more or less indifference to them. There are few, however, who on being asked their opinion affirm their joy over allied victory. It is to try and combat this ignorance and to celebrate V-E day that the Mission is giving a 3 day party next week to all Lhasa officials and their ladies.¹³⁰

Yet Tharchin had already anticipated the war victory by printing the victory symbol at the top of the front page in the April 1945 edition: *rgyal V rgyal V rgyal V lo*, with a large photo of King George VI under it and drawings of Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin at the bottom of the page.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Richardson to The Political Officer in Sikkim, Gangtok, Lhasa, July 9, 1944, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4165, fols. 38, 43, 45.

¹³⁰ George Sherriff, Lhasa Letter for Week Ending 13th May 1945, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4165, fol. 395.

¹³¹ *Melong* XII, 8, April 1945, front page.

However, it was not for want of Tharchin's efforts that Tibetan government circles had failed to adequately exploit the opportunity of gaining information about world affairs and the war in their own language. He had tried his utmost in his efforts to report on world affairs, and to encourage Tibet to open up to the changing modern world. For example, he had already included a large and impressive fold-up map of the world, showing all UN member states with their flags, in the issue of *The Melong* on the occasion of United Nations Day on June 14, 1943 (Figure 12).¹³² If even this information alone had only been understood correctly by the Tibetan government's decision-makers, the Tibetan government might have turned to the UN earlier and not waited until 1950 to do so.

¹³² *Melong*, XI, 12, July 3, 1943, 2–7.

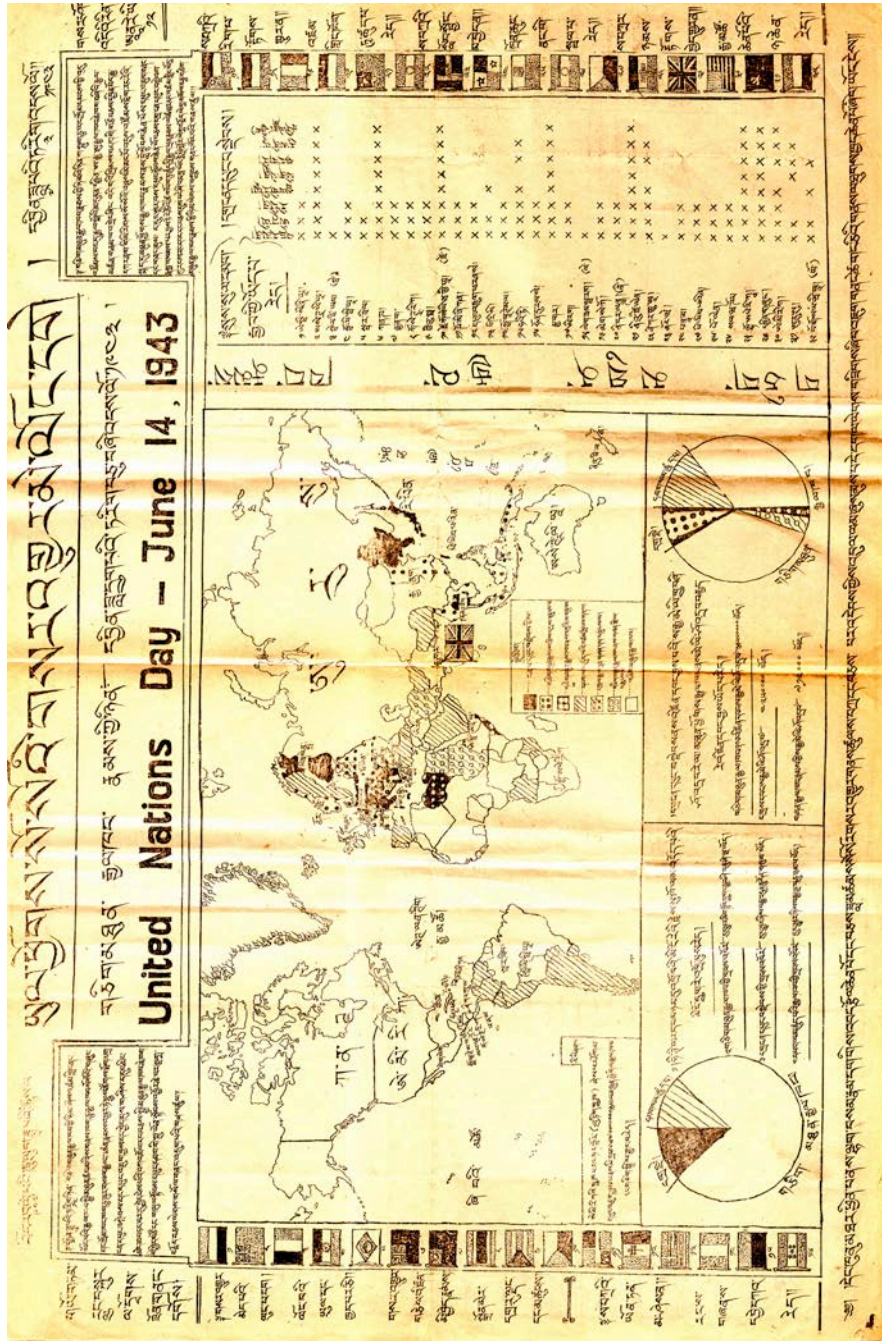


Figure 12

United Nations Day—June 14, 1943

Conclusion

For the nearly four decades of its existence *The Tibet Mirror* chronicled the news of the world, encapsulating an entire era during which Tibetan reformist stirrings collided with the weight of tradition and conservatism. In the above-mentioned Silver Jubilee Number, Tharchin's newspaper is praised by David Macdonald: "*The Tibet Mirror* is the only Tibetan Newspaper in the world and is a strong bridge between India and Tibet. It is also circulated to many countries overseas." And Lha Tsering, Assistant Director, Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau in Kalimpong, commented:

I remember how twenty-five years ago you started your paper with meagre resources, how you struggled single-handed through difficult times, until now, yours is a modern and up-to-date Press. A newspaper, particularly in Tibet, is the chief source of information to enlighten the Tibetan people about the world events and the political situation and yours, the only one in Tibetan, is admirably serving the purpose. I know it is greatly appreciated by the Tibetan-knowing public and that it is eagerly waited for and read by all Tibetans and Tibetan-knowing people.¹³³

Tashi Namgyal, the Maharaja of Sikkim, said with appreciation:

It is widely read in Sikkim and rightly appreciated for the sanity of its views and charity of thought . . . Twenty-five years of constant and faithful service to one's country must be a proud performance for any journal, but for *The Tibet Mirror* press which is printed in a script comparatively little

¹³³ *Melong* XIX, 1–2, December 1950–1951, 11 (In English). On Lha Tsering cf. Sangharakshita 1991, 75, 189, 197–98.

known in India this glorious record should be particularly flattering . . . The pictorial side of the magazine has always been its most pleasing feature.¹³⁴

Yet despite the many paeans in this anniversary edition, Tharchin had difficulty in maintaining publication of his paper in the face of a readership unwilling to pay for the privilege, the modesty of the financial support from the Tibetan government, and the occasional internal conflict with the missionaries. Although the *Melong* “was eagerly awaited and read by all Tibetans,” the readers’ interest may have focused more on news from the Tibetan sphere of influence and trade news, while less attention was paid to international news events.¹³⁵

The words of Dawa Norbu thus seem an appropriate conclusion:

The Rev. G. Tharchin was a pioneer in several fields: the first Tibetan journalist in the entire Tibetan speaking world, a towering modern man of letters in a field traditionally dominated by lamas, a lone modernizer in tradition-bound

¹³⁴ *Melong* XIX, 1–2, December 1950–1951, 13 (in English).

¹³⁵ Only later, after the occupation of Tibet by Chinese Communist troops, did *The Melong* become really popular with Tibetans as Tharchin wrote in 1954 (and mentioned above): “Now the Tibetan public knows the value of the paper.” Again, Sangharakshita explains: “The reason it was so widely read was that Mr. Tharchin was violently anti-Communist and anti-Chinese, and denounced Chairman Mao and all his works with unsparing vigour in every issue of his paper.” Sangharakshita 1991, 177–78. However, it is also interesting to consider the contrasting view of Joseph Francis Rock, who wrote from Kalimpong on May 5, 1951 to Johannes Schubert that Tharchin had given up the newspaper, saying that it was no longer financially feasible to continue publishing it. At the time he had only 50 subscribers and produced each issue at a cost of three Rs., which nobody would pay. Information courtesy of Manfred Taube.

society, and above all the most articulate spokesman for Tibet's freedom. It is no exaggeration to say that if the ruling classes in Lhasa and New Delhi had heeded what Tharchin Babu was saying, Tibet's modern fate might have been different.¹³⁶

Acknowledgement: I am especially grateful to Paul Hackett for all his effective support and to the late Namgyal G. Rongé for helping with the translations.

¹³⁶ Dawa Norbu in his introduction to Fader 2002, XI.

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