

When Tibet Came to Prince Peter: Tibetan–Danish Relations through a Stationary Expedition in the 1950s

Trine Brox & Miriam Koktvedgaard Zeitzen

In the official Dharamsala narrative, the birth of the Tibetan exile occurred in March 1959 when the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and his Tibetan followers fled from Tibet to South Asia in order to protect their lives, culture and religion from Communist Chinese destruction. It is also this exile, so the story goes, which made Tibetan customs, art, literature and philosophy globally available and relevant. In Denmark, such a connection to Tibet had already been established before this official beginning of exile. A particular Tibetan–Danish relationship highlights an underexposed phase in modern Tibetan history: how exile in the case of many Tibetans began even a decade before the Dalai Lama settled in India in 1959. This early exile was witnessed by a member of European royalty, a prince who, at the time, was heading for Tibet in the name of scientific exploration. Yet instead of entering Tibet to explore and ‘discover’ the Tibetan civilization in the 1950s, the prince ended up conducting a seven-year rescue mission of tangible and intangible Tibetan cultural heritage—today preserved and kept for posterity in Denmark. We relate this largely overlooked story of how his unsuccessful attempt to lead a scientific mission to Tibet led to the salvaging of a different Tibet—that of a Tibet in exile.

The impetus for a Tibetan–Danish relationship came from the explorer and ethnographer H. R. H. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark (1908–1980). He was the eldest of two children of Prince Georg of Greece and Denmark, brother of the Greek king. Prince Peter had estranged himself from the royal inner circles by marrying the twice-divorced Russian socialite Irina Alexandrovna Ovtchinnikova (1904–1990), the daughter of a prominent jeweller to the Tsar. Prince Peter’s mother, Marie Bonaparte, from the wealthy French Blanc

* This article presents new insights into an ongoing research project, Prince Peter and the Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia, which investigates the life and works of H.R.H. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark. Parts of this article have appeared in a Danish-language article in the popular journal *Tibet* (see Brox and Koktvedgaard Zeitzen 2016). The authors would like to thank Jesper Kurt Nielsen and Christel Braae, both at the National Museum in Copenhagen, for their indispensable help during our time working with the Prince Peter collection. Associate Professor Jan-Ulrich Sobisch at the University of Copenhagen has likewise provided invaluable encouragement and input during numerous conversations on the many themes and challenges that our research unpacks. We are also grateful to Brian Donahoe for his careful language editing.

The Tibet Journal

A publication for the study of Tibet

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SPRING/SUMMER VOL. XLII, No. 1, 2017

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family that owned the Monte Carlo Casino, supported Prince Peter financially, enabling him to travel the world. In 1935 the prince commenced his post-graduate studies in anthropology at the London School of Economics under the guidance of Bronislaw Malinowski, one of the founding fathers of modern anthropology. Prince Peter's passion for adventure and knowledge drove him to the far reaches of the world, and in 1937-39 Prince Peter and Irina went on their first ethnographic expedition to India, Ladakh and Ceylon. Their journeys were interrupted by the Second World War, when Prince Peter was stationed in Egypt as an officer in the Greek army. In 1949 he resumed his anthropological studies when he joined the Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia. It was as leader of the expedition's second team that he came to the west Bengali town of Kalimpong in the Himalayan foothills—the little frontier town at the very gate of central Tibet¹—close to the Indo-Tibetan border.

According to the plan, Prince Peter was to lead the expedition from Kalimpong into Tibet via Lhasa and over the Tibetan Plateau to Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang. However, the Communist expansion into Tibet forced the expedition to stand by in Kalimpong. It must at first have seemed like a professional failure when the expedition became stranded there, unable to enter Tibet and follow the Indo-Tibetan trade route that would have brought Prince Peter and the expedition deeper into Central Asia. This, however, turned out to be a unique and rich opportunity to get to know Tibetans and Tibetan worlds through the many Tibetans who had fled to safety in Kalimpong. In other words, Tibet came to Prince Peter. These many meetings with a diverse cast of Tibetan people in Kalimpong profoundly changed his personal and professional life trajectory. Prince Peter's work also significantly influenced the Tibetan-Danish connection, particularly for three major Danish institutions: the National Museum, the Royal Library, and the University of Copenhagen. In these institutions today we find the rich material collected by Prince Peter during those seven years from January 1950 to February 1957, when he studied Tibetan worlds from his field station in Kalimpong.

The concept of 'stationary expedition' that features in the title of this article is an attempt to encapsulate the state of Prince Peter's expedition work in Kalimpong—replete with those challenges, advantages and dilemmas an expedition in a stationary mode presents.² Based on hitherto unexplored material concerning Tibet and the Tibetan exile housed in these Danish archives, the present article introduces Prince Peter's personal and professional engagement with Tibet, which takes place during an all-too-overlooked epoch of Tibetan history. Furthermore, this part of Tibetology research history illuminates some of the ethical problems of conducting research among refugees.

1. THE THIRD DANISH EXPEDITION TO CENTRAL ASIA

The Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia was one of several expeditions organized from Denmark in a race among nations to explore such remote and, to the West, unknown places. Denmark had organized several scientific expeditions to Greenland, North Africa and Central Asia with the aim of cementing its position as an explorer nation. Together with the two previous expeditions—the First and Second Danish Expeditions to Central Asia, which had covered western Manchuria (1936-37) and eastern Mongolia (1938-39) respectively—the Third Danish Expedition would collect and document the flora, fauna and folk of 'Upper Asia'. The team that Prince Peter was to lead through Tibet consisted of scholars of anthropology, archaeology, geography, botany, meteorology and religious studies, all intent on documenting a civilization in its entirety. The purpose of the expedition was two-fold: (1) to explore and map terra incognita, the unknown and uncharted territories deep in the Asian highlands; and (2) to save the remains of local cultures considered on the brink of extinction due to an encroaching modern world.³

Tibet in the early 1950s was considered an isolated and inaccessible place between tumultuous China and newly independent India. Most Europeans and Americans in Prince Peter's time only knew Tibet from the very contradictory and contrasting travel accounts by those who proclaimed themselves to be the 'discoverers' of unknown Tibet. The Tibetan adventures recounted in such contemporary travel literature were influential and authoritative, partly because they were considered truthful testimonies. Yet their tales may rather have reflected an 'invention' of Tibet, fed by the travellers' fantasies of untouched exotic lands.⁴ The travellers were missionaries, mountaineers, secret agents, explorers, treasure hunters and the like. Many of them did not reach Lhasa, and some did not even reach Tibet, but only travelled there in their imagination.

Like other places uncharted and unexplored by cartographers and ethnographers, Tibet was perceived as a time capsule—a backward place where time stood still, a peaceful Shangri-La. It was this image of Tibet as a peaceful and exalted place that was popularized in the twentieth century. The term Shangri-La was introduced by James Hilton in his famous 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*. *Lost Horizon* tells the story of four Westerners whose plane crashes in the Himalayas and, in their search for help, reach the utopian monastery Shangri-La. It became such a powerful trope that the name of the fictive monastery came to symbolize paradise on earth. Eventually, Shangri-La became a metonym for Tibet in general.

Prince Peter, influenced to a certain extent by similar fantasies of an untouched Shangri-La, feared that the region was heading for cultural extinction as the two massive forces of modernity and Communism threatened Tibet at its borders. This created a sense of urgency that partly drove Prince Peter's research interest

in Tibet. He credited the late leader of the Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia, Henning Haslund-Christensen, with recognizing the urgency of sending scientific explorations to Upper Asia—including the area around Kalimpong, from where the prince explored a Tibet in absentia:

Now the culture of these people is threatened by the new circumstances prevailing in the outside world, and it may rapidly disappear without leaving any traces—something of which Haslund-Christensen was very conscious and expressed in his proposal regarding a Danish scientific expedition to Central Asia.

In the closed regions around Kalimpong, modern progress will probably push forward more slowly than elsewhere exactly because these regions are kept sealed off. However, it would be a pity if these people were to lose their indigenous characteristics before science had the opportunity to study them and retain their ancient and picturesque life ways for posterity.⁵

Prince Peter saw the value of these cultures in what he considered their ancient and indigenous character, and thus considered them in danger of succumbing to the influences of a global modernizing world. For Prince Peter, his scientific salvage mission was driven by a sense of responsibility to preserve these ancient ways of life. He was particularly interested in indigenous marriage practices and family constellations. He had brought this interest with him from home, so to speak, from his mother, the famous psychoanalyst Marie Bonaparte. Marie Bonaparte had become a psychoanalyst after being a patient (and later a friend and colleague) of Sigmund Freud. Prince Peter was also affected by Freud's work through his anthropological mentor Bronislaw Malinowski. Malinowski was intrigued by Freud's thoughts about the Oedipus complex, but questioned its universality and cross-cultural applicability—whether it was traceable across the many cultures and various marriage and family forms found around the world. Prince Peter was likewise fascinated by such psychological-anthropological questions. Influenced by the ideals of a comparative social anthropology, he wished to investigate whether there existed an Oedipus complex in societies where women's status differed from the classical Western marriage and family constellations on which Freud had based his theories. Freud had taken European family structures as the point of departure when he developed his theory of a universal, inherent conflict arising from a son's hateful jealousy of his father and the incestuous attraction to his mother. Freud's thinking about the human psyche spurred Prince Peter's interest in Tibetans, particularly because of their polyandrous marriage customs.⁶

Prince Peter consequently sought out polyandrous societies—where one woman can be married to several men—to investigate whether the Oedipus complex in these societies takes a different form when a child may be considered to have several fathers. From a global perspective polyandry was a rare form of marriage, and Tibet was at the time and still is today home to the largest polyandrous population in the world. Tibetans typically practise fraternal polyandry, where a group of brothers takes a common wife. For Prince Peter, Tibet was an ethnographic goldmine because it seemed that every known form of marriage was practised, sometimes even within the same family: different varieties of polyandry, polygyny, monogamy and group marriage, sometimes in combination.⁷ Prince Peter wanted to explore the region's cultural diversity with regard to marital and family relations, and through a comparative socio-anthropological perspective, perhaps challenge Freud's Oedipus theory. He therefore conducted fieldwork among polyandrous groups in the Himalayas and the Malabar Coast from 1937 to 1939. He continued these studies under the Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia, arriving in Kalimpong in January 1950 with the intention of travelling further into Tibet.

2. KALIMPONG

Although Kalimpong was geographically situated across the border in India, it was considered by many foreigners to be a Tibetan place. There was a large colony of permanent Tibetan residents at the time of Prince Peter's stay there, counting aristocrats, merchants and Tibetan Christians among its numbers. Furthermore, the number of Tibetans travelling to and through Kalimpong amounted to, according to Prince Peter's estimate, some 15,000 travellers annually. Situated at the southern terminus of the Indo-Tibetan trade route, Kalimpong was an important trade centre in the region as well as the preferred winter refuge for Tibetans from central Tibet. Prince Peter reported in 1953 to the National Museum in Copenhagen:

A multitude of peoples of different kinds traverses this road daily. One cannot drive here, only ride—and if one cannot afford a horse or a mule, one has to walk. Annually, but particularly during the winter when it is cold in Tibet and not too hot in India, muleteers with their caravans pass through Kalimpong, as do noble men and their wives who own houses and gardens in Kalimpong, the Tibetan Riviera. There are beggars by the hundreds, hoping to earn a little more and be a little warmer in India, where they can sleep outdoors; pilgrims on their way to the holy sites where the Buddha lived and preached; prosperous merchants on their way to Calcutta or Bombay to tend to their international trade

connections; and many others. Kalimpong is like a big funnel at the entrance to Tibet: everybody must pass through here to reach the Indian plains.⁸

This meant that Tibetologists, anthropologists, political agents, merchants and adventurers travelled to Kalimpong as a necessary stop before proceeding into Tibet, or even as a replacement for Tibet—a Tibet in absentia. Here also came famous writers and Tibetophiles such as Alexandra David-Neel, Georg Nikolaevich Roerich, René De Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Sangarakshita and George Patterson. One of the gathering places for foreigners in Kalimpong was the Himalayan Hotel, where Prince Peter and Irina could meet like minds and have a chat or dance, accompanied by the music of the day. The hotel continues to attract visitors from around the world today, and an evocative pencil portrait of the couple still adorns the sitting room, a sitting room where Tibet was created and recreated in the minds of the many foreign travellers pouring into Kalimpong in those days. In March 2015, when we stayed in the hotel, its slightly faded colonial glory likewise inspired reveries about earlier times, when the town inspired dreams about, if not actual journeys into, Tibet.

In the 1950s the town was a central place not only for trade, intellectual life and imaginations about Tibet, but also for political games. Wedged between Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet, the town was a place where regional and national interests intersected. Kalimpong can be called a 'geopolitical contact zone',⁹ and Prince Peter lived there at an extremely intense time during the Cold War, when foreigners were met with suspicion and distrust. Here congregated agents representing conflicting interests and powers: they were reporting to independent India, the United States, Great Britain and the People's Republic of China. The belief that there was an extraordinarily high density of foreign agents in Kalimpong even led Jawaharlal Nehru to call the town a 'nest of spies'.¹⁰ It also became a place for Tibetan and Chinese dissidents, as well as for the Tibetan guerrilla warriors who were planning their fight with help from the CIA. And it was in Kalimpong that Prince Peter's expedition had to wait for approval to enter Tibet.

Prince Peter reached Kalimpong in January 1950, but was not able to obtain the proper permits to proceed with the expedition into Tibet. It was not only the tense geopolitical situation that worked against him; his personal biography did as well. Three facets of his unusual background must be highlighted in this connection: (1) his royal biography: his cousin was the Greek King Paul of the Hellenes, at the time collaborating with the Americans;¹¹ (2) his military background: he had a career as a major in the Greek army and had formerly been stationed at Chiang Kai-shek's headquarters in Chungking,

China; and (3) his intimate relationship with Russian nationals, most notably his wife Irina and his close friend Roerich, who were under suspicion of being spies. These three aspects of his personal biography, at least as much as the expedition's scientific aims and its suspected potential political agenda, were stumbling blocks for Prince Peter. Now that Tibet was incorporated into the People's Republic of China, creating an extremely tense political situation in neighbouring India, the expedition had to stop even before it had entered Tibet. For this reason Prince Peter was soon forced to abandon his original goal of traversing the Tibetan Plateau.

Prince Peter now chose to settle with his wife in Kalimpong. At the beginning of their stay, they rented a house by the name of Tashiding from Jigme Palden Dorji, who in 1957 became Bhutan's first prime minister.¹² Later, in May 1954, they bought the mansion Krishnalok, which they refurbished into a luxurious home suitable for a European prince. Both houses were 'situated literally and metaphorically high above the rest of the town'.¹³ Prince Peter also had a stable of horses that he would ride when moving around in the mountainous terrain—when he was not using the car that he had driven all the way from London to the Himalayas, that is.

When we were in Kalimpong in March 2015 we met Monia, who, as a young girl, had known the prince. She readily told us about Prince Peter, whom she remembered as a generous, if somewhat eccentric, gentleman. He had, Monia recalled, a pet squirrel that always sat on his shoulder or in the pocket of his jacket. Prince Peter had named him Krishna, which also became the name of their home, Krishnalok. In their impressive villa they welcomed guests and held lavish parties for prominent members of Kalimpong society as well as for visitors from around the world. Here they created a cosmopolitan home, contributing to the cosmopolitanism of Kalimpong. The town became Prince Peter's base for seven years, and his stay there is today remembered by many of Kalimpong's residents—even those who were not yet born at the time of Prince Peter's stay here. He has become part of the town's history and part of the inhabitants' local memory. He was considered somewhat of a local legend, even though some of the people we talked to in 2015 were unsure of his exact national identity: 'You say that he was a Danish prince? Wasn't he a Greek prince? Or Yugoslav, as I recall?'

3. EXILE AND SCHOLARSHIP

When the so-called People's Liberation Army moved into eastern Tibet in October 1950, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama relocated to Dromo near the Indo-Tibetan border. This relocation caused panic among members of the Tibetan elite, who took their families and valuables and fled to safety in Kalimpong.

In his report from Kalimpong, dated 31 January 1951, Prince Peter related:

Recent events in Tibet, where a full-scale invasion by Chinese Communist troops developed in the early days of November, can be said to have made Kalimpong even more interesting. Wealthy Tibetans of the nobility began arriving almost immediately, bringing a considerable part of their belongings with them and settling down in the available houses in and around the town. Possibilities were thus opened for studying these people, and although this is obviously less satisfactory than getting to know them in their own setting, it is certainly better than the complete blank we drew when we were refused permission to enter Tibet. Being in need of ready cash, these Tibetans have moreover put many of their belongings up for sale. Facilities for purchasing typical articles very often of value have thus been created, an unhelped for opportunity to add to the collection of ethnographic artifacts of the National Museum, Copenhagen, of which full advantage should be taken.¹⁴

Prince Peter witnessed how Kalimpong's Tibetan presence amplified as the political turmoil grew in Tibet. Families of important Tibetan officials, merchants, pilgrims and a few Europeans who had stayed in Tibet now fled to Kalimpong. The Dalai Lama's mother and siblings, Reginald Fox, Heinrich Harter—they all came to Kalimpong. Prince Peter reported that the number of Tibetan residents in Kalimpong greatly increased.¹⁵ In the Darjeeling District, which included Kalimpong, as many as 10,000 Tibetans had registered with the Frontier Police in the first fifteen months following the introduction of compulsory registration on 15 January 1951, according to a news item in the *Himalayan Times*.¹⁶

While acknowledging the dire situation of many of the refugees, Prince Peter was nonetheless excited about the increasing number of Tibetans arriving in Kalimpong, as it created new opportunities for his ethnographic quest. Even as the Communist Chinese forces pushed their way into Tibet and closed the door to Europeans seeking adventure and scientific exploration, the steadily expanding stream of refugees into Kalimpong not only enlarged the pool of Tibetan artefacts that Prince Peter could buy, but also gave Prince Peter access to a diverse group of Tibetans that would have been difficult to access if Prince Peter's expedition had managed to move into Tibet. In other words, now that Prince Peter was trapped in Kalimpong, unable to penetrate into Tibet, he had to decide whether to abandon the expedition entirely or change its modus operandi. As the sole remaining member of the expedition

in Kalimpong, now promoted to its leader, Prince Peter chose to transform the expedition into a stationary field station from where he could document and collect tangible and intangible Tibetan cultural heritage. He had been commissioned to collect artefacts representative of various aspects of Tibetan lifeways for institutions in Denmark, including the Danish National Museum, while the Anthropological Laboratory at the University of Copenhagen requested that he take anthropometrical measurements of several thousand Tibetans.

Thus, what at first looked like a professional failure because Prince Peter could not meet the expedition's aim of traversing the Tibetan Plateau developed into an extremely favourable situation in which he managed to gain unparalleled access to informants. Tibetans from all walks of life, from all segments of society, and from all regions of Tibet now came to Kalimpong—and Prince Peter was there to meet them. This diversity is partly documented in the anthropometric data—the measurements of face and body dimensions that Prince Peter collected from 5,000 individuals who came to Kalimpong from Tibet. Among these were 4,924 Tibetans, 4,411 of whom were men and 513 women. For Prince Peter and his collaborator in Denmark, Professor Jørgen Balslev Jørgensen, the collection of material from 5,000 individuals constituted a 'gold mine of information about a now dispersed people who soon may well be wiped out'.¹⁷ The Tibetans he measured and interviewed came from all three of Tibet's major regions (Tib.: *choi kha gsum*): Utsang, Kham and Amdo. Prince Peter categorized the data that he collected along the lines of these three regional categories, which to his understanding comprised Tibet and constituted the three ethnic cohorts that made up the Tibetan population. In other words, Prince Peter adopted the emic categories that the Tibetans themselves used when talking about their country. Despite internal variations, Prince Peter and Balslev Jørgensen concluded that the Tibetans, in a physical-anthropological sense, constituted a single 'folk' inhabiting the entire Tibetan Plateau, and their more or less mongoloid features reflected that they lived in proximity to other peoples.

The idea of measuring Tibetans did not originate with Prince Peter, but was rather a task that he had been asked to perform on behalf of the University of Copenhagen. Prince Peter explained in a report from 1953 that the idea behind collecting such data was to compare Tibetans to the indigenous Inuit people of Greenland, which at the time was a North Atlantic colony in the Danish Realm.¹⁸

The University's Anthropological Laboratory, Copenhagen, Denmark, is particularly interested in obtaining this information

because of its studies of Greenland Eskimos. The latter's racial affinity with northern Asiatics is now established and research has been continued in Mongolia. It is thus also important to see if the latter links up with Tibet, where the people are undoubtedly mainly of Mongoloid stock. The connection is well illustrated by a Tibetan lama, to whom we showed pictures of an Eskimo woman with her three children, explaining, when we asked him whom these people were: "they are Kham-pa drok-pas (eastern Tibetan nomads)".¹⁹

To a certain extent Prince Peter took advantage of the Tibetans' very insecure and vulnerable situation and made them contribute to his research. According to Prince Peter's own report, he had no trouble at all in finding compliant Tibetans who were willing to participate in his research. On the contrary, if we are to believe his report from 1966 detailing his anthropometric studies, it was often a cheerful encounter when the prince investigated the shape of the nose, the length of the fingers, the body hair and so on of the Tibetans who agreed to participate.²⁰ Yet Prince Peter did realize that he was taking advantage of their insecurity in order to reach his own research goals: 'In the country itself it would probably not have been possible to achieve as much, since the population there probably never would have agreed to undergo such measurements.'²¹ Prince Peter exploited very special circumstances: everybody who came to Kalimpong had to register with the Frontier Police, and during its opening hours from 6:00 to 11:00 in the morning, they were also met by Prince Peter and his assistants. He had been allowed to set up his field station outside the police station so that the Tibetans who queued up to register at the same time also queued up to be measured and interviewed by Prince Peter.²² In that way, he was not only able to obtain the vast number of individual measurements commissioned by the University of Copenhagen, but also to get in contact with Tibetans who could help him obtain data for his own research interests, such as polyandry, as well as help him collect artefacts for his other Danish collaborator, the National Museum.

4. COLLECTIONS

Prince Peter's large-scale physical-anthropological investigation today represents a form of inquiry considered neither scientifically rigorous nor ethnically sound in its approach to human beings as objects of study. We may, however, acknowledge the depth of the information he collected, not least in light of the tremendous amount of associated inquiries Prince Peter carried out to support the 5,000 measurements. He interviewed many of the Tibetans, some of whom also agreed to submit to further examinations, such as thematic

apperception tests (TATs) and Rorschach tests. A few even agreed to allow the prince to make dental casts. Moreover, he collected 200 blood samples, as well as social and medical data from almost 2,000 Tibetans.²³ He took 3,000 photographs, including portraits accompanying the anthropometric data and other colour and black and white photographs, and shot a large amount of 16mm Kodachrome and black and white movie film. This visual material illustrates life in Kalimpong among the caravanserai, in the market, in the gardens of the nobility and in the Western expatriate community. He furthermore documented religious rituals, performances, football matches, school children's activities and so forth. This still- and moving photographic material offers a unique insight not only into life in Kalimpong and Tibetan culture, but also into the particular scientific gaze of Prince Peter. Furthermore, it represents important landmarks in his personal life, which was closely intertwined with his professional life.

From his now stationary field station in Kalimpong, Prince Peter worked hard to document Tibet. He learned the Tibetan language in order to be able to speak directly with his Tibetan contacts and informants. Prince Peter's reports home were written in the plural 'we', as Irina was his intrepid companion and assistant in the field. They wrote their ethnographic notes in six different languages: Danish, English, French, Greek, Russian and Tibetan. During their seven years in Kalimpong, they collected a broad spectrum of Tibetan culture. Tibetan-language manuscripts constitute one such major contribution. For the Royal Library in Denmark he bought the Tibetan Buddhist canon: the Lhasa Kangyur and the Narthang Tengyur, and other works such as the *Blue Annals*, the biography of Padmasambhava, the collected works of Tsongkhapa, the tales of Milarepa, and works belonging to different Tibetan traditions such as *bon*, *rrying ma*, *bka' brgyud* and *dzogs chen*.²⁴ He also collected other stories and biographies of Tibetans that he met, and collected information on topics ranging far and wide, from polyandry to oracles, aristocracy, Tibetan Muslims, naming traditions, sleeping positions, the abominable snowman and many others. He made sound recordings of their stories, cultures, customs and rituals. There are, for instance, sound recordings of *rrying ma* and *age lugs* ceremonies, Tibetan oracle trances, Lepcha songs, Tibetan new-year dances, the Gesar epic, Tibetan-language conversations, and popular songs sung by Tibetan girls. His strategy was to fan out as much as possible, and he applied to local authorities for permits to travel to the neighbouring regions of Sikkim and Nepal in order to make comparative observations. His applications were almost always rejected, but he was allowed to travel on two occasions: to Kathmandu in November 1951 and to the mountain passes Jelep-la and Nathula in May 1952. Thus he was not completely dependent upon contact with Tibetans travelling in and out of Kalimpong.

As noted above, an essential aspect of Prince Peter's work in Kalimpong consisted of purchasing Tibetan artefacts for the Ethnographic Collection at the Danish National Museum. He managed to collect more than 600 items that were shipped to Copenhagen. Prince Peter bought clothes and costumes, accessories, household items, icons and ritual objects from different social strata and regions of Tibet. For instance, he purchased several costumes, complete with accessories, worn by Lhasa's aristocracy, power holders, military personnel, monks, state oracles and other ritual specialists, as well as apparel that had belonged to nomads and the lower classes in Tibetan society. These artefacts represented a civilization that Prince Peter believed was threatened by progressing modernity and which now was occupied by a foreign and hostile power. Kalimpong had a long history as a place where collectors came to purchase Tibetan artefacts,²⁵ so Prince Peter did not have to rely exclusively on what the Tibetan refugees and travellers brought with them to India; he could also place orders with professional dealers.

Prince Peter purchased artefacts from people who were temporary refugees and guests in a town not far from the Tibetan border. Uncertainty regarding what was awaiting them and whether they would ever return to Tibet prompted some Tibetans to sell their belongings to Prince Peter. Through it all he was well aware that he was exploiting the dire situation that these people found themselves in. '[T]hings came our way under the stress of the prevailing political circumstances', he observed in his reports.²⁶ He did not seem to consider or question the potential ethical problems of his endeavours to any great extent, however. Rather, in the spirit of old-world ethnography, he perhaps took for granted the ethnographers' *right* to collect data and the need to 'rescue' the native culture. It was all in keeping with the times and his public persona. Yet in his reports Prince Peter also related specific incidents reflecting the social tragedy that forced the most desperate refugees to sell their belongings to him. For instance, he reported that he was able to obtain

an excellent set of jewels, from a distracted husband who had tragically seen his four children die of dysentery within a week, during an epidemic at Kyirongdzong in Tö, and subsequently lost his wife in childbirth at Yatung, in the Chumbi valley. He sold all her belongings in order to go on pilgrimage in India and make offerings to the gods for the happy reincarnation of her soul.²⁷

The most distressed refugees were desperate to exchange some of their belongings for cash in order to survive. Others were of the opinion that, in this new exile situation and in a modern world, they would no longer need

their traditional clothes, costumes and uniforms, so they might as well get something for their soon-to-be superfluous Tibetan outfits. Selling his set of costumes to Prince Peter, one wealthy Tibetan said, 'Probably in future we shall all be wearing khaki, so we might as well make money on our dresses while we can'.²⁴ The political situation was so difficult that many Tibetans had lost all hope that they would ever be able to return to Tibet, and would instead be forced to dwell on Indian land where the *phyu pa*—the traditional long-sleeved Tibetan robe suitable for cold winters on the plateau—would have to be replaced by the khakis worn by civilians and military personnel in India as well as in Europe and the United States. This suggested that traditional lifestyles belonged to the past. Prince Peter was more than willing to relieve them of these redundant clothes. In 1952, when reporting on the stiff prices he had to pay for the clothing and jewels purchased from the Lhasa nobility who were waiting out the storm in Kalimpong, Prince Peter added that their belongings were 'unique specimens which will no doubt now go completely out of use'.²⁸ He tried to collect and salvage whatever he and his Danish collaborators found valuable and representative of Tibetan civilization. In other instances, people approached Prince Peter unsolicited and offered to sell him some of their belongings. For instance, the complete costume worn by an oracle and now housed in the Ethnographic Collection at the National Museum in Copenhagen came into Prince Peter's possession when the emissary of Nechung, the Tibetan state oracle, approached him and offered a complete set of his clothes.²⁹ In such situations his contacts had the upper hand in the negotiations and often demanded prices that seemed unreasonably high to Prince Peter.

Many of the Tibetans who sought refuge in Kalimpong in the aftermath of the Dalai Lama's relocation to the Indo-Tibetan border in December 1950 went back to Tibet when the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa on 23 July 1951, after half a year in near-exile. On 9 April 1952, the *Himalayan Times* reported that approximately one hundred Tibetans were crossing the eastern border into India every day, and about half of them returned home.³¹ Thus, Prince Peter lost access to many potential informants and their belongings, and thereafter had to work primarily with the Tibetans permanently residing in Kalimpong and the merchants, muleteers, holiday-goers and pilgrims who made up the seasonal cross-border traffic. Prince Peter was furthermore met by increasing resistance and opposition from the Indian and west Bengali authorities, who worried about his activities in a geopolitically tense Kalimpong. Yet he persistently navigated—and tried to improve—the challenging conditions under which he had to live and work, and he continued to collect anthropometric data, accounts and artefacts. Nevertheless, back in Denmark, the chairman of

the expedition's committee, H. R. H. Prince Axel, decided that Prince Peter should pack up the expedition.³² Prince Peter lamented this decision, as he was becoming more optimistic about the expedition's prospects and felt he had already proven that, even under the most challenging of circumstances, he could undertake important research. In his sixth expedition report, written on 31 January 1955, Prince Peter declared the expedition 'dead' and stated that from then on he would undertake the work 'privately', based at Krishnalok, his newly acquired and refurbished house in Kalimpong. He refused to give up his ethnographic explorations in what he considered an extremely important Asian frontier region.³³ In 1956, only a year after he pledged to continue the expedition work privately, he and Irina were evicted from Krishnalok by the west Bengali authorities, who had withdrawn their residency permit. The couple left Kalimpong for good in February 1957.

5. A VIEW FROM DENMARK

In Kalimpong, then, Prince Peter's academic pursuits got entangled with the political drama and the social tragedy resulting from the incursion of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) into Tibet, and this fundamentally influenced his future academic and personal trajectory. In a Danish context, moreover, it was his interaction with Tibetans in Kalimpong that initiated a special Tibetan-Danish relationship. Prince Peter became deeply involved in the Tibetan cause after having witnessed the political struggles playing out in Kalimpong and after hearing Tibetan testimonies about how the PLA forced its way into Tibet and pushed Tibetans out of their country. Back home in Europe, Prince Peter used his privileged position to work for the Tibetan cause, not least by engaging with the media. In the fall of 1959, for example, when the Dalai Lama's older brother Thubten Jigme Norbu was his guest at Lille Bernstorff, the Danish home of Prince Peter and Irina in Gentofte, Prince Peter arranged an interview with the newspaper *Dagens Nyheder* to talk about the Tibetan situation. The interview was published under the headline, 'The Dalai Lama's brother says: China is exterminating Tibetans'.³⁴

Prince Peter also worked for the Tibetan cause as the president of the Nordic Council for Tibetan Assistance, which in the years 1960-1979 arranged for the education and residency of one hundred Tibetans in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The Dalai Lama himself requested Prince Peter's help. Regarding the migration of Tibetan families to Scandinavia, the minutes of a meeting of the Nordic Council for Tibetan Assistance record: 'Splitting the Tibetans up into smaller groups and transforming them into so-called Botias, as has already happened in places in northern India, goes against the Dalai Lama's wishes... The Dalai Lama wrote to Prince Peter and to the Swiss authorities and asked

whether a larger group of adult Tibetans could be relocated to Scandinavia and Switzerland'.³⁵ The term 'Botias' refers to people in the Himalayas who are believed to originate from Tibet and possess Tibetan ethnic and linguistic traits, but who do not identify as Tibetan. They are invoked here as an example of what can happen if Tibetans do not live together and do not take care to preserve their culture when living outside of Tibet. It can therefore be seen as in compliance with the Dalai Lama's anti-assimilation strategy when the Council investigated the possibility of creating larger Tibetan communities abroad and even looked into sending a large group of Tibetan refugees to Greenland, but decided that the conditions there were too harsh. Instead, the Council considered sending Tibetans to Norwegian farms, as it believed that for the Tibetans 'it would be necessary to keep yaks'.³⁶ It is thought-provoking that Prince Peter and the Nordic Council for Tibetan Assistance sought to help the Tibetan refugees achieve their stated goal, which was to resist integration or assimilation into their guest countries. In fact, Prince Peter strove to support the Tibetans' efforts to preserve their old customs, culture and religion.³⁷ The reports and correspondence suggest that Tibetans' relationship to rugged nature and yak husbandry were perceived as crucial for such a preservation project to be successful. Hence, Norway and Greenland were considered as possible options.³⁸ Prince Peter believed that it would be possible to preserve a Buddhist society in a Scandinavian country, and he looked towards Philadelphia in the United States, where the Buddhist Kalmyks 'still had their own "gumpa" and had succeeded in retaining their distinctiveness for 300 years'.³⁹ Prince Peter believed that the Tibetans' 'strong religiosity' would allow them to retain their distinctiveness if they were to relocate to Scandinavia. Prince Peter also foresaw the global importance of preserving Tibetan culture. In his capacity as the president of Nordic Council for Tibetan Assistance, he wrote to U Thant, the General Secretary of the United Nations, asking the United Nations to intervene and save the Tibetans. The letter, dated 20 September 1971, ends with the following appeal:

Through this work among the young refugees we have learnt to understand and appreciate the people of Tibet. Their ancient culture, and their persistent strivings to keep it alive, have made a strong impression on our northern countries. The personal qualities of the Tibetan, his love of work and his efficiency, his whole way of life have commanded respect for his people. In the present situation the Tibetan risks losing his particular characteristics, his soul, his face. We appeal to the nations of the world for their support of this people with a great culture, who have so much to give the world, if only they are allowed to develop it.⁴⁰

Prince Peter's appeal shows his strongly felt bonds with the Tibetan people, whom he had come to care for deeply during his seven years in Kalimpong. He felt it was not only his duty, as a person and as an anthropologist now safely located in Denmark, to help them in their struggles, but also his privilege. Prince Peter left Kalimpong in 1957, but Kalimpong and its Tibetan inhabitants never left Prince Peter; they travelled back to Europe with him, personally and professionally.

Prince Peter's seven years in Kalimpong fundamentally influenced his future academic endeavours. The Tibetan exile that Prince Peter indirectly documented, which had already started a decade before the Fourteenth Dalai Lama sought asylum in India, meant new knowledge about Tibet. This knowledge is invaluable to research not only in Denmark today, but to anyone with an interest in this turbulent and contentious period in Tibetan history. The richness, variety and sheer quantity of artefacts, anthropometry and ethnographic accounts acquired from his base in Kalimpong from January 1950 to February 1957 testify to the enormous personal and professional dedication and productivity of Prince Peter. Drawing on his expedition materials he published a series of articles of great thematic breadth. When Prince Peter returned to Europe, he finished his dissertation about polyandry, based on his fieldwork in the Himalayas and southern India, and received his PhD in anthropology from the London School of Economics in 1959 with a groundbreaking thesis about polyandry (published in 1963). The following year he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Copenhagen. Yet despite these accomplishments, he was never offered an academic position in Denmark or any other country.

Nonetheless, through his great dedication to Tibet research, Prince Peter came to have a decisive influence on Tibetology in Denmark.⁴¹ There had been Danish research into Buddhist manuscripts at the Royal Library in Copenhagen prior to Prince Peter's contributions; the first manuscripts were brought to Denmark by the language scholar and founder of comparative linguistics, Rasmus Rask (1787–1832). Professor Kaare Grønbech established the Central Asia Institute in the late 1940s at the University of Copenhagen and introduced Tibetan language studies in the beginning of the 1950s. But it was the now famous collection of Tibetan manuscripts that Prince Peter brought to the Royal Library that provided the vital stimulus for Tibetan Studies proper. Eric Haarth, a professor of the history of religions, became the caretaker of the manuscripts at the Royal Library. He and Prince Peter invited two Tibetan scholars to catalogue the Tibetan collection. Appointed by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and, with financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation, two Tibetan monks—Bamrin Tulku Thubten Dadak (1919–1978) and Tarab

Tulku Ngawang Losang (1934–2004)—were invited to Copenhagen to work at the library for three years from July 1962 to June 1965.⁴² The latter, Tarab Tulku, became an important consultant to the National Museum, providing information on the uses of the artefacts that Prince Peter had brought to Denmark from Kalimpong. Tarab Tulku also meticulously worked on cataloguing the collection at the Royal Library (the catalogue was published in 1999), and he taught Tibetan language and later philosophy at the University of Copenhagen. He ended up staying in Copenhagen for the rest of his life.⁴³

Thus, we consider Prince Peter a founding father of the study of Tibetology at the University of Copenhagen, despite the fact that he was never employed at the university. Prince Peter is part of our creation myth, and his personal and professional story continues to be an enormous inspiration, as well as an important responsibility, for our research today. Tibetology became institutionally embedded in the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, a department constituted more than ten years ago when twenty-eight smaller disciplines were brought together under one roof to focus on the languages, cultures and religions of the non-Western world. In many ways, these various scholarly disciplines reflect the academic breadth and vision with which Prince Peter met the world. When we were naming our new department in 2004, we even considered naming it after Prince Peter, who personifies the passionate quest for knowledge about 'foreign' worlds and peoples. Prince Peter himself, as noted, never taught at the university (apart from the occasional talk), nor did he partake in the work of the library. He nonetheless left an important legacy, not least through the Tibetan artefacts, anthropometry and accounts that have been the focus not only of his own research, but also that of other scholars. His work, his commitment, his spirit of adventure and the collections he brought back continue to help us understand the riches of Tibetan culture and history today.⁴⁴

Upon his return to Europe, Prince Peter travelled and gave lectures at universities, explorers' clubs and the like, and published many articles with a broad audience in mind. In his professionally active period between 1935 and 1980, he published six books and more than sixty articles, and he made sixteen anthropological films. About half of his publications were released in the 1950s, which was his most productive decade, corresponding to the time when he was based in Kalimpong. Prince Peter's scientific work has had the most impact within Tibetan studies in general and polyandry studies in particular. It was not until 1979, a year before his death in 1980 in London, that Prince Peter was finally allowed to travel into Tibet.

Notes

1. Prince Peter 1963, 581.
2. While this article introduces some of the many issues involved in a 'stationary expedition', please refer to our forthcoming article, 'From Expedition to Fieldwork Mode: Prince Peter's Stationary Expedition in Kalimpong, 1950-57', for an in-depth discussion of the concept itself and its implications. Prince Peter's stationary expedition is also discussed in Koktvedgaard Zeitzen and Brox 2016.
3. See for instance Prince Peter (1952; 1953a, b). More details about rescue anthropology as a paradigm and expedition as a rescue mission can be found in Brox and Koktvedgaard Zeitzen (forthcoming).
4. Brauen (2004). For a discussion of these conflicting accounts of Tibet, see Bishop (1989, 1993); Lopez (1998).
5. Prince Peter (1953a, 13). Translated from Danish. All translations are by the authors.
6. See also Pedersen (2005) and Koktvedgaard Zeitzen (2016) for discussions of Prince Peter's relationship to Freud and his interest in polyandry.
7. Koktvedgaard Zeitzen (2008); Prince Peter (1963).
8. Prince Peter (1953a, 6). Translated from Danish.
9. Brox and Koktvedgaard Zeitzen (forthcoming).
10. Nehru (1959, 18-19).
11. Prince Peter (1953b, 10; 1954a, 232). See also Pedersen (2006) for an insight into Prince Peter's relationship to the Greek royal family.
12. Personal communication with Paljor Jigmie Dorji, the eldest son of Jigme Palden Dorji. The west Bengali authorities have now transformed this English country-style house, Tashiding, into a hotel for tourists, allowing visitors to experience some of yesteryear's colonial atmosphere.
13. Brox and Koktvedgaard Zeitzen (forthcoming).
14. Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia (1951, 1).
15. *Ibid.*, 6.
16. *Himalayan Times* (1952).
17. Prince Peter and Balslev Jørgensen (1966, 6).
18. Greenland remains part of the Danish Realm, but was granted home rule in 1979 and self-government in 2008.
19. Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia (1953, 6-7).
20. Prince Peter and Balslev Jørgensen (1966, 9).
21. Prince Peter (1953a, 12). Translated from Danish.
22. Prince Peter and Balslev Jørgensen (1966, 7).
23. Prince Peter (1954, 234).
24. For a complete list of the books acquired by Prince Peter, see Hartmut Buescher and Tarab Tulku's *Catalogue of Tibetan Manuscripts and Xylographs* (2000). Cf. also Prince Peter's article (1955) about the books that he purchased from Kalimpong up to 1954.
25. Harris (2013).
26. Prince Peter (1954, 235).
27. *Ibid.*
28. Prince Peter (1953b, 9).
29. Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia (1952, 4).
30. Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia (1954, 7).
31. *Himalayan Times* (1952).
32. Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia (1955, 10).
33. *Ibid.*, 15.
34. *Dagens Nyheder* (1959). Translated from Danish.
35. Minutes of the meeting of the Nordic Council for Tibetan Assistance on 29 November 1966. Etnografisk Samlings Beretningsarkiv. Translated from Danish.
36. *Ibid.*
37. See Brox (2006) for a discussion of cultural preservation discourses in Tibetan exile.
38. Prince Peter's deep involvement with the resettlement of Tibetan refugees is evident in the minutes of the Nordic Council for Tibetan Assistance meetings as well as in the communication between Prince Peter and Ilya Tolstoy. In the beginning of the 1960s, the Tolstoy Foundation investigated the possibility of resettling Tibetan refugees in Alaska and concluded in reports dated September 1963 and February 1964 that Alaska would not be suitable for the Tibetans. Etnografisk Samlings Beretningsarkiv.

39. Minutes of the meeting of the Nordic Council for Tibetan Assistance on 29 November 1966. Etnografisk Samlings Beretningsarkiv. Translated from Danish.
40. Etnografisk Samlings Beretningsarkiv.
41. We owe the following history of Tibetan Studies in Denmark largely to Jan-Ulrich Sobisch.
42. The correspondence between Prince Peter and the Rockefeller Foundation, as well as notes and impressions about the two Tibetan scholars who resided in Denmark, are related in the papers collected at the Etnografisk Samlings Beretningsarkiv.
43. One of the authors, Trine Brox, had the pleasure of attending TarabTulku's classes when she started studying Tibetology in September 1994 at the University of Copenhagen. Besides Tarab Tulku, Per K. Sørensen, Flemming Faber, Hartmut Buescher and Anne Burchardt were at different times responsible for teaching Tibet-related courses at the University of Copenhagen. Tibetology was upgraded in 2000 with the appointment of a full-time position (filled at the time by Christian Wedemeyer, who is presently at the University of Chicago) and in 2003 with the appointment of an associate professor, Jan-Ulrich Sobisch. In 2009, Trine Brox was hired as assistant professor (since 2014 associate professor), with a joint appointment in Tibetology and China Studies. At the time of writing (spring 2016), there is a moratorium on enrolment of new students in the Tibetology study programme. It is uncertain what the future holds for the education and recruitment of new Tibet scholars in Copenhagen.

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