

OXFORD



FORGOTTEN FRIENDS

*Monks, Marriages, and Memories of
Northeast India*



INDRANI CHATTERJEE

FORGOTTEN FRIENDS

*Monks, Marriages, and Memories of
Northeast India*

Precolonial Northeast India assimilated within itself a host of monastic traditions—Buddhist, Vaisnava, Saiva, Tantric, and Sufi—and was home to women-centric communities, which dominated the political, social, and economic life.

This book traces the now-forgotten relationships between the distinct languages, faiths, monastic traditions, and communities of this region. It shows how war, changes in revenue regimes, and the growth of the plantation economies in the nineteenth century fragmented this landscape and strained these relationships.

Chatterjee argues that the representation of this landscape in the writings of colonial and postcolonial historians continued the erasure of erstwhile monastic relationships across the historic geographic order, and suppressed women's histories. On a deeper, philosophical level, it explores the nature of history itself, through 'forgetting'.

An intellectual *tour de force*, this book will be indispensable for students and scholars of Northeast India, modern Indian history, and religious studies.



Indrani Chatterjee has taught at the Department of History, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, and at Miranda House, New Delhi. From September 2013, she is going to teach at the University of Texas at Austin.

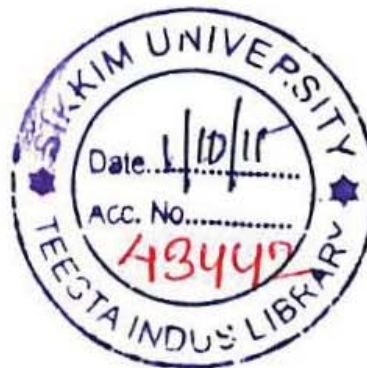
Jacket illustration: Terracotta slab embedded in the stupa excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India at Pilak, Tripura. Courtesy of the author.

Author photograph: Courtesy of the author.

Forgotten Friends

*Monks, Marriages, and Memories of
Northeast India*

INDRANI CHATTERJEE



OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Call No.: 294.095416
Acc No.: 43442 CHA/F

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in India by
Oxford University Press
YMCA Library Building, 1 Jai Singh Road, New Delhi 110 001, India

© Oxford University Press 2013

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

First Edition published in 2013
Second impression 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by licence, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above

The international boundaries, coastlines, denominations, and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply judgement on the part of Oxford University Press concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such information. For present boundaries and other details, please refer to maps authenticated by the Survey of India.

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

ISBN 13: 978-0-19-808922-3
ISBN 10: 0-19-808922-8

Typeset in Adobe Garamond Pro 11/13.2
by The Graphics Solution, New Delhi 110 092
Printed in India at Anvi Composers, New Delhi 110 063

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
Introduction	1
1. Monastic Governance, 'Geographicity', and Gender	36
2. Eighteenth-century Shifts of Monastic Governments	81
3. Political Ecology and Reconstituted 'Hindu' Marriage	127
4. Translations of Adherence: From 'Feudalism' and 'Slavery' to 'Savagery'	173
5. A Fraternity of Tea and the Politics of Monastic Friendship	232
6. Undoing Gender? Restoring of Motherhood and Merit	287
Conclusion: Rule by Ethnology—Forgetting Histories and Households	339
<i>Bibliography</i>	372
<i>Glossary</i>	420
<i>Index</i>	425
<i>About the Author</i>	453

Figures

1.1 Physical Contours of Eastern India	37
1.2 Sharecropper's Buddhist Temple, Pilak, Tripura	40
3.1 Navadvip Khunti	130
3.2 Follower of Khunti, Potrait and Image, Navadvip	131
5.1 Mary Winchester in 1871	265
7.1 Modern Political Boundaries of Eastern India	362

Abbreviations

ABHS	American Baptist Historical Society
AGG	Agent of the Governor General
AGG, NEF	Agent of the Governor General in the North-East Frontier
<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
Asst.	Assistant
BC	Board's Collection
<i>BDRC</i>	<i>Bengal District Records, Chittagong</i>
BFP	Bengal Foreign Proceedings
BJC	Bengal Judicial Consultations
BJP	Bengal Judicial Proceedings
BOR	Board of Revenue
BPC	Bengal Political Consultations
BPP	Bengal Political Proceedings
BRC	Bengal Revenue Consultations
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>CDR</i>	<i>Kachar District Records</i> (comp. Debabrata Datta, ed. Sunanda Datta, Kolkata, 2007)
CMA	Church Missionary Archives, Wales.
CNISSAS	Centre for Northeast India, South and Southeast Asia Studies
Collr.	Collector
Commr.	Commissioner
Comp.	Compiled
CSSEAS	Centre for the Study of South-East Asian Societies
<i>CSSH</i>	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>
DHAS	Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies
Dy.	Deputy
Ed.	Editor
<i>EI</i>	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i>

<i>EPW</i>	<i>Economic and Political Weekly</i>
FPP	Foreign and Political Proceedings
GG	Governor General
GOB	Government of Bengal
GOI	Government of India
ICSBA	International Centre for the Study of Bengal Art
<i>IESHR</i>	<i>Indian Economic and Social History Review</i>
<i>IHRC</i>	<i>Indian Historical Records Commission</i>
IOR	India Office Records
Islam <i>BDR</i>	Sirajul Islam (ed.), <i>Bangladesh District Records: Chittagong vol. 1, 1760–1787</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JAS</i>	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
<i>JASB</i>	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JARS</i>	<i>Journal of the Assam Research Society</i>
LP	T. H. Lewin Papers, Senate House, London
<i>MAS</i>	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
NAI	National Archives of India, Delhi
NEF	North-East Frontier
NLW	National Library of Wales, Aberstywyth
OIOC	Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library
<i>PP</i>	<i>Parliamentary Papers</i>
<i>RDR</i>	<i>Rangpur District Records</i> , Walter K. Firminger (ed.)
<i>SDR</i>	<i>Sylhet District Records</i> , Walter K. Firminger (ed.)
<i>SRCB</i>	<i>Select Records of Cooch Behar, vol. 2</i> . Calcutta, 1869.

Acknowledgements

A FERRY-RIDE ON THE BRAHMAPUTRA sparked off this book. I was visiting Gauhati for its archives, but had decided to take a detour to study the architectural design of a temple on an island off the river. I was unaware that my unpreparedness for such a visit struck other passengers on the ferry as odd until a matron, leading a festive group of young male and female weavers, took me under her protective wing. When we got off the ferry, her group of pilgrims offered their fruit and sweets to the priest within the temple. I had nothing to contribute. But the matron quickly gave me work to do—‘click photographs!’—a place to stand in when the offerings were given to the priest, and entered my name alongside those of the other members of the group asking for the deity’s blessings. The names, I noticed only then, all ended with ‘Bodo’. Even though I had brought nothing to the ritual, they gave me large shares of the fruit and sweets that had been returned by the deity as ‘blessings’. Their kindness, unremarkable to those who are not attuned to the social and political hierarchies of the subcontinent, shamed me out of my intellectual and political smugness and torpor. Even if she never reads this book that resulted from her generosity, I thank Rupa Bodo for that instructive gesture of inclusion.

A chain of old and new friends have guided me at every step. Monisha Behal, better known as Ben, assured me a place to stay in Gauhati, and put me in touch with her network of friends and family in many parts of northeastern India. Along with Oli and SP, marvelous and caring hosts in Gauhati, I am especially grateful for the help and sustenance organized by Dingi Sailo, her entire family, Ramdini and Dinkima and everybody who travelled with me between Aizawl and Siaha. I thank Pu T.K., Nonai, and Ma Puia for accompanying me on a hair-raising journey up the hillside to Serkawr. However, I remain especially grateful to the Lha Pi

family for their hospitality at the end of that journey—and for permission to photograph their historic home in the hills, their library, and records. I also thank Kalyani Das and Debashish Das for sheltering us in Kalyani and for accompanying me on one of the more daring of my intellectual journeys through the archives and institutions of Navadvip. Their generosity led me to the doors of the Manipuri dham there and to the custodian of the deity (sebait) Tikendrajit, who gave me permission to photograph the metal ‘licence’ that has been reproduced in this book. I also thank the lineage of Bhattacharyya purohits who spent long hours narrating the histories of each of the sites across Manipur and Tripura for me, for explanations and commentary on the signs and symbols of Buddhist awakening at a formally Vaisnava site. I especially thank them and the sebait, Rajkumar Tikendrajit Simha, for permissions to photograph all the images within.

My undergraduate and graduate students at Rutgers University have borne up with my ideas, tests, and arguments patiently through the years. They are the reason that I have tried to write simply. They are the reason that I wish to write at all. My colleagues in the department, especially Temma Kaplan, Julie Livingston, and Bonnie Smith read through and commented on various segments of drafts. Mia Bay, Paul Clemens, Barbara Cooper, Samantha Kelly, Jennifer Jones, Cami Townsend, and Seth Koven provided dollops of emotional support in the department. I have learnt a great deal from them, as I have from the tireless efforts on my behalf by colleagues in the Interlibrary Loan department of the Alexander Library and members of the Art Library at Rutgers University. This hard-working group of librarians has been heroic in securing copies of books and rare articles for me. I could not have studied what I did without them.

My warm thanks also to a vast network of generous colleagues outside my own university. I have received gifts of books and articles from people across such a wide range of places that I am deeply humbled by them. I wish to acknowledge in particular Robert Linrothe, who gave me his marvelous and illustrated books on Bengal art and archaeology in addition to reading and commenting on early drafts of the first two chapters. Paul Nietupski found and sent me all the articles that I could ever hope to read and digest on Himalayan geographies and monastic regimes. Jacques Leider found manuscripts

that would be of special interest and sent them online to me. Elliot Sperling encouraged me by sending along his own unpublished work, as did William Pinch, Dick Eaton, and David Curley.

I also received a great deal of support from South Asian feminist scholars who convened the annual Feminist Pre-Conference at Madison and constituted themselves as my 'sisters under the sari'. I owe a special vote of thanks to Anjali Arondekar, Geeta Patel, and Ramya Sreenivasan for many hours of scintillating conversation; to Minnie Sinha, Barbara Ramusack, and Geraldine Forbes for wise counsel on many aspects of institutional life. Anjali and Ramya bravely committed to reading drafts and gave me the critical comments that only 'sisters' can. I thank them for keeping me honest at all times. I particularly thank Anannya Dasgupta who turns everything she touches into a thing of beauty; she turned a jumble of words into a chapter once and showed me that it could be done. Ramya too committed to reading drafts even as she moved jobs, homes, and cities—and remained a stalwart friend of the project despite all that.

A fellowship at the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton and another at the Agrarian Studies Program at Yale University allowed me freedom from teaching commitments and a lively and engaged environment in which to first conceive and then execute different segments of the manuscript. Julia Thomas and Bruce Grant were especially generous in their engagement at Princeton. Sincere thanks go to Kay Mansfield, administrator extraordinaire and friend of scholars at the Agrarian Studies Program, K. Sivaramakrishnan and Jim Scott for cordially nourishing open-ended debate. The most sincerely felt thanks also to Kasturi Gupta, South Asian Studies Council at Yale, for being the centre of home, hospitality, warmth and care for all visitors from South Asia as well as from other American universities to New Haven. Her warm hospitality and care ensured that there was enough laughter with which to recover from bad days.

My heartfelt thanks go to my parents who taught me to resist fear and welcome the unknown and invisible. I am grateful that they let me be curious and that they remained curious about the strange world I inhabited in my work. I am also grateful that they shared at least one trip to a Buddhist site with me. Watching them as they responded to archaeological finds of stones and metal objects in a humble caretaker's trunk in an on-site hut, as well as to Buddhist

populations described as 'tribal' in anthropological scholarship, were clarifying moments. I thank them for that memory of Pilak and Unakoti, as much as I remain grateful to Rong-phru-sa and his community for their tenderness and conversation.

I have received so much from Sumit Guha that it is hard to know how to describe it all. Over the years, he has lifted a great deal of responsibility from my shoulders, and encouraged me to explore parts of a world that had been hitherto shut off to us. I thank him for accompanying me also on one of my trips; his presence made the visit to the Buddhist stupa at Baxanagar and its environs especially memorable. In addition to that, he has endured additional hours of intellectual work debating the admissibility of this or that body of evidence, the need for additional language-training, running his razor-sharp eye over my draft chapters. His commitment to the world of learning has been an inspiration. I hope this book compensates in some way for all that he has endured in its making.

However, all things in my life have begun with one good woman and been completed by other expert women. This monograph too would not be complete without the expert cartographic skills of Lois Kain. Nor would it have been clarified without the compassionate expertise of Margaret Case. I thank both women profusely. I remain responsible for all the failures and shortcomings, and would like to ask for my readers' pardon for such in advance.

Introduction

THE BACKBONE OF THIS BOOK is a political and economic order centring on monastic teachers in a variety of disciplines—Buddhist, Vaisnava, Saiva, Tantric, and Sufi. These teachers and their disciples, students, and adherents constituted a basic unit of political society in precolonial India, which lasted in ever-attenuated forms into the twentieth century. Among other things, these monastic teachers and students performed the social labour of evaluating, corroborating, transmitting and storing information; both hermit-like and collective monasticism implied a broad-based organization of life common to many groups in the subcontinent.

Among these, the Sufi, Vaisnava, and Saiva lineages of the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries have received serious historical attention.¹ Such attention has been withheld, however, from the Bon Tantric and Mahayana Buddhist lineages that occupied the same terrain.² Moreover, the particular relationships that existed between Buddhists and non-Buddhist others—such as the Sufi or Vaisnava lineages around them—have also been ignored. This deficit is only partially due to post-nationalist distance from the material archaeological and numismatic remains, records, and lived practices in large swaths of the area.³ The oversight of collocated Buddhist and Bon figures is more likely based on a linear and largely Christian logic of time and history. In its Protestant and post-Reformation aspects, such logic implied the absolute uniformity of the faith of subjects and their sovereigns. Moreover, British colonial scholars in the early nineteenth century constructed a chronology in which a ‘Hindu epoch’ was followed by a ‘Muslim one’ and so on. When some texts in the same century were found to describe Buddhist thought and practice, colonial scholars retrofitted Buddhism into this chronology.⁴ Accordingly, Buddhism was believed to have ‘died’ in India and lived outside it after the thirteenth century.⁵ This view

has been spectacularly influential in shaping postcolonial Indian historical scholarship, especially of eastern India.⁶

Elsewhere, scholars of Tibetan-language records have, however, found that Tantric Buddhist and Bon teachers—disciples and adherent households continued to thrive on the plains of eastern India long after the arrival of Central Asian Sufis.⁷ This was especially true of places along the foothills of the Himalayas (Kamarupa, western Assam), but it was also true of places further south, such as Kumilla (centre of colonial Tippera, historically Tipura, transcribed as Tripura in modern India), Chittagong, and the region that modern maps identify as Arakan. Sometime between the seventh and tenth centuries, this entire area had constituted the southern part of a Tibetan empire, whose southern border ran along the river Ganges on the Indian plains.⁸ In the sixteenth century, the itinerary of a Tantric Buddhist monk, included long stays at monastic centres in the highlands of ‘Bhangala or Tipura’, ‘Ra’kan (Arakan) and Assam’.⁹ This teacher’s disciple also wrote a history of the extent of Vajrayana (Tantric) Buddhist settlements in the same region, whose populations he referred to as ‘Ku-ki’.¹⁰ In classical and standard Tibetan, ‘sKu’ (pronounced ‘Ku’) is shorthand for the Buddha’s body, and ‘sKyed’ (pron. ‘Kye’) a reference to birth.¹¹ Together, the term stands for the birth of incarnate Buddhas. By such use, the monk-historian linked the presence of Muslim Central Asian armies (Turuskas) on the plains with the re-invigoration of Buddhist teaching. Monks from Magadha, he wrote, ‘returned’ to their original homes; the distinction between the different Buddhist teaching traditions was erased and these places were sanctified as homes of reincarnated Buddhas (‘Ku-ki’)

Such accounts were taken seriously by literate Bengali-speaking men in the late nineteenth century. It was reflected in their sense of social geography. Sarat Chandra Das, who visited some Tibetan Buddhist sites during these years, thus provided three different meanings for a literary term such as ‘Kamboja’. The first identified it with a region called ‘Upper and Eastern Lushai Hill Tracts lying between Burma and Bengal called Koki land’; a second identified it with ‘southeast of Burma and Siam, where the Buddhists of Magadha had taken shelter during the conquest of their country by the Mahomedans in 1202 A.D.’¹² The third identified the term

with people from Inner Asia. This expansive sensibility survived till the 1930s, when the historian Benoychandra Sen situated Bengal and Kamarupa (part of modern Assam) within a 'Tibeto-Chinese' Kamboja as well.¹³

This study also presumes upon the expansive temporal and geographical sensibility of the monk-historian as well as that of the late nineteenth-century Bengali-speaking and Tibetan-reading male. The territorial spread inferred by terms such as 'Tipura' and 'Rakhan' is enormous. 'Tipura' referred to Bhatgaon (eastern Nepal); it was the site of the palace of the Saiva lord Anandadeva (1147–67).¹⁴ It was a name also associated with a goddess, Tripurasundari, whose temple in the Tibukche Tol was the centre of the town. Descendants of Anandadeva were identified as 'Tripuri' and alternated in the control of the valley with another family, the Bhonta, with its centre at Banepa (in the east of the valley). Their power-sharing arrangements were disrupted at the end of thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, when Tipura (Bhatgaon) was repeatedly attacked, with the connivance of its rivals, by Tirhutiya (from plains of Bihar) forces established in the Terai (foothills).¹⁵ Whether as fugitives or as new members of the Tirhut forces, the Tipuria followed Saiva ascetic warriors who travelled between the temples dedicated to the wealthy Visvanath on the plains and Pasupatinath on the mountains.¹⁶ After the Sultan of Bengal raided Bhatgaon in 1349, a female regent in Kathmandu shored up the lineage by arranging a marriage between her seven-year-old granddaughter and an initiated Saiva, Jayasthiti Malla, from the Gangetic plains.¹⁷ The erstwhile dual rule of Tipura-Bhonta was transformed into a form of triple rule, identified as Malla rule within the valley.

Himalayan Malla were important for the history of eastern India for many reasons. At least one of the branches of the Malla dominated a region called 'Khasa or Ya-tshe' in western Tibet between the end of the thirteenth and through the fourteenth century. This region is now divided up between the modern Indian states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Western Nepal, Tibet and the Republic of China. However, in the thirteenth-fifteenth century, these Malla were both lay patrons of, and often ordained monks in, a lineage of Buddhists whose main monastery was at a place called Sa-skya [pronounced Sakya].¹⁸ The Sakya Buddhist hierarchs in turn had been

significant mediators in the thirteenth century vis-à-vis Inner Asian armies led by Mongol commanders. Sakya Buddhist proximity to Mongol commanders enabled them to flourish, sometimes in rivalry with other Buddhist ordination lineages in the Kailasa-Mansarovar region, such as the Kagyupa located at monasteries such as Digungpa (in Tibetan, bKa'-rGyud-pa at 'Bri-gung-pa) or another lineage of Buddhist called the Kadampa.¹⁹ The co-dependence of monastic lineages and laymen's militias shaped the histories of war on both sides of the Himalayas. The ancient Tibetan tantric lineages (called the Nyingma) had developed a reputation for battlefield sorcery. As a scholar puts it, no Himalayan Buddhist lineage was entirely devoid of its own arsenal of harmful magic and functionaries.²⁰ This must also be kept in mind when speaking of eastern Bengal in the same centuries. For Malla forces were said to have entered Magadha and then reached Gangasagar in Bengal in the fifteenth century. In the early seventeenth century, Mughal armies seeking to oust Afghan sultans from eastern India confronted Tibetan-speaking Bon and Buddhist Tantrics in the same area.²¹ Together, this evidence suggests that scholars who argue for the 'Tibetanisation' of regions in the Brahmaputra valley only in the seventeenth century may have underestimated the historical depth of the process.²² This monograph attempts to understand why, and to trace its consequences for a postcolonial historiography and politics of the region.

It proceeds by resurrecting an outline of relationships that once linked the coastal plains with the Himalayan societies. It then lays out the conditions that induced postcolonial historians to ignore or forget these relationships. It ends with both explanations for, and implications of, such forgetting in the postcolonial historiography of gender, geography and memory in and across eastern India.

MONASTIC TEACHERS AS FORGOTTEN FRIENDS AND 'GOVERNORS'

Foremost among the forgotten relationships were those that had coalesced around a variety of monastic teachers, some of who were spoken of as 'spiritual friends' (Sanskrit *kalyanamitra*, Bengali-Hindustani *dost*). Each group of disciples, students, and adherents of a teacher was formed by a mode of ritualized initiation, mandatory in all forms of Mahayana (and Vajrayana) Buddhist

orders, Vaisnava Bhakti, Saiva and Bon Tantra, and among Sufi *silsilahs*. Empowerment and initiation rituals may or may not have been followed by a second and third, equally formalized, ordination or renunciation ritual, but a basic ritual of initiation was adequate to constitute a relation of power and affection, and had material and political effects.²³ To accept initiation was equivalent to submission to a legal–moral and disciplinary practice that was identified with particular teachers. Thus the ‘irony’ noted for Mahayana lineages—that ‘progress’ in training was equated with greater and greater ‘dependence’ and the merging of the disciple’s personhood into that of the teacher’s and of the teaching lineage—could be thought of as representative of more than Buddhist traditions.²⁴ Similar initiation committed disciples of other traditions also to mandated, physical and mental–emotional observances, that dissolved the ‘individual self’ into a larger and more potent entity, whether that of a guru, or that of the guru’s own ritual-intellectual teachers, and through them to an even wider group of followers and disciples. These relationships might have been renewed at various points in the course of the performances enjoined by the initiation itself; these may or may not have varied by season, generation, and gender under the direction of a teacher–guru.²⁵

Rituals of initiation, common to most teaching–learning societies in the subcontinent, had a threefold implication for a South Asian history of politics. They shaped subjectivities of entire lineages of students and teachers by means of shared discipline of appetites and desires, bodies and minds. They secured the availability of administrative and military personnel; and they established and elaborated an economic system and network.

The disciplinary and spiritual lineage that each teacher claimed as his own shaped the training of the student and the cultivation of a discipline, often referred to as asceticism.²⁶ Scholars of Sanskrit texts use the term *yoga* (and *prayoga*) to refer to such regimes of practice or discipline.²⁷ The doctrines to be cultivated varied from teacher to teacher, from that of generative potency and power over the elements to renunciation of all such power. In some, especially the Vajrayana Buddhist orders, one ultimate goal of such discipline was to make the hierarchical division of male and female itself irrelevant to the goal of achieving liberation from the cycles of birth and rebirth.²⁸

An equally important aspect of this form of politics was the availability of trained and disciplined clerical, artisanal, and military personnel that initiation and ordination established. Since the second century CE, monastic ordination lineages of Mahayana Buddhists had developed clerical administrations made up of grades of contemplative, teaching, and service-oriented monks.²⁹ From the seventh century, this monastic form of government spread through Tibet and Central and Inner Asia. An ubiquitous system of monastic administrations and economies existed in many Asian societies ranging from Mongolia to the islands of Southeast Asia during the late medieval and early modern periods.³⁰ Copperplate and stone inscriptions, dating between the seventh and thirteenth centuries, and paper and cloth deeds thereafter, found in many parts of eastern India, spelled out identical 'constitutions' of monastic governance.

The third and most important aspect of these ritualized relationships was economic. All initiates paid for their learning and assimilation in some form. Sanskrit legalists used terms such as *dakshina* to refer the exchange of services between a skilled teacher and a lay disciple or 'patron'. The quality, size and nature of these payments separated the humbler initiates from their wealthier counterparts. Biographies of Tibetan and Chinese scholars reveal that some initiates made over cloth, wine, barley, and meat—moveable and useable goods—along with labour services.³¹ Wealthier initiates offered 'as remuneration for the initiation rite an image made of gilded bronze, and a golden throne as a thanks-offering (*gtan-rag*), a silver spoon with the image of a stag, a sword with an ornamented hilt, and an armour with the image of a scorpion on it'.³² Labour-services at one end and precious bullion at another connected the same order of disciples through their common subjection to the adept teacher-master. Commoner labour-providers, wealthy merchants, and fierce warriors could all be counted among the lay (or un-ordained) disciples or 'subjects' (Sanskrit *praja*) and simultaneously patrons and protectors, of a monastic or teaching lineage and all its residential sites, fields, herds, and goods.

The wealthiest however appeared to have given produce of cultivable or uncultivated lands to individual members of a monastic or teaching lineage, declaring the recipients and the lands exempt from taxes and labour-levies. Such deeds and documents were thus economic

and political charters. The most effective were those granted by Buddhist monks, either as a collective or as individuals. Such for instance was the case of the first Tibetan abbot of the monastery at bSam.yas (pronounced 'Samye'), who allotted a 'hundred subject households' to the monastic collective.³³ Sometimes these payments were 'fees' for the conduct of an important ritual.³⁴ These payments and grants enabled heads of monasteries, or their most ardent lay disciples, to assemble a heterogenous and differentially skilled set of people on those lands.³⁵

In particular, this pattern of economic activity by monastic men in the early centuries amassed men skilled in arts of physical combat (wrestling, stickwork, archery) and ritual warfare on monastic estates. This was especially true of Vajrayana body-based *tantra*, *kaula*, *siddha* disciplines practiced by some branches of Buddhist and Saiva-sakta lineages at the time.³⁶ Monastic militias grew out of such estates of Tantric Buddhist and Saiva orders. 'Pala' Buddhist donors, for example, settled 'Vedic' Brahman lineages, skilled in these ritual arts, in the Brahmaputra valley.³⁷ A lineage of ordained Buddhist tantrics such as the Kargyupa constituted an entire police and military force of the Tshalpa monasteries.³⁸ Since Vedic Brahmans and Buddhist monks alike originated from lay families and clans that also supported their gurus, both laymen and ordained monks appear to have provided military service to monastic estates and teachers. Each such community was multi-layered: asceticized lay householders followed monks, some of who were preachers while others exercised temporal and 'royal' authority.

Monastic grants which inscribed the 'payments' that all residents of such lands were obliged to make to the 'Brahman' recipient of the gift were most politically potent when accompanied by other provisions that established limits on external authorities. Sometimes these authorities acted on behalf of laymen. Sometimes these were the donors' own bureaucracy, especially those of law-enforcement personnel (*chat-bhat*). Exemption from their ingress into the gifted estate, and exemption from their search warrants, meant that the 'sovereignty' of the recipient was localized, shaped by the terms of the grant, and limited to the territorial boundaries spelled out in the grant.³⁹ Within these limits, wealthy or powerful monastic donors exchanged their own powers of tax collection or authority

over a group of people for the skills and support of a non-Buddhist adept, his teaching–disciple lineage, and the lineage’s support and participation in the donor’s government. Thus, monks sometimes received the moral authority to punish crimes committed by villagers within their domain, and the economic authority to collect sale taxes and charge fines and arrears.⁴⁰ In sum, such grants decentralized the powerful monastic donor’s own authority by making his favoured monastic lineage, or another lineage or teacher responsible for many aspects of pastoral care.

This pattern of localized sovereignties also intensified non-sectarianism, characteristic of eastern Indian monastic governments of the ‘Pala’ as well as of the Saiva Tantric teachers and disciples whose names ended with *-sena* (Devasena, Buddhasena, and his son or disciple Jayasena).⁴¹ Lay disciples of one teaching lineage patronized skilled adepts of other lineages. A grant of the Buddhist (*paramasaugata*) Mahendrapala, for example, confirmed all the gifts of grain and land that a Saiva subject had earlier made to various working populations.⁴² Identical non-sectarianism was noted of the Sena lineage in the thirteenth century. A Tibetan Buddhist monk (Dharmasvamin) who went on pilgrimage to Bodhgaya (Bihar) in 1234–5, *after* the Turko-Afghan Muslim ‘conquest’ of the region, found one of the Sena disciples as a ‘lord of Magadha’.⁴³ Buddhasena issued orders to the cultivators and others attached to the tax-exempt property owned by the Mahabodhi complex that the income from the property be assigned permanently to yet another Buddhist monastic scholar (*bhikshu pandita*), Dharmarakshita, who had once been the Rajaguru (royal preceptor) of the Kama country. Dharmarakshita, in turn, was advised to care for the elderly monks from Sinhala (modern Sri Lanka), presumably also present on the plains at the same time. Presumably such pattern of non-sectarian gift continued in the Himalayan worlds as well between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries: for long-haired Saiva Natha ascetics (yogis, bairagis) were painted in Buddhist processions till at least 1712.⁴⁴ Such non-sectarian patronage also enabled the establishment of Central Asian Sufis in eastern India.⁴⁵ Thus the same actions were spoken of as gift (*dana*) and mandatory charity (*zakat*).

When the term was *dana*, they referred to an invisible but socially valued good called *punya* or merit, a commodity that mitigated the

effects of karma, overcame debt—especially to one’s ancestors—and overcame bad rebirths for the donor. Like other kinds of capital, merit was produced by the Buddhist monk and acquired by both laity and the ordained in exchange for lands, grain, herds, manufactured goods, labourers, and labour-time given in *dana*. The process of exchange consolidated the political and economic relationships between donor and recipient, as well as tying the present ‘long life’ and afterlife of both to the future.

Michael Walsh has recently argued that ‘merit’ was a commodity which was the object of many transactions and exchanges between lay and ordained monastic actors alike.⁴⁶ Rather than the division of labour associated with an industrializing economy, Walsh’s treatment of merit as a quantum good suggests that labour in a monastic economy was divided between the lay and the ordained, and the returns of labour between the worldly (*laukika*) and the cosmological (*paralaukika*). Work in both domains constituted the merit-making goals of laymen and laywomen. Laymen were expected to conquer greed, desire, and ignorance as they moved towards renunciation of worldly ambitions on their journey towards monastic merit-making. Laywomen, too, were expected to conquer greed, desire, selfhood in their ability to give up the fruits of their work—cattle-wealth, trade goods, cash, and sons that had been generated by their work in the world. Such gifts in turn amassed moral capital, or ‘merit’, for the lineages in which they were simultaneously daughter and wife, sister and mother.

For lay followers, anonymous gift-giving had little value since such gift-giving had to earn ‘merit’, which in turn could be accumulated and transferred to the credit of particular persons, lineages, clans. As a ‘good’, such merit was moral capital that was transferred and transmitted to ancestors, future generations of descendants, disciples as well as teachers and superiors. These dual conceptions of material and future returns shaped the economic actions of both laymen and laywomen and are attested by metal images commemorating such monastic teachers in many parts of Bengal, Assam, and Bihar in the medieval and early modern periods. These images were of the monks themselves.⁴⁷ Some of these images bore inscriptions transferring the merit accrued from gifting an image (including a Siva-linga) to a teacher (*acarya*).⁴⁸ Susan Huntington’s study of medieval sculpture

from eastern India found many such inscribed images.⁴⁹ Similarly, Gouriswar Bhattacharya's work on an eleventh-century inscription on a slate relief identified a Bouddha *bhikshu* male with shaven head and long ears as that of a tantric acarya, the preceptor of the donor and a worshipper of Tara.⁵⁰ These images constituted investments in spiritual futures, and represent an identity of values and wealth-holding by lay males and females in the same period. Both used mobile wealth to invest in meritorious futures, a fact that is also borne out by the names of lay females (*upāsikā*) who sponsored the writing, illustration, and donation of key ritual manuscripts of Mahayana Buddhist orders across eastern India and Nepal in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵¹

Transmissions of 'merit', and generosity as forms of moral capital, distinguished some men and women from others. A reputation for generosity, wisdom, knowledge, or skill was as much part of capital as lands and herds and goods created and earned by such traits. The rules of transmission of each kind of 'good', however, varied from group to group in time. Methods of accounting for transmission of moral capital in spiritual and social lineages fuelled the construction of tradition in the shape of genealogies in the hands of descendants and successors. Such methods of transmission enhanced the generational authority of men and women who alone could 'remember' and transmit genealogies. As in seventeenth-century Vietnamese and Thai societies, post-menopausal women, though female in anatomy and work experience, became 'male' as they aged; their prestige and potency within the household grew as they accumulated hitherto 'male' oral-ritual skills such as those of communal lore, genealogies, and ritual invocations.⁵²

Mughal documents and inscriptions from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suggest a continuity of this pattern of monastic government and the extension of power through the actions of such teaching-learning lineages. In the eyes of their disciples, all such figures—whether Bonpo or Buddhist, Vaisnava or Saiva, Sufi or *alim*, 'teacher' or 'priest', diviner or prophet—were potent figures with the power to control or avert disease, death, and defeat. They were appreciated and nurtured by all with the means to do so. Some of these men were closer to alchemists, like the Muslim diviner (*qalandar*), an 'expert in the science of necromancy and magic spells',

who was the teacher of a highly-ranked Mughal officer, a governor of Bengal. He received a substantial annual stipend (30,000 rupees) from his disciple, and served as both arbitrator of disputes and as a naval commander, as occasion arose and as his Mughal patron-cum-disciple needed.⁵³ An earlier generation of scholars of Muslim and Hindu lineages had studied mostly male members of such political societies. Following Mills, however, this monograph turns its attention to the women-centred households that constituted the 'base' of support and provisioning for both monastic militias and teaching lineages of males.⁵⁴

FORGOTTEN LAYWOMEN AND MONASTIC CODES OF GENDER

Three concerns in particular drive this monograph. One is that of female donors and the monastic economy. Despite the economic salience of *dana* and *zakat*, the historiography of eastern India has lagged behind that of southern India in its study of gendered economic agency within the terms laid out by monastic constitutions.⁵⁵ Recent scholarship on the gendered nature of donative activity in eastern India suggests some parallels with the southern Indian evidence.⁵⁶ It appears that though women's public authority over land may have been widely known, women did not liquidate their holdings for their own donative activities. Instead, it is likely that the instance of the landowning female consort of a Buddhist male (Devakhadga) was representative: this female allowed her husband to make gifts of her immobile wealth (land) while she used gold, a mobile and malleable form of wealth in her own donative activity, which comprised the covering of an image of a Brahmanical goddess with precious bullion. This would appear to fit with the record between the seventh and the eighteenth centuries, which indicated that many laywomen acted as donors of valued mobile goods such as manuscripts, lamps, and herds; fewer of them gave lands. From the seventeenth century, however, some female donors also gifted lands to monastic recipients. As with previous regimes of monastic actors, Mughal donors also rendered gifted lands exempt from taxes; imperial and local officials were instructed not to impede the recipient's organization of cultivation and collection of harvests from these lands for their own subsistence (*madad-i-ma'ash*).⁵⁷ Women also appeared to have made gifts of their

claims in the labour-services of others to their teachers and gurus in the eighteenth century.⁵⁸ What happened to such actors in the monastic economy in the nineteenth century?

A second question arises from the recorded involvement of monastic governments in marriages of disciples, members of ordination lineages, and of related laity. Three different kinds of disciples and members of monastic communities have to be distinguished in any group. One was the initiated layman who had sexual partners; the second, the ordained monk who also had sexual partners; and finally, the ordained celibate male or female who did not. Theoretically parallel to each other, ordained monastic and lay householder lineages in fact overlapped in the communities around individual Tantric Saiva, Sakta, Vaisnava, and Tantric Buddhist teachers. One such overlap appeared in the records of an initiated Buddhist tantric lord, the 'king' Dharmapala, whose banner had the goddess Tara represented on it.⁵⁹ The same Dharmapala, however, after having visited the pilgrimage sites of Kedara and Gokarna, 'entered the life of a householder' by marrying Rannadevi, daughter of a Rastrakuta. From this marriage was born Devapaladeva, who combined both monastic and temporal authority in himself and was described in the inscriptions as world-conquering ruler.⁶⁰ The father's ritual-meditative focus on Tara was shared by the son, whose inscription on an icon of the deity found in Patna district bore Tantric formulae (*Om Tare Tuttare Ture Svaha*).⁶¹ The affinal relationship with the Rastrakuta was inherited and renewed by men in the Pala lineage. These affinal relations were equally marked by an absence of sectarianism. The Pala Buddhist initiates' wives were not themselves initiated Buddhists but 'Hindu', likely Vaisnava.⁶²

Cross-lineage affinities suggest that marriages between disciples strengthened the political and economic bases of a teacher and his teaching lineage, perhaps by expanding the sources from which 'gifts' could originate. Sanskrit texts on *dana* authored by learned Saiva tantric 'Sena' men, for instance, recommended endogamous sexual unions for those considered spiritually and ritually distinguished (*kulina*). However, these men of superior moral achievements were also required to accept 'in gift' the hands of maidens from households of lesser moral capital. When Saiva monastic governance thus authorized polygyny and hypergamous relationships for the

distinguished and spiritually accomplished men (that is, *kulina* brahmans), they implicitly positioned the supremely disciplined householder male (*kulina* brahman) as the tantric analogue of the supremely disciplined celibate monk. Both received 'gifts' from disciples and acted as a 'field of merit', returning blessings. Since 'gifts' were permanent, the same codes therefore accommodated a variety of arrangements such as single-generation or bi-generational polyandry (*niyoga*). Epic narratives laid claim to arrangements in which supremely disciplined elder males ('sages') were nominated (by elder women) to impregnate childless widows of the elder women's households.⁶³ Such textual Brahmanic and precolonial provisions are illuminated further by recently found documents which establish explicit contracts of fraternal polyandry in the period between the fourth and eighth centuries CE in and around northwestern Afghanistan.⁶⁴ Neither fraternal polyandry nor levirate nor polygyny was unknown to monastic governments. If such was the case, when and why did these marriages acquire 'subaltern' status?⁶⁵ Or to put it in another way, when did political and economic institutions become merely 'domestic'? Were eighteenth-century or nineteenth-century British colonial policies responsible for both the degraded status of such marriages as well as the inability of historians to appreciate them in the histories of the seventeenth-nineteenth century?

From the eighteenth century, it is true, individual colonial officials disdained plural partnerships that were 'repugnant to European ideas'.⁶⁶ Yet such attitudes were neither uniform nor given effect as policy immediately. A Scottish private trader and official of the East India Company who spent four months at the fifteenth-century monastery at Tashilunpo in 1774, referred to polyandry among the subjects of the monastic estate as a form of 'club[bing] together in matrimony as merchants do in trade'.⁶⁷ Engels too lauded these forms of political cooperation as representative of the 'mutual toleration among adult males' essential to the formation of permanent political groups.⁶⁸ Even the Bengali-speaking men who visited those societies in the late nineteenth century found these marriages praiseworthy, connected to the monastic arrangements of the same societies. Yet, when the first feminist histories of the subcontinent began from the 1980s, these patterns of marriages were acknowledged in all parts of the subcontinent *but* that of eastern India. For instance studies

of northern India located fraternal levirate (*karewa*) in the labour-intensive agropastoralist work of women there.⁶⁹ But no study of eastern Indian historical practices tracked the persistence of such marriage patterns in terms of agropastoralist and labour-intensive work in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. Certainly no historian, including me, had previously tied these regimes of meritorious but monastic female subjects' labour to the very foundations of colonial or imperial political history.⁷⁰

Had all of us postcolonial historians simply overlooked the evidence of the eighteenth-century 'colonial' archives? If we had, what were the reasons for such exclusion? After all, British officers who praised polyandry had also described landscapes of predominantly female cultivators. One who visited the winter capital of a Himalayan monastic lineage was struck by the women who cultivated the terraced corn fields; that it was mainly women who planted, weeded, harvested, and performed a 'thousand laborious offices, exposed themselves to hardships and inclement weather'.⁷¹ Such officers noted the lack of a separation between 'domestic' and 'external' work and the absence of a sexual division of labour; women, like men, also worked as transporters or 'coolies'. In the 1780s, a Company official observed women in Sylhet carrying cloths, iron, cotton, and fruits 'from the mountains' of Assam for sale to the plains. These women carried back considerable quantities of salt, rice, dry fish, in extremely short supply in the Himalayan foothills. Colonial observers described the men of these groups accompanying the women 'with arms to defend them from insult.' These officers referred to such groups as 'my Tartar friends' while detailing the method of transportation: 'women in baskets supported by a belt across the forehead, the men walking by their side, protecting them with their arms'.⁷² These colonial eighteenth-century descriptions of female labour did not disparage the labourers. But their encomia of such labour overlooked the twinned 'political-moral economy' within which such labour was transacted on estates owned by monastic lineages and in exchange for merit. Postcolonial feminist historians of eastern India appear to have mimicked these colonial observers twice over: first in overlooking the significance of monastic militias and men, and secondly in overlooking the predominantly female cultivators among

Tibetan-speaking people living on many of the hills and plains of Bangladesh-Bengal and Assam.

Therefore a third area that this monograph engages is the persistent nature of labour-services and dues. These affiliated lay and monastic households to each other across different ecologies across different terrains. Legends collected in the early twentieth century from the same regions as earlier monastic histories called 'Buddhist lands' continued identifying adult women and female children at the literal centre of narratives of migration from the Tibetan highlands to the plains. As one account visualized it, 'the women and children were in the middle, before and behind [them were] the brave chieftains and warriors strong'.⁷³ The women carried the implements of cultivation—the short axes (*dabs*), hoes, the seeds and the brass cymbals, yak tails and harps; the men carried the implements of war—the swords and shields. These legends and accounts insisted that the women and children had been the main *producers* of the crops of consumption and exchange; males were soldiers who guarded cultivators. These accounts treated marriages of such productive females as acts of great political import, the substance of diplomacy, of 'friendships' between groups and collectives. They treated the theft of such cultivators as immoral. They even spelled out that transmissions of authority and property were mediated through daughters, sisters, and mothers: men accessed or managed authority and property by virtue of their relationships to women, not independently of them. And finally, these were *political* decisions taken in collective assembly, and therefore to be maintained as an expression of 'collective will'.

When postcolonial socialist feminist scholars of eastern India overlooked this particular mode of political cooperation routed through the household, they failed to value the 'protection of women' that reverberated in literati discourse from the nineteenth century. Postcolonial historians granted such affective investments only to the anti-colonial urbane literati nationalists. Partha Chatterjee, Tanika Sarkar, and Mrinalini Sinha highlight the ways in which nationalist 'Hindu' males responded to British colonialism by reconstituting the household and the family as the male's uncolonized 'sphere of sovereignty' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁷⁴ This position misrecognizes a common and central concern of males *dependent* on female producers for their food and their 'merit'. It

rests on blindness towards the payments of labour-services as 'rent' or 'taxes', well-known everywhere in the lands flanked by the rivers Brahmaputra and the Ganges. As a result, monastic and lay communities' struggles to retain females and children as cultivators and transporters for their own monastic estates remains a curiously under-studied part of colonial economic and political history. By focusing on the political economy within which polymorphic households and friendships were re-constituted and labour-services 'freed' for colonially organized economic 'development', this study offers a new, culturally and historically specific way of conceiving gender and politics for a forgotten part of the subcontinent.

FORGETTING AND 'NORTHEAST INDIA': LAMENTABLE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PRACTICE OR MONASTIC GOVERNMENTALITY RESTORED?

The causes for our common postcolonial historical refusal to name the political histories of eastern India correctly remain to be investigated. Had we never learnt or had we forgotten to look in the right places? Forgetting has been much lamented lately.⁷⁵ But not so in South Asia. In 1992, after mobs of Hindus destroyed a historic fifteenth-century mosque at Ayodhya in the name of an amoral certitude about the past, at least one scholar lauded the 'principled forgetfulness' located in the worldview of the victims.⁷⁶ Nandy celebrated those societies that refuse to remember the past either objectively or clearly or in its entirety. He argued that such forgetting was essential for maintaining the social fabric of the present and for defeating the amoral desires that drive post-Enlightenment historians.

This position puts historians of South Asian pasts in a dilemma: if forgetting is a value, then we are called upon to ensure its production and widespread distribution, rather than its amelioration. Yet, Nandy offers no guidelines by which political, economic and social institutions may create and transmit such forgetting. Moreover, he considerably mis-states the contrast between history and forgetting. A significant trend in modern South Asian history has been its sensitivity towards the malleability of memory.⁷⁷ Two studies of precolonial forgetting in particular have the potential to extend Nandy's argument regarding the objects and temporal rhythms of forgetting and remembering. The first is Sumit Guha's study of

Bhosle records between the seventeenth and nineteenth century. He finds that the Bhosles forgot the ancestral lands in the peninsula whence they came to prominence; instead, they laid their claims to authority in the region in political negotiations with a trans-regional Mughal administration.⁷⁸

A similar process is found in Elliot Sperling's study of the migration of Tibetanized clans from Inner Asian (Tangut or Xi Xia, from around Lake Kokonor, in northeastern China) kingdoms to eastern and southeastern Tibet (Khams) and to the monastic centres of the Sa-skya lineage of Buddhists during and after the thirteenth century. Sperling argues that the migrants and their hosts in Khams integrated their historical memories to the extent that the link to an exalted past as rulers of the Xi Xia state became the common historical memory of the population in Khams as well.⁷⁹ Such deliberate amalgamation of memories binds both northern and eastern Tibetan clans (Tangut and Khams Mi Nyag) in narratives of the origin of Sikkimese 'kings' and clans, many of who held estates in eastern Nepal between the fifteenth and the eighteenth century.

Such purposive and precolonial acts of forgetting local particulars for more potent or illustrious pasts were also characteristic of early modern Buddhist 'pagoda histories' in Arakan. There the working of Time was denied altogether as an attempt to paper over the ruptures that Time imposed; stressing eternity was a method of reassurance to the community of followers.⁸⁰ This was especially true for histories of buildings or decoration of stupas, which constituted the highest kind of 'treasure' in Tibetan Buddhism: Buddha's mind-treasure.⁸¹ Equally important, the calendar of 'decline' of the Buddhavacana (teachings of the Buddha) was a real concern among avowed Buddhists. Hence the stress on eternity, rather than the emphasis on change characteristic of European historical texts, was itself a sign of the composers' disciplinary location.

By reminding ourselves of the ways in which monastic governments shaped memory, this study historicises the forgetting of Himalayan pasts in the histories of 'Assam', 'Tripura', 'Northeast India', written in the twentieth century. For instance, an eminent Buddhist monastic complex such as Nako (in modern Himachal Pradesh, on the border with Tibet) lauded by seventeenth-century Tantric and Persian-writing historian, mystified a twentieth-century

editor such as Suryya Kumar Bhuyan.⁸² His omissions of particular Buddhist monastic sites in north-western parts of the subcontinent, while remaining aware of Saiva and Sufi actors in the same landscape, then generated an amnesiac colonial and postcolonial geography and history of a region called Assam. Post-colonial Indian historians of 'Assam', 'the Northeast' and of Bhuyan himself, remain unwilling to relocate the region in a broader trans-regional space that included Ladakh, Kashmir, Inner Asia and beyond.⁸³ In its place, a post-nationalist geographical sensibility attempts to come to terms with colonial policies towards forests, rivers, and environments shaped by animals.⁸⁴ Little in this scholarship re-imagines precolonial geographies shaped by monastic governments across dispersed sectarian traditions and ecological niches. Even less is said here about the ways in which the replacement of monastic government and geography substantially rewrote ideas of gender and rank for the 'Northeast'.

So, to return to the question posed by Nandy's argument, should modern historians of eastern India continue to emulate their predecessors in forgetting about the Buddhist centres in Ladakh and the Himalayan world altogether? Or are the histories they attempt to write meant to recover from such forgetting? The former is doubtless an easier option at present, especially since the histories one might recover potentially damage various kinds of nationalist and regionalist claims to land, dominance and dignity made by various politically active groups. Forgetting however is also a politically loaded action. One can illustrate the political costs of forgetting by alluding to the complex scribal cultures nurtured by monastic sites in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.⁸⁵ Such cultivation of scribal cultures, however, was conditioned by two factors: first, heteroglot languages and the second, a priority to oral transmission of core issues.

Ambiguous written language was especially part of Buddhist-Saiva Tantric cultivation.⁸⁶ In records generated within such epistemological traditions, twilight language was used to refer to three kinds of objects of knowledge—the manifest, the cognitive, and the realized—valued by non-dualist groups.⁸⁷ Such languages could only be deciphered by students formally trained by teachers empowered to explain such terminology. When the teachers lost their ability to

teach, or the students disappeared, historians of the region failed to recognize the written record.

Furthermore, oral transmission enhanced this possibility. Turko-Mongols of the thirteenth–fifteenth centuries had relied on religious or clerical figures to perform the work of political ambassadors. Such clerical figures were charged with delivering the more important secret and oral message not trusted to a formal letter, while formal letters were produced collaboratively by a largely undifferentiated collective in the chancellery.⁸⁸ Cryptic letters from the chancellery of an Assamese heavenly lord (*svargadev*) to various hegemon in the vicinity similarly name priestly brahmans and scribes as conveyors of the much more important ‘oral communication’ to be delivered in secret. The high status of oral transmission, highlighted in writing itself, suggests the problems of interpretation that would arise in cases where sacred envoys—the ‘brahmans’, the teacher-monks, religious scholars and priests—were killed, persecuted, disappeared in the course of battle. The writing that they carried or created would become inexplicable without oral commentary. Something of this process occurred repeatedly between the seventeenth and the early twentieth century on the plains of eastern India. So that by the early twentieth-century, colonial literati failed to recognize their Himalayan and trans-regional pasts etched out in the records themselves.

Judging from the surviving diplomatic correspondence, Sanskritic Bengali was cultivated as a diplomatic language in eastern Himalayan centres in the eighteenth century. An Englishman who carried a Persian-language letter to a Bhutanese Buddhist monastic centre at the time found only Bengali in diplomatic use there.⁸⁹ This tradition remained vibrant well into the first half of the nineteenth century.⁹⁰ In the mid-nineteenth century, missionaries summoned to the hills of the east inhabited by Tibetan-speaking populations noted that the Bengali alphabet was adapted for expressing what missionaries called ‘the sounds of Garo words’.⁹¹ [The region constitutes modern Meghalaya in India]. Tibetan-inflected Bengali-language records abounded in other parts of eastern India as well. Even in mid-twentieth century, public intellectuals from Chittagong continued to use such Tibetan-Bengali unselfconsciously. For instance, two

separate authors described historical texts as 'gojen-lama' books.⁹² *Gojen* (written as 'k^ho.chen in Tibetan and pronounced *gojen*) stands for a 'note written by a superior officer/official on a report submitted by a subordinate officer/official that indicates the superior's decision or answer'.⁹³ It exemplifies many such Tibetan phonemes and words used by Bengali speakers outside the metropolitan centre of Calcutta.⁹⁴

Yet, in the same century as such Tibetan-inflected Bengali writers, Bhuyan collected written texts generated by locally settled scribes in the Brahmaputra valley and called them *buranji* without recognising the term's Tibetan and monastic connection at all. In Tibetan the term 'byas' (pronounced 'chi' and 'ji') means to say/tell. When added to the Tibetan verb 'phukhs.lon' (pronounced 'pulon' and 'bulon', meaning to know or understand the gist or essence of a matter) it suggests a synthetic narrative. Such syntheses, in addition to the difficulties of converting the Tibetan calendars (of sixty-year cycles) to Saka and Vikrama era dates, shaped major controversies about these chronicles and records, most of which were also editorially reconstituted and printed only after 1930.⁹⁵

Postcolonial historians of 'modern' eastern and northeastern India have already mastered a particular kind of forgetfulness about their trans-regional, trans-sectarian and trans-national precolonial histories. In place of amnesia then, this monograph seeks to highlight its causes and its costs. In this it wishes to extend recent debates about historical thinking in another direction altogether.⁹⁶ While an earlier scholarship drew attention to the wealth and heterogeneity of communicative and commemorative technologies in prefiguring the constitution of historical records, it said little about the priority of monastic commitments in shaping the non-formation of 'historical records' or the non-transmission of scribal cultures. These issues have been especially significant wherever Vajrayana, Saiva, and Bon tantric lineages were collocated: their disciplinary regimens emphasize oral teaching, disciplined silence, institutions of social retreat and the determined maintenance of obscurity and secrecy.⁹⁷ Tantric Buddhist and Sakta emphases on oral modes of instruction and transmission of sacred knowledge made them particularly vulnerable to traditions of 'history-writing' that insisted on transparent and referential forms of writing. Forced to operate amidst groups with scribal cultures

of the latter kind, many might have created written texts which appear as 'recovered treasures' only available to visionaries.

These conditions appear to have been shared by three verse narratives used in this monograph, all of which have been identified with a lineage of Himalayan-based Tantrics of 'Tippera'. One of these is *SriRajamala*, an annotated and revised verse narrative published in four volumes during 1927–30.⁹⁸ Others are *Krishnamala* and *Srenimala*: both were published only in 1995–6. However, the editor of the first claimed that he 'discovered' a manuscript copy of the poem which was originally written in the eighteenth century. In a similar vein, the published *SriRajamala* is offered as a continuous record from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, but it was only finalized in its poetic form around 1840–4 by a Durgamani Wazir, composer of the *Srenimala*, a record of marriages in the same lineage. Moreover, the Bengali version was explicitly identified as a translation from an original 'Tripur bhasha', which has never been available in writing to any scholar till date. Admittedly, these verse narratives cannot be treated as accounts from the seventeenth-eighteenth century of which they speak, but they can be treated as local language historiographic narratives, parallel to and contemporaneous with histories written by men and women trained in colonial schools and universities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Only as contemporaneous texts can these records become meaningful as commentaries on colonial conditions. They are attempts to remember a precolonial past that was dominated by initiated monastic warriors. The opening segments of the first volume of the *SriRajamala*, for instance, encompasses all tantric traditions—the Saiva, Vaisnava, and Buddhist—by referring to 'root' texts such as the *Yogini tantra* and *Haragaurisamvada*, a composition by Hema Sarasvati, one of three poets patronized in fourteenth-century Kamatapura (northern Bengal-Assam) and dramatized at the court of the (eastern Nepali) Bhatgaon Mallas in the early seventeenth century as *Haragaurivivaha*.⁹⁹ Tantric composers of narratives of *SriRajamala*, *Krishnamala*, and *Srenimala* used explicitly non-dualist frame that united absolute (*paramartha*) and phenomenological (*vya-vahar, laukika*) statements as 'truth'. Such non-dualist metaphysics emphasized dissolution of differences between subject and object, knowledge and knower, secular and sacred.

Earlier generations of historians of independent India were critical of such verses. Like Bhuyan who had ignored Buddhist-Sufi Nako, earlier critics of the mixed language verses of *SriRajamala* failed to notice the Himalayan and trans-national references in them. A few examples should suffice. The first volume refers to populations from 'Kaifeng', the metropolis of the northern Song Chinese empire, who accompanied others on their way to the Indo-Gangetic plains. Though the verses themselves provide no date for such an event, other sources mention gifts of cotton goods carried to the Song metropolis by Indian Jews in the eleventh century and the arrival of lay Buddhist associations in southern China in the fourteenth.¹⁰⁰ Read against these sources, the verses do not appear to 'falsify' the past so much as encode it in a non-European, monastic and itinerant hermeneutic. The geographical space encountered in these verses under the term 'trisrota' (or 'three rivers') was a reference in colloquial Sanskrit to the river Tista, which flowed from the eastern Himalaya through Sikkim-Nepal on to the plains of Bengal.¹⁰¹ In the same vein, the verses speak of a mountain (*parbatiya*) king of 'Tripura', whose followers were knowledgeable in 'malla-vidya' (lit. wrestling, also hand-to-hand combat). However, since these verses were printed only after the circuits of a monastic geographic order were dissolved, many of the places named in such verses remained unrecognized by nationalist plainmen of the twentieth century. 'Herambo' is a case in point: few Bengali readers after 1930 could translate the name as the district of Herombo in western Nepal, associated with an ancient (in Tibetan, the term is 'rNyingma', and represents an ordination lineage) Buddhist monastery. However, the verses that use such terms also specify the flora and fauna of the terrain. Animals referred to in the poem included mountain goats 'with extremely fine hair', horned goats of the high Himalayan and Tibetan plateaus.¹⁰²

Such landscapes were eclipsed from view finally by the Second World War and its aftermath, the territorial Partitions of 1947. These were the second set of circumstances that shaped postcolonial historical imagination and methods of verification. As a result, the terracotta plaques, stone inscriptions, metal images and coins that corroborate names and dates mentioned in the verse-narratives and chronicles, which lie scattered across the monastic geographic order between western Tibet, Kashmir, Nepal, Burma, western and

southern China, Assam, and Bengal, (many of which are in private collections across eastern India) were seldom studied at any length by professional Indian historians in the 1970s–90s.¹⁰³

Place names on the coasts also hint at connections with foothills: for instance, a temple dedicated to the goddess Ambika, also called Tripurasundari, sits on a high hilltop outside the modern town of Agartala. A river that flows from Nepal into the Gangetic plains (of modern Uttar Pradesh in India) called the Gomti gives its name to a river in the southern part of modern Tripura. In the vicinity are Buddhist stupa sites such as Pilak and Baxanagar. Terracotta plaques found in the walls of the abandoned stupa at Pilak mirror the motifs of terracotta plaques found on the Buddhist stupa at Paharpur (presently in northern Bangladesh). The earliest plaque recovered from Pilak, sculpted with date Om Śakābda 1419 (1497 CE), in the same script and numbers used for medieval Bengali, puts the building, or at least embellishment, of the Buddhist stupa in the tenure of the Turco-Afghan Muslim Hussain Shahi (1494–1519 CE) governors in western Bengal.¹⁰⁴ Another terracotta plaque also recovered from Pilak is sculpted with the figure typical of Achaemenid Bactrian art: it is the mythical horned lion with a spearhead-ending tail, a long slim body shaped like an S and an open mouth.¹⁰⁵ The only difference between the older Bactrian motif and that of the Pilak terracotta and coins of the seventh-century Himalayan Buddhist-Vaisnava lords of Nepal (Manadeva and Sivadeva c 570s–605 CE) and those found in Kumilla/Tripura on the Bengal plains is that the horned lion of the latter has a raised right paw, and appears to be holding a plant in it.¹⁰⁶

These objects, names, and practices resonate only when placed within the map of a monastic geographic order that connected the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan world with that of the coastal and riverine plains of eastern India. The ‘Tipura’ coinage, marked by the composite horned lion referred to above, had the same weight standards as the silver *tanka* of the Afghan sultans of Bengal.¹⁰⁷ The close economic relationship that is narrated by the *SriRajamala* between a lineage of monastic militants and a Turco-Afghan imperium appears plausible in the light of such external corroborative material.

Nor are these verses, chronicles, and correspondence limited to relations between men, women, deities, and spirits alone. They also

treat all animals as wealth, given in payments of different kinds. Verses of *SriRajamala* aver that one of the scions of Tipura/Tripur, having presented the sultan, the supreme commander of Gauda (Gaudesvar), with elephants, was allowed to settle in 'Vanga' (eastern Bengal).¹⁰⁸ Buranjis refer to the number of elephants that were sent annually by monastic tenants, residents of Tipura and the Assam hills, to Mughal tax collectors well into the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁹ They refer to institutions of trapping and corralling elephants (*kheda*) established for such purposes. They document the many different lives that made up the monastic geographic order in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

In addition, these heteroglot records alone allow us a vantage point from which to launch the interrogation of colonial categories of knowledge as well as colonial methods of recognition as the practices of distance. Viewed from the perspective of intimates—the perspective that this monograph adopts—the same groups that appear as 'Dafla tribes' in nineteenth-century English records reappear in chronicles and poems as seventeenth-century tenants (*bahatia*) of old monastic lineages of married abbots.¹¹⁰ Other Vaisnava texts place names such as those of 'Govinda Garo', 'Paramananda Miri', 'Jayaram Bhutiya', a Nocte called Narottama, and a 'Jayahari Yavana' (literally 'Yavana' was Ionian or Greek, but in seventeenth-century usage referred to Muslims)—names taken as badges of subaltern and 'tribal' alterity in the colonial order—as fellows and members of ordination lineages.¹¹¹ Eventually, these heteroglot genealogies, poetry, and chronicles' insistent mapping of a relational universe commends them to every postcolonial historian as the starting point of a journey *out* of a fragmented landscape—that of a so-called 'Northeast India'—and into reviving a modicum of the friendships that have been valued in and among Buddhist communities.

ARCHITECTURE OF THE ARGUMENT

Chapter 1 surveys the ways in which monastic governments of collocated Buddhist, Saiva, Sufi, and Vaisnava guides, teachers, and their adherents shaped what van Spengen has called 'monastic geographicity'.¹¹² The term expresses the spatial extent of a cultural complex of establishments and movements, a conceptual map of dominant patterns of communication, lifeways, repertoires, and

techniques, and a political complex of 'subjects' and 'sovereigns'. The chapter argues that exogamous marriages and polyandrous and polygynous unions were the fulcrum of such 'monastic geographicity'.

This chapter begins with the basic units of monastic geographicity—the monastic residence, established by adherent individuals and clans that focused pastoral networks, pilgrim itineraries, and trade routes, acted as local marketplaces and storehouses. By virtue of receiving the gift of donors in exchange for merit, individual monasteries came to possess extensive lands, livestock, trading goods, and capital on loan. This vast geographic order had been created by the establishment of monasteries at the crossroads of silk routes in the Himalayan domains, including Assam, as well as along the coasts of Bengal, Burma, and beyond.¹¹³ At least one such silk road was called the Northern Route (*Uttarāpatha*).¹¹⁴ There were others, either branching off from the Northern Route or entirely independent of it. Mobility between the Himalayan hills and coastal plains along routes dotted by such monastic establishments enabled the circulation of people, herds, and objects, as much as they led to the convergence of ideas, structures of lineage-making, rituals, and disciplines. Mahayana Buddhist manuscripts dated between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries circulated by many routes within this vast domain and were eventually found in Nepal.¹¹⁵ Using similar routes and extending them further, men and animals from 'power' centres in Himalayan uplands settled the lowlands and swamps of the Indo-Gangetic and Irawati lowlands and swamps.¹¹⁶

Monastic centres, spread out across different environmental and resource niches, had to be connected to each other through other relationships, either of friendship or of marriage. Therefore alliances and marriages became the fulcrum of 'monastic geographicity' and the key to monastic governments. In the medieval Tibetan empire, these marriage alliances set up 'uncle-nephew' or 'father-in-law and son-in-law' relationships (*zhang dbon*) or 'elder brother-younger brother' relationships (*tschen-tschung*) between central governments and provincial powers. Similar marital relationships were recorded in genealogies that expressed the localization of Central Asian (Afghan) and West Asian (Arab) lineages of *ulema* and Sufi *pirs* in Bengal after the fifteenth century. In the late seventeenth century, Mughal attempts to reorganize monastic militias then created

conditions in which descent from monastic men became important to remember.

Chapter 2 traces the early encounter between the English East India Company and the key figures of monastic geography and genealogical memory in the second half of the eighteenth century. Officers attempted to destroy monastic exemptions from taxes, and to tax lands held as service-wages by adherents in a temple-monastic economy. Female landholders, major donors and actors in the monastic economy, became particular targets of these policies. Twin dispossessions converged to create shifts of title in landed wealth within all groups with claims to collect payments in kind and services from people settled on such estates. At the same time, the legislative enactments also created conflicts of succession within the all-male lineages of teachers and gurus on the land.

Chapter 3 tracks the further diminution of authority of monastic leaders and their households of adherents across the early nineteenth-century network that encompassed lineages and families in Ava, Assam, Tripura, and Manipur. The East India Company's wars of the early nineteenth century, especially that with Burma and in the Brahmaputra and Barak river valleys, were crucial in the *de facto* delegitimation of a widow's rights of inheritance from a second husband. In highlighting this, the chapter links colonial land-revenue legislation from 1790–3 to the legal dispossession of daughters as well as widows much further eastwards than hitherto understood. This dispossession clarifies the ways in which 'Hinduism' itself was revised to keep it abreast of the expanding colonial military frontier. At the same time, this chapter attempts to fix the cause of such dispossession not in an idealized British law of coverture or married women's 'separate estate' but rather in military and economic concerns after the Anglo-Burmese War (1824–6). Such concerns, rather than abstract legal ideals, eventually eroded the political fraternities based in a common spouse, or polyandry and levirate, from eastern Indian history. Structural and discursive shifts occurred simultaneously to obliterate the marriages of daughters and sisters from the colonial archives and from the authority or dignity accorded to these households by subsequent historians.

Chapter 4 translates between metaphors and descriptions of adherence and the nineteenth-century Liberal and colonial Anglophone

discourse of 'feudalism', 'slavery', and 'savagery'. In choosing linguistic and cultural translation as an interpretative stance towards both hybrid regional and English-language written sources, one of my goals is to reinstate translation to its intellectual dignity as a historically established scholarly activity. Translation had a hoary literary genealogy especially in the medieval and early modern periods during which texts and teachers from eastern India travelled and taught in Himalayan terrain; translations also engaged visiting Moroccan Muslim scholars and craftsmen at the same time.¹¹⁷ In keeping with that past, I subject English-language colonial records to translation. On the one hand this renders coherent a great mass of descriptive terms and nomenclature found transcribed in the records of the East India Company between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. It makes the hybridity of the colonial archives explicit. On the other hand, it allows us to read these terms against the shifting economies of land revenue and military service associated with the growing power of the East India Company. Finally, this method of reading also reveals the ways in which early nineteenth-century colonial Englishmen mimicked the very monastic political economies that their policies gradually, and selectively, overrode.

Chapter 5 analyses the implications of colonial mimicry of monastic politics. It traces the formation of two parallel and competing orders of 'friendship' in eastern India. While the conflicts over tea plantations have been hitherto studied as issues in European management of immigrant labour, this chapter tracks the politics of fraternity practiced by monastic subjects resident in places such as Kachar, Sylhet, Tripura, and Manipur when tea plantations arrived there. In particular, this chapter studies the confrontation that is known as the 'Lushai Expedition' of 1871 in the colonial records. This expedition inaugurated the territorial segregation of tea-growing regions by an imaginary 'Inner Line' and its administration by a Chief Commissionership of Assam set up in 1874. In effect this 'Inner Line' was aimed at keeping the visiting, non-residential, non-native monastic teacher, guru, and guide of yesteryear from acquiring lands, trade goods, and subjects in terrain and among 'labourers' coveted by European tea planters. An apparently political boundary was thus created to keep monastic subjects apart from their erstwhile 'friends'.

Chapter 6 studies the attempt led by women to restore older codes of friendship in the face of intensified militarization of colonial governance in southern Kachar, northern Chittagong, and the Arakan hills. British military policemen did not distinguish between male and female when using the term 'coolie'. Yet in at least a few instances, their demands for labour were also demands for sexual services from local wives. These demands were resisted by networks of intermarried clans. The resistance of 1890–1900 provided the background for the gradual turn to Christian healers who lived alongside the British Indian armies. I track the effects of events in the Himalayan monastic world of 1903–4 on a cluster of villages that had been affected by the exclusions of the Inner Line. The populations of these villages on the Indian side of the Inner Line followed older monastic ideas of debt and exchange and offered themselves to Christian missionaries. Elder women led this attempt to re-establish the merit-based monastic economy, only this time with a new kind of monk and teaching at its centre. The Inner Line had however cut off hillocks from flat lands. Therefore, Christianization of newly isolated societies also excluded such populations living on elevations from interactions with plainsmen. These circumstances finally and ironically led to the renunciation of collocated pasts in Bon, Tantric Buddhist, and Saiva communities as 'barbaric'. This simultaneously consolidated a social amnesia about the past within the new learning societies on the hills as well as on the plains. In postcolonial universities outside the Inner Line, scholars began to identify hitherto co-members of monastic discipleship as 'strangers of the mist'.¹¹⁸

NOTES

1. Eaton (1978, 1993); Digby (2001); Green (2006, 2008); White (2009: 198–254); Pinch (1996, 2006); Dube (2004); Chaturvedi (2007).
2. For studies of Arakanese Buddhist-Muslim kings between the fifteenth and eighteenth century, see Gommans and Leider (2002); Leider (2002); for Muslim–Mongol military commanders who protected Tibetan Buddhist texts and practices by compelling Jesuit missionaries to learn them in the eighteenth century, see Pomplun (2011).
3. For studies of monastic sites and assemblages excavated over easternmost India and Bangladesh, see Dikshit (1938); Das (1971); Mitra (1976); Mitra (1996); Gill (2002); Roy (2002); Das (2004); for a survey of all the sites in Bogra district, see Rahman (2000) and comments on the

co-existence of Buddhist and Brahmanic finds; for Avalokiteshvara and Akshobhya finds at Mainamati and Paharpur in Bangladesh, see Imam (2000a, 2000b); Bhattacharya (2000, 2003); for Jaina, Saiva and Buddhist finds, see all articles in Mevissen and Banerji (2009). For reports of Buddhist and Saiva finds at western and southern Tripura sites dateable to the sixth century by the Archaeological Survey of India, Gauhati Circle, visit http://asi.nic.in/asi_exca_2005_tripura.asp (last accessed on 15 June 2009). Compare standing Buddha figure of red sandstone from Pilak, southern Tripura, dated to the tenth century by the Tripura Government Museum, <http://tripura.nic.in/museum> (last accessed on 15 June 2009), with red sandstone standing Vishnu from Pilak at Tripurasociety.org/photogallery (last accessed on 15 June 2009). The Tripura Government Museum has also collected miniature terracotta figures of Mukhalingam (Saiva) Avalokiteshvara, Tara, and Vishnu from various sites: for an analysis of these, see Sengupta (1986, 1993). Accidental excavations continue to yield paired Buddhist–Vishnu icons such as the pair found while excavating a pond at Taichama, western Tripura, for which see *The Telegraph*, 17 March 2006 at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1060317/asp/northeast/story_5976829.asp (last accessed on 15 June 2009). Some of these finds and sites have been read alongside Sanskrit and Bengali-language inscriptions, deciphered, and translated in Bhattacharya (1968); Das (1997); Bhowmik (2003); Palit (2004); Acharjee (2006); and Acharjee (2008); for descriptions of recent excavations, see Chauley (2009). For sites in modern Bengal and Assam such as Surya Pahar at Goalpara, see Kaushik Phukan, <http://www.posoowa.org/2007/06/27/the-conditionof-surya-pahar-a-neglected-archaeological-site/> (last accessed on 15 June 2009) and <http://explorenortheastindia.com/assam.htm> (last accessed on 20 June 2009); for the depiction of multiple deities at the Hayagriva Madhava temple at Hajo, see <http://asi.nic.in/images/epigraphy/008.jpg> (last accessed on 15 June 2009). For reports that the Hajo temple is the site of the winter pilgrimage of thousand of Buddhist Tibetans and Bhutanese on the grounds that Shakyamuni attained Mahaparinirvana at Hajo, that the Vaisnava temple itself is a chortem called r-Tsa-mch-gron (Tsamcho-dun), that a rocky area a few kilometres away is considered the site of the Buddha's cremation called Silwa tsal-gi tur do (the pyre of the cool grove), that Buddhists also consider sacred a Saiva Kedarnath temple on the shoulder of a hill nearby and call a lake beside the temple Tso-mani bhadra (the lake of the notable gem), see Ravi Deka's report filed in 2000 at <http://www.geocities.com/ravideka/archaeology.htm> (last accessed on 20 June 2009); for scholarly discussion of Hajo as well as the Tibet-Assam connections of the seventeenth century, see Huber (2008: 125–65); for other sites in modern Northeastern Indian states, see Dutta and Tripathy (2006, 2008).

4. For illustrative studies of the gradual discovery of Buddhism by the British, see Lopez (ed.) (1995a and 1995b); Leoshko (2003); De Filippis (2003 [1932]); and Harris (2006).
5. For representative illustration of such schema, see Verardi (2011).
6. For illustrative examples, see Niyogi (1980); Bhattacharya (2008).
7. For the fifteenth century, see Mckeown (2010); also Elverskog (2010); for translation activities of Indian pandits and Tibetan lo-tsa-ba between fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Shastri (2002).
8. Doctor (2005: 18); for a list of the epigraphs found in coastal Bengal, see Morrison (1970, 1974); updated lists and sites in Hussain *et al.* (1997); Banik (2009).
9. Tucci (1931: 697, 699).
10. *Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India* (1970: 330). Taranath, *b.* 1575, wrote this in 1608.
11. Hodge (2009: 171); Goldstein *et al.* (2001: 55).
12. Das (1990 [1902]: 10).
13. Sen (1942: 341–6).
14. Petech (1984: 66). Bhatgaon, in eastern Nepal, was also known as Bhaktapur in Sanskrit.
15. *Ibid.*, 107, 109. For earlier reports of worship of Tripuresvari alongside Bonpo and Buddhist practices in western Nepal (Jumla) and Tibet, see Tucci (1956: 17–62); for confusion about the status of Tripurasundari in late twentieth-century Bhaktapur, compare Levy (1987) with Gutschow and Basukala (1987); Vergati (2002 [1995]: 39, 110).
16. Gaenzle (2002).
17. Petech (1984: 124–9).
18. Dhungel (2002: 47–72).
19. For the Kagyupa, see Dargye (2001); for the Kadampa, see Rai (2006).
20. Pomplun (2010: 118).
21. *Jahangirnama* (1999: 142–3).
22. Huber (2008: 6); for different interpretations on both sacred geography of Tibetan Buddhists and of ethnic categories such as 'Mon-pa' in southern Bhutan, see Pommaret (1999) and Templeman (1999).
23. For debate on 'monastic' as a term, see Gellner (1987, 1992).
24. Amstutz (1998).
25. As Alexis Sanderson's studies of Pala disciples of particular Tantric teachers reveal, initiates were spoken of as 'kings': after initiation, these men rewarded their teachers with headships of monasteries and monastic estates. Though king, each Pala was also a 'subject' of a teacher; Sanderson (2009: 92–4) for Pala-built monasteries for teachers; also see his lecture at the University of Toronto, February 2010.

26. Flood (2004). *Askesis* literally meant exercise or discipline, giving practical effect to a doctrine and continuous embodied practice. See Valantasi (1995); for the centrality of disciplinary practice, not doctrines, to the formation of all schools, sects and lineages in India, see Silk (2002).
27. Ingalls (1957); Pollock (1985); for *yogacara* as attempt to synthesize diverse contemplative, ruminant and renunciative practices or muni-yati cults, see Amstutz (1998); Bronkhorst (2011: 164–5 and *passim*).
28. For Theravada symbolism, see Kirsch (1996); Van Esterik (1996); Keyes (1984); for Mahayana gender, see Cabezón (1992); Gyatso (2003); Makley (2007); Cook (2009).
29. Silk (2008).
30. Among the earliest studies, see Schram (1957); R.J. Miller (1959, 1961); B.D. Miller (1961); Cassinelli and Ekvall (1969); Ellingson (1990); Mornang (1990). For elaborations of monastic governance and economy, see Schopen (1997, esp. 258–9), and *idem* (2005); Boulnois (2002); Nietupski (2011); for comparative medieval western instances, see Sliber (1993).
31. *The Blue Annals* 1996, 178–9.
32. *Ibid.*, 96.
33. Dotson (2007: 3–78).
34. Kane (1930, vol. 2: 321–61).
35. Orr (2005).
36. For a comprehensive account, see Davidson (2002).
37. See, for example, Subhanakarapataka Grant of Dharmapala, in Sharma (ed.) (1981 [1931]): 217–21.
38. Carl Shigeo Yamamoto (2008: Chapter 3).
39. This clause was the single common denominator of the grants: for which compare between the easternmost grant found in Tezpur, Darrang district of Assam, by Chaudhary and Sircar (1951, *EI* 29: 145–59), and the latest finds of ‘Pala’ epigraphs in western Bengal and south Bihar, such as reported by Furui (2008) and Fleming (2010).
40. See for example, Narendradeva inscription (641 or 643–79) found in Pasupati temple, Kathmandu, in Bajracharya (1998: 30–1, Appendix VI).
41. Sircar (1979: 30–1).
42. Bhattacharya (2007).
43. Sircar (1979: 31–2). For Khalji presence on the plains of Magadha, Gaur, and foothills of the Himalayas 1199–1227, see Sarkar (1973: 1–38).
44. Vergati (1987: 43–7); Vergati (2002 [1995]: 202–14).
45. For studies of inscriptions dateable between 1205 and 1707, see Siddiq (2009).
46. See Walsh (2007, 2010).

47. For example, an elder (Sthavira) Pindola Bharadvaja, deified as a 'Buddha of medicine' (*bhaisajyaguru*); Bhattasali (1929: 37–41).
48. For the donative declaration of 'de dharmoyang acaryya prathama ... bhadrasya' on a black stone lingam, see Bhattasali (1929: 143).
49. Huntington (1984: 65–6).
50. Bhattacharya (2000a: 373–83; 2000b).
51. See Kim (2010a: 269; 2010b). Among nine donors, three were female laity, named 'Queen Uddākā' and 'Hīrākā, wife of a *thakura*'; the third was unnamed.
52. Andaya (2006); Blackwood (2005); Peletz (2006); Loos (2009).
53. *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, II (1936: 669–672, 693, 736).
54. Mills (2000: 17–34).
55. Orr (2000).
56. Rangachari (2009: 432–6 and 435).
57. For records of sixteenth and seventeenth-century grants of tax-exempt lands to women, including a cluster of women led by a 'Musammāt Raj Gosain', see Srivastava (1974: 19, 24, 29); Tirmizi (1979); Shakeb (ed.) (1982: 7–8).
58. Ahmad (1946). The document, dated 1783 CE, hands over a female donor's inheritance of slaves as a gift to a guru, Sarbananda Gosain in Kuch Behar, northern Bengal.
59. Dasgupta (1967).
60. Monghyr Copper-Plate in Mukherji and Maity (1967: 115–31); Sastri (1923, *EI*, 17: 310–27).
61. Sircar (1967: 128–33); for significance of Tara and other goddesses in inscriptions for eastern Assam and Manipur, see Bhattacharyya (1995).
62. Rangachari (2009: 410–14).
63. For levirate and widow marriages, and polyandry see Arti Dhand (2004); Sarva Daman Singh (1978); Meyer (1989 [1971]).
64. Sims-Williams (2000: 14).
65. Sahai (2007).
66. For comment on Bogle's notes on a 'modest and virtuous' wife of six of the lama's nephews, see Stewart and Lama (1777: 465–92).
67. Cited in Stewart (2009: 44).
68. Engels (2000 [1884]: Chapter II).
69. Chowdhury (1987, 1994); for studies of levirate and plural marriage from colonial peninsular India, see Poonacha (1996); for studies of shifting marital preferences and inheritance systems, see Arunima (2003); M. Srinivas (2008).
70. For example of oversight, see Chatterjee (2004); also Majumdar (2009).
71. Turner (2005 [1800]: 141, 180–1).

72. Robert Lindsay, Collector of Sylhet to Board of Revenue, 14 Dec 1787, *SDR*, 2, 205.
73. Rongmuti (1933: 54–60).
74. P. Chatterjee (1993); M. Sinha (1995, 2006); T. Sarkar (2002).
75. Bennett (2008); also Scott (2008).
76. Nandy (1995).
77. Novetzke (2008); in a similar vein, see Sreenivasan (2007).
78. Guha (2009).
79. Sperling (2011); Mullard (2011).
80. Leider (2009).
81. For discussions of such ‘treasure literature’, see among others, Vostrikov (1970 [1958]), Doctor (2005).
82. Bhuyan *Padshah Buranji* (1947: 62–3). For description of Nako, see Tucci (1988 [1935]: 3: 141–73).
83. Saikia (2008a); Purkayastha (2008).
84. Zou and Kumar (2011); Saikia (2005); Singh (2007); for political implications of such environmentalist histories, see Ludden (2003); Kar (2004); Baruah (2004); Pradhan (2007); Misra (2010); also Cederlof (2009); Suan (2011); Zou (2011).
85. D’Hubert and Leider (2011).
86. See surveys of the debate in Wayman (2005 [1973]: 128–35); Davidson (2002: 236–92); Kvaerne (2010 [1977]).
87. In addition to above, see Bhattacharya (1916); Thurman (1978, 1991); Lopez Jr. (1993 [1990]); reviews of Lopez in Griffiths (1990), Boucher (1990), Ruegg (1995); Cho (2002); Hershock (2003); Samuel (2008); Patil (2009); Urban (2001, 2010).
88. Broadbridge (2010: 17, 22–5).
89. Turner (2005 [1800]: 69); for another ordained monk who assumed the part of a ‘buffoon’ who hailed the Englishmen in ‘bad Bengali’, 151.
90. See Cooch Behar-Bhutan Diplomatic Correspondence in Biswas (1997: II, 923–40). A letter dated 1812 names ‘Ramnath Kayeth’ [member of a scribal community] as agent on behalf of the Buddhist monastic regime; the letter also names a polyglot Brahmana, Rammohun Roy, as Diwan of the British Collector of Rangpur, and emissary on behalf of the Company.
91. *Outline Grammar of the Garo Language* (1874: 2–3).
92. Karmi (comp) (1997 [1940]: 16); also Dasgupta (1997 [1372 B5]).
93. Goldstein, Shelling, and Surkhang (2001: 239).
94. For Kumilla, Sylhet, Chittagong, and Arakan, see Chatterjee (1993 [1926]: 108–9, 228–35); for its influence in shaping the study of Assamese and the lexical correspondence between Perso-Arabic, Burmese, Maithili, Malaya and Tibetan languages with Assamese, see Kakati (1962 [1941]:

- xiii–xiv, 40–82, 263), and passim; for studies of subcontinental heteroglossia from the earliest period to the present, see Pollock (2000, 2005); Busch (2011); Guha (2004b, 2005).
95. Gogoi (1986), Tunga (1985).
96. For sample of debate on vernacular materials dateable to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from south India, see Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam (2003, 2007); for east India, see Chatterjee (2008, 2009, 2010); Tony K. Stewart (2004, 2010); Curley (2008); Kar (2008) for west India, see O’Hanlon (2010); Guha (2004).
97. Among others, see Lopez (1995a); Davidson (2002).
98. For review, see Chatterjee (2002); Acharjee (2008, 2012); Deb Roy (2008).
99. Macdonald and Stahl (1979: 24).
100. Laufer (1930: 189–97), www.jstor.org, accessed 06/21/2010; for potential significance of the contemporary Buddhist-Taoist lineages of Song-Yuan deported to southern China, see Overmyer (1982).
101. Hossain *et al.* (1995: 10–11); for major Buddhist monastic complexes along this river-system, see Rahman (2000).
102. For a pictorial representation of the animals referred to, see Goldstein and Beall (1990: 96) and passim.
103. In addition to the government museums at Delhi, Calcutta, Gauhati, and Agartala, these include private collections such as those housed in Rajendra Kirtishala, Agartala.
104. The terracotta block is preserved in Rajendra Kirtishala; some of the numismatic collections can be found in the Indian Museum in Calcutta as well as Acharjee (2008).
105. Compare Aruz, Farkas, and Fino (eds) (2006, fig 16: 124), with a terracotta plaque of a horned lion and the same images on coins and seals associated with the Tripura Manikya, for which in addition to above, see Rhodes and Bose (2002).
106. For discussion of epigraphic and numismatic evidence on the Vaisnava-Buddhist genealogies of Jayadeva II, Manadeva, and other figures in the Himalayan foothills, see Bajracharya (1998: 18–35); Rhodes and Gabrisch *et al.* (1989); compare with Kuch Bihar in Bhattacharyya (1991); Mitchiner (2000); Rhodes and Bose (2003).
107. Rhodes and Bose (2002: 8–11); also A.C. Roy (1986: 259–318).
108. Kaliprasanna Sen, *SriRajamala* (1927, 1: 67–9).
109. S.K. Bhuyan *Tripura Buranji* (1938: 48–9). The text was written in 1724 and provided eye-witness accounts of routes between northern Bengal and the coastal plains of modern Bangladesh that passed through the Barak valley.
110. S.K. Bhuyan ed. *Tungkhungia Buranji* (1990a [1933]: 99–172).

111. Neog (1998 [1965]: 369).
112. Van Spengen (2000).
113. Luczanits (2004); also Luczanits (2011a, b: 13–24, 73–83); for archaeology of monastic sites along trade-routes, see Ray (2003, 2007); Neelis (2007); for an earlier study, see Dutt (1962).
114. Dar (2007); Neelis (2011: 186–204); for a later period, Sen (2003); Chakravarti, first 2002, revised 2007; Adhikary (1997 [1988]).
115. See Kim (2010a, 2010b).
116. Aung-Thwin (2005: 64 and *passim*).
117. For linguistic translations between Sanskrit and Tibetan, see among others Vostrikov (1970 [1958]); Van der Kuijp (1983); Eimer and Germano (2002); Gangopadhyay (2007); for Arabic translations of Sanskrit texts, see Pines and Gelblum (1989); Flood (2009); for other adaptations of literary forms and oral performances, see Guha (2004a).
118. The phrase is borrowed from Hazarika (1994).