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Global Encounters, Local Places: Connected Histories of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and the Himalayas—An Introduction

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Majestic Himalayan landscapes and colonial-era attractions continue to entice domestic and global tourists to the picturesque mountain towns of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Occasionally, a travel writer gushes over their quaint charms, but national and international media highlight them only when beset by natural disasters or political turmoil. Local inhabitants fret about the inadequate infrastructure and Indian state neglect that drives their youngsters away to global mega-cities such as Mumbai, Hong Kong, or London. This present marginality stands in sharp contrast to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when Darjeeling and Kalimpong were internationally notable hubs for mountain exploration, commodity trade, religious innovation, and Great Game politics. Until the mid-twentieth century, readers of international publications such as the *Times of India*, the *Scotsman*, the *New York Times*, *Harper's Magazine*, *South African Outlook*, and the *Berliner Volkszeitung* regularly encountered Darjeeling as a bucolic tea-growing destination and a colourful mart on the edge of the world's highest mountains, or its neighbour Kalimpong as the embarkation point for Everest expeditions and the headquarters of the wool trade from Tibet to the United States.

This themed section historicises and recovers the complex histories of these recently marginalised Himalayan places by connecting them to larger transcultural narratives and global processes of economic, religious, and social exchange. It is largely inspired by Sanjay Subrahmanyam's call for "connected histories" that explore how local and regional places, transactions, and encounters constitute global histories through the circulation of people, ideas, and commodities into and across such spaces.¹ Contributors seek to develop this model as an alternative to the dominant historiographies and

1 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," in "The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400–1800," special issue, *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (July 1997): 735–762.



Fig. 1: *The eastern Himalayas as a contact zone of different nation states. Map created by UvA-Kaartenmakers.*

area studies scholarship that privileged nation state-centred histories and Cold War political formations over connective and transnational ones. Global processual histories, such as those by Eric Wolf, Sidney Mintz, and Fernand Braudel, have demonstrated from a macro-level, material culture perspective that the circulation of people, goods, and things transcends nation states.² The recent turn to scholarship on maritime networks is a significant contribution to connected histories, but privileges coastal cities rather than inland ones, not to mention those in seemingly more remote areas.³ This themed section's emphasis on borderland histories and their transcultural connections across Asia and the globe is also inspired by North American scholars such as Richard White, who called for careful historical interrogation of the shifting power dynamics that characterised spaces between states which functioned

2 Fernand Braudel, *Afterthoughts on Material Civilisation and Capitalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking Press, 1985); Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

3 An excellent example of a maritime history is Nile Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840–1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

as a “middle ground” for different cultures and ethnicities.⁴ An important impetus is the call for “Zomia” from Willem van Schendel and James Scott as a heuristic area for study that comprises the linguistically, culturally, and economically connected Asian borderlands of Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, Nepal, India, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Burma. This call serves to further de-centre the nation state as a sealed “container” of history and allows contributors to re-imagine Himalayan place histories from connected local-global perspectives that move beyond nation states, area studies, and regions such as South Asia or East Asia.⁵

We recognize that writing connected histories of such borderland and transnational spaces poses large and specific challenges. Himalayan archives, for instance, are dispersed across many local and national collections in numerous languages, often in a perilous state of preservation, with only scanty historical materials to illuminate subaltern and mobile subjectivities. Partly for these reasons, anthropologists, linguists, and specialists of religious studies who undertake ethnographic or purely textual research have managed to study this region much more than historians. This themed section emerges from a collaborative academic network aimed at promoting historically nuanced conversations and interdisciplinary initiatives that recognize and challenge such a lacuna.⁶ Our hope is that it will inspire scholars who face similar challenges to advance dialogue about how connected and collaborative approaches to humanities and social science research across national and disciplinary boundaries might thrive and, in turn, encourage public engagement for such under-studied areas.

4 Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). White’s theoretical model for understanding borderland history has inspired scholarship on Asia with works such as C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China’s Yunnan Frontier* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2006) and Yudru Tsomu, *The Rise of Gönpo Namgyel in Kham: The Blind Warrior of Nyarong* (Lanham: Lexington, 2014).

5 See Willem van Schendel, “Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance: Jumping Scale in Southeast Asia,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 20 (2002): 647–668 and James Scott, *The Art of not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). For more on Zomia and the Himalayas, see Sara Shneiderman, “Are the Central Himalayas in Zomia? Some Scholarly and Political Considerations across Time and Space,” *Political Geography* 5 (2010): 289–312.

6 The Eastern Himalaya Research Network is an international network of scholars that focuses on historically nuanced cultural studies of the eastern Himalayas and their borderlands. We promote collaboration in digital scholarship and pedagogy, archival preservation and dissemination, and nurture research partnerships involving university academics, public intellectuals, young researchers, and institutions across the Himalayas and beyond: <https://www.uts.utoronto.ca/digitalscholarship/ehrn/home> [Accessed on 24. June 2016].

For centuries, the Himalayas were of spiritual and commercial significance, but mainly to the inhabitants of Asia. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, medical theories, plantation capitalism, commodity commerce, migrations, and strategic machinations brought these mountain localities and habitats to imperial and global attention.⁷ An important impulse behind the geo-political manoeuvring to control these spaces followed from the bio-political theories that encouraged imperial territorial expansion into mountain zones. Nineteenth-century Euro-American medical science was steeped in climatic thinking, which held that tropical colonies posed great dangers for white races. Periodic bodily recuperation seemed essential to preserve white racial health in hot climates, but this depended on European colonisers having access to the temperate climes of high-altitude spaces. This in turn inspired the English East India Company to annex a remote mountain hamlet named Dorjéling (*Rdo rje gling*) from the kingdom of Sikkim in 1835. The Company's new British settlement of Darjeeling was planned as a high-altitude sanitarium that would provide refuge for white troops and administrators from the ravages of the Indian plains.⁸ Similar bio-political thinking based on climatic theories and race science inspired the creation of Dalat, Bukittinggi, and Baguio—other hill station resorts across Asia—when Dutch, French, and American empire-builders adopted the British strategy of periodic high-altitude recuperation.⁹

British Darjeeling acquired additional economic and political cachet when colonial experiments to grow transplanted tea-plants along its mountain slopes proved successful. After the Portuguese introduced this Chinese

7 Relevant works across a variety of disciplines include Toni Huber and Stuart Blackburn, eds., *Origins and Migrations in the Extended Eastern Himalayas* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Alex McKay, *Their Footprints Remain: Biomedical Beginnings across the Indo-Tibetan Frontier* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007); Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Karma Phuntsho, *A History of Bhutan* (Delhi: Random House, 2013); Sara Shneiderman, *Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, *The Social Life of Tibetan Biography: Textuality, Community, and Authority in the Lineage of Tokden Shakya Shri* (Lanham: Lexington, 2014); Wim van Spengen, *Tibetan Border Worlds: A Geo-Historical Analysis of Trade and Traders* (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000).

8 Judith T. Kenny, "Climate, Race, and Imperial Authority: The Symbolic Landscape of the British Hill Station in India," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85, no. 4 (1995): 694–714.

9 Other works on hill stations include Nandini Bhattacharya, "Leisure, Economy, and Colonial Urbanism: Darjeeling, 1835–1930," *Urban History* 40, no. 3 (2013): 442–461; Aditi Chatterji, *Landscapes of Power: The Colonial Hill Stations*, Research Papers 59 (Oxford: School of Geography, University of Oxford, 2003); Pamela Kanwar, *Imperial Simla: The Political Culture of the Raj* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990); Dane K. Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Queeny Pradhan, "Empire in the Hills: The Making of Hill Stations in Colonial India," *Studies in History* 23, no. 1 (2007): 33–91.

beverage into seventeenth-century Europe, tea had become hugely popular. By the mid-nineteenth century, tea-drinking became inseparable from genteel ladies' parlours as well as workers' canteens on the British Isles. Until that time, China was the sole supplier of tea to the globe. This gave the Chinese Qing Empire a crucial commercial monopoly that European statesmen and scientists attempted to contest. Such attempts were fruitless until the British succeeded in cultivating tea in their colonial acquisitions.¹⁰ In the 1860s, when colonial tea plantations in Darjeeling, Assam, and Ceylon started to challenge the Chinese monopoly, this was hailed as a key political and scientific achievement of the British Empire. Over the next few decades, Darjeeling tea acquired a reputation and fame that spanned the globe.¹¹ The town's growing popularity as a picturesque mountain destination and the main producer of a global beverage intensified when it became the summer capital of the Bengal Presidency, with a rail connection to the port-city of Calcutta that largely mitigated the rigors of high-altitude travel.

A few hours from Darjeeling, across the Teesta River, lies the hamlet of Kalimpong, which the British acquired in 1865 from the kingdom of Bhutan. Already home to a lively market that connected dispersed Himalayan localities with the long-distance salt and brick-tea trades, Kalimpong became particularly popular with European missionaries and explorers, above all as a window into Buddhist-ruled Tibet, which was not accessible to most foreigners at that time. The two mountain towns developed into crucial economic and cultural crossroads between the eastern Himalayas and the world, especially in the wake of the Younghusband Mission's forcible opening of Tibet in 1904. They gained their hub status at the expense of the historic cities of Kathmandu and Lhasa, whose Nepali and Tibetan rulers, hoping to evade European territorial ambitions, imposed severe restrictions on cross-border travel and commerce. In their place, Darjeeling and Kalimpong, positioned between the Qing and British Empires, the kingdoms of Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim, and Tibet, attracted settlers of diverse Asian and Himalayan ethnicities, as well as British, German, French, and Scandinavian sojourners. In these British-ruled towns, colonial administrators, planters, and missionaries dominated social hierarchies, but Asian traders were the key economic actors. Marwari, Tibetan, Nepali, and Chinese traders dispatched consumer goods ranging from rice to Rolex watches to and from these hill stations, into territories such as Tibet, which had only recently become accessible to the global circulation of goods. In turn, trading partners located

10 Jayeeta Sharma, *Empire's Garden: Assam and the Making of India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

11 Sarah Besky, *The Darjeeling Distinction: Labor and Justice on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

across the Himalayas assisted Darjeeling and Kalimpong agents in transmitting locally produced commodities to the rest of the world.¹²

Darjeeling tea was the best known of these Himalayan products. By 1896, Darjeeling and its surroundings had 175 tea plantations owned by British firms that employed approximately 70,000 local workers, to grow a crop worth well over ten million pounds.¹³ Other, less widely-known Himalayan commodities were Tibetan sheep wool and yak tails. These crossed the Himalayas on mule and yak into Kalimpong, from whence powerful traders such as the Tibetan Pangdatsang syndicate sent them across the oceans into North American factories and department stores. Few global consumers realized that ubiquitous modern artefacts such as Santa Claus beards were manufactured from yak-tail hair. Wool trade figures fluctuated wildly due to global economic and geopolitical conflicts; at the height of its post-war boom during the 1940s, the trade generated between one and a half and two million US dollars.¹⁴

As colonial Darjeeling and Kalimpong expanded into hubs for commerce across British India, Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, and China, they flourished as fluid contact zones characterized by economic mobility, urban socialization, and cross-cultural encounters.¹⁵ A substantial mobile population was drawn in from a wide swathe of economically marginal lands such as the Himalayan territories of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, and China, as well as parts of Northern, Eastern, and Western India. At the upper reaches of the hill station labour pyramid were the men and women who found employment in the military, on plantations, and in households; at the lower end were porters and other types of manual workers. The anthropologist Tanka Subba estimates that the Darjeeling hinterland's population increased from around one hundred at the time of British annexation, to 10,000 by 1849, 22,000 by 1850, and that it had jumped to over 90,000 by 1872.¹⁶

A large proportion of this population arrived from Nepal, and found new employment opportunities in the colonial economy as Gurkha soldiers and tea

12 Jayeeta Sharma, "Producing Himalayan Darjeeling: Mobile People and Mountain Encounters," *Himalaya: The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 1–15.

13 G. W. Christison, "Tea Planting in Darjeeling," *Society of Arts Journal* 44 (1895–96): 623–644.

14 Tina Harris, *Geographical Diversions: Tibetan Trade, Global Transactions* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013).

15 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

16 Tanka Subba, "Living the Nepali Diaspora: An Autobiographical Essay," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 133, no. 2 (2008): 213–232.

plantation labourers.¹⁷ In 1895, there were roughly 160,000 Nepali workers in the Darjeeling area, of whom 88,021 had been born in Nepal. Away from the repressive Rana regime that ruled their homeland, these Darjeeling and Kalimpong migrants played a prominent role in the creation of Nepali as a literary language, establishing some of the earliest Nepali print periodicals, such as the *Gorkha Khabar Kagat* (1885) and *Chandrika* (1914). These towns provided a safe home for Newar Buddhists from the Kathmandu Valley who faced religious persecution in Nepal. Settling in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, these families found not just religious refuge but a suitable base to conduct commerce that spanned India, Sikkim, Nepal, and Tibet.¹⁸ Assisted by such wealthy patrons, the two towns became vital centres for the creation and dissemination of Buddhist knowledge that were connected to other Asian centres such as Ceylon and Burma, but also generated secular information, especially on Tibet, that spread across the world.¹⁹ A key figure in such information circulation was an ethnic Tibetan migrant from the western Himalayas, Dorje Tharchin, who earned his living at Kalimpong as a translator and language instructor for the Scottish Foreign Mission, but became famous as the creator of the world's first Tibetan newspaper with a wider distribution network, the *Mélong* or *Tibet Mirror*, which was published from 1925 to 1963.²⁰ Its subscribers ranged from the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Dalai Lamas to traders from Tibet, Nepal, and surrounding areas. This newspaper was also read by an emerging global network of intellectuals and academics interested in Tibetan issues, including Jacques Bacot (France), Marco Pallis (UK), Johan van Manen (Netherlands), and Johannes Schubert (Germany).

During the 1840s, the British botanist Joseph Hooker was the first well-known figure to bring Darjeeling into the public eye. He lived there for three years, making it his base for naturalist collecting activity. Through private letters and published journals, Hooker engaged an influential scientific community

17 Catherine Warner, "Flighty Subjects: Sovereignty, Shifting Cultivators, and the State in Darjeeling, 1830–1856," *Himalaya: The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 34, no. 1 (2014).

18 An interesting biography of a transnational Newar Buddhist trading family is D. S. Kansakar Hilker, *Syamukapu: The Lhasa Newars of Kalimpong and Kathmandu* (Kathmandu: Vajra Publications, 2005).

19 Another transnational study where Kalimpong networks play a crucial role is Paul G. Hackett's *Theos Bernard, The White Lama: Tibet, Yoga, and American Religious Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

20 See digital collections on the *Tibet Mirror* from Columbia University: http://www.columbia.edu/cu/web/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd_6981643_000/ [Accessed on 24. June 2016].

and a wider European readership with his Himalayan findings.²¹ Those ranged from the rhododendrons that began to bloom in gardens across the globe to natural observations incorporated by Charles Darwin into his influential *On the Origin of Species*. In the century after Hooker's visit, Darjeeling and Kalimpong played host to other sojourners and settlers from across the globe, who pursued a wide variety of interests. They included the Nepali Christian preacher Gangaprasad Pradhan, the Belgian-French mystical writer Alexandra David-Néel, the Scottish missionary and child welfare reformer John Anderson Graham, the British administrator and Tibet scholar Charles Bell, the Bengali Nobel Laureate litterateur Rabindranath Tagore, the Newar Buddhist businessman Bhajuratna Kansakar, the Danish anthropologist Prince Peter, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, the Japanese Buddhist pilgrim Ekai Kawaguchi, and the mountain porter-turned-Everest-conqueror Tenzing Norgay. Throughout the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, their travels, experiences, and narratives further tied the Himalayas to larger histories of modernity and cross-cultural encounters.

This themed section of the journal *Transcultural Studies* engages with such multiple journeys and crossings around Darjeeling and Kalimpong and offers alternative approaches which connect and intersect the history of local places and spaces with broader narratives of global history. The contributors to this section draw upon a range of perspectives and archives to frame their explorations of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and the eastern Himalayas as hubs for local, regional, and global circulation, transnational and transcultural encounters. An important aspect of these articles is their wide-ranging exploration of textual, oral, and visual source materials in multiple languages and locations across the world, from the colonial modern to the contemporary era.

Jayeeta Sharma places Darjeeling within the historical context of hill station sanatorium urbanity that was a key feature of British imperial culture. She explores how a strategic eastern Himalayan location at the crossroads of transnational circulations of bodies, commodities, and ideas shaped the transcultural character of the town and gave it a distinctive global presence. The article examines Darjeeling as a colonial space that was laboured upon and constituted by mobile historical actors from across the Himalayas and beyond, including Lepcha cultivators, Nepali labourers, Sherpa porters, Gurkha soldiers, Sikkim landholders, Bengali clerks, Scottish missionaries, and British planters. The circulation, migration, and representation of

21 Joseph Dalton Hooker, *Himalayan Journals: Notes of a Naturalist in Bengal, the Sikkim and Nepal Himalayas, the Khasia Mountains, &c* (London: John Murray, 1855); see also the newly available database of his correspondence on the website of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: <http://www.kew.org/science-conservation/collections/joseph-hooker/correspondence> [Accessed on 24. June 2016].

Himalayan labouring bodies, the economic and social transactions of capitalism around commodities such as tea, salt, and wool, and the local and global journeys of Euro-American sojourners became the key transcultural elements that transformed British Darjeeling into a place famed across the Himalayas and the world. Emma Martin's article takes the production of the British administrator Charles Bell's influential *Tibetan Dictionary* (1905) as a thread to investigate scholarly encounters and interactions in the Himalayan borderlands. She explores how Bell spent his years as a colonial government functionary between Sikkim, Tibet, Darjeeling, and Kalimpong, consolidating the skills that made him a leading Tibetologist of that era. In so doing, she illustrates how Bell's much-vaunted global reputation as a Tibet scholar was largely based on his access to local intermediaries from Darjeeling, Tibet, and Sikkim. Reading between the lines of the British state's official archive and Bell's own correspondence, she shows how a landmark of imperial knowledge like Bell's *Dictionary* was predicated on the "knife edge of colonialism" and its inequalities of power. This article deconstructs the expertise of an imperial functionary to delineate the "hidden histories" of local and indigenous agency that helped create an ostensibly Western canon of Himalayan knowledge. Kalzang Dorjee Bhutia explores different perspectives on the importance of Darjeeling and Kalimpong as hubs of cultural hybridity where local intellectuals and global visitors were able to exchange and cross-fertilize ideas unhampered by the repressive political environments of other Himalayan polities. This article focuses on the Young Men's Buddhist Association, which devoted its energies to public education and, by taking the YMCA as both inspiration and challenge, countered Christian missionary efforts to convert locals by presenting modernized Buddhism as an alternative. His sources include a little-known oral archive narrated in the Bhutia, Lepcha, and Nepali languages about the Theravada monk S. K. Jinorasa and his wide-ranging social justice initiatives, as well as the self-consciously penned and self-published memoirs of the British-born Buddhist philosopher Sangharakshita. Samuel Thévoz investigates global forms of Buddhism inspired by the representation of local cultures of Tibet and Sikkim in Western scholarship, with a focus on the life of Alexandra David-Néel, the early twentieth-century Belgian-French explorer, spiritualist, and *New York Times* best-selling author who was to have a profound and long-lasting influence on Beat culture and Western esotericism. His examination of David-Néel's encounters with Tibetans in Darjeeling and Kalimpong adds a new dimension to the crucial role played by these mountain towns located at the borderland junction of cross-cultural currents in the creation of global intellectual and cultural networks that derived inspiration from Buddhism and Orientalism.

The shifting perspectives employed in these articles tie these localities to larger histories of enormous relevance to our understanding of the global history of intellectual and commercial exchange. They are also of great import for a fuller understanding of twenty-first century geo-politics, where, as China and India consolidated their global position, smaller Himalayan entities such as Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Tibet as well as Indian and Chinese borderland spaces became embroiled within—and perhaps even central to—those territorialising ambitions. By the late twentieth century, a broad constellation of economic and political forces made localities such as Darjeeling and Kalimpong marginal to the media and to area studies scholarship that focused on the rising Asian nation states of China and India. China's increasing post-war grip on Tibet had mixed effects on the inhabitants of these borderland towns. On one hand, the increase in Chinese soldiers and demand for commodities in Tibet brought significant prosperity for some traders in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. On the other hand, many felt the impact of commercial restrictions, as well as heavy losses (in the case of the wealthy trading families) as the Chinese state began to take over the Tibetan economy. Combined with the US export control act limiting goods from China, global trading connections with the now-Indian towns of Darjeeling and Kalimpong began to visibly chill. In the late 1950s, refugees from Tibet into India initially used Kalimpong as a base, but later left for other places with better opportunities. The build-up of animosity between India and China culminated in significant border conflicts and eventually the Sino-Indian War of 1962. Chinese families based on the Indian side were accused of spying and were repatriated to China despite the fact that they had not lived there for several generations. The 1962 war essentially sealed off all borders between China and India. Whatever was left of small-scale Tibet-India trade was rerouted through Nepal, rather than via Kalimpong. Neighbouring Darjeeling largely retained the cachet of its tea, which in 2005 acquired the status of India's first GI commodity, along the lines of French champagne and Italian parmesan. However, its share in the global market dipped, partly due to strong competition from lower-end teas from Kenya and elsewhere, and partly due to the political turmoil associated with the sub-nationalist Gorkhaland movement, which protested the distant West Bengal state government's political neglect of these mountain spaces.

In the eastern Himalayas, images of these connected histories—tea and yak tails, spies and missionaries, administrators and monks—still remain central to negotiations of identity, albeit in a new globalized idiom. This is illustrated by the recent installation of a giant LCD screen at the Chowrastra pedestrian square, known to any connoisseur of Darjeeling's picturesque vistas. Once an exclusive social space reserved for the white elites of empire, today's Chowrastra is pleasantly chaotic in the daytime hours, with Euro-American

backpackers, Israeli tourists, and Indo-Nepali, Tibetan, and Bengali locals milling around. Bellowing over their voices is the soundtrack of television shows from the giant screen. The television images appear to mirror postcards at nearby bookshops: photographic images of soaring peaks and bucolic villages whose inspiration goes back to the colonial-era tourist trade. Closer attention reveals that the soundtrack that accompanies those images is not the locally dominant Nepali or English languages, but Mandarin. This linguistic detail evokes an even older connected history, one where mountain spaces controlled today by Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, and Russia formed part of the ancient trade route that transported tea and silks from Yunnan into Eurasia. Such entanglements represent the complex and connected histories that thread through Darjeeling and Kalimpong, and demonstrate how ostensibly marginal borderland places continue to perform as gateways to the world that connect diverse spaces, peoples, objects, and representations.