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## A Newspaper for Tibet: Babu Tharchin and the 'Tibet Mirror' (Yul phyogs so so'i gsar 'gyur me long, 1925–1963) from Kalimpong

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## REFERENCES

A Newspaper for Tibet: Babu Tharchin and the 'Tibet Mirror' (Yul phyogs so so'i gsar 'gyur me long, 1925–1963) from Kalimpong

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Further documentation on the development of Tibetan newspaper history can be found at: <https://tibetannewspapers.com/>.

- 1 The study examines the beginnings of the history of a Tibetan-language newspaper by analysing Yul phyogs so so'i gsar 'gyur me long, ie 'Mirror of News from Various Regions [of the World]' (in short: Melong), in a social-historical context. Melong was produced between 1925 and 1963 from the Indo-Tibetan border town of Kalimpong by the Christian convert Babu Tharchin. It developed into one of the most influential early

newspapers in the Tibetan language. Differing from its precursors, Melong was not envisioned mainly as a medium to propagate religious content (as Christian missionaries had done) or political propaganda (as Republicans in China had done). Melong's editor-in-chief Tharchin attributed special value to the newspaper: as a medium of an active public of a nation state.

- 2 After a concise history of mediated communication on the Tibetan plateau with a focus on printed media, the production environment of Melong's print shop 'Tibet Mirror Press' in Kalimpong is examined. Here, Tharchin, with his workshop, is identified as one of the first commercial print-publishers for the Tibetan language. His partly commercial outlook gave way to a new agency of mass audiences, in theory levelling people as equal potential customers and disregarding traditional sociocultural hierarchies.
- 3 A detailed content analysis of editorial comments published in the newspaper underlines this trend. The same data gives insight into how Tibet as a nation state was imagined within Melong, while appropriating content in language and style for specific communicative protocols established amongst Tibetan-language speakers. Five case studies based on the general content of the newspaper further highlight the strategies used to help understand foreign concepts, whilst changing the newspaper in the process. These are: religion (Christianity), knowledge production (discourses on the shape of the earth), world politics (coverage of the Second World War), economics (advertisements) and time (the newspaper as prophecy).
- 4 On the one hand, the study investigates transformation processes of the participating community, Tibet. On the other hand, it investigates how, in the process, the global product newspaper was adapted to a Tibetan-speaking audience, analysing transformation processes of the newspaper genre. Due to the state of available source material, the study focuses on the imaginations of Tibet within the contents of the newspaper and thus combines Benedict Anderson's theses of 'imagined communities' with a transcultural approach.

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**Keywords:** newspapers, media history, Tibetan history, Tibetan literature, transculturality, cross-cultural theory

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Anna Sawerthal is currently editor at Der Standard. Her dissertation can be downloaded at: <https://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/25156/>