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exploration, imperialism, and mountaineering in British India, 1927-1947

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Nicholas Green, COVID-19 Statement

My doctoral thesis has been impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. I had planned to undertake a research trip to India to visit the library of the Himalayan Club in New Delhi during the Autumn of 2020. Due to travel restrictions at the time and ongoing uncertainty regarding the rules and possibility of travel I hoped to re-schedule this trip for the Spring of 2021. This too proved to be impossible due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic, and the emergence of new variants. The timing of this prospective Spring trip was important because I was already then in my third year of study and it would thereafter have been unfeasible, for financial and visa-related reasons, to introduce a significant amount of new primary source material into my work. Consequently, my present thesis is much more concerned with *The Himalayan Journal*, the literary organ of the Himalayan Club than I had initially intended. I am satisfied with this course correction, but it is important to acknowledge this limitation.

The Himalayan Club's library consists primarily of donated monographs and material by individual members of the Club. Consequently, much of this material was accessible elsewhere. And I was able to locate much of the archival material relating to the foundation of the Club at the archives of the Alpine Club in London. Despite this, I nevertheless lost out on a valuable opportunity to unearth unexpected archival material and to engage with the Himalayan Club's library as an object of study.

The Himalayan Club:
Exploration, Imperialism, and Mountaineering in British India, 1927-1947

by
Nicholas Green

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for
award of the degree of History in the Faculty of Arts

Word Count: 82,900

Abstract:

This study examines the relationship between ideas of exploration, imperialism, and mountaineering on the Himalayan frontier of the British Empire in the 1920s and 1930s. This is done through an examination of the Himalayan Club, a society that was founded in Simla in 1927. With interests in mountaineering and upland recreation, the Himalayan Club and its members, many of whom were high ranking members of the Indian Civil Service and Military, were driven to create the Club by a nostalgia for a putative golden age of exploration. This study argues that for many British officials and officers in India in the 1920s and 30s the Himalaya was perceived to be a space in which an idealised form of imperialism could be performed without the constraints imposed by normal imperial administration. It does so through an examination of *The Himalayan Journal*, the literary organ of the Club, alongside mountaineering memoirs, travelogues, private correspondence and journals. This idealised form of imperialism was predicated on a belief in the intimate connection between exploration and imperialism. This connection, in large part, depended on a nostalgic conception of the Empire's past and indeed of many older colonial officials' experience of it. Within this narrative, exploration had been the motor of the British Empire and the absence of new frontiers or of blank spaces on the map was something to be dreaded. For the Himalayan Club, however, exploration encompassed a variety of activities ranging from hunting excursions, to scientific expeditions, to high-altitude climbs. Overall, this study argues that a nostalgic conception of exploration and of Britain's imperial past was widespread amongst British imperial agents during the Interwar period and suggests that by the 1920s and 30s these agents had increasingly come to understand the Empire in terms of personal interests and desires.

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There are many people without whom this thesis would never have been possible. I would first like to thank the University of Bristol and its staff for their support throughout my four years as a student. I would especially like to thank my supervisors Dr. Daniel Haines and Professor Simon J. Potter as well as Dr. Sumita Mukherjee, who supervised me during my first year, for their constant support, good humour, advice, and wisdom. I would also like to thank Professor Hillary M. Carey for her guidance and feedback during my first annual progress monitoring evaluation. I would also like to thank my examiners Professor Robert Bickers and Professor Robert Fletcher, for their consent to review this work.

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Finally, I would like to thank my close family and friends. I thank my friends for helping me to keep a healthy work life balance. I thank my mother Kim Green for her constant support, and never-wavering belief in my abilities. I thank my father Erik Green, for his reassurance and level-headed advice. I thank my sister Christina Green for reminding me of the lighter side of life. I thank my grandmother Lois Green for her faith in my ambition. And I thank my partner Robert Chaudhry for his constant support, love, and for helping me to see this thesis through to the end.

I dedicate this thesis to all of you.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: **Nicholas Green**

DATE: 6th of September, 2022

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Introduction: The Himalaya as a Theatre of Individualistic Imperialism

Francis Kingdon-Ward was born in Manchester on the 6th of November, 1885, a little under a year after the commencement of the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, which saw most of the African continent divided amongst the European colonial powers with little regard for pre-existing African polities. The Conference had translated the supposedly inchoate patchwork of African societies, peoples, and cultures into a number of discretely delineated colonies, governed, defined, and described by Europeans. Because of this, the Conference could also be seen as marking the end (or at least the beginning of the end), of a period of celebrity exploration in Africa which had reached its apogee with Henry Morton Stanley's 1871 expedition to locate David Livingstone.¹ Kingdon-Ward died in 1958, the same year in which the Soviet satellite Sputnik fell from orbit and Edmund Hillary's Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition completed the third overland journey to the South Pole. These dates, not definitive points of demarcation in themselves, serve as the bookends to a life which was shaped by a belief in exploration as an heroic endeavour. Between 1885 and 1958, however, exploration, and ideas about what it meant to be an 'explorer', had changed enormously.

Kingdon-Ward was a botanist, the son of Henry Marshall Ward, a lecturer in botany at Cambridge University.² After a brief stint at Cambridge himself, Kingdon-Ward had taken on a post as a teacher in Shanghai, at a school organised along the lines of an English public school. The life of a schoolmaster held little appeal for Kingdon-Ward, however, and in 1909 it did not take much for him to accept an offer to travel and work with the naturalist Malcolm P. Anderson who was voyaging up the Yangtze to the border with Tibet.³ Upon his return to Shanghai, Kingdon-Ward 'settled down to humdrum life...with every prospect of becoming a

¹ For more on this era of celebrity exploration in Africa see 'Chapter 8: Celebrities' in Dane Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

² Francis Kingdon Ward was born without the hyphen connecting his middle and surname. This was a self-styled addition later in life.

³ J.P. Mills, 'Obituary: Frank Kingdon-Ward', *The Geographical Journal* 124, no. 3 (1958), 422 (p. 422).

quiet and respectable citizen'. But, as he later recalled, 'travel had bitten too deeply into my soul, and I soon began to feel restless again, so... after four months of civilised life [when] something better turned up, I accepted with alacrity'.⁴ This better thing turned out to be plant hunting, and Kingdon-Ward's journey up the Irrawaddy and into Eastern Tibet, documented in *The Land of the Blue Poppy* was to be the first of many plant-hunting expeditions he would undertake in the Eastern Himalaya. Most of these expeditions were ostensibly concerned with the collection of rare flowers, especially rhododendrons, for the gardens of wealthy clients in Britain. These expeditions, aside from their botanical aims also provided Kingdon-Ward with an opportunity to satisfy his desire for exploration, and his published works, despite their ostensible focus on flowers also read like what they are, self-aggrandizing accounts of adventure on the frontiers of Empire. In *the Land of the Blue Poppy* alone, for example, Kingdon-Ward recounts: his first experience of a Tibetan rope bridge, false rumours of a British invasion of Tibet, and a bout of mild hallucinations brought on by ingesting the corollas of rhododendrons for sustenance whilst lost and separated from his party.⁵

Although he maintained a belief in exploration as an heroic ideal, by the late 1920s Kingdon-Ward was aware that the age of Stanley and Livingstone, and even Scott and Shackleton, had come to an end. And in a 1929 article entitled 'Botanical Exploration in the Mishmi Hills', Kingdon-Ward began his account with a brief note on the state of exploration at the time, writing that 'probably every generation has boasted to its successors that it has left them no more worlds to conquer'. Despite this general truth, which could also be seen as an implicit acknowledgment that there were many who believed that there were no 'blank spaces' left on the map, Kingdon-Ward still saw reason to be optimistic. 'And yet there never were more explorers than there are to-day. The truth is that the geographical outlook, like everything

⁴ F. Kingdon Ward, *The Land of the Blue Poppy: Travels of a Naturalist in Eastern Tibet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. 1.

⁵ Kingdon Ward, *The Land of the Blue Poppy*, pp. 42, p. 115, pp. 150-52, pp. 25-31.

else, has changed with the times'. And he concluded his introduction with a boosterish crescendo:

No more worlds to conquer! Rather are there new worlds for old, and explorers need never despair that the romance of their calling is dead. The paradox of exploration is that as the field narrows, the objects in the field expand to infinity. If, then, the pioneer has had his day, for the specialist it is only the breaking of the dawn.⁶

Kingdon-Ward wrote this for an article in the inaugural volume of *The Himalayan Journal*, the literary organ of an organisation founded the year before, the Himalayan Club.

Before proceeding it must be noted that the Club, which is still active today, has changed substantially since its foundation in 1928. These changes can be readily appreciated through a comparison of the content and activities of the club over time. In particular, the scope and range of the Club's interests has narrowed since the Second World War, tending towards an almost exclusive focus on mountaineering as a sport. Despite an evident respect and interest in its past (the Club has made substantial efforts to digitise past volumes of *The Himalayan Journal*, publish articles dealing with its institutional past and its past members, and to provide reference guides), the significance of these changes has not always been appreciated by the club. Or, rather, the imperial context in which the Club was founded had not been considered in a holistic fashion by the Club. This is understandable considering the Club's focus on mountaineering, but it misses out on much that was interesting about this period of its existence.

Inaugurated on the 17th of February, 1928, in Simla, the official objects of the Himalayan Club were (and still are) 'to encourage and assist Himalayan travel and exploration, and to extend knowledge of the Himalaya and adjoining mountain ranges through science, art,

⁶ F. Kingdon Ward, 'Botanical Exploration in the Mishmi Hills', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 51-59 (p. 51).

literature and sport'.⁷ Although not mentioned in its objects, the Himalayan Club was particularly interested in furthering the cause of Himalayan mountaineering and in seeing great summits like Kangchenjunga, Nanda Devi and especially Mount Everest summited. In the words of one of its founding members, Kenneth Mason, the Club was 'a mean between a specialised Geographical Society and a Climbing Club'.⁸ Of all the Club's objects, however, it was exploration, both as an abstract ideal and as a practice, which truly animated it. Indeed, for the Club's founding and early members, Kingdon-Ward's assertion that for the specialist explorer it was only the 'breaking of the dawn', could be seen as something like a clarion call. With mountaineering at the forefront, the early members of the Himalayan Club sought to create an organisation in which the same exploratory impulse that had guided the 'pioneer' explorers was kept alive, and directed to new and profitable ends.

Amongst the earliest men to join the Himalayan Club were members of the political and military elite of British India including: Malcolm Hailey, the governor of the Punjab, Edward Tandy, the Surveyor General of India, Sir William Birdwood, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, T.E.T. Upton, the Solicitor to the Government of India, and Edwin Pascoe, the Director of the Geological Survey of India, as well as the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, among others.⁹ Alongside these men were dozens of lower-ranking district officers, army officers, and members of the Survey of India, Forestry Service, as well as peripatetic explorers like Kingdon-Ward, the archaeologist Aurel Stein, and the explorer Reginald Schomberg.¹⁰ This thesis will examine the Himalayan Club and its members' relationship to exploration,

⁷ G. L. Corbett, 'The Founding of the Himalayan Club', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 1-3 (p. 2).

⁸ The Archives of the Alpine Club, Letter from Kenneth Mason to G.L. Corbett, 16th October, 1927, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

⁹ G. L. Corbett, 'The Founding of the Himalayan Club', pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ It should here be noted that the Club's membership was overwhelmingly white and European. And although the Club never formally adopted discriminatory measures its rules and qualifications for membership had the potential to be used as an unofficial colour bar should the Club's balloting committee see fit. This will be addressed in greater depth in chapters 2 and 3.

climbing, and the Himalaya, from the Club's conception in 1927 until approximately 1947.¹¹ Despite a definite start date the chronological fuzziness at the other end is a reflection of an organisation in transition. The dual shocks of the Second World War as well as the subsequent independence and partition of India fundamentally reconfigured the Himalayan Club. As with any social organisation, a continuity of membership, structure, and regulation ensured that while some things changed others remained much as they had been before. The dates above, then, were not chosen because they capture an absolutely discreet period in the history of the Club. Rather, the period 1927 to 1947 is significant for two reasons. Firstly, because it was a period of rapidly increasing mountaineering activity in the Himalaya. And secondly, because it includes the period in which Himalayan mountaineering and British imperialism coexisted, as well as the brief period after 1945 in which this legacy was purposefully reconfigured and reimagined to suit a new geopolitical reality in which the British no longer served as the gatekeepers of large sections of the Himalayan mountains.

The questions animating this thesis are twofold. Firstly, why did so many members of British India's political and military elite, alongside well-known explorers and mountaineers take an interest in Himalayan mountaineering and in the Himalayan Club specifically? And secondly, was there something about the Himalaya, other than the great height of its mountains, which inspired this interest? In this thesis, I will argue that the Himalayan Club was a manifestation of elite nostalgia for a putative golden age of heroic exploration. And that the men who founded the Club were interested in mountaineering because it was seen to be exploration's next logical frontier. But mountaineering was different from previous forms of

¹¹ In a strictly technical sense, the word Himalaya should only ever be used in the singular, since the word derives from the Sanskrit words hima, meaning snow and alaya, meaning abode. Throughout this thesis, however, I will use the singular Himalaya only to denote the wider cultural region encompassing Tibet as well as the Himalayan and adjoining mountain ranges. For the sake of clarity, the technically incorrect, but commonplace, *Himalayas*, will be used to refer specifically to the Himalayan mountains. This distinction was set out by Kyle Gardner, *The Frontier Complex: Geopolitics and the making of the India-China Border, 1846-1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 11-12.

exploration. The attainment of a summit was of limited scientific value in itself and the conquest of a great peak did not have the power to shift the paradigm of European understanding in the same way that Columbus, Cook, or Darwin's journeys had. Instead, the discoveries yielded by mountaineering were primarily interior and individual. Mountaineering allowed an individual to explore the limits of human psychology and physiology by testing oneself against nature.

To wit, my central argument is as follows: the founding members of the Himalayan Club, motivated by a nostalgia for a supposed golden age of exploration and a belief that it was a thirst for discovery which had propelled the growth of the British Empire, conceived of the Himalaya as a theatre for individualistic imperialism. For these men, the British Empire, at least in its romantic iteration, had been assembled through individual acts of exploration and discovery. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, and especially after the end of the First World War there came to be a notion that the possibilities for genuine adventure and discovery were steadily shrinking. And it was precisely because of this fear that the Himalayan Club conceived of the Himalaya in the way that it did. The region was a theatre, because mountaineering, the newest form of heroic exploration, was ultimately more concerned with an individual's performance in challenging circumstances than it was with technical records and achievements. And the performance of this kind of individualistic exploration, which included mountaineering as well as recreational and amateur scholarly travel, could be labelled imperialistic because these activities were believed to be of a kind with those which had supposedly helped to construct the Empire in the first place.

This, however, only goes part of the way towards explaining the appeal of Himalayan mountaineering and the Himalayan Club more specifically to British India's military and political elite. To fully answer this question requires an engagement with the second question outlined above. In other words, to truly get to the bottom of the Anglo-Indian elite's interest in

Himalayan mountaineering, their attitude to the Himalayan mountains themselves and indeed to the Himalaya as a cultural region, must be made clear.¹² The fact that the Himalayas contain the majority of the world's highest peaks was, of course, an important factor in shaping this view. Equally important, however, and the reason why the Himalaya could be conceived of as something like a theatre for individualistic imperialism were the things that the region was not. According to contemporary stereotypes, the Himalaya was cool, masculine and salutary, whereas the Plains were insalubrious, hot, and feminine.¹³ The Himalaya was a land where governing was difficult, bordering on impossible and the people were warlike (and much the better for it).¹⁴ The Plains were equally difficult to govern, but for different, and less exhilarating reasons.¹⁵ And there was the perception that the Himalaya was a frontier zone and therefore not subject to the same pressures and obligations of administration that were the rule in lowland India. Finally the obligations and duties which did exist for the frontier official could be construed as romantic, a continuation of the so-called 'Great Game,' or the great military forays of the nineteenth century.¹⁶ Because of its perceived liminality, its remoteness and geographical extremes, its fundamentally uncivilized character and its wildness, the Himalaya was the perfect theatre in which an idealised form of imperialism could be performed

¹² Throughout I will be using the term 'Ango-Indian' in the contemporary sense of the word, describing British people resident in India.

¹³ For more on the relationship between climate and the perception of India and Indians by the British see: 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* (1995): 694-714. David John Arnold, *Tropics and the Traveling Gaze: India, Landscape, and Science, 1800-1856* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), and 'Chapter 4: Colonialism, climate, and race' in Pratik Chakrabarti, *Medicine and Empire, 1600-1960* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

¹⁴ For a general overview on the way in which British orientalist conceptualized race in India see Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). For an overview of the Martial Races Theory see Heather Streets-Salter, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

¹⁵ See J. Auerbach, *Imperial Boredom: Monotony and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹⁶ For more on the conventional 'Great Game' between Britain and Russia in Central Asia see Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia, and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

by political and military officials who otherwise believed that the halcyon age of the British Empire was passing into history.

I. Setting the Stage: Nostalgia and Empire

From the outset, it should be made clear that this project is not an exculpatory one and does not seek to answer the tired question of whether the British Empire, the Indian political service, or even the Himalayan Club, was a force for good in the world. Rather, I share Robert Bickers' view that while 'there were certainly other voices and histories, long suppressed by colonist and colonial discourse, which needed rescuing...the pointed neglect of the colonizer is no longer tenable'.¹⁷ In other words, an awareness of the role that colonial discourse has played in shaping the early historiography of British imperialism in India should not prevent the insights, innovations, and concerns of post-colonial studies and the 'cultural turn' more generally from being brought to bear on the imperialists themselves. By taking this approach, my research is broadly in line with scholarship that has turned the cultural lens onto British imperial culture itself. Until relatively recently, these works have tended to focus on the metropole and on the colonies of settlement, often in an attempt to 'recast the domestic history of modern Britain as one infused with empire experience'.¹⁸ Edited volumes by Robert Bickers, Barrie Crosbie and Mark Hampton, Andrew S. Thompson and Kent Fedorowich, as well as Robert Hellyer and Robert Fletcher have sought to widen the debate by looking at the experiences of Britons living abroad outside the colonies of settlement, a subject which hitherto has received less attention.¹⁹

¹⁷ Robert Bickers, 'Introduction: Britains and Britons over the Seas' in Robert Bickers ed., *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1-17.

¹⁸ Bickers, *Settlers and Expatriates*, p. 12.

¹⁹ Bickers, *Settlers and Expatriates*. Barry Crosbie and Mark Hampton, *The Cultural Construction of the British World*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016). Andrew S. Thompson and Kent Fedorowich, eds., *Empire, Migration and Identity in the British World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). Robert Hellyer and Robert S.G. Fletcher, eds., *Chronicling Westerners in Nineteenth-Century East Asia: Lives, Linkages, and Imperial Connections* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022).

Valuable as these works are, there remains more to be done. Indeed, in the introduction to *Settlers and Expatriates*, Bickers lays out some of the limitations of the collection, stating that ‘groups barely touched on here would repay close attention, such as medical professionals, scientists, engineers, agriculturalists, policemen, development workers, missionaries, journalists, the military, and the administrative services’.²⁰ Since the publication of *Settlers and Expatriates* scholars have begun to critically reassess many of these groups.²¹ There has not, however, been anything like enough work done on the governmental and military elite of British India. In other words, it is time that the members of the Indian Army and the Indian Civil Service received a critical re-evaluation.

At first glance, these might seem like two groups which are not in need of critical attention. After all, such men were accorded a prominent role in early British scholarship on India. Indeed, contemporary British historians in the early twentieth-century saw the history of Empire as a history of such individuals responding to and shaping events.²² On the contrary, however, taking a view of the literature as a whole, critical scholarship on the officer class of the Indian military and especially, the I.C.S. has been surprisingly slight.²³ The earliest

²⁰ Bickers, *Settlers and Expatriates*, p. 15.

²¹ There still remains much work to be done on all of these groups, especially on those operating outside the colonies of settlement. That said, for recent works on science see Goh Chor Boon, *Technology and Entrepot Colonialism in Singapore, 1819-1940* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013). And Ulrike Kirchberger and Brett M Bennett, eds., *Environments of Empire: Networks and Agents of Ecological Change. Flows, Migrations, and Exchanges* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021). For medical professionals see David Arnold, ed., *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017). On missionaries there is Felicity Jensz, *Missionaries and Modernity: Education in the British Empire, 1830-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022). And Andrew J. May, *Welsh Missionaries and British Imperialism: The Empire of Clouds in North-East India* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012). And finally, on journalists, there is Simon J. Potter, ‘Journalism and Empire in an English-Reading World: The Review of Reviews’, Chapter 16 in Joanne Shattock, *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

²² Ramsay Muir claimed that the only way to make sense of the British presence in India was to look at ‘how Indian conditions and the problems of Indian government appeared at each stage to the men who had to deal with them’. Ramsay Muir, *The Making of British India* (second impression) (Edinburgh: The Riverside Press Limited, 1923 (first published 1915)), p. v. See also John Marriot, *The English in India: A Problem of Politics* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1932).

²³ There has, of course, been a plethora of works in the more traditional, military history mode, on the Indian Army. Richard Holmes’ *Sahib* is a good example of a book which combines this approach with a more nuanced take on methodology and subject matter. Richard Holmes, *Sahib: The British Soldier in India, 1750-1914*

accounts of the I.C.S. tended to be institutional histories, which sought to construct a narrative history of the organisation.²⁴ Until the 1970s this approach remained the norm in works dealing specifically with the I.C.S.²⁵ Broadly speaking, during the same period (roughly the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s), Indian historians studying British colonial authority in India also tended to focus on elites, whether they be the colonialists themselves, nationalist leaders like Gandhi and Nehru, or conversely on a Marxist interpretation of Indian history. During the 1980s, however, the emergence of the Subaltern School of historians and the advent of postcolonial theory moved the critical lens away from both British and Indian elites onto ordinary Indians whose voices had hitherto been excluded from the historiography.

In the 1990s and 2000s scholars began to re-examine the I.C.S. in a variety of different ways.²⁶ Anthony Kirk-Greene's *Britain's Imperial Administrators, 1858-1966* presented a more nuanced narrative history of the I.C.S, the Colonial Administrative Service, and the Sudan Political Service which engaged with contemporary developments in cultural history.²⁷ And by the 2010s and 2020s a variety of scholars had brought new critical approaches to various aspects of the I.C.S. and its membership.²⁸ As for the Indian Military, a range of recent works have helped to bring long-overdue attention to the contribution of Indian soldiers in both the

(London: HarperCollins, 2005). Other works focus on specific regiments or divisions. An example being Col. H. C. Wylly, *History of the 5th Battalion 13th Frontier Force Rifles: 1849–1926* (Luton: Andrews UK Ltd., 2014).

²⁴ An example being Sir Edward Blunt, *The I.C.S.: The Indian Civil Service* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1937).

²⁵ Terence Creagh Coen, *The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971). Being a well-known example of such a work.

²⁶ Clive Dewey, for instance, in *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service* Attempted to describe what he believed had been two distinct mentalities within the I.C.S. (the 'Gospel of Uplift' and the 'Cult of Friendship') through an analysis of Frank Lugard and Malcolm Darling. Dewey's approach is novel, and he acknowledged that his was perhaps a more continental approach to history than many of his contemporaries. Still, Dewey's focus on the power of ideas is interesting, and his claim that the ICS was 'an extension of the Victorian intelligentsia', is still striking. Clive Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993).

²⁷ Anthony Kirk-Greene, *Britain's Imperial Administrators, 1858-1966* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000).

²⁸ See Patrick O'Leary, *Servants of the Empire: The Irish in Punjab 1881-1921* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

First and Second World Wars as well as the culture of the Indian military itself.²⁹ Still, there remains something of a gap in the scholarship regarding both the I.C.S. and the Indian military. Namely, there has not been enough scholarship which investigates the ways in which the Britons who worked in both of these positions understood and conceptualised their work. More specifically, there is a dearth of scholarship relating to the period following the First World War and prior to the independence and partition of India.

There is, of course, a vibrant body of work on British expatriate life in India, with a variety of excellent works on gender, family and home life, and voluntary associations amongst British communities in late-Victorian and Edwardian India.³⁰ Similarly, the ideas and ideologies which informed decision making at the highest levels of the Indian government during the nineteenth century have received ample scholarly attention.³¹ And the relationship between British expatriates in India and the climate and environment of the Subcontinent, especially after the Indian Rebellion of 1857 has also proved a fruitful subject for historians.³² Until quite recently, however, the relationship of these men with the work itself has been lacking. Jeffrey Auerbach's *Imperial Boredom* represents an important step in the right

²⁹ On the contribution of Indian and other colonial soldiers to British efforts in the Second World War see Ashley Jackson, Yasmin Khan, Gajendra Singh eds., *An Imperial World at War: The British Empire, 1939-1945* (London: Routledge, 2016). On the culture of the Indian military, specifically as regards the end of the British presence in India see Daniel Marston, *The Indian Army and the End of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

³⁰ On gender see Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). Antoinette M. Burton, *Gender, Sexuality, and Colonial Modernities* (London: Routledge, 1999). Tim Allender, *Learning Femininity in Colonial India, 1820-1932* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016). And Indrani Sen, *Gendered Transactions: The White Woman in Colonial India, C. 1820-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017). On family, Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Alison Blunt, 'Imperial Geographies of Home: British Domesticity in India, 1886-1925', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24, no. 4 (1999), 421-40. On associational life see Benjamin B. Cohen, *In the club: Associational life in colonial South Asia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

³¹ On the role of liberalism see Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999). And Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). On utilitarianism Bart Schultz and Georgios Varouxakis, eds., *Utilitarianism and Empire* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005).

³² For more on the former see Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (London: University of California Press, 1996). And Mark Harrison, *Climates & Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

direction. Auerbach's contention 'that despite the many and famous tales of glory and adventure, a significant and overlooked feature of the nineteenth-century British imperial experience was boredom and disappointment', is one which I share. Auerbach argues that 'scholars have tended to rely on the carefully edited writings of famous explorers... self-promoting administrators... renowned generals... and intrepid women' while ignoring the vast body of writing generated by 'settlers, administrators, merchants, soldiers, and housewives'. And in doing so 'scholars have tended to describe the men responsible for establishing and maintaining empire either as courageous heroes charting new lands and amassing great wealth; or, as pathetic misfits whose missions were beset with problems and who imposed culturally-bound norms and values that led to the destruction of indigenous peoples and their ways of life'.³³ Looking at the more ordinary men and women engaged in the British imperial project led Auerbach to his emphasis on boredom. Based on my own readings of the works of district officers, their wives, travellers, scientists, and mountaineers, it is clear that boredom was a distinct and pervasive element of the imperial experience in British India, even on the Himalayan frontier.

Still, there was often excitement as well, especially in the recollection and *Imperial Boredom*, despite its invaluable contributions, somewhat underemphasizes the extent to which enthusiasm, curiosity, and passion do figure in the accounts of some of agents of empire at least part of the time.³⁴ In particular, the importance of nostalgia, as a sincere if somewhat artificial expression of excitement about the Empire has been underappreciated by scholars more

³³ Auerbach, *Imperial Boredom*, p. 3.

³⁴ It should be made clear that although there were very high-ranking members of the Indian government and military in the Himalayan Club, these were not its most active members, these tended to be lower-level district officers, Survey of Indian men, or military officers. Likewise, although there were prominent explorers in the Club (Francis Younghusband and Francis Kingdon-Ward being two notable examples) there were many men with similar amateur interests but less renown.

generally.³⁵ Engaging with nostalgia can reveal a number of valuable insights about British imperial culture, and late-imperial culture in India more specifically.

In *What Nostalgia Was: War, Empire, and the Time of a Deadly Emotion*, Thomas Dodman argues that our modern conception of nostalgia as something one feels, was not always the case, and that in the early-nineteenth century nostalgia was ‘something one “had,” in the way one might have tuberculosis, cholera, or a banal cold’.³⁶ Looking at the French Empire, Dodman argues that within this context the pathological conception of nostalgia faded away around the same time that the French Empire was at its peak, in the 1880s. Prior, to this point, clinical diagnoses of nostalgia had been common, especially in the France. By 1884, however, ‘such debilitating atavism had apparently been overcome, at least according to official statistics’. This was also, however, ‘the moment when the French—like so many others elsewhere—turned massively to invented traditions and renewed forms of regionalism, becoming, in the process, a nation of willful (and at times ardent) nostalgics’.³⁷ In the end, Dodman argues that it was because of the French Empire, and indeed because of European empires more generally that nostalgia took on its modern meaning in the 1880s. More specifically it was because of the emergence of scientific racism and climate science that European expatriates began to conceive of nostalgia as a benign phenomenon, ‘a salutary way of clinging on to one’s identity and origins’.³⁸

³⁵ The role and importance of nostalgia in metropolitan Britain has recently been considered by Hannah Rose Woods, *Rule, Nostalgia: A Backwards History of Britain* (London: WH Allen, 2022). And Robert Saunders has recently challenged the perception that it is only Conservatives or those who advocated Leave in the 2016 Brexit Referendum who utilised and manipulated nostalgia for the empire. Robert Saunders, ‘Brexit and Empire: “Global Britain” and the Myth of Imperial Nostalgia’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 48 (2020), 1140–74.

³⁶ Thomas Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was: War, Empire, and the Time of a Deadly Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

³⁷ Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, p. 4.

³⁸ Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, pp. 175-176.

This change in the meaning and experience of nostalgia is important. To put a finer point on it, Dodman's correlation between nostalgia as a benign, if painful, emotional state and European imperialisms has profound implications for this thesis. For although many of the Himalayan Club's members lived and worked in India, there were some who did not, or who did not for significant portions of time. And even those who did live and work in India, did not always, or even often, do so for the entirety of their careers. In other words, nostalgia, despite regional specificities and nuances, must be seen as an empire-wide phenomenon. Moreover, it must be understood as chronologically contingent. In this case, it must be considered within the temporal confines of the late-1920s and the 1930s. I emphasize the fact that the Himalayan Club was conceived of and created in the late 1920s (The winter of 1927 and the spring of 1928) because the latter half of this decade was different from the former half in several significant and important ways.

After the conclusion of the First World War, during which time Britain had in the words of John Darwin snatched 'an imperial triumph from what seemed... the jaws of continental defeat', the principal goal of British policy makers was the internal security of the Empire.³⁹ And the Empire was faced with a variety of threats on this front. Indeed, by 1920 the Empire was in crisis: in India there was the rise of Gandhi's Non-cooperation Movement; in Ireland, there was a war of independence; in Egypt, following a violent insurrection in favour of independence the previous year, there were ongoing negotiations with the dissidents, and in metropolitan Britain there was a wave of industrial unrest.⁴⁰ By 1925, however, the situation had improved somewhat. Liberal apologists for imperialism advocated for a 'third British Empire'. One 'based not on rule but on the growth of cooperation and partnership in a world-

³⁹ John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 359.

⁴⁰ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 380.

spanning 'Commonwealth'.⁴¹ And it was at this point, just before the sudden economic turmoil brought about by the Wall Street Collapse in 1929, that the Himalayan Club was created.⁴²

In *Propaganda and Empire* John MacKenzie argues that imperial propaganda reached its apogee in the interwar period. This was in contrast to some contemporary historians who argued that the period following the First World War was one of pacificism and disillusion with Empire. Indeed, MacKenzie argues that in the face of economic difficulties, propagandists turned to the Empire to counter narratives of national decline.⁴³ The propaganda of the interwar years, according to MacKenzie, was not so much concerned with glorifying 'military adventure' or 'aggressive expansionist Christian culture', as creating 'apologias of two sorts, the economic necessity of Empire to both rulers and ruled, and the international trust involved in that relationship.'⁴⁴ On the surface this might seem to entail an abandonment of military heroes, and a move away from the old model of imperial heroes more generally. Berny Sèbe's *Heroic Imperialists in Africa*, however, offers a useful clarification on the matter.

Although Sèbe's work relates to Africa his insights on the changing place of imperial heroes in a wider British and French imperial context are invaluable. Sèbe defines imperial heroes as 'leading figures of colonial expansion, who enjoyed widespread publicity for a variety of reasons in their home countries between the late nineteenth century and the Second World War, and who were viewed and described as heroes by at least a significant fraction of their compatriots'.⁴⁵ Sèbe lists David Livingstone, Henry Morton Stanley, Pierre Savorgnan de

⁴¹ The Balfour Definition, which set out the definition of dominion status, was agreed upon at the 1926 Imperial Conference, but only passed into law in 1931. In the words of Ronald Hyam this compromise 'represented a genuine compromise... [and] opened the way for a torrent of idealism about the Commonwealth'. Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 69-71.

⁴² Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 418-419.

⁴³ John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp 1-10.

⁴⁴ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 256.

⁴⁵ Berny Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa: The Promotion of British and French Colonial Heroes, 1870-1939* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 9.

Brazza and Henri Duveyrier as examples of explorers who performed an imperial role, and his exemplary case studies are Jean-Baptiste Marchand and Herbert Kitchener. In part, Sèbe attributes the massive rise in popularity of figures like those just listed to an expansion of the popular press in the 1870s.⁴⁶ Following the First World War, however, the cultural significance of imperial heroes had changed. According to Sèbe, by the 1930s the imperial hero had become something of a nostalgic figure, rather than a living category. This shift from ‘contemporary celebration to retrospective admiration’, and a concomitant move toward the production of hagiographical works chimes with Kingdon-Ward’s thoughts on heroic exploration, and indeed with the founding members of the Himalayan Club more generally. Sèbe links the rise of this commemorative incarnation of the imperial hero with the broader geopolitical situation in the interwar years: an initial enthusiasm for internationalism saw a decline in the cultural relevance of the imperial hero whilst a fear about the rise of Germany in the 1930s saw his return.⁴⁷

All of this poses a challenging question for this thesis. Namely, if it is asserted that the Himalayan Club was, in part, born out of an official nostalgia for imperial heroes and heroic imperial explorers then what does this reveal about the Club’s members’ views on the contemporary state of the Empire during the 1920s and 1930s? In other words, did the Club members’ enthusiasm for a romanticised version of exploration and imperialism, entail boredom, disillusionment, or frustration with the Empire as it was? My answer is a qualified, no.

It is easy to see how the Himalayan Club might have acted as something like a panacea for anxieties about an imminent end of empire. Indeed, I am not arguing that the Club was *not* this. But it would be overly simplistic to assert that the Himalayan Club was intended for such purposes when many of its founding members still held out hopes for future generations of

⁴⁶ Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁷ Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa*, pp. 202-205

imperialists. The reason my no is qualified, however, was because this hope for the future was largely inward looking and steeped in nostalgia. The founding members of the Himalayan Club had hopes that mountaineering might offer future generations something of the spirit which had animated the imperial heroes of the nineteenth century, that it might, in the words of one of its founding members 'help to rear a breed of men in India, hard and self-reliant, who will know how to enjoy life on the high hills'.⁴⁸ The emphasis on the men themselves, and on their enjoyment, however, is revealing. For although one must be careful about reading too much into the significance of a social organisation like the Himalayan Club, it is still significant that the founding members' hopes lay not in the Empire itself, but in its individual imperialists. And it is hard not to see in this, if not an acceptance of Indian independence along the lines which actually transpired, then certainly an acceptance that dominion status was fast approaching. And in this, the Himalayan Club was very much in keeping with the times.

Understanding this imperial nostalgia is critical to understanding the Himalayan Club. More than that, though, examining imperial nostalgia as one of the defining characteristics of expatriate officials' attitude towards their work requires historians to reconsider the nature of British rule in India during the interwar period more generally. By this, I do not mean to suggest that the beliefs or personal opinions of individual imperial agents can be used to explain official policy, nor do I wish to exaggerate the extent to which mid-ranking district officers or soldiers shaped events. I do, however, believe that the importance of nostalgia and indeed of individual imperatives in shaping policy has not yet been sufficiently explored. In this thesis I will demonstrate that for many high-ranking officials in British India, most of whom had arrived in the subcontinent prior to the First World War, their conception of what it meant to be an effective imperial administrator was intimately connected to a nostalgic conception of the empire's past. They imagined their early careers as being filled with promise and opportunity:

⁴⁸ G. L. Corbett, 'The Founding of the Himalayan Club', p. 3.

the average British official could act with a greater degree of personal autonomy; there were ample opportunities for adventure and exploration; and the imperial services were staffed by men of quality. After the First World War, however, these men believed that their ability to act had been curtailed, that the opportunities for exploration and adventure had grown few and far between, and that the I.C.S. and the Indian military were increasingly being staffed by an inferior sort of British officer.

This simultaneous nostalgia for the past and anxiety about the future has, of course, been identified before. What has not been sufficiently appreciated by historians, however, is the extent to which the good of the empire was linked to the character and indeed satisfaction of its officials, administrators, and soldiers. In other words, scholars have not fully considered the extent to which personal motivations, imperatives, and prejudices shaped the British Empire. Although many late imperial officials genuinely wished to ‘improve’ India many others saw this element of their work as burdensome and longed for an empire which afforded them the chance to explore and pursue adventure. Older officials could pine after a nostalgic conception of the empire’s past, whilst younger officials, many of whom were from a slightly lower social class, could still conceive of imperial work as an adventure. Whatever the case, it is my contention that this self-interested, one might even say selfish, aspect of imperialism warrants further study. Indeed, cultural studies of empire have too often taken hegemonic views of both the coloniser and the colonised without sufficiently considering the individual. This is not a return to a history of ‘great men’ but rather an acknowledgment that ideas and ideology do not exist in a vacuum but are actively shaped and engaged with by individuals.

Ultimately, the Himalayan Club was an organisation which had a somewhat paradoxical relationship with nostalgia. On the one hand, many of its founding members were driven by a desire to recapture an older imperial ethos which they worried was in steep decline and on the other they sought to advance the cause of mountaineering, a sport which Peter H.

Hansen has linked with the very idea of modernity itself.⁴⁹ This apparent paradox does, in some ways, reflect a Club that maintained two distinct, though not competing, tendencies throughout its first two decades of existence. But in another way, it is no paradox at all. For although mountaineering could be seen as quintessentially modern (and there were members of the Club who had no time for paeans to nostalgia), for many of the Club's early members, mountaineering was but the newest form of exploration. Indeed, for these men, association with mountaineering, and with mountaineering exploits, vindicated their nostalgia

i. Methodology and Material

Before proceeding to an analysis of the more specialized literature which informs this thesis it is important to first set out my methodology and to make clear the material evidence I will be analysing. The subject of this project is the Himalayan Club. More specifically, it is the Himalayan Club, its members, and the broader cultural milieu in which they operated between the years 1927 and 1947. Materially, my principal body of evidence is *The Himalayan Journal*. *The Himalayan Journal* was published annually and covered subjects as diverse as mountaineering, botany, military reminiscences, hydrology, glaciology, and archaeology. It contains articles from members and relevant non-members, overviews of expeditions, book reviews, and a sizeable back matter. Aside from the *Journal* I have also looked at a variety of archival sources. In particular: the archives of the Alpine Club, which contains a wealth of correspondence and records relating to the foundation of the Himalayan Club; The India Office Records at the British Library, for private correspondence, diaries, lectures, and memoranda; as well the Royal Geographical Society, The Royal Society for Asian Affairs, and the Royal

⁴⁹ Peter H. Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man: Mountaineering After the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

Botanical Gardens at Kew. Alongside these archival sources I have also referred to a wide variety of published material by the members of the Himalayan Club, as well as other relevant individuals and organisations. Due to complications which arose as result of the Coronavirus Pandemic I was unable to complete a plan tripped to New Delhi and Mumbai to visit the libraries of the Himalayan Club. Similarly, for much of 2020 and the first half of 2021 travel to London and access to archives was often quite limited or difficult. Although this has necessarily affected the kind of thesis I could write, the abundance of material regarding the foundation of the Club in the archives of the Alpine Club and the sheer abundance of written material within the pages of *The Himalayan Journal* itself has allowed me to proceed with only minor adjustments.

There are numerous advantages to engaging with these sources. It is impossible to quantify the numbers of readers of the earliest volumes of *The Himalayan Journal*. But it is probably safe to say that although it would initially have attracted fewer readers than the *Alpine Journal* (the literary arm of the Alpine Club), *The Himalayan Journal* and Club still attracted the attention of many prominent European mountaineers within a very short amount of time.⁵⁰ Perhaps more interesting, and analytically more persuasive, than the question of readership is the body of people who contributed to *The Himalayan Journal*, and the kinds of contributions they made. There were many contributions from members of the civil and military branches of the Indian government. These most often recounted recreational travel undertaken by the authors up to and including mountaineering. But there were also accounts from mountaineers, some of whom were engaged in the I.C.S. or the military, some of whom were not, as well as

⁵⁰ In its first year of operation the Club was contacted by the German mountaineer Willi Rickmer Rickmers to assist a party of German mountaineers who eventually set their sights on Kangchenjunga. And the *Journal*, in the words of Maurice Isserman and Stewart Weaver, became 'the more or less definitive record of Himalayan achievement'. Maurice Isserman, Stewart Angas Weaver, Dee Molenaar, *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 131.

explorers, archaeologists, botanists, glaciologists, ornithologists, and a host of other professions, some of whom were engaged in the political or military services in India, some of whom were not. And it is the coming together of these various groups under the auspices of *The Himalayan Journal* which makes both *The Journal* and the Club, worthy objects of study.

But this project is not only interested in discourse and rhetoric. And an analysis of *The Himalayan Journal*, as well as related archival evidence also provides a window onto some of the more practical measures taken by the Club. More than this, it offers new insights onto the relationship between officialdom, mountaineering, and imperial culture. Aside from *The Himalayan Journal* and archival material relating to the Club, I have also examined a wide range of published and un-published material (principally correspondence and diaries) produced by individual members of the Club. This material is diverse and wide-ranging and could all too easily distract attention away from the Club itself. For that reason, my engagement with these sources has been targeted, focusing on the commonalities and divergences between these sources and works by the same authors in *The Himalayan Journal*. Looking at these works has also allowed me to contextualize the Club and its members within a variety of different contexts.

Even without the difficulties imposed by the pandemic, however, there are drawbacks to using these kinds of evidence. Looking at official or institutional publications, whether they are produced by institutions or individuals, comes with an inherent risk of regurgitating the views, prejudices, and worldview of their authors. More specifically there is a risk of over interpretation, of mistaking the voice of the Himalayan Club for an official one. Similarly, although there are values to discourse analysis, this analysis cannot be disconnected from the actual events, people, and places which shaped them. Finally, the nature of the Himalayan Club itself requires some consideration. By this, I mean that a voluntary organisation dedicated principally to recreation and sport should not be overinterpreted.

To wit, I am not arguing that the views of the Himalayan Club should be taken as indicative of the whole of the Indian Political Service, the Indian Army, or the Anglo-Indian expatriate community more generally (if such groups can even be discussed in these broad terms). Indeed, this project proceeds from an assumption that trying to discern a broader cultural mood, or a mentality, from the writings and activities of a single group is a fundamentally difficult if not impossible task. Instead, this thesis uses a singular group, the Himalayan Club, as a means of examining competing, correlated, and contested cultural tendencies put into practice. In other words, the Himalayan Club is a potentially productive object of study, not because it is some way emblematic, paradigmatic, or representative of early-twentieth-century British attitudes towards the Himalaya, but rather because it was designed to be. The founding members of the Himalayan Club codified and acted out their beliefs and assumptions about exploration, mountaineering, and their role on the frontiers of the Empire through the Club.

In conducting this analysis, I have borrowed liberally from imperial, social, and cultural historical approaches and to a lesser extent environmental history. And although my approach is solidly historical, I have drawn additional insights from specialist literature in historical geography and literary studies. Combining discourse analysis with more traditional historical practices I look at both the written output of the Himalayan Club, and the ‘imagined community’ it created within the pages of *The Himalayan Journal* as well as the very real activities and initiatives of the Club and its members.

II. The Historiography

The central argument of this thesis is that the early members of the Himalayan Club saw in the Himalaya, and in the Himalayan Club, an opportunity to act out a more idealised form of imperialism, predicated on exploration. This desire was a product of nostalgia for a supposed golden age of exploration as well as an excitement about the new possibilities offered by high-altitude mountaineering. Nostalgia, however, is not the same thing as a desire to repeat the past. And the founding members of the Himalayan Club did not want to bring back the heroic age of exploration, nor did they think it was possible. For these men, mountaineering was not the solution to their own anxieties about empire, but an insurance against a future repudiation or diminution of the values they held dear. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge that the Himalayan Club conceived of exploration as a spectrum. At the one end was exploration, in the heroic mould, embodied by men like Ernest Shackleton and Francis Younghusband, men who could be said to have filled in blank spaces on the map, and at the other end was mountaineering, a form of exploration more concerned with reaching beyond the limits of human physiology. Underpinning this spectrum, however, was a belief in the explorer him or herself. More specifically, a belief in an inextricable connection between explorers and British Imperialism. This can be seen in the various forms of travel which lay between the two extremes of the spectrum. To explain this, and before setting out the structure of this thesis, it is important to refer to a few distinct historiographies. First, I will address scholarship which relates to exploration and travel more generally, as well as exploration in British India, more specifically.⁵¹ Second, I will look at historiography relating to what might be dubbed the individual imperialist. And finally, I will examine scholarship which deals with climbing and interiority.

⁵¹ The paradox of exploring an area that was already known to Europeans and indigenous peoples alike will be addressed in due course.

i. Exploration, Travel, and Empire

Since the 1980s and 1990s scholars have been engaged in a major critical reassessment of exploration, as a concept, a practice, and a category of analysis. Initially, many of these works, in the words of Stephen Greenblatt ‘shared with other recent scholarship in Europe and the Americas a sense of alternative histories, competing accounts, and muffled voices’.⁵² In other words, much like the Subaltern Studies group, contemporary scholars attempted to introduce non-European voices, histories, and perspectives into the history of European exploration.⁵³ At the same time and continuing into the 2000s scholars began to pay increasing attention to the part played by indigenous peoples and systems of knowledge in facilitating and shaping western exploration.⁵⁴ Similarly, and gaining pace in the 2000s, scholars also took a greater interest in global connections and in de-centring and complicating Eurocentric or nation-focused accounts of exploration.⁵⁵ And western explorers, both as archetypes and very real individuals have also undergone a critical reassessment, with insights and challenges from these new scholarly approaches being brought to bear on the historiography of European explorers themselves.⁵⁶

This thesis also reconsiders European explorers and European exploratory cultures. Unlike the scholarship outlined above, however, I am not focusing my attention on the so-

⁵² Stephen Greenblatt, ‘Introduction: New World Encounters’ in Stephen Greenblatt ed., *New World Encounters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁵³ Warwick Bray, ed., *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Europe and the Americas, 1492-1650*, Proceedings of the British Academy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). Stephen Greenblatt ed., *New World Encounters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Samuel Meredith Wilson, ed., *The Indigenous People of the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997).

⁵⁴ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000). John R. Short, *Cartographic Encounters: Indigenous Peoples and the Exploration of the New World* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009).

⁵⁵ David Arnold, *The Age of Discovery, 1400-1600* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013). David Abulafia, *The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007). Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Merry E. Wiesner, eds., *Part 1, the Construction of a Global World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁵⁶ An excellent example being Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Columbus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

called ‘Age of Discovery,’ covering the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries but on the appropriation of a specific nostalgic conception of this period (alongside the great scientific expeditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) which emerged in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries). Felix Driver in *Geography Militant* sets out a useful distinction which he identifies in narratives about geography and exploration, between what he dubs the age of ‘Geography Militant’ and that of ‘Geography Triumphant’. Driver associates the age of ‘Geography Militant’ with figures like Columbus, Cook, and Livingstone while ‘Geography Triumphant’ represented an age of shrinking of horizons and diminishing returns.⁵⁷ If one accepts this framework, the Himalayan Club could be said to have come into being at the dawning of the age of ‘Geography Triumphant’. Something like this distinction can easily be found in the writings of the Himalayan Club and its members. Because of this, it is important to look at how exploration came to be such a salient idea for early-twentieth century Britons, and indeed Europeans more generally.

Dane Kennedy has argued that exploration, as ‘a concept and a practice’ has a ‘particular set of cultural, social, and political valences’ which originated ‘in the European historical experience’.⁵⁸ The potency of exploration in the western imagination, according to Kennedy, rested upon a sense of European exceptionalism. Exploration connoted ‘a combination of scientific and technological achievement, state power, and national prestige’. Because of this the expeditions of Christopher Columbus, Vasco de Gama, and Francis Drake, could be seen as of a kind with post-enlightenment explorers who viewed their expeditions ‘as missions in the service of modernity’.⁵⁹ Kennedy draws attention to this not because of any belief that exploration is a western or euro-centric phenomenon but rather because it came to

⁵⁷ Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp. 3-8.

⁵⁸ Dane Kennedy, ‘Reinterpreting Exploration’ in Kennedy, Dane ed. *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-20 (p. 1).

⁵⁹ Kennedy, ‘Reinterpreting Exploration’, pp. 2-3.

be seen as such by Europeans. Indeed, contributors to Kennedy's edited volume *Reinterpreting Exploration* such as Jane Samson and Gordon Stewart both interrogate Euro-centric conceptions of the history of exploration in the South Pacific and Central Asia respectively.⁶⁰

The association of exploration (in the more limited sense outlined above) with European exceptionalism was just one of the factors which ensured its emergence as a salient concept in European cultural imaginings. Indeed, in narratives of exploration the explorer himself (it was usually a he) were just as important as any abstract notion of exploration.⁶¹ And by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a proliferation of travel literature, facilitated by the expansion in print culture, had made expeditionary narratives a potentially lucrative business.⁶² But travel literature did not exist in a vacuum. Indeed, travel writing, exploration, and imperialism were inextricably linked. Mary Louise Pratt, for instance, has argued that travel books 'gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized'. What is more, travel books were popular and they 'created a sense of curiosity, excitement, adventure, and even moral fervor about European expansionism'.⁶³

⁶⁰ See Jane Samson, 'Exploring the Pacific World,' 154-171. And Gordon Stewart, 'The Exploration of Central Asia', 195-213, in Dane Kennedy, 'Reinterpreting Exploration' in Kennedy, Dane ed. *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶¹ For more on this see Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994). Felix Driver, 'Henry Morton Stanley and His Critics: Geography, Exploration and Empire', *Past and Present* 133 (1991), 134-66.

⁶² Dane Kennedy, 'Reinterpreting Exploration', pp. 3-4.

⁶³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 3.

ii. Exploration and Travel in British India

When considering exploration and especially when considering exploration in the context of the establishment of British rule in India it is important to note the intimate connection between exploration and knowledge production. In the words of Dane Kennedy, ‘exploration is a knowledge-producing exercise’.⁶⁴ And for Britons in India during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries exploration was far more than just a series of transversal surveys or military expeditions. Indeed, exploration could be seen as encompassing, variously: history, philology, archaeology, ethnography and various other disciplines. That India was already a place in which Indian peoples variously conceptualized and understood their own existence and place in the world reveals what Kennedy has described as ‘one of the great paradoxes of exploration as it came to be understood and practiced by the British and other Europeans from the late eighteenth century onward’. Namely, that ‘it was possible to explore and “discover” places that were already known— known not simply by the indigenous peoples of those places but also by Europeans themselves’.⁶⁵

After establishing a sizeable territorial presence in Bengal in the late-eighteenth century the East India Company began a project of what might be described as historical exploration, in an attempt to make sense of the new territories and peoples which had come under its control. The Company sought to locate and shape a narrative of India’s past which situated ‘the British dominion in a line of conquests that had begun with the Turko-Afghans and within a tradition that allowed the conquerors to extract tribute from the conquered’.⁶⁶ To do this company agents turned to ancient and medieval documents, which often required a knowledge of Persian or Sanskrit. Consequently, philology became intimately involved with the project of British

⁶⁴ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, p. 6.

⁶⁶ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 2.

control in India. Orientalists like William Jones, the founder of the Royal Asiatic Society, believed that the study of ancient Indian languages would allow them to access an Indian past which had been lost to time, and to contemporary Indians. Building on this idea, philosophers in the early-eighteenth century began to conceptualize contemporary India as a land which was fixed in the past and which was in need of improvement and civilisation.⁶⁷ Utilitarian thinkers thus sought to bring India up to the level of progress that they saw in Britain whereas orientalist sought to govern India using a suite of categories and conceptualisations dug up from written historical sources.⁶⁸

In the 1980s and 1990s scholars began to pay increased attention to the ways in which British colonialists sought to understand, shape, and control Indian history. Scholars like Bernard Cohn, Nicholas Dirks, and Ronald Inden have argued that British imperialists actively shaped a certain conception of India based on this historical and philological research.⁶⁹ These scholars were keen to deconstruct supposedly fixed ideas about India and its history by examining the ways in which British and European scholars, in an attempt to understand India, simultaneously constructed a new India in the process.⁷⁰ Around the same time, and taking a similar approach, Matthew Edney examined the geographical construction of British India. *Mapping an Empire* was one of the first works to systematically address this topic. In it, Edney

⁶⁷ An example being John Stuart Mill's *History of British India* (1812).

⁶⁸ William Jones, for instance, in his preface to *The Institutes of Hindu Law*, wrote that 'It is a maxim in the science of legislation and government, that *Laws are of no avail without manners*, or to explain the sentence more fully, that the best intended legislative provisions would have no beneficial effect even at first, and none at all in a short course of time, unless they were congenial to the disposition and habits, to the religious prejudices, and approved immemorial usages, of the people, for whom they were enacted.' *The Institutes of Hindu Law* was derived from Jones' translation of the Sanskrit *Ordinances of Manu*, compiled around 200 BCE. William Jones, *The Institutes of Hindu Law; or the Ordinances of Menu, according to Gloss of Culluca* in William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, Vol. 7., Edited by Charles John Shore Teignmouth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 75.

⁶⁹ Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

⁷⁰ For instance, in *Castes of Mind*, Nicholas Dirks asserted that it was British orientalist who transformed caste into 'a single term capable of expressing, organizing, and above all "systematizing" India's diverse forms of social identity, community, and organization.' Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, p. 5.

argues that ‘Imperialism and mapmaking intersect in the most basic manner as ‘both are fundamentally concerned with territory and knowledge’.⁷¹ Edney’s broader thesis is that in the hundred years after 1750, the British in India ‘undertook a massive intellectual campaign to transform a land of incomprehensible spectacle into an empire of knowledge’.⁷² Throughout the book Edney traces the ways in which the burgeoning field of geography was utilized to strengthen, define, and expand the Empire. Indeed, in a sense, Edney argues that the British ‘imagined’ India, or at the very least imagined a particular version of it and saw to it that this vision of India was borne out in the cartography.⁷³

These works, despite their differing subjects all deal with the relationship between exploration, interpreted broadly, and work. That is, they all examine the ways in which cultural assumptions about history, philology, and geography produced real changes in administration, governance, and understanding. Recently, Thomas Simpson has turned this framework on its head, looking at the ways in which the nature of work itself, in its practice and individuals’ experience of it, also played a role in shaping imperial culture.⁷⁴ Working at the intersection of various historiographies (environmental, geographical, imperial), Simpson has written on the nature of surveying and boundary making in the Himalaya during the late-nineteenth century.⁷⁵ In particular Simpson has argued that the difficulty and imprecision of surveying in the

⁷¹ Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India 1765-1843* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 1.

⁷² Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, p. 2.

⁷³ I am here referencing Ronald Inden’s *Imagining India* (1990), the title and thesis of which were themselves influenced by Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983).

⁷⁴ Indeed, Simpson disagrees with ‘postcolonialist accounts, most notably those emanating from the Subaltern Studies tradition, [which] suggest that colonial domination in the subcontinent was premised on epistemic projects of defining and taxonomising.’ Thomas Simpson, *The Frontier in British India: Space, Science, and Power in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021). Instead pointing to the role of contingency, imprecision, and confusion on the frontier.

⁷⁵ Thomas Simpson, ‘Bordering and Frontier-Making in Nineteenth-Century British India’, *The Historical Journal*, 58.2 (2015): 513-42. Thomas Simpson; ‘“Clean out of the map”: Knowing and doubting space at India’s high imperial frontiers,’ *History of Science* 55.1 (2017), 3-36.

Himalaya came to be appreciated by surveyors as a potentially positive aspect of this work. Indeed, as Simpson makes clear:

Admissions of fallibility [in written accounts of surveying] were not merely about meeting popular demand for tales of danger; they appeared with surprising consistency across written and visual genres, forming part of private correspondence within the survey establishment as well as mass-market accounts.

This fallibility also had epistemological implications. As Simpson puts it, ‘Surveyors did not assume the existence of an authoritative epistemological domain sealed from a shifting array of challenges to stable knowledge experienced ‘in the field’.⁷⁶ That is, experience in the field needed to be accommodated and embraced for all of its inherent difficulties and there was no uniform or singular ideology to guide their practice.

In fact, one of Simpson’s bolder claims is that ‘one key development of this era was the advent of a widely shared notion of frontiers as spaces that eluded map representation, demanding alternative modes of engagement’.⁷⁷ One such mode of engagement was first-hand experience. A concrete example of this can be found in route books, that is, books of information documenting the stages of a given journey based primarily on information gleaned, at least in part, from previous travellers’ experience. Route books were often informed by triangulation surveys, which at least aspired to something like absolute accuracy.⁷⁸ Unlike triangulation surveys, however, route books, by design were able to accommodate individual impressions, individual discretion and some imprecision. Underpinning the route book, however, was an implicit faith in the reliability of the person, the traveller, who had collected

⁷⁶ Simpson, “Clean out of the map”, p. 7.

⁷⁷ Simpson, “Clean out of the map”, p. 35.

⁷⁸ For more on the relationship between route books and triangulation surveys see Chapter 5: Disciplining the Space of Asia: triangulation and route books.’ in James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

the information which informed it. On the Himalayan frontier this question of reliability was fundamentally important. And the kinds of people and the kinds of knowledge which were perceived to be reliable by British officials on the frontier was a fundamentally subjective matter. As Simpson put it, 'imperial personnel perceived that their status as frontier experts depended on limiting the spread of certain types of knowledge and wilfully disregarding others'.⁷⁹ For the members of the Himalayan Club certain kinds of individuals were considered more reliable than others and in the next section I will examine the ways in which a certain experience of education and a related set of cultural assumptions dictated who was considered to be a reliable source of information on the Himalayan frontier.

iii. The Individual Imperialist

David Cannadine, in *Ornamentalism*, argued that the British Empire was primarily an upper-class affair, one which reflected a deeply conservative British worldview wherein society was seen to be 'characterized by a seamless web of layered gradations, which were hallowed by time and precedent'.⁸⁰ Cannadine's argument is compelling, but it is also bound up in a greater debate about the extent to which the 'Empire', as an idea and as a reality, entered into the lives of Britons at home (thus Cannadine argues that since the Empire was largely a function and product of the upper classes, it did not enter much into the lives of ordinary citizens). I do not intend to enter this wider debate, but I share Cannadine's belief in the importance of hierarchy and class in conceptualising British imperial culture. Thus, while Cannadine's assertion of upper-class predominance in imperial positions holds some truth, it does not give the whole picture. Crucially, as regards my project, many, if not most of the mid-level positions in the

⁷⁹ Simpson, *The Frontier in British India*, p. 6.

⁸⁰ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 2001), p. 4.

military and civil services were solidly upper-middle class, rather than aristocratic or upper class. As Anthony Kirk-Greene, in *Britain's Imperial Administrators, 1858-1966*, points out: 'the element of class (within the ICS) became not that of family, the primary context of English class, but of class formation, (and) of elitist moulding'.⁸¹ This concept of elite moulding will be crucial to my analysis, and informs Kirk Greene's next major conclusion which could be summarized as follows: since Britain never institutionalized a specific course of education for imperial service (even Haileybury and the United Services College still focused heavily on classics and character) it was assumed (by contemporaries) that a classical English education was sufficient for service anywhere.⁸² Thus, unlike domestically, where Eton and a few other public schools exercised outsized influence, in India, and the Empire more generally, it was the experience of a public school education more than attendance at any specific institution which was important. Similarly, Kirk-Greene stresses that the 'career' factor, that is 'the cachet of a Crown service career' should not be overlooked.⁸³ For, while such careers certainly held less appeal to undergraduates after the First World War, they nonetheless maintained an aura of 'rank, respectability, responsibility and reward' and offered 'the generic DO' [district officer] a chance to practise and manifest what he had learnt at school'.⁸⁴

But what went into this elite moulding Kirk-Greene speaks of, and what about it lent itself well to a career in the Empire? P. J. Rich, in *Elixir of Empire*, argues that masculinity, and in particular a kind of masculinity which was supposed to be developed through team sports and rituals of hazing and punishment, was of primary importance.⁸⁵ Richard Holt, in *Sport and the British* also argues for the primacy of games culture in imperial culture. For Holt, however,

⁸¹ Kirk-Greene, *Britain's Imperial Administrators*, p. 9.

⁸² Kirk-Greene, *Britain's Imperial Administrators*, p. 18.

⁸³ Kirk-Greene, *Britain's Imperial Administrators*, p. 12.

⁸⁴ Kirk-Greene, *Britain's Imperial Administrators*, pp. 12-13.

⁸⁵ P. J. Rich, *Elixir of Empire: The English Public Schools, Ritualism, Freemasonry, and Imperialism* (London: Regency Press, 1989).

this idealization of athleticism, which became so pervasive in the nineteenth century, was a reaction to the increasingly sedentary lives lead by men of the middle class and was born out of an assumption that ‘problems of the mind had their origins in the body’.⁸⁶ Thus, for public school boys, sport was deemed of vital importance in the continuation of the values of Britain’s elite: it fostered a denial and rejection of pain; a sense of subjective loyalty, and fair play; and a healthy sort of manliness. The old boy ‘was neither a thinking machine nor was he governed by unrestrained sexuality as animals were thought to be. He was loyal, brave, and active...the natural counterpart of woman’.⁸⁷

As far as the actual curriculum taught at these schools, C.A. Hagerman, in his study on the relationship between the Classics and British imperialism has asserted that throughout ‘the long nineteenth century the Greek and Latin Classics constituted the central intellectual element in the education of Britain’s imperial elites’.⁸⁸ The origins of this emphasis on the classics is hard to pin down, its pre-eminence within the pedagogy of the nineteenth century, however, is well documented. Hagerman claims that a classical education, aside from the more immediately tangible benefits it was thought to confer, also constituted a sort of ‘secret knowledge’ base amongst Britain’s elite, one which ‘reinforced the cultural solidarity and shared identity of the initiated’.⁸⁹ Indeed, the link between education and solidarity, whether it be on the rugby field or through a shared knowledge of Thucydides was, alongside masculinity, the second great tenet of a public school education. William Lubenow, in *“Only Connect”: Learned Societies in Nineteenth-Century Britain* has advanced the claim that this sense of in-group solidarity, first developed in the public school, transitioned seamlessly throughout a boy’s life, first to university societies, and then to learned or amateur societies. Much like the

⁸⁶ Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 78.

⁸⁷ Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 86-90.

⁸⁸ C. A. Hagerman, *Britain’s Imperial Muse: The Classics, Imperialism, and the Indian Empire, 1784-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 1.

⁸⁹ Hagerman, *Britain’s Imperial Muse*, p. 191.

classical curriculum, however, these learned societies, for all their claims of academic rigour, were as much about camaraderie and a warm spirit of amateurism as any desire to expand humanity's horizons.⁹⁰

All of these works have their respective merits, for my purposes, however, there are a few themes which are of particular importance, namely, amateurism, in-group solidarity, and masculinity. For it was these three features which underpinned frontier officials' faith in the experiential knowledge generated by their comrades. After all, a great deal of knowledge on the Himalayan frontier was, in the first place, produced by the peoples who already lived there.⁹¹ Moreover, British surveyors often relied upon the aid of Indian colleagues, and travellers in the Himalaya were very much dependent on the employment of local porters.⁹² Once again this accords with Simpson, who argues that 'high imperial frontiers did not emerge from the development of stable governmental logics and the cumulative acquisition and dissemination of information'. Rather, 'the colonial state developed ways of comprehending and working in these regions that relied on strategies of forgetting, overlooking, and occluding'.⁹³

While frontier making and cartography are only secondary concerns in this thesis, Simpson's insistence on the ambiguous and shifting nature of colonial knowledge production on the Himalayan frontier is vital. Indeed, the Himalayan Club's conception of the Himalaya as something like a theatre for individualistic imperialism depended on this ambiguity; on forgetting the geopolitical realities of contemporary India, and the Empire writ large; on overlooking inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and personal differences in favour of in-group

⁹⁰ William Lubenow, *"Only Connect": Learned Societies in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2015).

⁹¹ See 'Chapter 1: Territory Before Borderlines: Trade, Cosmology, and Modes of Seeing in Precolonial Ladakh.' In Kyle Gardner, *The Frontier Complex*.

⁹² See Bayly, C. A., *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁹³ Simpson, *The Frontier in British India*. p, 6.

solidarity; on occluding other perspectives on the Himalaya and on imperialism. And above all else it depended on a conception of both the Himalayan Club and the Himalaya more generally as places in which the values and activities that the early membership of the Club held dear could be performed. I stress the performative nature of the Club because of a series of developments in contemporary cultures of climbing and exploration.

iv. Exploration, Climbing, and Gender

Before proceeding something must be said about the importance of gender and more specifically masculinity, to my analysis of the Himalayan Club. Since the 1980s scholars have been engaged in a thorough re-evaluation of the relationship between gender and empire.⁹⁴ Works by Margaret Macmillan and Margaret Strobel presented a more nuanced history of the role of European women within the British Empire, redressing the shortcomings of an earlier scholarship which had either ignored women or saw them as harbingers of a more intolerant form of imperialism. Later, in the 1990s and 2000s scholars built upon this foundational literature to further complicate our understanding of European women's relationship with empire by focusing on the intersection of femininity with race, class, and nationality.⁹⁵ This scholarship challenged the notion that the British Empire was a fundamentally masculine project or that it was only men who shaped the course of empire. Concurrent with this, there was also a surge of interest in masculinity itself. Rather than taking the masculine character of the British Empire (both in terms of its personnel and its culture) as a given, scholars like

⁹⁴Margaret MacMillan, *Women of the Raj: The Mothers, Wives, and Daughters of the British Empire in India* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988). Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁹⁵Catherine Hall, *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000). Clare Midgley ed., *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrmann, eds., *Empires and Boundaries: Race, Class, and Gender in Colonial Settings* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008). Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*.

Patrick F. McDevitt, John Tosh, and Mrinalini Sinha have all analysed colonial masculinity as a historically contingent phenomenon shaped by its various *others*, be they racial, religious, or sexual.⁹⁶

Much like scholarship on women, femininity, and empire, scholarship which examines colonial masculinity has, in the 2000s and 2010s, expanded to cover a wide variety of contexts and actors. From this diverse scholarship a few relevant themes emerge. I briefly touched on one of these themes, the importance of public schools as institutions tasked with turning boys into men with a certain set of masculine characteristics in the previous section. In the 1980s J.A. Mangan and Richard Holt both turned a critical lens onto the relationship between athleticism, sport, and imperialism while P.J. Rich was an early and somewhat idiosyncratic pioneer in drawing a direct link between public schools and imperial ideology. A diverse array of more recent works have also taken up the subject of the relationship between masculinity, homosocial relationships, and empire.⁹⁷ Angela Woollacott, has examined the relationship between popular culture, in particular boy's literature with notions of adventure and imperialism, Heather Streets-Salter has written on the so-called *martial races* of the British Empire, William Lubenow, has analysed homosocial networks as they evolved from school to university to learned society, and Michael Brown, Anna Maria Barry, and Joanne Begiato have recently produced an edited volume dealing with martial masculinities in the nineteenth century.⁹⁸ Of particular relevance to this thesis, however, is the work of Peter L. Bayers, who

⁹⁶ Patrick F. McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005).

⁹⁷ J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1986). Holt, *Sport and the British*.

⁹⁸ See Chapter 3 in Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Streets-Salter, *Martial Races*, Lubenow, 'Only Connect'. Michael Brown, Anna Maria Barry, and Joanne Begiato, eds., *Martial Masculinities: Experiencing and Imagining the Military in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

argues that mountaineering was seen by contemporaries in both Britain and America in the early-twentieth century as a means of reinforcing and performing masculine and imperial virtues. Indeed, Bayers asserts that exploration and in particular mountaineering served as a balm for anxieties about the masculinity or virility of contemporary Britons, writing:

If established masculine norms were under duress in the metropolis... heroic actions within the empire helped to reassure English males of the health of their supposedly essential masculine virtues—such as bodily virility, rationality, leadership, self-sacrifice—that in turn reassured them that English national identity was healthy.⁹⁹

My work builds upon and complicates this scholarship, because masculinity, in many ways, was at the heart of the Himalayan Club. Indeed, by arguing that a romanticised conception of heroic exploration informed the founding and conception of the Club I am, implicitly, making an argument about masculinity and it is not hard to imagine an alternative version of this thesis in which masculinity is the primary category of analysis. Despite this, I have chosen not to focus on masculinity. Principally, because a variety of scholars have already produced works on the relationship between masculinity and mountaineering.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, as I have made clear, there exists scholarship which deal with middle-to-upper class masculinity, sport and leisure, as well as imperialism and gender. Another reason I have elected not to foreground masculinity writ-large in my analysis is because, in the case of the Himalayan Club during the period in question, masculinity and an overwhelmingly male membership really were taken for granted. Rather than analysing masculinity in a general sense, then, I have opted to focus instead on the specific ways in which masculinity, homo-social relationships, and identity

⁹⁹ Peter L. Bayers, *Imperial Ascent: Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003), p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ See Bayers, *Imperial Ascent*. Paul Gilchrist, 'Mountains, Manliness and Post-war Recovery: C.E. Montague's 'Action'', *Sport in History*, 33, no. 3 (2013), 282–302 (p. 283). Reuben Ellis, *Vertical Margins: Mountaineering and the Landscape of Neoliberalism* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), pp. 12–13.

shaped the character of the Club during the 1920s and 1930s. The temporal boundaries here are important and have dictated my choice of these specific categories of analysis.

v. Climbing, Interiority, and Intergenerational Masculinity in the Interwar Period

Until relatively recently studies of imperial culture have tended to focus on either the Victorian, or high-imperial periods of the British Empire rather than the Interwar years.¹⁰¹ It is easy enough to see the reasons why this might be so. Despite some territorial acquisition following the First World War, by the 1920s it was clear that Britain was no longer an expanding imperial power. Similarly, the gradual transition of the white settler colonies to dominion status and increasingly powerful calls for independence from Indian nationalists have often led historians to focus on these subjects, rather than on the specificities and uniqueness of imperial culture at the time. Indeed, it is easy to take a teleological view that imperial culture during the 1920s, and especially the 1930s was shaped by a narrative of decline. In many ways, this view is correct, although for many British officials in India the assumption was of a much more gradual decline than that which was borne out in reality. Despite this, there are merits to examining interwar imperial culture on its own terms. By examining the interplay of empire, climbing, individualism, and intergenerational masculine dynamics during this period one can see that attitudes to Empire were not limited to bitterness, anxiety, or retrenchment. Indeed, rather paradoxically, a nostalgic view of the Empire's past and its intimate relationship with exploration allowed late-imperial officials to re-conceptualize the end of the British presence in India in less alarming ways.

¹⁰¹ Some recent works of cultural history which do specifically address the late British Empire are: Andrew S. Thompson, ed., *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Caroline Ritter, *Imperial Encore: The Cultural Project of the Late British Empire* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021).

For the founding members of the Himalayan Club, this desire to imagine a future for the empire, inspired by a nostalgic conception of its past but directed towards new, modern aims, was something of a *raison d'être*. Beneath this broader concern about the fate of the empire, however, there also lurked anxieties about the social and masculine character of the empire's administrators. Indeed, for the founding members of the Himalayan Club, many of whom had arrived in India prior to the First World War, imagining a future for the British in India depended, more than anything else, on ensuring that their successors measured up to their own standards of masculinity and individuality. This inter-generational dynamic will be explored at length in chapters 1 and 2 but it is important, here, to briefly explain how it was that this conception of colonial masculinity was seen to find expression in high-altitude mountaineering. To do this, it is first necessary to make clear what, exactly, it was that defined masculinity for the founding members of the Club. Attempting to define a nebulous concept like this is an inherently difficult task but I will argue that one supposedly masculine virtue, autonomy, was valued above all others by the Club's founding member. The ability to think and act without outside interference and more importantly the capacity to do so well, was what defined masculinity for the high-ranking men who founded the club. To be autonomous in this sense depended on a number of factors: the class of the man concerned, for to be able to act freely in this way depended on a privileged position within society; similarly, an education which instilled in boys a belief in their right to wield such privilege was also a prerequisite; more esoterically, it also presumed that the individual man would also act bravely, dispassionately, and responsibly; and how could he not if he had been properly moulded during his formative years? All of which is not to say that this conception of masculinity placed the individual above the collective, rather, it identified individualism as the preserve of a select few. In other words, individuality was not to be valued in itself but rather something to be

valued amongst those who were supposedly capable of seeing things objectively and of acting appropriately.

As is so often the case, this conception of masculinity was, in large part, defined negatively. According to the prejudices of imperial elites, the lower classes, much like women, were given to emotional excess and irrationality, whilst Asian peoples were irredeemably fatalistic, dishonest, and superstitious. With this in mind, it is easy to see how a nostalgic conception of exploration could appeal to such men. Despite the realities of exploratory expeditions, in nostalgic recapitulations, explorers acted alone. They were solitary agents of reason filling in the blank spaces on the map whilst operating amongst unreliable and largely undifferentiated indigenous others. With a dearth of new places to explore, however, mountaineering offered a medium in which men could exercise their autonomy and, by extension, demonstrate their masculinity. Climbing at high-altitudes pared down the personnel involved, thereby helping to resolve the internal contradiction inherent to the exploration of inhabited places. Moreover, the non-Europeans involved at such heights were seen to be those who best exemplified masculine virtues, even if they were not able to act entirely autonomously. Thus, for an older generation of imperial agents who viewed their past experiences of empire through a nostalgic lens, and for whom the best feature of the empire was the ability to explore and to exercise autonomy in unfamiliar circumstances, mountaineering held out the possibility for masculine reinvention. This conception of mountaineering and, indeed, of masculinity, was not necessarily shared by high-altitude mountaineers, especially those of a younger generation.

For both the older and younger generations of Himalayan Club members the First World War fundamentally shaped their approach towards climbing. For the older generation, the war called into question the certainties of their youth and for younger men the war destabilised the future. Scholarship which deals with the relationship between British soldiers

and the First World War often focuses on the emotional, physical, and psychological damage that the war imparted to its participants. This trauma, however, was not simply experienced or endured passively. Indeed, soldiers, countries, and cultures sought to reshape the trauma and pain of the war into something positive. This re-shaping sometimes looked to the past for inspiration. Stefan Goebel, in a comparative study of public commemorations of British and German soldiers, has looked at the ways in which soldiers utilised nostalgic medieval imagery to make sense of their own traumatic experiences of the war.¹⁰² Others were more forward looking, seeking to avoid a repeat of the war by enshrining internationalism into law and creating institutions, like the League of Nations, which could mediate in international conflicts.¹⁰³ Rhetorically, mountaineering existed somewhere between these two poles.

Paul Gilchrist has suggested a link between mountaineering, as a salve for masculine anxieties, and the collective traumas of the first World War. As Gilchrist writes

Victims rather than heroes emerged out of the physical and psychological trauma of war. Young men cowered from the sounds of shell-fire instead of meeting the didactic appeals to nation, duty and glory that officers barked at them from the parade ground. The war exposed Victorian and Edwardian codes of manliness as an unattainable ideal next to the petrifying fear of oblivion'.¹⁰⁴

Climbing offered some reprieve from this condition. To quote Gilchrist, 'Climbing could be spiritual but, as recent scholarship has shown, was for many in the immediate post-war period

¹⁰² Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁰³ See Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). And Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013).

¹⁰⁴ Gilchrist, 'Mountains, Manliness and Post-war Recovery', p. 283).

profanely therapeutic as bodies re-emerged from the Alps more resilient and strengthened by the experience'.¹⁰⁵

Mountains could also be spaces in which the future was negotiated. Ilaria Scaglia has argued that the Alps, which were the site of much fighting in the First World War, came to be a place in which internationalist aspirations were fixed. Mountains, she argues, 'inspired a set of associations readily applicable to the political landscape of the 1930s and 1940s. Contemporary notions about *alpinistes* and *montagnards* forming a separate and morally elevated community that spanned across national borders fit well within the universalist vocabulary adopted by many internationalists at this time'.¹⁰⁶ More esoterically, she goes on to argue that 'the broad set of extreme sensorial experiences available in the mountains (from the gusts of their wind to the warmth of their huts) made them an apt laboratory for testing a wide variety of feelings' and also, by way of this extremity, served as useful physical embodiments of discourse surrounding modernity and authenticity.¹⁰⁷ All of which leads her to conclude that mountains 'worked as an important space for the negotiation of competing aspirations' and that 'emotions served as an essential ingredient for managing and communicating what internationalism was—or should have been—in this [the Interwar] period'.¹⁰⁸

But what of the origins of mountaineering as a popular pursuit? Historians have traditionally located the emergence of mountaineering as a popular pastime in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, and to Romantic notions of the sublime. This notion has been questioned. Peter H. Hansen, for instance, has argued that mountaineering's widespread popularity in the late-nineteenth century had more to do with middle class

¹⁰⁵ Gilchrist, 'Mountains, Manliness and Post-war Recovery', pp. 292-93.

¹⁰⁶ Ilaria Scaglia, *The Emotions of Internationalism: Feeling International Cooperation in the Alps in the Interwar Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 3. p. 85.

¹⁰⁷ Scaglia, *The Emotions of Internationalism*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁸ Scaglia, *The Emotions of Internationalism*, p. 85.

aspiration than with notions of the sublime.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, in another revisionist approach, Elaine Freedgood has attributed the rise in popularity of mountaineering in Victorian England to cultural what she called cultural Masochism, that is a deliberate endurance of physical torments so as to heighten the pleasure of finally attaining a summit.¹¹⁰ Alan McNee's *The New Mountaineer in Late-Victorian Britain: Materiality, Modernity, and the Haptic Sublime*, acknowledges the validity of these other revisionist approaches. Indeed, McNee begins his work by questioning the idea of a 'typical Victorian mountaineer'. McNee is keen to stress the differences between individuals and generations of climbers. In particular, he argues that by the 1870s, mountaineers had come to value what he dubs the 'haptic sublime'. The haptic sublime placed an 'emphasis on the quality of [the] physical experience of mountaineering', rather than on a sublime located outside the body.¹¹¹ During the late nineteenth century, McNee argues that this insistence that 'visual evidence being supplemented and verified by physical experience,' was part of 'a more general cultural shift in this period towards allocating greater importance to touch and physical sensation'.¹¹²

While McNee's work focuses on the late-Victorian period I will argue that his notion of the haptic sublime is still applicable after the First World War. Indeed, the traumatic experiences of the war only reinforced many mountaineers, especially younger mountaineers, desire to turn the negative physical and emotional realities of war towards more positive ends in the mountains. In fact, the mountaineer Frank Smythe, believed that fear in mountaineering could even be a positive thing, or at least something which a thoughtful man need not dread.

¹⁰⁹ See Peter H. Hansen, 'Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Journal of British Studies* 34, no. 3 (1995), 300–324.

¹¹⁰ See 'Chapter 4: The Uses of Pain: cultural masochism and the colonization of the future in Victorian mountaineering memoirs,' in Elaine Freedgood, *Victorian Writing About Risk: Imagining a Safe England in a Dangerous World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹¹¹ Alan McNee, *The New Mountaineer in Late Victorian Britain: Materiality, Modernity, and the Haptic Sublime* (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2017), p. 149.

¹¹² McNee, *The New Mountaineer in Late Victorian Britain*, p. 23.

Unlike fear in war, which produced ‘in its train a deadening of the finer instincts, leading finally to a brutal conception of life, a modicum of the same emotion in mountaineering’ according to Smythe ‘quicken[ed] the appreciation of beauty’.¹¹³ Indeed, and again conjuring up a vision of McNee’s haptic sublime, Smythe believed that ‘the charm of mountain-climbing [lay] not in the climbing, in success, nor in failure, but in the great range of emotions provoked through these physical experiences’.¹¹⁴

This move towards interiority and a preference for experience over abstract knowledge or sentiment accords with Thomas Simpson’s work on frontier making. For my own purposes I see in the Himalayan Club a unique confluence of all the various historiographical trends described above. And it is because of this that I claim that the Club saw the Himalaya as a theatre of individualistic imperialism. The region was a theatre not just because knowledge about it was considered fundamentally imprecise and partial, but also because it was a frontier, and thereby not subject to the same rules as elsewhere. As Simpson put it, the Himalaya’s frontier nature ‘allowed agents of the colonial state to act in ways that contravened notions of what was viable or acceptable elsewhere and to ignore similar undertakings in the past that had conspicuously failed’.¹¹⁵ Because of this, in-group solidarity and personal passions could be afforded greater importance in the Himalaya. Imperial agents could pursue an idealized form of empire, predicated on exploration, without many of the incumbent burdens of rule. In the mountains, older generations could seek the restoration of the values of their youth whilst younger generations could locate a more positive vision of the future. And perhaps most importantly, in mountaineering the exploratory ethos had found a new horizon, a new blank

¹¹³ Frank S. Smythe, *The Mountain Vision* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1941), pp. 257-258.

¹¹⁴ Smythe, *The Mountain Vision*, pp. 257-258.

¹¹⁵ Simpson, *The Frontier in British India*, p. 6.

space on the map that, because of its focus on interiority and personal overcoming, could not be easily coloured in.

III. Chapter Structure

This thesis will proceed in a broadly chronological fashion working from the conception and foundation of the Himalayan Club in 1927 and 1928 to approximately 1947. The first chapter deals with the conception of the Club and the process of settling and defining its rules and objects. It examines Geoffrey Corbett and Kenneth Mason, the guiding lights behind the Himalayan Club, their hopes and aspirations for it, and the responses they received to the circular letter which they sent to their friends and colleagues asking for suggestions and advice about the nascent club. Dealing roughly with the period between the Autumn of 1927 and the early months of 1928, this chapter establishes the cultural parameters in which the Himalayan Club was conceived and conceptualized. It makes clear who, exactly, the founding members of the Club were, their various conceptions of what a mountaineering club in India should look like and ultimately, their ambitions for it. Attention is paid to a common theme which emerged in the responses to Corbett and Mason's circular letter: namely, a belief amongst those members of the Club who were older or more senior members of the Indian political and military services that one of the chief functions of the Club should be the attraction of younger officials to the Himalaya. This desire to attract younger men of the right sort to the mountains was predicated on a belief that travel in the mountains could have an edifying effect on these men and could help to mould them in the image of imperial heroes and explorers from past generations. As what mentioned earlier, however, this desire to improve and inspire younger imperialists did not stem from a belief that these men might thereby improve the empire. On

the contrary, the empire, or more specifically the Himalayan frontier was thought to be improving for the imperialists themselves.

Chapter 2 details the actual foundation of the Club. Looking in turn at the final settlement of its objects, the operational structure that was put in place and the regulations for its membership. The conflicts and disagreements which emerged during the flurry of correspondence which proceeded the inaugural meeting found their resolution on the 17 February 1928. At this meeting it was decided that the Club should have far-reaching objects not limited to mountaineering and including hunting. This final decision was a pragmatic one, a reflection of the Club's desire to attract younger members. More than that, though, it also reflected a belief that valuable and reliable information about routes, conditions, and topography could be obtained by those engaged in recreational travel. Indeed, the Club believed that the average young officer, simply by dint of his presence, could contribute to the general understanding of the Himalaya. This belief, however, depended upon a number of omissions, occlusions, and obfuscations about the realities of the Himalaya, India, and the Empire more generally.

Chapter 3 is an examination of specialist travel. By this, I mean that it looks at travel which was undertaken in the Himalaya for scholarly reasons. I use the word 'specialist' because these individuals conceived of themselves as explorers operating within an increasingly specialised and smaller-scale scholarly paradigm. Looking at the creation and early issues of *The Himalayan Journal*, the literary organ of the Club, this chapter examines both the positive and negative justifications for Himalayan travel as well as the Himalayan Club's relationship with scholarship and with learned societies more generally. This chapter will also engage with a wide array of private correspondence by specialist explorers who were members of the Club. Through examining these sources, I argue that the Club's simultaneously optimistic and

nostalgic conception of exploration coloured and shaped its engagement with scholarship and scholarly travel.

Chapter 4 considers recreational travel as an object of the Club. This form of travel, which often combined shikar and climbing, was undertaken during the course of routine travel conducted in the name of work or undertaken for recreational purposes during a period of leave. The chapter looks at how these expeditions were described in the pages of *The Himalayan Journal*. Generally, these accounts were framed in an eminently practical way, detailing routes, hunting head-counts, and other things deemed of interest to a would-be traveller of a similar class and character. This pragmatic focus on practical details was often framed as an invitation for others to travel further, higher, and more widely than the author. Similarly, these accounts also made use of familiar exoticizing and orientalising tropes associated with heroic exploration of the golden age. Most importantly, though, the inclusion and comparison of these trips with the great mountaineering exploits described in *The Himalayan Journal* allowed for shikaris and young officers to conceptualize their travel within a continuum of exploration extending from a simple hunting trip in Kashmir to climbing mount Everest.

Chapter 5 will look at the ways in which the Himalayan Club sought to facilitate high-altitude mountaineering. These efforts took three main forms. Firstly, the Club quickly came to see itself as a gatekeeper of the Himalaya, with the ability to help international expeditions (including those originating in metropolitan Britain) secure the necessary permission to travel and climb in the Himalaya (those areas where they could practically help, at any rate). Secondly, the *Himalayan Journal*, in some ways, moved the Club closer to its aspirations of being an Alpine Club for India as the 1930s progressed, with the *Journal* containing accounts of a number of prominent expeditions which are evidently aimed at an audience of fellow mountaineers, or as the HC might have described them, technical climbers. Finally, as the 1930s progressed the Club implemented a number of measures decided to facilitate major

expeditions including the creations of ‘huts’ in Sikkim and Kashmir, help with provisioning expeditions, and perhaps most importantly a register of sherpa porters, which aimed to help European travellers and climbers secure experienced porters for their expeditions (this registry would be utilised by Hilary’s 1953 expeditions with Tenzing Norgay being classed among the register’s elite ‘tiger’ classification).

Chapter 6 will look at the ways in which mountaineers themselves conceived of climbing in the Himalaya. It will look at the ways in which mountaineers responded to a number of key changes taking place within mountaineering. Specifically, the legacy of the First World War, the increased athelticisation and mechanisation of mountaineering, an increased understanding of routes and conditions in the Himalaya itself, and an increasingly broad understanding of who, exactly, counted as a Himalayan mountaineer. In the face of these changes and despite the existence of any number of personal beliefs or perspectives, I argue that there were two overarching impulses running through contemporary descriptions of Himalayan mountaineering in the 1930s. First, there was a desire to find transcendence through individual effort and exertion. And secondly, an acknowledgment of the importance of teamwork. In particular, the move towards a more interior experience of mountaineering allowed mountaineers to overcome, or at the very least, accept, the idea that the age of heroic exploration was at an end.

Ultimately, by looking at the various efforts of the Himalayan Club, and at its institutional literary output as well as that of its members. I will demonstrate that the founding and early members of the Himalayan Club conceived of the Himalaya as something like a theatre of individualistic imperialism in which an idealised form of imperial activity could be performed. That the Club could conceive of the Himalaya in this way depended on a highly individualistic conception of work and play in the Empire. It depended on a belief in the value of the individual imperialist. And it depended on a faith in exploration as an heroic ideal.

Chapter 1: The Conception of the Himalayan Club

On December 20th 1927, Kenneth Mason, a member of the Survey of India, and Geoffrey Corbett, Secretary of State for Commerce and Industry in the Government of India, sent a circular letter to those of their acquaintance whom they believed ‘had a definite interest in the Himalaya’ and ‘were known to have travelled to the Himalaya or to have contributed something towards Himalayan geography, science, literature or art’. Also included among the recipients of the letter were ‘military and political officers whose work was on the frontier, members of the Survey of India, the Indian Forest Service, the Geological Survey and other scientific departments, and members of the Alpine Club now in India’.¹ ‘We are writing to you on a matter which has long been in our minds, and possibly also in yours’, the letter began. For:

It is believed that there are now many in India who are interested in the Himalaya... [and] it has been suggested that a Himalayan Club should be formed with the object of assisting Himalayan travel and increasing our knowledge of the Himalaya in all its aspects’.²

The men who received this letter (and all 137 recipients of the letter were men) were asked for their thoughts on two questions regarding the creation of a Himalayan club: first, they were asked to provide their ‘views and criticisms of the proposed Club, and its objects’ along with any suggestions ‘for its organisation [and] qualification[s] for membership’; and second, they were asked to become a founder member and, if possible, attend an inaugural meeting in Delhi on Saturday the 18th of February 1928, during the annual Horse Show.³ At the Delhi meeting

¹ Alpine Club Archives, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Himalayan Club, held at the Committee Room, Army Headquarters, Delhi, on the 17 February 1928, at 10 a.m., Himalayan Club, F12, folio 5. (Annexure I).

² Alpine Club Archives, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Himalayan Club.

³ The implication that anyone not otherwise engaged would be at the Horse Show is telling. It illustrates both the potency and significance of ritual and hierarchy in the British Empire and in India more specifically. More specifically it points to the importance of rituals surrounding equestrianism in Anglo-Indian culture. And polo, in particular, achieved a preeminent position amongst both Indian and Anglo-Indian elites in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. See Luise Elsaesser, ‘Dashing About with the Greatest Gallantry’: Polo in India and the British Metropole, 1862-1914’, *Sport in History* 40, no. 1 (2020), 1–27. On the other hand, it also illustrates the ubiquity of what Mrinalini Sinha has called ‘clubland’, and attitudes of clubbability amongst Anglo-Indian elites. That is, on the networks of sociability and exclusion which defined

(which actually took place on the 17th of February) a summary of the 80 replies which Corbett and Mason had received was presented to those in attendance. The responses to the letter, and to the idea of a Himalayan Club, had been overwhelmingly positive, but it was also clear that there were competing (if not necessarily exclusive) conceptions of the proposed club in the minds of its founder members.⁴ These competing notions of what a Himalayan Club should and could be would never become a matter of open conflict for the Club. They did, however, fundamentally shape the Club's identity and in their substance, reveal a good deal about the cultural and political concerns of the Club's founding members.

The following two chapters will delve into this debate, examining the preoccupations, concerns, and aspirations of the Club's founding members. Within this debate a wide array of subjects and themes emerge, ranging from the amalgamation with another Indian mountaineering club, the Mountain Club of India; to an informal discussion regarding the inclusion of Indian members; to the deliberately abstruse: the climber Edward Norton, for instance, in his response to Corbett and Mason's circular letter insisted that members ought to have a 'real keenness and love for the mountains qua mountains (as opposed to their aspect as a source of fresh air after the plains)' a qualification for which he gamely admitted having no idea how to legislate.⁵ Rather than attempt to draw out and explore all of these various themes individually, however, this chapter and the next will look at the ways in which these various ideas, suggestions, and beliefs fit into two broader ways of understanding the founding of the Himalayan Club. First, its institutional aims and ambitions of the Club and second, the nature and composition of its membership. There is, obviously, a great deal of overlap between these

British associational life in India. See Mrinalini Sinha, 'Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India', *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 4 (2001), 489–521. And Cohen, *In the Club*.

⁴ACA, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting, Himalayan Club, F12, folio 5.

⁵ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from E.F. Norton, 12 January 1928, Himalayan Club, F12, 1-3: Copies of Replies to Circular Letters.

two themes (for instance, it is perfectly plausible to suggest that the Club's institutional aims were but a reflection of its membership's desires and characteristics) and this division, in part, is a means of getting to grips with the idea of an array of idiosyncratic men.

But there is an important rationale for utilising these two categories of analysis, not in spite of the complexities and contradictions which emerge therein, but because of them. By this, I mean that the contrast between the Club's ideas about membership (for instance a belief in social qualifications for membership and an unofficial policy of Indian exclusion) and a simultaneous belief that the 'one great attribute possessed by the Himalaya' was that it offered 'room for all the climbers of all the nations of all the world' (as Kenneth Mason would later claim), reveals a contradiction at the very heart of the Himalayan Club's identity during the years 1928-1940.⁶ The Himalaya, within the imaginative worldview of the Club, occupied a unique position: at once inhospitable and remote yet also increasingly accessible and comprehensible; a place to be cherished for its supposed quiet and indifference to human concerns while also being held up as the perfect ideological nursery for young agents of empire. As I argued in the introduction, the members of the Himalayan Club, both in the pages of *The Himalayan Journal* as well as through their actions, constructed an image of the Himalaya as a theatre of individualistic imperialism. For them, the Himalaya was a space in which the guiding impulse behind early imperialistic forays could be inculcated in a new generation. By nature of its liminal status on the frontiers of the Empire, the Himalayas could provide respite from the perceived difficulty and tedium of administering India and, perhaps most importantly, a space in which the growing anxiety about a dearth of 'blank spaces on the map' could be alleviated through the performative feats of high-altitude climbing.

⁶ From a transcript of Kenneth Mason's toast at a dinner held for a party of German mountaineers on their return from Kanchenjunga in 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 02 (1930), 182-187 (p. 188).

In terms of structure the following two chapters will proceed broadly chronologically. This chapter will look at the events, the correspondence and personal meetings, which preceded the Club's inaugural meeting on the 18th of February 1928. It will proceed in four parts. The first, will explore in more depth the correspondence which preceded and initiated the foundation of the Club, culminating in Corbett and Mason's circular letter. The second, will look at Corbett and Mason's response to the foundation of the Mountain Club of India, another mountaineering club with similar if not identical aims. The third section will look at the responses Corbett and Mason received to their circular letter. And the final section will examine the historiographical implications of this analysis. The next chapter will then deal with the founding of the Club and the final settlement of its objects, its structure, and amalgamation with the Mountain Club of India.

I. 'The idea must have recurred to many': Geoffrey Corbett, Kenneth Mason,
and the conception of the Himalayan Club

Geoffrey Corbett (1881-1937) joined the Indian Civil Service in 1904.⁷ A keen rock-climber since his school days Corbett was elected to the Alpine Club in 1916 and had already climbed and trekked in Kashmir, Ladakh, and the Satpura Range before the end of the First World War. In 1927 Corbett, by then a middle-aged man, was the Secretary for Commerce and Industry in India, and a devoted Himalayan enthusiast who 'preferred roaming to climbing in the technical sense'.⁸ Also a high-minded imperialist, in an anonymous letter submitted to *The Observer* on 9 June, 1923 (regarding the 1923 Imperial Conference) Corbett made clear his preference for 'the old Victorian conception' of the Empire as something that existed 'for the common good of all its subjects, of whatever race or colour, and more especially for the upliftment of

⁷ 'Sir G. L. Corbett Dead', *The Times of India*, 3 November 1937, 14 (p. 14).

⁸ 'In Memoriam', in *The Himalayan Journal* 10 (1938), 184-192 (p. 185).

backward peoples'. He contrasted this view with those who viewed the 'white peoples of the Empire as a ruling caste', and 'who regard colonies and dependencies as the praedia populi Anglici [property of the English people]'.⁹ Corbett was an imperialist in the late-Victorian mode, who believed the Empire was a burden to be borne by those entrusted with its upkeep, in other words, men like himself. On the 15th of October 1927 Corbett wrote a letter to Kenneth Mason asking for advice on establishing a Himalayan Club or Alpine Club for India.

Kenneth Mason (1887-1976) replied to Corbett's letter the next day to let him now that he was with Corbett 'heart and soul'.¹⁰ And Mason was of a mind with Corbett on matters besides mountaineering as well. Commissioned into the Royal Engineers in 1906, Mason spent two years at the School of Military Engineering, Chatham where he worked on the development of stereoplotting machines.¹¹ In 1909 Mason was posted to Karachi where he joined the Survey of India. Mason participated in the triangulation of Kashmir in 1912 and in 1913 he triangulated several high peaks in the Western Karakoram. Mason's first taste of high-altitude Himalayan Climbing came in 1912 when he and Ernest Neve were the first to successfully climb Kolahoi. After the First World War Mason continued surveying and climbing in the Himalaya.¹² But it was early encounters with two late-Victorian explorers, Francis Younghusband and Sidney Burrard which had first piqued Mason's interest in the Himalaya.¹³ Mason claimed to have met

⁹ India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London, Anonymous article submitted to the Observer on the 9th of June 1923, Correspondence with Sir Geoffrey Latham Corbett MSS EUR D545/3.

¹⁰ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from Kenneth Mason to Geoffrey Corbett, 16 October 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

¹¹ Peter H. Hansen, 'Mason, Kenneth (1887-1976), geographer and mountaineer', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004.

¹² 'Obituary', *The Himalayan Journal* 34 (1976), 183-193 (pp. 183-184).

¹³ Sidney Burrard (1860-1943) had participated in the Great Trigonometrical Survey and was later Surveyor General of the Survey of India (1911-1919). Francis Younghusband (1863-1942) found fame as an explorer of Central Asia in the late nineteenth century and led the violent 1903/4 British mission to Tibet. Perhaps due his later interest in spirituality and orientalism, the violence of Francis Younghusband's activities in Tibet were largely ignored or minimized for much of the twentieth century. Charles Allen's work has led to a re-evaluation of Younghusband and his expedition to Tibet: Charles Allen, *Duel in the Snows: The True Story of the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa* (London: John Murray, 2004). This was followed by Michael Carrington, 'Officers, Gentlemen and Thieves: The Looting of Monasteries during the 1903/4 Younghusband Mission to Tibet', *Modern Asian Studies* 37 (2003), 81-109; and Tim Myatt, 'Looting Tibet: Conflicting Narratives and

Sidney Burrard before he was ten and to have read Younghusband's *Heart of a Continent* (which details Younghusband's travels in Central and North Asia during the period 1884-1894) before he was twelve.¹⁴ Thus, it is little surprise that Corbett and Mason, who were roughly contemporary, and both passionate about the Himalaya should strike up a friendship.

It is unclear whether Corbett and Mason, or Corbett and anyone else spoke about the idea of a Himalayan Club prior to Corbett's letter to Mason. In the editorial which began the inaugural edition of *The Himalayan Journal* Corbett traces the idea to a chance meeting in Simla on the 6th of October 1927, although he does not make clear who, exactly, he spoke to.¹⁵ Whatever the case, the first detailed proposals for a Himalayan Club can be found in Corbett and Mason's initial correspondence in the Autumn of 1927. Corbett began his first letter to Mason by making clear that the idea of something like a Himalayan Club had been on his mind for several years, but that the idea had become particularly agitating in recent months. He had only delayed in writing to Mason because he wanted to write to him whilst he was in India. This was because, in Corbett's words: 'I think it depends on you [Mason] more than anyone whether the idea will materialise'.¹⁶ Corbett then set out three potential objects for the proposed Club. 'If a Club is to be a live thing, he wrote 'it must, I think, have definite objects and the objects that naturally suggest themselves, would be:

- (1) To collect, classify and publish first-hand descriptions of Himalayan routes, and information about peaks and passes. You [Mason] have yourself, of course, gone far with this already;

Representations of Tibetan Material Culture from the 1904 British Mission to Tibet', *Inner Asia* 14 (2012), 61–97.

¹⁴ Kenneth Mason, *Abode of Snow* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1955), p. ix.

¹⁵ Corbett, 'The Founding of the Himalayan Club', p. 1.

¹⁶ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from G.L. Corbett to Kenneth Mason, 15 October 1927, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

(2) To give information and advice to members;

(3) To obtain the assistance of local officials for members travelling in the Himalaya.¹⁷

Beyond these narrower objects Corbett made clear that his general vision for the Club, was to be something along the lines of an Alpine Club for India with the initial organisation spearheaded by members of the Alpine Club in India, of which Corbett believed there were ‘not more than ten or a dozen’.¹⁸ Corbett concluded his letter by lamenting the fact that ‘the difficulty in India is to find someone with sufficient leisure to do the editing and secretarial work’.¹⁹ Corbett evidently had Mason in mind for this task and his faith in Mason’s abilities and dedication seemed to have been well placed. Both because Mason did end up taking on the position of editor but also because he quickly took on decisive role in shaping and defining the character of the Club.

Indeed, Mason’s response to Corbett’s letter, which came a day later on the 16th of October, 1927 contained a wealth of suggestions. Mason began his response by reflecting on the general nature of the Club. In particular, Mason was sceptical about the possibility of creating a Club which was at all comparable to the Alpine Club. Indeed, he made clear that he was only aware of ‘two Alpine Club members serving in the country’ and that he doubted whether there were more than twenty members in India at the time with a third likely to be on leave at any given moment.²⁰ Moreover, those Alpine Club members who were present were, in Mason’s words ‘scattered’ and he conceded that ‘it would be very difficult to get together in any one place more than half a dozen at the outside.’²¹ Because of this difficulty Mason did not

¹⁷ ACA, Letter from G.L. Corbett to Kenneth Mason, 15 October 1927.

¹⁸ ACA, Letter from G.L. Corbett to Kenneth Mason, 15 October 1927.

¹⁹ ACA, Letter from G.L. Corbett to Kenneth Mason, 15 October 1927.

²⁰ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from Kenneth Mason to G.L. Corbett, 16 October 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

²¹ ACA, F12, Folder 1, Letter from Kenneth Mason to G.L. Corbett, 16 October 1927.

believe that a Club which was narrowly focused on climbing had much chance of success.²² Mason did believe, however, that there were ‘a number of Himalayan travellers, Mountaineers rather than Climbers, who would support the formation of a Himalayan Mountain Club, rather than a technical “Alpine Club”’.²³ And in the next few paragraphs of his reply Mason set out a vision of the Himalayan Club that would, with only minor modifications, become the stated objects of the Club at its inaugural meeting on the 17th of February 1928. Before, proceeding, however, something must be said about the Alpine Club, for it is noteworthy that the word ‘Alpine’ should be used by both Mason and Corbett as virtually synonymous with climbing. And the implication that the Alps were the mountain range par excellence for mountaineers needs interrogation as well.

Peter H. Hansen has argued that it was ‘an increased competition for status symbols’ amongst middle class men (alongside the greatly reduced travel times made possible by rail travel) which explains the rise in popularity of mountaineering in the Alps during the mid-Victorian years. In particular, Hansen argues that it was Albert Smith, ‘a middle-aged journalist and entertainer’ who, in a series of one man shows combining irreverent humour, satirical lampooning, and a stage festooned with Alpine curios, did more than anyone else to popularise mountaineering in Britain during the 1850s (Smith ultimately performed before nearly 200,000 people by the end of 1853).²⁴ Unlike romantic writers who came to the mountains to experience the sublime, but did not necessarily climb the mountains themselves, for these middle-class mountaineers, it was the conquest of un-climbed peaks that was of importance. ‘Mountain

²² It is notable that Mason did not consider the possibility that there might be climbers not associated with the Alpine Club in India. Indeed, a club that was more narrowly focused on mountaineering did exist in India at the time. And the Himalayan Club’s relationship with this group, the Mountain Club of India, will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

²³ ACA, Letter from Kenneth Mason to G.L. Corbett, 16 October 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927.

²⁴ Hansen, ‘Albert Smith’, pp. 304-05.

conquest transferred prestige from the mountain to the climber', and an increased perception of the dangers and difficulties of high-altitude climbing only served to increase this prestige.²⁵

The Alpine Club emerged from this milieu and allowed professional men to align themselves with the supposed virtues of Empire. And unlike the exploits described in adventure stories mountaineering was notable for its 'participatory character'. As Hansen put it: 'not everyone could travel to remote corners of the globe, but middle-class men with a few weeks' holiday could reach Switzerland and act out the drama of the empire'.²⁶ Thus, notions of the sublime in the arts might have first driven Britons to the Alps, but it was a desire to participate in the imperial project of exploration which turned the mountains into the playground of Europe. Travelling to the Himalayas, however, was vastly more expensive than travelling from Britain to the Alps, and even for those Britons already in India the expenses were often perceived to be prohibitive. As Douglas Freshfield, a former president of the Alpine Club (1893-95), put it in 1928: 'Himalayan exploration...demands both more time and expense than the average Englishman in India can afford; distances are great and transport is onerous; guides and porters, in the Alpine sense of those terms, have to be created. And after these difficulties have been faced and overcome there (remain) always frontier barriers and official restrictions'.²⁷ It was because of these very difficulties that Corbett and Mason believed in the necessity of a Himalayan club.

Returning to Kenneth Mason's response to Geoffrey Corbett's letter it is clear that Mason believed that the difficulties British climbers faced when trying to organise expeditions in the Himalayas were more acute than Corbett. Mason responded to each of Corbett's three objects in turn. Regarding the first, Mason's modified Corbett's wording slightly, with Mason's

²⁵ Hansen, 'Albert Smith', pp. 318-321.

²⁶ Hansen, 'Albert Smith', pp. 322-323.

²⁷ Douglas W. Freshfield, 'Mountain Clubs for the Himalaya', *The Geographical Journal* 71, no.5 (1928), 471-473 (p. 471).

first object for the Club being: ‘To encourage, collect, classify and diffuse first-hand information of Himalayan routes, mountains passes and peaks’.²⁸ The only difference between Corbett and Mason’s version’s being the change from the word ‘publish’, to ‘diffuse’ in Mason’s iteration. Mason had a pragmatic as well as philosophical rationale for this change. Pragmatic because, in Mason’s words ‘publication costs money, and I doubt whether I shall be able to do much of this at first’.²⁹ This statement implies Mason had already accepted the mantle of editing whatever publications might eventually emerge from the Club and that he had broader ambitions than just publication. ‘I think we ought to make the Club a mean between a specialised Geographical Society and a Climbing Club’ Mason wrote, ‘the sport of climbing being allowed to grow naturally among the majority of members by association with the minority’. In Mason’s vision the beginner would ‘take the routes, study and enjoy the mountains, discover and cross the passes, and be tempted by the peaks’. Ultimately, Mason believed that in the Himalayas, unlike in the Alps, mountaineering and climbing were ‘quite distinct pastimes’.³⁰ By simultaneously ‘diffusing’ accounts of major mountaineering expeditions as well as more prosaic information on routes, passes, and peaks, the Club could allow climbing novices to aspire to new and better challenges.

On Corbett’s second point, regarding the informing and advising of members, Mason had relatively little to add, although he did suggest adding the phrase ‘and where possible assistance’ after the word ‘advise’ because it opened the possibility of members with a surplus of equipment loaning it out to other members. To Corbett’s third object: ‘to obtain the assistance of local officials for members travelling in the Himalaya’ Mason said he had no

²⁸ ACA, Letter from Kenneth Mason to G.L. Corbett, 16 October 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1.

²⁹ ACA, F12, Folder 1, Letter from Kenneth Mason to G.L. Corbett, 16 October 1927.

³⁰ ACA, F12, Folder 1, Letter from Kenneth Mason to G.L. Corbett, 16 October 1927.

remarks, only writing 'if we can do this alone, the Club will have justified itself'.³¹ After which Mason set out the ideological case for facilitating travel in the Himalaya:

If we can only get some of our frontier officials to take a keener interest in the mountains amongst which they live, we should not have it said that British officers are debarred from visiting certain districts into which Foreigners are permitted to enter. And we should not have private individuals put to the expense of organising expeditions, only to be turned back at the last minute by some windy official. We might also be able to ensure fair-play and consideration, and uniformity of treatment among Himalayan porters, on whom ultimately the success of our Club must depend.³²

Fundamentally, then, Kenneth Mason's vision for the Himalayan Club was of an organisation which could make the Himalaya more accessible, more comprehensible, and ultimately, conquerable. And it was a vision that Corbett shared as well. Writing on the 25th of October Corbett made clear that that he was entirely in agreement with Mason that 'the Club should be primarily for Himalayan travellers, and not for "climbers" in the technical sense,' and stressed that he had never had any 'intention of suggesting anything else.' What is more, after trying out various names for the club on his acquaintances, Corbett found that Himalayan Mountain Club and Alpine Club of India both gave his interlocutors the impression that the club was dedicated to climbing, in the strict sense of the word. Thus, having settled on the Himalayan Club as a name, Corbett and Mason were ready to begin the process of organising and founding the club.

³¹ ACA, F12, Folder 1, Letter from Kenneth Mason to G.L. Corbett, 16 October 1927.

³² ACA, F12, Folder 1, Letter from Kenneth Mason to G.L. Corbett, 16 October 1927.

II. The Matter of the ‘Ramblers’: The Mountain Club of India and the question of amalgamation with the Himalayan Club

A little less than two weeks after Mason’s response to Corbett’s letter, Corbett sent another letter to Mason informing him that they had been pipped to the post. The Secretary of the United Services Club had informed Corbett that another mountaineering club, the Mountain Club of India, had just had its inaugural meeting on the 26th of September at Peliti’s Restaurant in Calcutta.³³ The notice came in the form of a general invitation to ‘all and sundry’ (Corbett’s words) to become founding members of the Mountain Club of India. Corbett, confessed to Mason that he had not yet looked over the rules of this new club, nor did he have a spare copy to send to Mason, but he felt assured that Mason would be able to obtain a copy easily enough in Calcutta. From his quick reading of the notice, Corbett surmised that the MCI was ‘to be primarily a Darjeeling affair, for encouraging holiday excursions in Sikkim’ and he felt confident that it would not encroach upon their own plans for a Himalayan Club based in Simla. Still, Corbett concluded his letter by writing that ‘it may not be wise to ignore it [the MCI] altogether’.³⁴ And the more Corbett and Mason learned about the MCI the more interest they took in both it, and its ‘guiding light’, William Allsup (1890-1969).

Initially Mason had his doubts about the Mountain Club of India, writing to Corbett that he felt that the founding of the club seemed to have been ‘rather rushed’ and that he could not imagine that it was going to be ‘a very live affair, with a President retired in England’.³⁵ Still, Mason conceded that it might be better to work with them unless it proved that the MCI really was ‘a more or less local Darjeeling affair’. During this time Corbett also received a

³³Alpine Club Archives, Letter from G.L. Corbett to Kenneth Mason, 28 October 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

³⁴ ACA, F12, Folder 1, Letter from G.L. Corbett to Kenneth Mason, 28 October 1927.

³⁵ This was Charles Granville Bruce, a Himalayan mountaineering pioneer. Alpine Club Archives, Notice of the Inaugural Meeting of the Mountain Club of India, 20 September 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

response from Edward Tandy the Surveyor General of India, whom he had simultaneously contacted regarding the formation of a Himalayan club. Tandy was both enthusiastic about the prospect of a Himalayan Club and already aware of the formation of the Mountain Club of India. From the outset Tandy gave short shrift to the MCI as an independent club, describing them as a 'a few Calcutta youngsters and some Gurkha officers'. Despite this Tandy was of the opinion that the MCI could be persuaded to join Corbett's broader organisation provided he, Corbett, and Mason did 'not choke them off by being too official'.³⁶

By the 30th of October, 1927, Mason had managed to obtain a copy of the 'Rules of the Mountain Club of India' from Allsup. After reading the rules of MCI, Mason felt that the club more or less covered the objects he and Corbett had discussed and that they ought to support it.³⁷ The very next day, however, Mason wrote to Corbett again, afraid that he had given 'quite a wrong impression to that which [he] had intended'. Mason went on to clarify his position, writing: 'I think we must not oppose it [the MC] in any way, but try to get them to think as we do'. Even more than this Mason believed that there should only be one mountaineering club in India otherwise they risked creating 'the same jealousies that existed with the commencement of several Ski Clubs and Associations in England'. Mason then set out a plan to approach Allsup and discuss the differences between the two clubs, of which Mason reported finding more than he expected on a second reading. Mason had also obtained a copy of a letter from Allsup to Colonel H.W. Tobin, E.O. Shebbeare, and Capt. J.W. Rundall. Mason knew and respected the first two, and the letter from Allsup revealed that none of the three addressees had been present at the inaugural meeting of the Mountain Club of India. To make matters worse the ten 'enthusiasts' who had been present were 'of different opinions on most subjects'.

³⁶ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from Colonel-Commandant E.A. Tandy to G.L. Corbett, 31 October 1927, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

³⁷ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from Kenneth Mason to G.L. Corbett, 30 October 1927, The Archives of the Alpine Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

As a result, Mason did not believe it would be difficult to persuade the members of the MCI to see things he and Corbett's way if they put 'a reasoned plan before them' which they could bring up at their next 'merry meeting.' Indeed, Mason was of the opinion that many of those who had joined the MCI had done so simply 'because there is no other'.³⁸

Prior to his first meeting with Allsup, Mason received further correspondence from both Corbett and one Captain Francis Oswin Cave (1897-1974). Cave's letter to Mason on the 3rd of November was principally concerned with a series of photos that Mason had printed and enlarged for Cave. Towards the end of the letter, however, Cave mentions the Himalayan Club. In a comment which must have raised Mason's hackles Cave wrote: 'I wonder if Sir Geoffrey Corbett's Himalayan Club is the same thing as The Mountain Club of India which has just been formed'? Cave went on to write that he had joined the MCI, though he did not expect to 'get much out of it'. This was because Cave took the MCI to be 'entirely a climbing club' and he preferred the idea of a Club that was a cross between a mountaineering and a geographical society. This, in Cave's opinion, would 'attract a lot of people'.³⁹ Corbett's letter to Mason on 6th of November confirmed Corbett's support for meeting Allsup and stressed, above all else, that they needed to avoid the impression that they were 'starting a rival show'. As Corbett put it, 'I like to regard climbing as the cleanest of clean sports...anything else is so distasteful to me personally that I would rather pull out altogether than be involved in it'. Despite this high-minded rhetoric Corbett nevertheless believed that the Himalayan Club was the more viable option. 'I find it rather difficult', he wrote 'to convince myself that it is in the best interests of

³⁸Alpine Club Archives, Letter from Kenneth Mason to G.L. Corbett, 30 October 1927, The Archives of the Alpine Club, F12, Folder 1.

³⁹ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from F.O. Cave to Kenneth Mason, 3 November 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

mountaineering and mountain travel in the Himalaya that its future should be entirely in the hands of a Club constituted as this one is'.⁴⁰

On the 8th of November Mason and Allsup finally met and the substantives differences between the nascent Himalayan Club and the Mountain Club of India became clear. William Allsup, described (rather cruelly) in his obituary for the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club as 'a very competent though not outstanding rock climber,' was the manager of an armaments factory in Cossipore, Calcutta.⁴¹ Prior to his arrival in India Allsup who, in Corbett's words, had 'tumbled about a lot in the Lakes and North Wales,' had only been to the Alps once and had no real experience of climbing in the Himalaya⁴². One of the first issues that Allsup and Mason discussed was the lack of any support from members of the Alpine Club, Survey of India, or Royal Geographical Society in the MCI. Rather condescendingly, Mason, asked Allsup why he and the other founder members of the MCI had not bothered to seek the advice of anyone from these organisations. Allsup replied that he wished that they had, but on finding little immediate interest from anyone in any of these organisations, he and the other founder members of the MCI had decided to press ahead in the belief that 'the only way to get a show going was to come into existence and "see what would happen"'.⁴³ Mason then showed Allsup the correspondence between himself and Corbett and set out their vision for the Himalayan Club. Mason was set on convincing Allsup of the inevitability and desirability of giving up the MCI in favour of the HC and his letter positively drips with condescension. For instance, Mason made it clear to Corbett that he found Allsup's letter to Tobin, Shebbeare, and Rundell

⁴⁰ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from G.L. Corbett to Kenneth Mason, 6 November 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

⁴¹ 'In Memoriam: William Allsup', *YRC Journal* 10. No 35. (1970), 384-392 (p. 387).

⁴² 'Letter from Corbett to Sydney Spencer, 24 November, 1927', The Archives of the Alpine Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

⁴³ Alpine Club Archives, Note of meeting with Allsup; addressed to Sir. G. Corbett, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

to be impertinent, but that he believed that this was due to ‘inexperience and enthusiasm’ and that Allsup seemed ‘a nice man’ and ‘not the sort to intend impertinence’.⁴⁴

Behind the frequent references to Allsup’s occupation, and comments like Mason’s, it is hard not to see a class element at work in Corbett, Mason, and Tandy’s attitudes towards Allsup and the MCI.⁴⁵ Corbett, for instance, in a letter to Sydney Spencer, the Honorary Secretary of the Alpine Club, confided that he did not think Allsup had any idea ‘what India means, or what he’s up against’.⁴⁶ And T. E. T. Upton, the Solicitor to the Government of India put the matter even more bluntly in a letter to Corbett. ‘He warns us’, Corbett relayed to Mason, ‘without being the least snobbish, that amalgamation with the “Ramblers” meant the introduction of a class of Calcutta people that we would sooner be without’.⁴⁷ Corbett’s addition of the clause: ‘without being the least snobbish’ could perhaps have been intended ironically, but even if it had, it is still clear that Corbett and Mason’s circle, their preferred core of Himalayan Club members, looked down upon Allsup and other members of the MCI.⁴⁸ Allsup was middle class, but he was not solidly upper-middle class, and his experience in the Yorkshire Ramblers proved to be a cause for private derision between Corbett and Mason.⁴⁹ Undoubtedly influenced by these private class prejudices, Mason made it clear to Allsup that

⁴⁴ ACA, F12, Folder 1, Note of meeting with Allsup; addressed to Sir. G. Corbett.

⁴⁵ Although it should be pointed out that Allsup was by no means a part of what Harald Fischer-Tiné has labelled ‘loaferdom’. That is the segment of white colonial society in India (Fischer-Tiné references a contemporary source which described them as loafers) which had the potential to ‘damage the immaculate image’ of colonial power. Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Low and Licentious Europeans: Race, Class, and ‘White Subalternity’ in Colonial India*. Dissertation (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2009), p. 132. Nevertheless, Allsup’s work in Calcutta would probably have conjured up negative mental images of such people, alongside negative stereotypes of Bengalis and Eurasians as well. See Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*. And C.J. Hawes, *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India, 1773-1833* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996).

⁴⁶ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from G.L. Corbett to Sydney Spencer, 24 November, 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

⁴⁷ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from G.L. Corbett to Kenneth Mason, 6 November, 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1.

⁴⁸ Upton’s reference to ‘a class of Calcutta’ builds upon an association of that city with corruption, both European and Native; trading on older motifs of avaricious nabobs, intransigent Bengalis, and racial miscegenation.

⁴⁹ It is tempting to see this derision as being based on Allsup’s lack of climbing experience. However, this does not wash when Corbett’s own self-professed lack of climbing experience is taken into account.

he thought the rules of MCI required ‘a good deal of overhauling’ and that he could not see ‘how this was to be done under their own rules’.⁵⁰ Indeed, reading Mason’s summary of the meeting it is clear that whatever his objections to specific points in the rules of the Mountain Club of India, it was Allsup’s failure to consult and bring in the ‘right sort’ of members which had most aggravated Corbett and Mason.

But who exactly were the right sort of people for the Himalayan Club? Caroline Schaumann in *Peak Pursuits: The Emergence of Mountaineering in the Nineteenth Century* has does much to illustrate the various ways in which a move from narratives of sublimity to a narrative of scientific exploration helped to open up mountaineering to wider swathes of society in Victorian Britain. Schaumann’s overall approach is unique in its location of Alexander von Humboldt as the progenitor of this move towards a more rational approach to masculinity, and latterly climbing. This Humboldtian mountaineering mixed ‘sublimity, science, and sensibility... and became highly marketable to a growing and interested middle class’.⁵¹ Dealing more specifically with the emergent popularity of mountaineering in the mid-Victorian era, Schaumann, like Hansen, identifies Albert Smith, as well as Sir Alfred Wills, as two of the key popularisers of mountaineering for middle-class audiences during the mid-Victorian era. Despite their differences, Smith was an everyman with a cockney accent and an eye towards satire while Wills was a serious minded intellectual with interests in botany and glaciology both of them helped to make mountaineering more accessible to new audiences.⁵² ‘Through their engagement in the Alpine Club’, Schaumann argues that ‘both men staged themselves and their work as constitutive to the beginning of the Golden Age [of Mountaineering]’.⁵³

⁵⁰ Alpine Club Archives, Note of meeting with Allsup; addressed to Sir. G. Corbett, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1.

⁵¹ Caroline Schaumann, *Peak Pursuits: The Emergence of Mountaineering in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), p. 23.

⁵² Schaumann, *Peak Pursuits*, p. 157.

⁵³ Schaumann, *Peak Pursuits*, p. 158.

Smith, whose only feat of mountaineering was a lone ascent of Mont Blanc in 1851 made high-altitude mountaineering seem possible to middle and lower-middle class audiences through his humorous and un-pretentious stage shows.⁵⁴ While Wills ‘appealed entirely to the touristic interests of a highly educated and well-read upper-middle-class British readership’.⁵⁵

Peter H. Hansen, has argued for a strong association between the emergence of mountaineering as a popular pursuit in the nineteenth century and middle-class identities. Taking a revisionist approach, he argues that ‘the history of mountaineering suggests the need to rethink interpretations of the mid-Victorian middle class and imperial cultures’. In particular, he challenges the argument that ‘public school athleticism diffused the imperial ethos among the upper middle classes’.⁵⁶ Instead, Hansen argues that ‘the invention of mid-Victorian mountaineering demonstrates that middle-class men were not co-opted, nor did they receive an older gentlemanly culture’. Rather, middle-class men ‘actively constructed an assertive masculinity to uphold their imagined sense of Britain’s imperial power’.⁵⁷ Both Hansen and Schaumann’s work reveal the multiplicity of possible meanings mountaineering offering to middle class men in the Victorian era. What is more, Schaumann’s work makes clear that amongst the middle class, there existed differences between upper and lower-middle-class men, with the latter favouring a more scholarly approach that incorporated some of the rhetorical motifs of the old romantic view of mountains.⁵⁸ The Alpine Club, however, was principally comprised of men who fit into the latter category.

As was mentioned earlier, however, Mason (and Corbett quickly acceded to his view) believed that there was a dearth of competent climbers in British India. Their condescension towards Allsup and other young climbers in the MCI, however, suggests that this perceived

⁵⁴ Schaumann, *Peak Pursuits*, pp. 158-59.

⁵⁵ Schaumann, *Peak Pursuits*, p. 161.

⁵⁶ Hansen ‘Albert Smith’, p. 302.

⁵⁷ Hansen, ‘Albert Smith’, pp. 303-04.

⁵⁸ Schaumann, *Peak Pursuits*, p. 160.

paucity of skilled climbers was, at least partially, a product of class prejudice rather than reality. Still, Corbett and Mason were willing to accept Allsup as a fellow (so long as he was a fellow on their terms). Indeed, their fundamental belief in the unpreparedness of the Himalaya for a club of the same scale and ambition as the Alpine Club necessitated some compromises. And it was for this reason that they favoured the creation of a club with broad aims that could encompass explorers, frontier officers, scientists, and military personnel. By doing this the Club was holding open the door to the right sort of men, upper-middle class men of a similar background to Corbett and Mason, who could gradually be introduced to mountaineering and eventually high-altitude climbing. Even accounting for this compromise, however, the Club still needed to attract men who were already interested in mountaineering, and this potentially required a certain flexibility regarding class distinctions.

For Corbett and Mason, Allsup and the Mountain Club of India's haste and perceived sloppiness reflected a fundamental ignorance about life in India. In their mind, mountaineering had to be nurtured gradually in the Himalaya, facilitated by men like themselves. Neither Corbett nor Mason seemed to consider the possibility that the enthusiasm of men such as Allsup and the other, younger, members of the MCI, might suggest that a mountaineering club could be founded in India on lines other than the ones he imagined. Indeed, from the outset one of the foundational assumptions of the Himalayan Club was that it would be an upper middle-class organisation. More than this, though, it would be an imperial organisation. It might operate unofficially and at a remove from the Government of India but the Club would nonetheless be shaped by its position on the frontiers of Empire. The Club could not simply operate as an Alpine Club for India because the reality, at least in Corbett and Mason's mind, was that the Himalaya was not yet ready for such a Club to exist.

Three days after Mason and Allsup's initial meeting, Corbett joined them for a second meeting which laid the groundwork for a gradual process of amalgamation between the

Himalayan Club and the Mountain Club of India. At the meeting Allsup conceded to Corbett and Mason's claim that the Mountain Club of India was ill-suited to serve as an all-India club and confessed a willingness to eventually amalgamate. The three also spoke about the possibility of sectional representation for the Eastern and Northern Himalaya within a single unified club, or the possibility of two sectional clubs joined by a central committee.⁵⁹ Ultimately, this meeting was just the beginning of a fairly drawn-out process but it nevertheless represented a decisive victory for Corbett and Mason's vision of a mountaineering club for the Himalayas. The Himalayan Club would be a distinct organisation, although the Mountain Club of India would, in due course, be absorbed on terms favourable to Corbett and Mason. Similarly, there was an assumption that the Himalayan Club would not be strictly dedicated to climbing, but would, instead, be something like a cross between a geographical society and a climbing club. Before the Club's objects could be settled, however, Corbett and Mason believed that it was important to seek the advice and opinions of those whom they trusted on Himalayan matters.

⁵⁹ Alpine Club Archives, Memorandum of discussion with Mr. W. Allsup, Honorary Secretary of the Mountain Club of India, 11 November 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

III. 'We live within reach of the greatest mountain range in the world.' The initial response to Geoffrey Corbett and Kenneth Mason's Circular Letter

On 20th December 1927, a little over two months after they had begun discussing the matter, Geoffrey Corbett and Kenneth Mason issued a circular letter to those of their acquaintances whom they believed to be definitely interested in joining the Himalayan Club as a founder member. Corbett and Mason received 80 responses to their letter by the time of the inaugural meeting of the Club.⁶⁰ The vast majority of the responses either indicated a willingness to join or, at the very least, an openness to the idea. The circular letter had also asked for suggestions on two matters regarding the Club: its objects and overall purpose, as well as its structure and the rules for membership. Amongst the responses several distinct themes emerged. In response to the first point, one particularly common suggestion was that the Himalayan Club needed to have wide ranging objects. More specifically, a number of respondents argued for the inclusion of shikar (hunting) amongst the other objects of the Club. The reasons for this were twofold. Firstly, it was believed that if shikar were not included that the Himalayan Club would not stand much chance of surviving in the long-term. Secondly, many respondents stressed that mountaineering, interpreted broadly as both climbing and travelling in the Himalayas, could act as an antidote to the deleterious effects of administrative tedium on the plains of India.

By advocating for this, these men were going further than Corbett and Mason in their attempts to be inclusive.⁶¹ Responses to the second question tended to expand upon the suggestions relating to the Club's objects. If shikaris were too be included, and if the Club was to seek the promotion of mountaineering and mountain travel amongst younger officers in

⁶⁰ 'Alpine Club Archives, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Himalayan Club, held at the Committee Room, Army Headquarters, Delhi, on the 17 February 1928, at 10 a.m., Himalayan Club, F12, folio 5 (Annexure II).

⁶¹ Indeed, they were also potentially opening the door to men of a slightly lower class of member. For although hunting in British India was highly hierarchical this did not preclude more rank-and-file military men from taking part. What is more, not all forms of hunting were as rigidly structured and formulaic as tiger hunting. And this was especially true of hunting in the Himalaya. This topic will be explored in depth in chapter 5.

India, then the qualifications for membership could not be too strict. Similarly, if a lack of readily available information (route books, maps, equipment, etc) was taken to be an impediment to wider enthusiasm for the Himalayas amongst younger Britons in India, then one of the chief aims of the Club would have to be the diffusion of relevant information. There were, of course, alternative views on offer but the picture which emerges from the responses to the Himalayan Club's circular letter is one of broad agreement concerning a crucial point: The Himalaya could help to rear a better class of imperial agent in India.

Before proceeding to an analysis of the responses to the Himalayan Club circular letter there is more to be said about the contents of the letter itself. Because in some ways, the framing of the letter helped to condition the kinds of responses that the Club received. For instance, in the first paragraph Corbett and Mason claimed that although there was a deep well of interest in the Himalaya, many would-be travellers were 'deterred by ignorance of local conditions'. Furthermore, they argued that what information there was about the Himalaya was often difficult to obtain and even those who were knowledgeable about the Himalaya, often knew only a small part of it well. By doing this Corbett and Mason provided a rationale for their decision to make the objects of the Club capacious, taking in 'Himalayan geography...science, literature and art', as well as 'travel, exploration, and mountaineering'.⁶² For although they had based their objects directly on those of the Alpine Club, those objects had been drawn up at a time in which the Alps were much less known to British and other Northern European mountaineers and tourists.⁶³ By the start of the twentieth century, however, this was no longer

⁶² Alpine Club Archives, Circular Letter of Invitation, 20 December 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

⁶³ The first edition of *The Alpine Journal* in 1864, for instance, claimed that the number of people who knew 'the mere name of the highest mountain in the great Dauphiné group' could 'be reckoned by the tens' and 'felt confident that even if all other objects of interest in Switzerland should be exhausted', that the Matterhorn remained. 'Introductory Address', *The Alpine Journal* (1864), 1-2 (p. 2).

the case.⁶⁴ Thus, Corbett and Mason's ambitions to assist Himalayan travel and to increase knowledge about the region must be taken at face value as a reflection of a genuine belief in the necessity of diffusing information about the mountains.

The letter also suggests that the Himalayan Club, unlike the Alpine Club, would operate as something like an unofficial adjunct of the state. For although Corbett and Mason made clear that they were not in favour of the Club operating as an 'official or semi-official' organisation they still hoped that it might prove to be 'of great value to the Survey of India, the Geological Survey and other scientific departments,' as well useful 'from the point of view of military intelligence and training in mountain warfare'.⁶⁵ The last point in particular reads like a tacit acknowledgment of the role travellers, explorers, and archaeologists had played, in gathering intelligence (often in the guise of research or exploration) throughout Central Asia during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.⁶⁶ Add to this the importance attached to triangulation and route books by the imperial security state in the Himalaya (both of which Kenneth Mason was intimately familiar with) and it is clear that Corbett and Mason envisioned an intimate, if unofficial, relationship between the Himalayan Club and the Government of India.⁶⁷

There are a few other, minor, points from the circular letter which are worth mentioning. On the second page, for instance, Corbett and Mason assert that 'the headquarters of the Club

⁶⁴ To illustrate this, in 1874 the German and Austrian Alpine Association's 14 huts received 1,451 visitors, by the start outbreak of the First World War the club had 230 huts which received 230,000 visitors. Tait Keller, *Apostles of the Alps: Mountaineering and Nation Building in Germany and Austria, 1860-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), p. 67.

⁶⁵ Alpine Club Archives, Circular Letter of Invitation, 20 December 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

⁶⁶ See Rosie Llewelyn-Jones, 'Letters from the RSAA Archive: Sir Aurel Stein, Colonel Reginald Schomberg and a Secret Mission to Central Asia', *Asian Affairs* 49, no. 3. (2018), 492-506. And Jonathan Westaway, 'That Undisclosed World: Eric Shipton's Mountains of Tartary (1950)', *Studies in Travel Writing* 18, no. 4 (2014), 357-73.

⁶⁷ See Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*. In particular Chapter 5. And Kyle Gardner, *The Frontier Complex*. In particular Chapter 2.

would naturally be at Simla, the Himalayan Capital of India'.⁶⁸ This statement is revealing because, in choosing Simla instead of Darjeeling, or Calcutta, the Himalayan Club was firmly identifying itself not only with Indian officialdom but also Northwest India and the Western Himalayas.⁶⁹ There were obvious practical reasons for this like the existence of the Mountain Club of India in Calcutta, and the greater ease of mountaineering in the Western Himalaya, but the use of the phrase 'Himalayan capital' is telling. The implication being that the Himalayan Club was to be an organisation which was aligned with British India's military and political elites. Finally, the letter also asks for opinions regarding the potential of amalgamating with the Mountain Club of India: 'We understand' they wrote, 'that the headquarters of the Mountain Club need not be regarded as permanently located at Calcutta'. This statement, however, was immediately followed by a qualification. 'But in a country so large as India, the geographical and administrative difficulties of a single all-India Club will always be very great'.⁷⁰

Turning now to the responses to the circular letter it is helpful to first look at the responses as a whole. Out of the 101 people who eventually replied to the circular letter 46 were members of the armed forces (twelve captains, nine majors, twelve lieutenant colonels, seven colonels, three colonel commandants, two major generals, one general, and a field marshal), there were fifteen knights and one peer (Lord Irwin, then Viceroy of India), as well as members of the Survey of India and the Imperial Forest Service.⁷¹ All of the respondents were men (women were not admitted to the Club until 1931) aside from Jenny Visser-Hooft, a noted mountaineer in her own right, who replied on behalf of her husband Philips Christiaan

⁶⁸ ACA, Circular Letter of Invitation, 20 December 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1.

⁶⁹ On the history of Simla see Pamela Kanawar, *Imperial Simla: The Political Culture of the Raj* (Second Edition) (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁷⁰ Alpine Club Archives, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Himalayan Club, held at the Committee Room, Army Headquarters, Delhi, on the 17 February 1928, at 10 a.m., Himalayan Club, F12, folio 5. p. 10. (Annexure I).

⁷¹ Alpine Club Archives, F12, Folder 5: Copies of Replies to Circular Letter.

Visser.⁷² There were four Indian founder members including The Raja of Jubbal (a princely state near Simla), but their voices do not feature prominently in these responses. Overall, these statistics suggest that a sizeable section of the Himalayan Club's founding members were, at the very least middle-aged, with years of experience in India or elsewhere in the Empire. Moreover, it suggests a group of men who were used to occupying positions of authority, and this is borne out in the responses themselves.

Sir George Cockerill (1867-1957) is an example of such a figure. Cockerill had served in the Chitral Expedition of 1895, an expedition to relieve the British garrison at Chitral which was besieged by supporters of an opposing claimant in the dynastic war of succession which had broken out after the death of the old *mehtar* (ruler), as well as the South African War in 1900. In 1892 Cockerill had been entrusted by the Government of India 'to explore the western Karakoram and eastern Hindu Kush from the extreme confines of Hunza and Nagar on the east to the eastern borders of Kafiristan on the west'.⁷³ By 1928, however, Cockerill had put India behind him and was sitting as the Conservative MP for Reigate, in Surrey.⁷⁴ Responding to Corbett and Mason's first question, regarding the objects of the Club, Cockerill wondered whether the thing they proposed ought to be a Society or a Club. The distinction was an important one because, as Cockerill saw it, a society, such as the Royal Geographical Society was better at 'organising and setting on foot expeditions' than a club, like the Alpine Club, which was a 'collection of men interested in climbing but not constituted so as to initiate and undertake expeditions'. In the end, Cockerill made clear his preference for the latter:

The Alpine Club consists solely of expert climbers. I think the Himalayan Club should consist of these but consist also of what the late Mrs. Bullock Workman elegantly

⁷² 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 03 (1931), 157-165 (pp. 164-165).

⁷³ Brigadier-General Sir George Cockerill. 'Pioneer Exploration in Hunza and Chitral', *The Himalayan Journal* 11 (1939), 15-41 (p. 15).

⁷⁴ Nigel West, *Historical Dictionary of World War I Intelligence* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), p. 56.

described as “Anglo-Indian valley-thumpers” – that is of men like myself who are not expert climbers but who can do a lot of useful work in exploring valleys and passes and the way to the big peaks.⁷⁵

A belief in the ability of ‘Anglo-Indian valley-thumpers’ to advance the cause of mountaineering was common in many of the responses. John Percy Farrar (1857-1929), a former president of the Alpine Club and a member of the Mount Everest Committee (a joint enterprise of the Alpine Club and the RGS that was initially set up to finance the 1921 Everest Expedition but which played a part in every major expedition until 1953) also believed in the value of such men.⁷⁶ Farrar thought that mountaineering could be useful from a military point of view writing:

I remember in the South African war my previous experience of mountains was often of considerable use in choosing positions of a line of attack. You have a very fine lot of young fellows in the Indian Army and if only they can be turned to the mountains it would do them no end of good and be of public service.⁷⁷

But who exactly was an ‘Anglo-Indian valley thumper’? Or, to put the question more concretely, who exactly were the men that Cockerill and Farrar wanted to encourage?

H.H. Jenkyns of the Indian Civil Service, thought that membership should be extended to anyone who liked ‘to put on shorts and go for a good walk round about Simla (or other hill stations)’.⁷⁸ Lieut.-Col. Henry Lawrence Haughton put forward a similar claim, writing that ‘... if the average young Englishman is encouraged to travel in the Himalaya and go shooting

⁷⁵Alpine Club Archives, Letter from George Cockerill, 19 January 1928, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 5: Copies of Replies to Circular Letter.

⁷⁶ ‘In Memorial’, *The Alpine Journal* 41 (1929), 172-176.

⁷⁷ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from J.P. Farrar, 10 January 1928, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 5: Copies of Replies to Circular Letter.

⁷⁸ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from H.H. Jenkyns, 1 January 1928, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 5: Copies of Replies to Circular Letter.

or bird-collecting, he can do much to advance our general knowledge of the Himalaya'.⁷⁹ And Kenneth Wigram, the commander of the Waziristan District, thought that the Club 'should aim at enlisting the sympathy of those who have travelled in the Himalayas or who are anxious to do so whether their object be the study of nature, the pursuit of game, or merely the avoidance of the heat of the plains'.⁸⁰

The suggestions above reflect a strong tendency in many of the responses. Men like Jenkyns, Haughton, and Wigram, believed that the objects of the Club should be wide and not overly, or even principally focused on mountaineering. Unlike Corbett and Mason, however, who viewed the inclusion of other, non-mountaineering pursuits within the remit of the Club as a means of bringing the Himalayan Club up to the standard of the Alpine Club, these men viewed Himalayan travel as good in itself. For them the Himalaya was a reprieve from duties which they might otherwise consider tedious or unfulfilling. The role of boredom in shaping British views of India and the Empire has been thoroughly investigated by Jeffrey Auerbach. According to Auerbach, this boredom often arose because of the disconnect between expectation and reality for those brought up on a steady diet of propagandistic accounts of imperial heroics, exploration, and adventure. To quote Auerbach, 'the empire was constructed as a place of adventure, excitement, and picturesque beauty not just because men and women were seeking to escape boredom at home, but because the empire so often lacked these very features'.⁸¹ Auerbach's thesis is a convincing one but, as he acknowledges there were people who did not find the Empire boring and there were also times, places, and situations, in which even jaded colonial officials could find the empire interesting. And for many would-be members of the Himalayan Club, the Himalayas were just such a place.

⁷⁹ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from H.L. Haughton, 1 February 1928, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 5: Copies of Replies to Circular Letter.

⁸⁰ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from K. Wigram, 12 January 1928, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 5: Copies of Replies to Circular Letter.

⁸¹ Auerbach, *Imperial Boredom*, pp. 3-10.

But the mountains offered much more than a respite from the heat of the plains. Indeed, the very reason that men such as Cockerill, Farrar, and the others mentioned above, believed that young soldiers and administrators should travel in the Himalayas (aside from the useful information they might collect) was because the mountains were seen as places in which outstanding imperial agents could be formed. Lieut.-Col. Charles Hugh Stockley (1882-1955) an Army officer and big game hunter put forward a version of this theory which is worth quoting at length:

The youngster when he first comes out takes more handily to motors and stink-bikes than he does to going off on his own. They are familiar to him, and Himalayan travel is apt to loom as outside his scope owing to... expense, ignorance of how to set about it, and where to make for. I am perfectly convinced that no first class soldier has ever been evolved who has not gone off on his own and experienced the delights and difficulties of travel, while exploration (of which there still remains a great deal to be done) gives a pleasure in achievement which whets the appetite for more. What applies to soldiers, I feel sure, must also apply to other professions. Trying to live in an English cantonment is fatal to contentment and healthy broad-mindedness.⁸²

But how were young British men to be induced to travel in the Himalaya? General Sir Alexander Cobbe (1870-1931) who wanted the Club to encourage 'young officers to do trips to the hills whatever the attraction may be' conceded that 'shooting trips are often, if not generally, the first attraction'.⁸³ Edward Felix Norton (1884-1954), a man who had participated in both the 1922 and 1924 expeditions to Everest, and therefore someone with a much stronger claim to membership in the Himalayan Club than many of the other respondents to the circular

⁸² Alpine Club Archives, Letter from C.H. Stockley, 16 January 1928, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 5: Copies of Replies to Circular Letter.

⁸³ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from A.S. Cobbe, 4 January 1928, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 5: Copies of Replies to Circular Letter.

letter, felt much the same as Cobbe. 'For years I have regretted the neglect with which Englishmen in India have treated all aspects of the Himalayas except that of Shikar', he wrote. Adding that he had been no exception when he was younger. 'But I think the existence of some such club as you propose in my day might well have turned my activities towards climbing or exploration.' To turn young officers' activities towards climbing or exploration, however, first required that they join the Club in the first place. To wit, Norton, like so many others suggested the inclusion of Shikar amongst the other objects of the Club. 'Nine tenths of men who go to the hills at present are bent on Shikar.' He wrote. 'And in a country offering such opportunities it will be impossible to dissociate exploration or climbing from Shikar'. And even if these men never did much more than hunt in the Himalaya, they could still help to fill in the general picture of a given area.⁸⁴

Henry Lawrence Haughton (1883-1955), mentioned earlier (and suggested as a good candidate for membership by the older Cobbe) also agreed that young men needed to be coaxed to join the Club. 'I certainly agree', he wrote, 'many men are rather frightened by what they take to be "learned societies", and very technical expert knowledge; and the inclusion of shikar would make the whole thing much more human to such people'. Haughton went on to provide the example of 'two very keen lads' he had recently met in Kashmir, both of whom had been 'bitten by the desire to wander further'. Haughton had 'nabbed them both as members of the Central Asia [Society]', and they had been very willing to join, but they were also, at least in Haughton's telling, somewhat in awe of the CAS, viewing it as 'something very scientific and above their heads'. After explaining the society to them, Haughton's keen lads were mollified. More than just a caution against the perils of an overly scholastic organisation Haughton lamented that there seemed to be 'far less

⁸⁴ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from E.F. Norton, 12 January, 1928, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 5: Copies of Replies to Circular Letter.

wandering and shooting than there was before the war'. A development which Haughton attributed to expense, an army which was 'so much more married' than it had been prior to the War, and because, in his words: 'these lads have had no one to encourage them as senior officers did before the war'. Indeed, Haughton relates that, 'Youngsters have said this to me: "We want to travel and shoot, but we don't know how to set about it, and there is no one in the regiment to tell us"'.⁸⁵ And it was here, in the encouragement of young officers that Haughton, along with many of the other respondents to the circular letter saw the Himalayan Club filling a vital role. The vision of Geoffrey Corbett, and in particular Kenneth Mason was, in the end, one that was shared by most of the other founding members of the Club.

IV. Conclusions

Scholars have written about colonial sociability from a number of different angles. Benjamin B. Cohen has looked at clubs and voluntary associations as a vital and underappreciated component in the shaping of public and private space in Colonial India.⁸⁶ In a similar vein William Lubenow has examined the place of learned societies in the Empire, seeing them as an extension of a culture and mode of sociability which had its origins in upper-middle class schooling.⁸⁷ Mrinalini Sinha has argued that masculinity was one of the defining elements of colonial sociability, with British men positively contrasting their own manliness with supposedly effeminate Indians, especially Bengalis.⁸⁸ Mary A. Procida has written on the relationship between women, marriage, and British imperialism in India.⁸⁹ And David

⁸⁵ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from H.L. Haughton, 1 February 1928, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 5: Copies of Replies to Circular Letter.

⁸⁶ Cohen, *In the Club*,

⁸⁷ Lubenow, *"Only Connect"*.

⁸⁸ Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*.

⁸⁹ Mary A. Procida, *Married to the Empire: Gender, Politics and Imperialism in India, 1883-1947*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2017).

Cannadine has argued for the importance of class.⁹⁰ All of these works have made invaluable contributions, and have informed my analysis in this chapter. One aspect of colonial sociability that has been underappreciated in the historiography, however, has been the role of generations in shaping colonial sociability.

Kinship and familial relationships amongst expatriate Britons have of course been covered extensively in the historiography. Johnson, Sabeen, Teuscher, and Trivellato's edited volume, *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond* argues for the importance of kinship relations in histories of empire and looks at a variety of diverse case studies.⁹¹ Elizabeth Buettner has written on the experiences of expatriate British families in the late imperial India.⁹² Durba Ghosh has written on mixed-race families in early colonial India.⁹³ Indrani Sen has examined the complex domestic relationship between British women and their servants, focusing in particular on ayahs (nannies) and wet nurses.⁹⁴ Ronald Hyam has even argued that 'sexual dynamics crucially underpinned the whole operation of British empire'.⁹⁵ The role of generations in shaping imperial culture, however, that is, the dynamics and importance of relations between older and younger men and women in the Empire, has been lacking.

And there is great potential in approaching histories of Empire in this way. One must, of course, be wary of overgeneralizing or of applying modern categories on to the past. But as this chapter has demonstrated intergenerational concerns and anxieties certainly played a part

⁹⁰ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*.

⁹¹ Christopher H. Johnson, David Warren Sabeen, Simon Teuscher, and Francesca Trivellato, eds., *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond: Experiences Since the Middle Ages* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).

⁹² Buettner, *Empire Families*.

⁹³ Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁹⁴ Sen, Indrani, 'Colonial Domesticities, Contentious Interactions: Ayahs, Wet-Nurses and Memsahibs in Colonial India', *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 16, no. 3 (2009), 299–328.

⁹⁵ Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 1.

in shaping contemporary attitudes about imperialism, especially as these intersect with concerns about class, as was the case here, or race, gender, and a host of other categories. In the context of this thesis and as regards the foundation of the Himalayan Club, nostalgia was one of the principal dynamics at work in inter-generational relations. An idealized conception of their own early careers, and of their own late-Victorian idols led Geoffrey Corbett and Kenneth Mason to conceive of a mountaineering club in which technical climbing was but one of many concerns. For them mountaineering was simply a new and exciting form of exploration, a logical extension of Man's impulse towards discovery. Likewise, a fear that the positive forces and factors which had supposedly shaped their own early careers was disappearing in India, convinced Corbett, Mason, and several of their contemporaries of the importance of shaping the Himalayan Club in their own image. And Corbett and Mason's reservations about William Allsup and the Mountain Club of India were but an extension of this anxiety. Finally, the broad consensus amongst the respondents to Corbett and Mason's circular letter that hunting should be included amongst the objects of the Club was, in part, motivated by intergenerational anxieties about future generations of imperial agents.

Homing in on the inter-generational dynamics at work in the foundation of the Himalayan Club reinforces the importance of nostalgia in its creation and conceptualization. More specifically it is a reflection of its founders' desire to recreate or recapture something from a more romantic version of the Empire which they believed had existed prior to the First World War. This can be seen in Corbett's praise for 'the old Victorian conception' of Empire as well as in Mason's nostalgic memories of reading the works of Francis Younghusband. Beyond the more immediate impact this had on the Club, however, there are wider implications to this generational approach. Because the Himalayan Club did not literally seek to recreate the past or its ideals. Indeed, the Club's founding members were cautiously optimistic about future generations of imperialists and understood that their concerns, and

their interests, would be different from their own. What is significant is the way that these men's nostalgia shaped their views of both the present and of the future; that is, the ways in which the Club's founding members' own nostalgic views about imperialism and exploration shaped their attitudes toward mountaineering. To wit, I argue that an analysis of the responses to Corbett and Mason's circular letter reveals a group of men for whom travelling in 'uncivilized' and remote places represented the pinnacle of imperial aspirations. For these men exploration and imperialism, at least that which was best about imperialism, namely the heroic, individual imperialist, were essentially the same thing.

Chapter 2: The Founding of the Himalayan Club

On the 17th of February, 1928, eighteen men gathered in the Committee Room of the Indian Army Headquarters in Delhi for the inaugural meeting of the Himalayan Club. The Field-Marshal of India, Sir William Birdwood, chaired the meeting. To start the proceedings, two papers were placed before those in attendance. The first was a summary of the replies Corbett and Mason had received to their circular letter, prepared by Brigadier Roger Wilson, and the second was a memorandum on the constitution of the Club prepared by Geoffrey Corbett.¹ At this meeting the articles of association for the Club were decided upon and a general Committee and Balloting Committee were both elected. The Club which emerged from this meeting was very much in line with Corbett and Mason's initial vision. The two subjects which had stimulated the most discussion had been the question of the qualifications for membership and the organisation and structure of the Club. In the end, the objects agreed upon were broad and the qualifications for membership gave the Committee of the Club latitude to admit members at their discretion.

On the surface, the inaugural meeting had been a straightforward affair. Each of the objects in Corbett's memorandum had passed with a minimum of changes and although there were some minor disagreements on specifics, the men gathered were in agreement on most of the broader points. On closer inspection, however, the final settlement of the Club's objects was not as uncomplicated or straightforward a process as it might appear. To put the point more finely, through an examination of the implications and assumptions behind its rules and regulations, it is clear that the Himalayan Club was an organisation which maintained two distinct ambitions. The first, which was explored in the previous chapter, was to build a better class of imperial officer through the encouragement of travel, exploration, and climbing in the

¹ Alpine Club Archives, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Himalayan Club, held at the Committee Room, Army Headquarters, Delhi, on the 17 February 1928, at 10 a.m., Himalayan Club, F12, folio 5.

Himalaya. The second was to aid and encourage the conquest of great Himalayan peaks. These two ambitions, though distinct, were not seen as mutually exclusive. Indeed, the first was seen as a complement to the second and the second a catalyst for the first. Encouraging more young officers to travel in the Himalaya would gradually lead to more of them taking up serious climbing. And the exploits of mountaineers on Himalayan giants would, in turn, encourage more men to travel to the mountains in the first place.

Underpinning both of these ambitions, however, was a belief that the Himalaya needed to be made more accessible to British and European travellers and mountaineers. What exactly this meant in practice, and the means by which it was to be achieved were not entirely clear until the inaugural meeting. In this chapter, I will argue that the decisions made at the Club's inaugural meeting and the structures and rules which were then put in place, reveal an organisation that prized first-hand experience, and empirical knowledge, above all else. In other words, the founding members of the Himalayan Club believed that the best way to make the Himalaya more accessible to travellers and climbers was to get more people to travel there in the first place. This might sound like a tautology, but the distinction, although subtle, is an important one.

In the previous chapter I argued that intergenerational anxieties and a nostalgia for a romanticised conception of the British Empire in the late-Victorian and Edwardian led Geoffrey Corbett, Kenneth Mason, and other early enthusiasts for the Club to prioritize attracting young men to the Himalaya. In this chapter I will look at how this priority was built into the structure and regulations of the Club and I will look at the ways in which the Club sought to facilitate travel in the Himalaya and adjoining mountain ranges. To do this, however, that is, to maintain a vision of the Himalayan frontier as one in which a more romanticised form of travel could be undertaken, required the Club to ignore, obfuscate, or occlude certain contemporary realities. This was reflected in the rules and regulations of the Club.

Before proceeding, it is first useful to consider another organisation whose interwar experience was, in many ways, quite similar to that of the Himalayan Club, the Royal Central Asian Society. Founded in 1901 the RCAS was an organisation with wide-ranging objects (science, politics, culture, etc.) relating to Central Asia. According to Robert Fletcher, the RCAS has been neglected by historians despite its rich archival legacy.² Based on his own study of the organisation, Fletcher has established a correlation between Britain's new territorial acquisitions in the middle east following the First World War and a surge of interest and membership in the RCAS. Unlike the Himalayan Club, the RCAS was, from the start, intimately concerned with and involved in geopolitics and imperial administration, with members seeking to bring their first hand-experience and knowledge to bear on high-level decision making.³ There were, however, ways in which the RCAS was strikingly similar to the Himalayan Club, namely, its dependence on the written word to survive, and its attempts to unite scholarship and administration.⁴ With a membership that was scattered across the globe the *Journal of the Central Asian Society* served as the primary means of engagement for most members of the Club. The Himalayan Club had a slightly smaller geographical focus than the RCAS but an equally peripatetic membership. Also, like the RCAS, the Himalayan Club put great stock in the knowledge of the man on the spot and sought to make this information more readily available to travellers and those in positions of power. In this section I will deal with both of these broader themes, looking at the ways in which the organisation of the Himalayan Club put a great premium on writing as well as the ways in which its rules and organisation sought to diffuse the knowledge of its membership to those it deemed worthy.

² Those works which do exist have tended to be institutional accounts like Hugh Leach, *Strolling About on the Roof of the World: The First Hundred Years of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

³ Robert Fletcher, *British Imperialism and 'the Tribal Question': Desert Administration and Nomadic Societies in the Middle East, 1919-1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 24-25.

⁴ Pp. 27-31.

To that end, this chapter will proceed in two main parts. The first section will deal with the organisation of the Club, and the ways in which it sought to make the Himalaya more accessible and comprehensible to its members, especially the younger ones, as well as the cultural assumptions which shaped their efforts. And The second will look at the Himalayan Club's qualification for membership, examining the ways in which these reflected a fundamentally euro-centric conception of the Club.

I. The Objects and Organisation of the Himalayan Club

The Summary of the Responses to Kenneth Mason and Geoffrey Corbett's circular letter, presented in Delhi on the 17th of February, 1928, contained seven subsections relating to specific subjects which had come up in the replies. Sections I and II dealt with the objects and organisation of the Club. In the first section it was reported that all the replies had been in agreement with the objects set out in the circular letter, with some laying 'more stress on the scientific and some on the travel side'. It was also reported that a number of responses, 'chiefly from soldiers' had advocated the inclusion of sport, or shikar, amongst the other objects of the Club. The argument for this, as presented in the summary, was as follows: since many young men already travelled to the mountains to hunt, and since 'the other objects of the Club would be attained to a great extent by the efforts of these men', hunting could serve as an inducement to join for those 'who might be diffident about joining a climbing or scientific club'.⁵ There seems to have been little discussion regarding this matter and those gathered were all in agreement that the objects of the Himalayan club would include sport, which could encompass shikar, as well as mountaineering and skiing.⁶ Thus the final objects of the Club were 'To

⁵ Alpine Club Archives, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Himalayan Club, held at the Committee Room, Army Headquarters, Delhi, on the 17 February 1928, at 10 a.m., Himalayan Club, F12, folio 5 (Annexure II).

⁶ ACA, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Himalayan Club, held at the Committee Room, Army Headquarters, Delhi, on the 17 February, 1928, at 10 a.m., Himalayan Club, F12, folio 5, p. 2.

encourage and assist Himalayan travel and exploration, and to extend the knowledge of the Himalaya and adjoining mountain ranges through science, art, literature and sport'.⁷

On the second point, relating to the organisation of the Club, the summary related that the suggestion was 'fairly general that the Club should have a central Headquarters with sectional Headquarters in outlying Districts,' with many offering 'the Continental Alpine Clubs as models'.⁸ The summary then provided a brief note detailing what exactly was meant by this, namely, a central committee, operating alongside sections, with each section taking a certain number of local mountains under their charge and operating huts, enrolling their own members and fixing their own rates of membership. This idea was disparaged within the summary by way of a caveat that such suggestions were 'perhaps too elaborate for adoption by a new club at the outset'. Instead, Wilson suggested that a more constructive alternative would be 'the appointment of Local Correspondents or Assistant Secretaries in outlying places'.⁹ And it was this idea which was ultimately taken up by the Club.

i. Local Correspondents, Travel, and Contested Space in north-western India

Agreed in principle at the inaugural meeting, by the time of the first annual general meeting on the 25th of February, 1929, honorary local secretaries (honorary because the positions were unpaid) had been appointed for six different locations (Kashmir, Chamba, Simla, Kumaon, Darjeeling, and Calcutta) and local correspondents in seven (Lahore, London, Meerut, Peshawar, Quetta, Rawalpindi, and Waziristan). The honorary local secretaries existed to 'assist and advise members in all matters relating to travel in their districts, including transport,

⁷ G. L. Corbett, 'The Founding of the Himalayan Club', p. 2.

⁸ ACA, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Himalayan Club, held at the Committee Room, Army Headquarters, Delhi, on the 17 February 1928, at 10 a.m., Himalayan Club, F12, folio 5 (Annexure II), p. 14.

⁹ ACA, F12, folio 5 (Annexure 11), p. 14.

shikaries [sic] and porters, equipment and supplies, and costs'. Local secretaries were furnished with detailed information about routes by the Honorary Editor or the Assistant Editor and had virtually the same duties as local secretaries in that they were tasked with providing advice on local conditions to would-be travellers. Unlike secretaries, however, correspondents' obligation to help in the actual arrangement and provisioning of expeditions only extended to 'preliminary arrangements'.¹⁰ Finally, seventeen honorary assistant editor positions were created, taking in locations primarily and understandably under direct British control, or under the control of an amenable princely state (a few examples being Baltistan, the Gilgit Agency, the Pamirs, and the Dharmasala Hills).¹¹ These honorary assistant editors were tasked with helping to gather and verify information for the collection of route books on the model of Kenneth Mason's 'Routes in the Western Himalaya, Kashmir, etc., Vol. I,' about which, more later.¹²

In part, the locations of these local secretaries, correspondents, and honorary editors was no doubt a pragmatic decision- a member of the club volunteered to take on the role or was cajoled into doing so. But even if one grants this point, the locations chosen still reveal a good deal about the Himalayan Club's assumptions about the scope and geographical reach of its activities. Firstly, it is immediately apparent that the Club had not actually limited its activity to the Himalayas, that is, to the Himalayan Mountain Range itself. The prospect of including adjoining mountain ranges within the objects of the Club had been raised in one of the responses to the Corbett and Mason's circular letter but had not been actively discussed at the inaugural meeting.¹³ From the list of places above, however, it is clear that the Club considered the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and Pamir ranges as falling within its purview. Similarly, it is

¹⁰ 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 135-142 (pp. 137-38).

¹¹ 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), pp. 139-40.

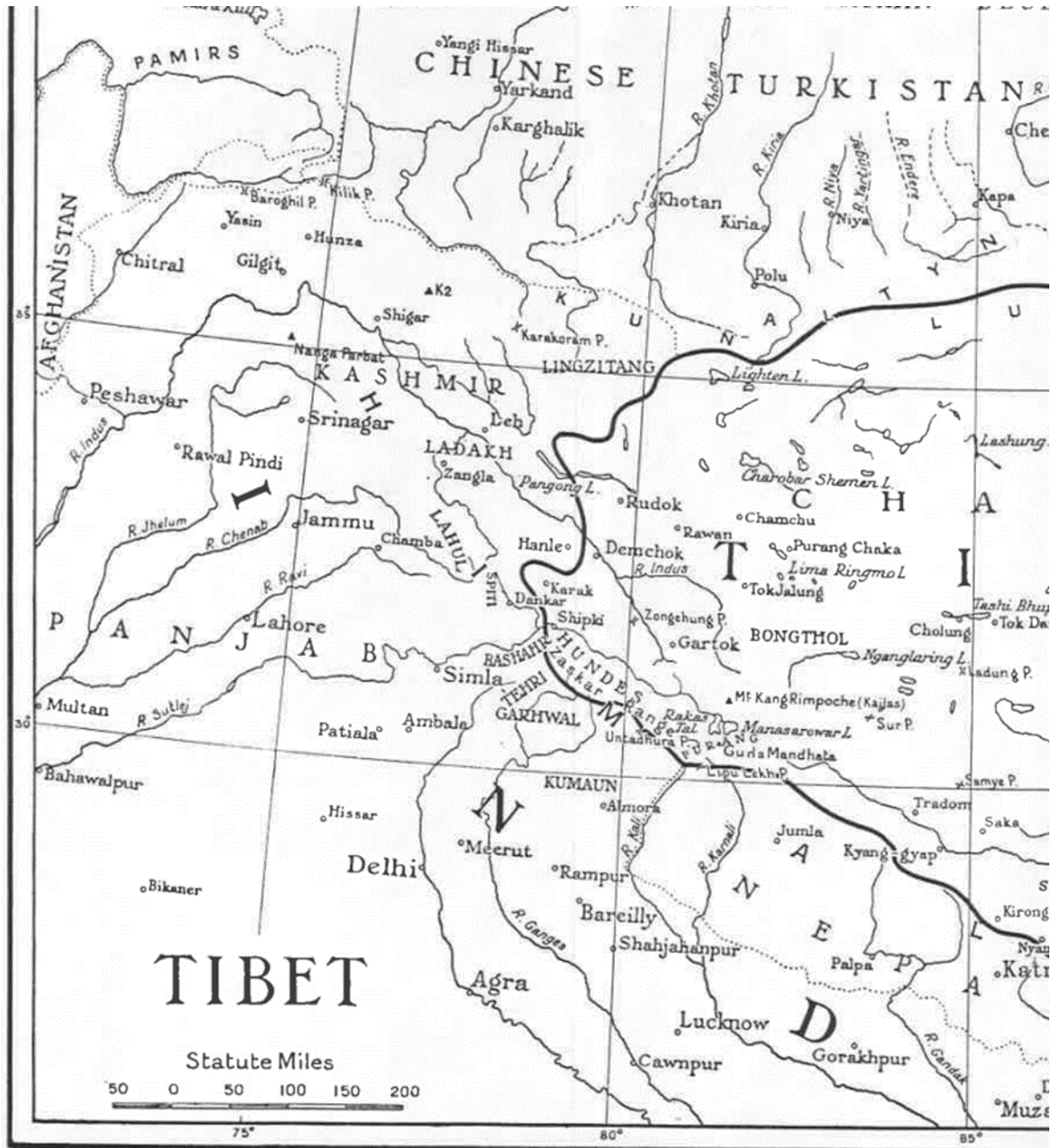
¹² 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), pp. 135-36.

¹³ ACA, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Himalayan Club, held at the Committee Room, Army Headquarters, Delhi, on the 17 February 1928, at 10 a.m., Himalayan Club, F12, folio 5 (Annexure II).

also readily apparent that the Club's focus was fixed squarely on the northwest of India because, aside from the two local secretaries in Calcutta and Darjeeling, and the one honorary assistant editor tasked with Everest (all three of whom were former members of the Mountain Club of India), all of the other secretaries and correspondents were positioned across the India's North-western plains, hills, and frontiers.¹⁴

¹⁴ The three former Mountain Club of India members were H.W. Tobin (Darjeeling), G.B. Gourlay (Calcutta) and C.G. Bruce (Everest). 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 01, pp. 138-40.

Figure no. 2.1: Map of north-western frontier of India 1928



Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928), p. 319.

Ultimately, the decision to create and appoint local secretaries and correspondents can be seen as a part of the Club's broader mission of encouraging younger British men, or those new to India, to travel and climb in the Himalaya. Secretaries and correspondents could provide information to would-be travellers, help to clear travel permission (if necessary), and perhaps most importantly could serve as a welcome point of contact in otherwise unfamiliar and potentially daunting surroundings. That these men were mostly located in the northwest of India was a reflection of political realities as well as the influence of Corbett and Mason.

These local secretaries, correspondents, and editors, however, were not simply amateur enthusiasts or travellers who happened to find themselves on the Himalayan frontier. Many of these men were either political agents, government employees, or officers in the Indian Army who played an active role in government and decision making.¹⁵ And the areas for which these men were responsible were not 'uncivilized' or 'a-historical', they were as much a part of contemporary debates about Indian nationalism and independence as other parts of India.

Despite this reality, the Himalayan Club, and indeed many members of India's military and political establishment continued to understand the north-western frontiers of India and its peoples in terms of a series of stereotypes about mountain and frontier peoples. An excellent example of this was the colonial response to the Khudai Khidmatgar (Pashto for servants of God) a non-violent resistant movement founded in 1929 which was initially dedicated to reforming Pashtun society but quickly broadened its scope to include calls for Indian independence. The group's founder Abdul Ghaffar Khan had attended meetings of the Indian National Congress and the movements demonstrations were non-violent.¹⁶ As Anchita Borthakur makes clear, however, Khan had not simply imported Gandhian methods and

¹⁵ For example in 1929, the honorary assistant editor for Gilgit was also its political agent. The commander of the 10-11th Sikhs in Peshawar was also its local correspondent. The local secretary for Meerut was a lieutenant-colonel in the 28th Field Brigade. The list could go on. 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), pp. 138-139.

¹⁶ Ifran Habib, 'Civil Disobedience 1930-31', *Social Scientist* 25, no. 9/10 (1997), pp. 55-56.

ideology into Pashtun society, he also made use of traditional Pashtun and Muslim concepts like *sabr* (forbearance), to advocate for a non-violent approach.¹⁷ Despite this, the group was primarily understood in terms of colonial stereotypes which saw Pashtuns as inherently warlike, quarrelsome, and prone to violence.¹⁸ The Khudai Khidmatgar's non-violence was seen as either an aberration or a ruse by colonial authorities. This can be seen in the violent reaction by British soldiers to a non-violent crowd at the Qissa Khwani Bazaar in Peshawar on the 23rd of April 1930, during which some 200-250 civilian were killed although the India soldiers and non-commissioned officers of the Royal Garhwal Rifles refused to fire on the crowd.¹⁹

Of course, it makes sense that movements like the Khudai Khidmatgar or incidents of violence like the Qissa Khwani massacre would not figure in the pages of *The Himalayan Journal*. And it would be a stretch to say that by not engaging with them the Himalayan Club was in some way endorsing colonial repression or making a case against Indian independence. That said, by encouraging travel to the north-west frontier the Club was nevertheless taking a stance on the matter.²⁰ By asserting the right of Britons and Europeans to travel in the region for recreational purposes the Club was either deliberating ignoring the rhetorical challenge posed by the Khudai Khidmatgar or, more likely, not taking it seriously, perhaps seeing it as little more than a case of outside interference, an importation from the Plains. And while it should be acknowledged that, legally, Britons with the correct permission had every right to travel to these regions, to actively encourage travel there, and to do so in a way which depicted

¹⁷ Anchita Borthakur, 'The Pashtun Trajectory: From the Colonially Constructed Notion on "Violent" Pashtun Tribe to "Non Violent" Pashtun Tahafuz Movement', *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 15, no. 3 (2021), 364-365.

¹⁸ Bala, S., 'Waging Nonviolence: Reflections on the History Writing of the Pashtun Nonviolent Movement Khudai Khidmatgar', *Peace and Change* 38, no. 2 (2013), 131-54 (p. 137).

¹⁹ Habib, 'Civil Disobedience 1930-31', pp. 55-56.

²⁰ To clarify when I use the term north-west frontier, I am not referring to the North-west frontier province specifically, but to a broader region running encompassing the mountains to the north and west of the Punjab. When I am referring to the province specifically, I will always use its full name.

the peoples of the northwest frontier in stereotypical ways which denied them agency and a role within contemporary debates suggests wilful or deliberate ignorance of the contemporary reality.²¹

This can be seen in the *Himalayan Journal*'s later depictions of the north-west frontier. In the third and fourth volumes of the *Journal* (1931 and 1932), for instance, there is a nostalgic recollection of a frontier tour conducted by Lieut.-Col. J. R. C. Gannon through the north-western frontier provinces. The article, which was published in two parts, the first part in the third volume and the second part in the fourth, recounts Gannon's involvement in a frontier tour of Dir, Chitral, and Gilgit (the first two being constituent parts of the North-West Frontier Province, the latter its own agency) in 1923 with Lord Rawlinson, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army (1920-1935). In the main, Gannon's article consists of a series of anecdotes relating to Gannon and Rawlinson's encounters with local rulers and with local cultures on their tour of these areas. At the beginning of his account Gannon provides some context for Rawlinson's tour, namely, an ongoing conflict between Miangul Aurangzeb, the Wali of Swat, and the Nawabs of Amb and Dir.²² This conflict, however, is kept in the background of Gannon's account, which deals in the main with Gannon's impressions of various peoples and places.

The local governors of Malakand, for instance, whom Gannon described as 'a fine lot of *maliks*' are likened to characters out of the Bible. For life there, according to Gannon, still revolved around 'the possession of land, women and cattle, and the almost daily battle, murder and sudden death involved in keeping them'. He carried the analogy further writing that 'the history of their times differs but little from the Old Testament tales of the Hittites, Jebusites

²² Gannon, J.R.C., Lieut.-Col. 'A Frontier Tour', *The Himalayan Journal* 03 (1931), 63-76 (p. 63).

and Amalekites'.²³ Indeed, biblical and literary allusions suffused Gannon's account. For instance, the town of Dir itself was also likened to the Old Testament, with Gannon quipping that it was 'surely in just such a place Jezebel must have met her boisterous end'. The attendants of the Nawab of Dir, who suffered from leprosy, are described as the Abrahams and Isaacs of the lost tribe, who sip thin tea, and otherwise relapse into dignified mummies apparently looking at nothing', and there was a gratuitous allusion to Kipling as well when Gannon, on seeing a dance performed by Kafirs, wished that he could remember *The Man Who Would be King* because he knew the story was set in Kafiristan.²⁴

These allusions add colour to an account that certainly reads like something out of Kipling. Geopolitical disputes in the region are brushed aside as mere local squabbles. In fact, the whole region, in Gannon's reckoning, is little more than a never-ending gyre of petty squabbles, murder, and violence where 'life is of little account and goes daily into the balance over a rupee or two, a woman, land, or even a goat'.²⁵ All of this stands in sharp contrast to the events surrounding the Khudai Khidmatgar, which were ongoing at the time of the publication of Gannon's article. And although this article cannot be taken as indicative of an editorial position on the contemporary situation there, the decision to publish nostalgic accounts of the region at this precise moment is telling.

Gannon's article was not the only nostalgic account of time spent in the region. In the fifth volume (1933), Lieut.-Col. B. E. M. Gurdon's 'Chitral Memories' is a recollection of Gurdon's role in the siege of Chitral in 1892. The siege was a part of a broader conflict which engulfed Chitral following the death of its ruler Amun ul-Mulk, the previous ruler of Chitral. Initially the old ruler's brother had seized the throne but he was soon replaced by one of Amun

²³ Gannon, 'A Frontier Tour', p. 64.

²⁴ Gannon, 'A Frontier Tour', pp. 64-75.

²⁵ Gannon, 'A Frontier Tour', p. 64.

ul-Mulk's sons, Nizam ul-Mulk, who had the support of Gurdon. Following Nizam's murder by his brother, however, Gurdon and his troops found themselves trapped in Chitral's fort, besieged by an army of Pathans under the command of one Umra Khan. The article depicts Gurdon's experience of being besieged awaiting relief from an army from Peshawar. The account is largely a strategic one, focusing on the details and events of the siege to the exclusion of broader commentary on the nature of the conflict.²⁶ The decision to include such an account in 1933, however, is once again significant. And although Gurdon's account does not deal with recreation, the events described had taken place thirty-seven years before publication, thus rendering them exhilarating but also safely ensconced in the past, a nostalgic depiction of a more heroic age. Similarly, Gurdon's account, both by nature of its subject matter, violent dynastic struggle and tribal warfare, as well as his own description of the people of Chitral as 'the most manly, and generally attractive, people on the Kashmir frontier', once again suggests a desire to ignore or deny contemporary realities in favour of nostalgia.²⁷

Aside from eliding any discussion of the changes taking place within contemporary Pashtun society in favour of stereotypes, this nostalgic characterisation of the frontier as a wild, uncivilized place also ignored the efforts of the colonial state itself to develop the north-west frontiers of British India. Daniel Haines's work on irrigation in Sindh has demonstrated that officials in Sindh were just as concerned with development as they were relations with tribal societies in nearby Balochistan. Indeed, according to Haines, 'one of the most important ways that the British addressed problems of frontier governance was by organizing the digging of canals from the Indus and settling the land that these irrigated'. This 'policy afforded officials a chance to shape the relationship between people and state, using transformations of the social

²⁶ B. E. M. Gurdon, 'Chitral Memories', *The Himalayan Journal* 05 (1933), 1-27 (pp. 1-8).

²⁷ Gurdon, 'Chitral Memories', p. 1.

and agricultural landscapes to assert greater control'.²⁸ While it would be wrong to suggest that Sindh can be compared to the North-west Frontier Province and the neighbouring princely states (the areas are geographically very distinct) the presence of wide-scale development on the frontiers of British India suggests that north-west frontiers of India were not quite as distinct, isolated, and torpid as their depictions in *The Himalayan Journal* might suggest.

ii. Route Books and Empirical Knowledge

The Club's complex relationship with frontier spaces can also be seen in another ambitious initiative of the Himalayan Club at the time of its foundation, the creation of Himalayan route books. These books were to be patterned on Lieut.-Col. T.G. Montgomerie's (1830-1878) *Routes in the Western Himalaya, Kashmir, etc* which was later expanded upon significantly by Kenneth Mason in 1922 and 1929. Montgomerie's original route book had been a by-product of his work surveying in Kashmir in from 1855 to 1865. Montgomerie's surveying, which had included 110,000 square miles of triangulation and 92,000 miles of topographical measurement via a theodolite, had produced a quarter-inch reconnaissance map of Kashmir and Ladakh.²⁹ Due to his initial dissatisfaction with the incomplete nature of his work, however, Montgomerie had also produced a route book for the region, collected from the observations of his assistants and contemporaries. This was deemed necessary because it provided more subjective empirical information that would be useful to travellers. In Mason's edition of the book, routes are

²⁸ Daniel Haines, 'Constructing State Power: Internal and External Frontiers in Colonial North India, 1850s-1900s', *Environmental History* 20 (2015), 645-670 (p. 648).

²⁹ India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London, Kenneth Mason, 'Preface to the Second Edition', *Routes in the Western Himalaya, Kashmir, &c. Volume 1. Pūnch, Kashmīr, & Ladākḥ* (Second Edition) [published under the direction of the Surveyor General of India] (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1929), IOR/V/27/60/160, p. xi.

described in stages, generally between places on the planes like Rawalpindi, Jhelum, and Gujarat, and places in the mountains like Pūnch or Kargil, with the pages generally working higher and higher into the mountains described in terms of stages involved. Each stage is given a name and a map reference. Each stage is also described in miles and the height above sea level. Further information labelled 'Remarks and Nature of country to the next stage' is also given.

In the final section of his introduction to the second edition of the route books (1929) Mason advertised the Himalayan Club writing that:

The recently formed Himalayan Club proposes to prepare District Guides, elaborating these Route-books, and including more detailed information on peaks and passes, on climate and meteorology, on geology, botany, natural history and other scientific subjects, on the inhabitants of the district and their way of living, on archaeology and folk-lore, and on all matters of interest to Himalayan travellers.

He then included an appeal for 'any details of interest on such subject' to be sent to the Honorary Secretary of the Club at Simla.³⁰ All of which, naturally, begs the question of why? Why did Mason, as well the Survey of India, and the Committee of the Himalayan Club believe that the Club could be of use in this regard? And, perhaps more importantly, why did the Club trust its members, many of whom admitted to gaps in knowledge about or inexperience in the Himalayas to provide reliable information?

James Hevia has traced the emergence of the route-book as 'a staple output of the Intelligence Branch of the Indian Army' to the late-nineteenth century. These route books, like Mason's, charted the stages of a journey based on 'the organizing principle of a day's march,' with information about the journey organized into a columnar chart. The first column charted

³⁰ BLIAO, Mason, *Routes in the Western Himalaya*, 'Preface to the Second Edition', p. xiv.

the stages of a day's journey and 'subsequent columns might include time of day, names of towns, villages and rivers traversed, distance traveled from the last entry, and cumulative distance from the starting point of the expedition'. There was also, often a remarks column which 'could include information on the availability of water, food supplies, fodder and pack animals'.³¹ These early route books were the product of reconnaissance undertaken by the intelligence branch of the Indian Army, taking into account such factors as the location of good campsites, the suitability of terrain for temporary fortifications, the availability of supply lines and the possibility of communication. More than 'simply neutral descriptions of terrain' route books 'provided a density of information that helped identify the keys to a successful, rather than an abortive, campaign'.³² Hevia makes clear that these route books, in part by design, were often less accurate than trigonometrical survey maps, focusing instead on the characteristics of the routes themselves.³³

As Thomas Simpson has argued, however, a perception of inaccuracy was not just limited to route books. Indeed, in his article. Simpson asserts that there existed a notion 'among surveyors in the later nineteenth century that climatic conditions and terrain in frontier India presented insurmountable difficulties to generating satisfactory data'. Because of this, Simpson argues that surveyors in the late-nineteenth century were often torn between frustration at the 'cartographic shortcomings induced by extreme topography' and a simultaneous desire to celebrate these same shortcomings 'in the course of aggrandizing their own labor'.³⁴ Indeed, despite these difficulties 'surveyors and men of science in colony and metropole widely deemed comprehending the mountains, deserts, and river courses that lay tantalisingly beyond the limits of governed British India to be one of the defining goals of imperial institutions and

³¹ Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, pp. 75-76.

³² Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, pp. 75-76.

³³ Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, p. 79.

³⁴ Thomas Simpson, "'Clean out of the map": Knowing and doubting space at India's high imperial frontiers', *History of Science* 55.1 (2017), pp. 22-23.

techniques of knowing space'. This project of defining space, with all its accompanying difficulties, was also deemed to be important on an ideological level as it served to counter 'increasingly common insinuations in the later nineteenth century that knowing space involved little more than the application of a standardised set of procedures, and that the era of heroic battles against nature had closed'.³⁵ And while it is true that by 1920s and 1930s the Himalayan frontier had been made much more comprehensible (Mason's work surveying the Shaksgam glacier near K2 being a prime example) this, in itself, did not make the mountains immediately more accessible to the Himalayan Club's target membership of young colonial officials.

With this in mind it is easy to see why the creation of route books would have appealed to the founding members of the Himalayan Club. The practical application of such books is obvious, and although they had their origins as instruments of military intelligence the format could easily be used for recreational purposes as well. Similarly, the process of compiling the information for route books was relatively straightforward affair, requiring little more than for travellers to write down observations that would already have been at the front of their minds, and for editors to maintain a methodical and organised approach to this information. More than that, though, the association of such works with the Survey of India (with which the club maintained a close relationship throughout the 1930s) also lent the Himalayan Club an air of respectability and rigour that could, rhetorically, elevate a simple hunting excursion into something much more serious. Thus, it could even be argued that the production of route books, as a part of its broader program of activities and initiatives, allowed for fairly low-level ICS or Army officers to participate vicariously in a wider culture of exploration made possible by associate with previous and greater achievements (and the idea was the same with regards to

³⁵ Thomas Simpson, *The Frontier in British India: Space, Science, and Power in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 73.

mountaineering). Still, it remains to be explained, how, exactly the Himalayan Club planned to produce these books.

At the first annual general meeting of the club an ambitious structure was put into place to facilitate the production of route books. The Club's stated objectives were first, to prepare a revised and enlarged edition of Montgomerie and Mason's *Routes in the Western Himalaya, Kashmir, etc., Vol. II*; second, prepare route books on a similar scale for the Eastern Himalaya as well as for the Northern Ranges of Assam and Burma; and third, prepare district guides which provided more detailed information on the peaks and passes of a specific area as well as information; on climate and meteorology, on geology, botany, natural history and other scientific subjects, on the inhabitants of the district and their way of living, archaeology and folk-lore, and all matters of interest to Himalayan travellers'.³⁶ The Honorary Editor of the Club (Kenneth Mason) had been tasked with the general composition of these works with the help of honorary assistant editors (mentioned earlier) who were responsible for gathering information in their specific districts.³⁷ How exactly Mason, or the assistant editors were to go about collecting this information was not made entirely clear but, in the 'Club Notices' section of the first volume of *The Himalayan Journal* it was advertised that:

Any member proposing to travel in the Himalaya may apply to the Honorary Editor or the Assistant Editor for the District, who will furnish him with all available information about the routes by which he proposes to travel, and will also tell him what further information is required about existing routes, and what new routes in the district might usefully be explored. In this way, it is hoped, the available information about each district will continually be supplemented and extended.³⁸

³⁶ 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), pp. 135-36.

³⁷ 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), pp. 135-36.

³⁸ 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), p. 135.

And there was also a general appeal for any members of the Club who had first-hand knowledge of any of the areas which did not then have an assistant editor (The Rawalpindi to Murree, Abbottabad and Kagan, Kulu, and Simla and Sirmur States sections were all marked as vacant) to get into contact with Mason. There was also an appeal for either the editor of any of the assistant editors to be made aware of any errors in the existing maps or route books.³⁹

Thus, once again, the Club was hoping to create a virtuous circle of information gathering whereby the efforts of past generations would enable the next to further the general understanding. The actual progress of the Himalayan Club's efforts in relation to these route books, however, as well as to surveying and cartography in the Himalayas more generally is difficult to measure. Work on the route books was still ongoing in 1933 although, owing to Kenneth Mason's acceptance of a chair in geography at the University of Oxford that year, the responsibility for producing and updating Volume II of the route book, concerning of Northwest India, was handed over to R. Maclagan Gorrie, a member of the Indian Forest Service, and Volume IV, concerning routes east of Nepal as far as Zayal Chu in the northeast corner of Assam was handed over to Major H.R.C. Meade of the Survey of India.⁴⁰ In 1934, however, the production of the route books ran into difficulties. Mason's 1922 and 1929 editions of Vol. II had been officially sanctioned by the Survey of India, but in 1934 the Club was informed by R.H. Phillimore of the Survey that the Surveyor General had informed him that the issue of Route-Books was no longer 'a legitimate function of the Survey of India' and that even if it were, that the strength of the department has been so heavily reduced that it was no longer feasible. Phillimore did, however, relate that the Surveyor General was perfectly happy to hand over the rights to publish future route books to the Himalayan Club or another organisation, and that 'information about roads and other communications in the more remote

³⁹ 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), pp. 136-140.

⁴⁰ 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 05 (1933), 163-167 (p. 166).

parts of the Himalaya' would always be welcome at Dehra Dun.⁴¹ At its Annual General Meeting the following year (1935) the Himalayan Club duly decided that it would accept full responsibility for the production and publication of the books.⁴² For a time the progress continued on these route books. However, in 1938, however, a year after the Club had asked for completed manuscripts to be submitted by the various editors, the publication of the route books was delayed due to insufficient material and after 1939, there was no further mention of them in *The Himalayan Journal*.⁴³

The Club's ill-fated attempt to take over the production of route books from the Survey could be seen as wishful thinking inspired by nostalgia and denial. Despite the vast political changes underway in India during the 1930s (the massive expansion of the Indian franchise brought about by the Government of India Act in 1935 for example), the Club persisted in its efforts, working on an assumption that Britons would maintain the same freedom of movement in India for the foreseeable future.

More generally, the Club also helped to facilitate and publicize the production of maps. For instance, in 1932 the Club contributed Rs. 200 to the German mountaineer Paul Bauer to finance the publication of a map of the Zemu Glacier, near Kangchenjunga in Sikkim, and in 1935 the Club was given permission by the Survey of India to publish the *Records of the Survey of India* for 1934.⁴⁴ But overall, the efforts of the Himalayan Club various editors and correspondents can, at best, only be labelled a partial success. Whether or not the Club actually lived up to its lofty ambitions, however, is not necessarily the most important point here: the fact that the Club attempted to produce route books is significant in itself. These efforts reveal a Club which sought to expand the possibilities for travel in the Himalaya for mountaineers as

⁴¹ 'Correspondence', *The Himalayan Journal* 06 (1934), 175-183 (pp. 181-182).

⁴² 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 07 (1935), 192-198 (p. 192).

⁴³ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 09 (1937), 189-202 (p. 198). 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 10 (1938), 220-224 (p. 223).

⁴⁴ 'Notes', *The Himalayan Journal* 08 (1936), 144-153 (p. 144).

well as for political and military officers. Even more significant than the what of these endeavours, however, is the how. All of the various positions and initiatives which I have described in this section fundamentally depended on the willingness of individual members of the Club to provide information and expertise: in the first instance, by volunteering to serve as an honorary secretary of a sectional or technical correspondent; and in the second, by providing the men who did occupy these positions, as well as the editor of *The Himalayan Journal*, with information about one's travels or work in the Himalaya.

By examining the structure, objects, and ambitions of the Himalayan Club at its founding it is clear that the Club operated on the basis of one fundamental assumption: that individual men, or more specifically individual men of the right sort (in particular those associated with academia, the Indian Civil Service, or army) were capable of expanding the general understanding and accessibility of the Himalaya simply by dint of their presence.⁴⁵ In other words, the empirical experiences of an average clubbable Briton travelling in the Himalayas were to be taken as fundamentally valuable in themselves. Indeed, this experiential knowledge could help to fill in the blanks left behind through the inaccuracies or impracticalities of surveying and could offer practical information that cartography simply could not. This assumption not only shaped the structure and ambitions of the Himalayan Club, but also shaped its rules and qualifications for membership as well. The next section of this chapter will go into more detail on this matter, examining the profile and character of the Club's desired membership. By doing this it will become clear that although the Club made claims to universality and disavowed open prejudice, it nonetheless maintained a constrained and

⁴⁵ Gyan Prakash has argued that British claims to authority in India depended on empiricism. Indeed, he writes that these claims were dependent on a belief in 'the authority and application of science as universal reason'. Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 4.

partially racialised conception of both its own identity and the production of reliable knowledge itself.

II. Rules and Regulations for Membership

After the matter of the Club's objects had been settled the next item on the agenda at the inaugural meeting of the Himalayan Club, was the rules for the qualification and election of its membership. In the summary of replies to the circular letter presented at the meeting it was made clear that respondents had presented a variety of different views on the matter. For instance, it was reported that although some respondents had argued that a mountaineering qualification should be a 'sine qua non', very few had definitely recommended it and that 'those probably best qualified themselves' were not in favour of it. Rather than a strict qualification, then, the summary reports that most of the responses had either been in favour of an 'easy' qualification, with an eye towards attracting new members, or a 'stricter' qualification aimed at 'limiting numbers to those really enthusiastic'. Other than these broader points some more specific suggestions outline in the summary letter were: distinct categories of temporary and permanent membership, with the former open to all and the latter only to specialists; an accommodation for younger and therefore less experienced prospective members; and election by committee. The main points of agreement, however, according to Wilson's summary, were that the Club needed to have a social qualification and a technical qualification. The social qualification was to be 'provided for by the usual method of proposing and seconding. The technical qualification would be' based on some special promotion of the objects of the Club'.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ ACA, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Himalayan Club, held at the Committee Room, Army Headquarters, Delhi, on the 17 February 1928, at 10 a.m., Himalayan Club, F12, folio 5 (Annexure II).

Taking the responses to his and Mason's circular letter as a guide, Corbett's 'Memorandum on the Constitution of the Himalayan Club' set out three distinct propositions relating to the qualification and election of members. The first, was that members would need to be proposed and seconded by members having personal knowledge of him. The second, was that any prospective member would have to submit 'a statement of his mountain travels in the Himalaya and elsewhere, and of his interest in the objects of the Club'. And finally, the third point proposed that every candidate for membership would have to be balloted by both the Club Committee and a balloting committee consisting of ten additional members. The Balloting Committee would then decide via secret vote with a threshold of two black balls to reject a candidate.⁴⁷ This final addition by Corbett had been introduced due to a belief that, unlike the Alpine Club, which elected members at its annual general meeting, 'in a country of such wide distances as India, ballot at a General Meeting, which many members might not be able to attend would not be a satisfactory method of election'.⁴⁸

Corbett's three points were approved during the inaugural meeting with only a couple of minor changes. Firstly, in relation to Corbett's second point, relating to the technical qualifications, it was granted that 'the age and opportunities of a candidate should be taken into consideration'. In practice this meant a 'lower standard of qualification might reasonably be required from an elderly candidate whose past opportunities had been limited, than from a younger candidate whose opportunities were still before him'. And, secondly, it was decided that when balloting a prospective member that the candidate would first have to be approved by the Club Committee before moving to the balloting committee so 'that some uniformity in the standard of qualification required might be maintained'.⁴⁹ What these rules amounted to in practice, however, and the subtle beliefs, prejudices, and assumptions which informed them

⁴⁷ ACA, F12, folio 5 (Annexure III), Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting'.

⁴⁸ ACA, F12, folio 5 (Annexure III), Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting'.

⁴⁹ ACA, F12, folio 5 (Annexure III), Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting'.

require some explanation. As I shall show, on closer inspection the rules for membership in the Himalayan Club reveal an organisation with a much more complex conception of its own identity than its straightforward objects might suggest. Going forward these complexities will be drawn out through an examination of the kinds of people the Club sought to attract and the kinds the Club sought to exclude.

As the previous chapter made clear one of the primary objectives of the Himalayan Club was the attraction of younger members from amongst the Indian Civil Service and Army. This was to be done, in part, through the inclusion of sport amongst the other objects of the club. The attraction of younger members, however, did not necessarily mean that the HC was to be a young man's club. Indeed, as the previous chapter made clear, the founding members of the Club did not prioritise the encouragement of younger men to join the HC because they believed that this would improve the Club. On the contrary, membership in the Club was seen as being potentially useful, educationally, morally, and spiritually, to its younger members *because* of the presence of its older members. Or rather, because the Club's older members would be able to direct its younger members towards a proper appreciation of the Himalaya. This can be seen in the accommodation made towards older members regarding the qualifications for membership. By making an allowance for members 'whose past opportunities had been limited' the HC was, once again, codifying Corbett and Mason's vision of the Club.

One way that Club did this was through the election of senior members of the political and military elite within India to positions of authority within the Club. Aside from attracting high-ranking figures to largely symbolic positions (for instance, Sir William Birdwood, the Field-Marshal of India, was the president of the Club) influential men from the military and political services also occupied prominent places within the Club's Committee. Edwin Pascoe, the director of the Geological Survey of India, J.G. Acheson, the Deputy Foreign Secretary for

India, T.E.T. Upton the Solicitor to the Government of India were all on the Committee.⁵⁰ With this in mind the decision at the inaugural meeting of the Club to make all voting by the balloting committee subject to preliminary approval by the regular Committee can be taken as an indication that the Club's founding members wished to retain a certain social qualification for membership. This point that can be detected implicitly in Geoffrey Corbett's assertion that undertaking this measure would ensure 'that some uniformity in the standard of qualification required might be maintained'.⁵¹

This desire to be exclusive can be seen more explicitly in the private correspondence of the founding members. In the previous chapter, for instance, various instances of snobbery towards the Mountain Club of India were illustrated. And although the amalgamation and integration of the MCI into the Himalayan Club went smoothly it remains that this process was conducted on Corbett and Mason's terms. The younger members of the MCI could be integrated safely into the Himalayan Club so long as the Committee and Constitution of the Club were set up so as to prevent the wrong sort of men taking charge. This effort to ensure that only certain kinds of men could join the Club was further entrenched by way of the Club's policy that members needed to be proposed and seconded by existing members with a personal knowledge of the individual in question.

The above measures were intended to keep a certain kind of man (and the assumption was that it would be a man), namely members of the British political and military elite in India in positions of power in the Club. There were also, however, more subtle ways in which the Club sought to shape its membership in a negative direction. To put the matter plainly, although the Club never implemented a racial qualification for membership, the racialized assumptions

⁵⁰ 'Front Matter', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929),

⁵¹ACA, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Himalayan Club, held at the Committee Room, Army Headquarters, Delhi, on the 17 February, 1928, at 10 a.m., Himalayan Club, F12, folio 5.

and prejudices of the founding members nevertheless limited the possibility of Indian participation in the Club from the outset. In the abstract, the matter of Indian participation in the Club, was seen as fairly uncontroversial by both Corbett and Mason.⁵² This was made clear by Corbett in a letter to Mason prior to the issue of their circular letter wherein he wrote that, having consulted trusted friends on the matter, he and they were in agreement that ‘the question of the admission of Indians... should not be referred to at all in the letter, but should be taken for granted’. This statement was immediately followed by a caveat in which Corbett makes clear that matter of Indian admission could be ‘settled finally’ by inviting certain Indians to be founder members.⁵³ It is telling that Corbett’s phrasing suggests that the admission of Indians to the Club was a problem to be solved. Similarly, the Indians who were invited to join the Club, the Raja of Jubbal and Captain Hissam-du-din Khan, a member of the Durrani family who had presided over the Afghan Empire in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, were both members of the Indian princely class.⁵⁴

This cautious approach was perhaps a reaction to the mixed responses that Corbett and Mason had received, unprompted, to the question of Indian membership in the Club. Reginald Phillimore of the Survey of India, for instance, lamented privately to Mason that it ‘is a pity one couldn’t get more Indians into the show.’ Though he also supposed that this was unavoidable, adding, ‘I suppose there are very few [Indians] indeed who would take any interest, or who would enjoy wandering in the hills for any purpose what so ever’.⁵⁵ This more

⁵² Indeed, as Benjamin B. Cohen makes clear, ‘For the British in India, to some degree having an Indian patron was a marker of a club’s rootedness within India’. Cohen, *In the Club*, p. 123.

⁵³ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from Geoffrey Corbett to Kenneth Mason, 30 November 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation, in the Archives of the Alpine Club.

⁵⁴ ACA, F12, Folder 1, Letter from Geoffrey Corbett to Kenneth Mason, 30 November 1927.

⁵⁵ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from R.H. Phillimore, 21 December 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, 1-3: Copies of Replies to Circular Letters.

positive response stood in contrast to the response of one A.R.B. Shuttleworth, who had this to say on the question of the Himalayan Club's qualifications for membership:

I consider that membership should be confined to British subjects. I have had dealings with foreign travellers such as Sven Hedin, Namura and Tachibana and I do not think that they would be a credit to our Himalayan Club. If possible let us keep it a white man's show – no ladies also!

Both Phillimore and Shuttleworth's comments, in their different ways, reflect an assumption that it was either undesirable or impractical to include Indians or other South and Central Asian people (with a few specific exceptions) into the Club. This assumption was spelled out by Edward Tandy, the Surveyor General of India, in a letter to Corbett. Setting out his rationale for excluding Indian officers (though not members of the aristocracy like Hissam-ud-din) from the Club. Tandy wrote: 'I am a little doubtful about the wisdom of including I.Os. Without being "snobs", we ourselves have certain social differences. I think the Indian has them more pronounced, in some respects, apart from caste... we must not forget that men like Hirsamuddin (sic) might think I.Os. admission under the same terms a little infra dig [a personal slight]'.⁵⁶

With all this in mind the Himalayan Club's balloting rules can be seen as a means of ensuring that the Himalayan Club could exercise unofficial prejudice in selecting its members without having to resort to an official ban on Indian membership.⁵⁷ What is more, by including men like the Raja of Jubbal and Captain Hissam-ud-din within their ranks the members of the Himalayan Club could maintain a position, similar to that advanced by Phillimore, that the Club was eager to have Indian members but that it was simply a lack of interest from likely

⁵⁶ Alpine Club Archives, Letter from E.A. Tandy to Geoffrey Corbett, 6 December, 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

⁵⁷ Indeed, 'only 4 percent of the hundreds of clubs across South Asia were European only.' Cohen, *In the Club*, p. 123.

Indian candidates that kept the number of Indian members low. Similarly, when women were allowed to join as full members in 1931, this balloting procedure could ensure that the number of female members would be kept at a minimum whilst those women who were admitted to the Club could be vetted to ensure that they fit the subjective criteria of the Club's governing members.⁵⁸

III. Conclusions

As this chapter has demonstrated, the rules and regulations put into place at the inaugural meeting of the Club, as well as further developments to the Club's structure in the following years, reveal an organisation whose founders had certain ideas about who should be encouraged to travel in the region. The creation of local correspondents, secretaries, and editors was intended to put useful information into the hands of would-be travellers. These men were to act as gatekeepers for the Club, maintaining and controlling information and guiding young travellers. And the Club's efforts to create route books could be seen as an extension of this dynamic. The older members of the Club would re-direct younger travellers towards areas that existing route books had missed or where information was outdated with an aim towards promoting general knowledge about the Himalaya as well as enthusiasm for mountain travel amongst the young. These development in many ways corroborate my conclusions from the previous chapter, namely, that the older generation of Himalayan Club members sought to inculcate an exploratory spirit in younger generations of colonial administrators and soldiers by encouraging them towards Himalayan travel.

But this chapter also reveals another side to this paradigm. If the Club was to encourage younger members to perform a more nostalgic version of imperialism in the mountains, then

⁵⁸ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* (03), pp. 164-165.

this required a degree of occlusion. Contemporary political issues and concerns had to be omitted in favour of accounts which aligned with a nostalgic conception of mountain travel. The Club could act like young officers trekking to Gilgit or Ladakh were continuing a process of exploration that had begun in the early-nineteenth century, but to do so required the Club to ignore or downplay the very real changes which had taken place both on the Himalayan frontier and in India more generally. Similarly, although the Club's founders made a point of accepting Indian members in principle, in practice the Club's procedures for electing new members and its balloting committee ensured that the Club would only ever elect those whom the members of the balloting committee, most of whom were members of the political, military, and administrative elite deemed fit. As a result, the organisation had only a handful of Indian members at its inception.

These apparent omissions and obfuscations could be interpreted in a few different ways. First, they could be seen as wilful omissions. After all, the Himalayan Club was dedicated to mountaineering, recreation, and nostalgia so it makes sense that the Club's members might have wished to escape the messy realities of the present for a comforting vision of the past. The second possibility, is that the Club refused to recognize the changes taking place on the frontiers because these places had stereotypically been conceived of as timeless and unchanging. The final possibility is that the members of the Club simply did not recognise these developments, they either did not understand them, did not know they were happening, or were too disengaged to notice. The answer undoubtedly lies in some mixture of the three. But the crucial point is that the Club was not fully engaging with the Himalaya as it was, choosing instead to view the region in a way which accorded with its own nostalgic conception of travel and exploration.

This understanding of the Club's omissions, however, only came about through an engagement with scholarship that moves beyond discourse analysis and which questions essentialising categories. Bala and Borthakur's work on the Khudai Khidmatgar, for example,

moves beyond the totalising approaches of both colonial and nationalist historiographies to examine the movement on its own terms, both as a reaction to wider trends in Indian anti-colonial thought, but also a movement which utilised and drew upon local traditions.⁵⁹ Similarly, Hevia's analysis of intelligence, focusing on both the praxis and theory of military intelligence, its production, its purposes, and the intellectual frameworks in which it was produced, adds nuance to an historiography which had previously ignored the forms and production of military intelligence in favour of political reports.⁶⁰ And Simpson's investigation of the nature of surveying in the Himalayas complicates previous works on surveying (like Matthew Edney's *Mapping an Empire*) by arguing that the imprecisions and difficulties of surveying on the Himalayan frontier were not something colonial surveyors tried to hide, but something they valorised (as well as bemoaned).⁶¹ All of these works in their different ways complicate our understanding of colonial knowledge production. And in this chapter, I have utilised the insights from these scholars to reveal the ways in which the founding members of the Himalayan Club ignored, confused, or rhetorically reconfigured contemporary political realities in favour of a nostalgic conception of mountain travel and mountain travellers.

⁵⁹ Bala, 'Waging Nonviolence', and Borthakur, 'The Pashtun Trajectory'.

⁶⁰ Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, p. 2.

⁶¹ Simpson, "'Clean out of the Map'", p. 7.

Chapter 3: Specialist Exploration

‘If the pioneer’s day is nearly over, the specialist-explorer’s dawn is only breaking.’

- Kenneth Mason, *The Geography of Current Affairs: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 15th November 1932*

The subject of this chapter is Himalayan travel. Indeed, the next three chapters, in their different ways all deal with this topic. Having examined the foundation of the Club, and the assumptions and beliefs which guided that process, the remainder of this thesis will examine how these same assumptions influenced its activities and outputs. More specifically, they will look at the ways in which exploration was variously depicted, defined, and encouraged by the Club. In the introduction, it was argued that for the early members of the Himalayan Club, exploration existed on a spectrum with recreational travel at the one end and high-altitude mountaineering at the other. It would be simplistic to attempt to chart all kinds of travel onto a neat linear model, for travellers conceived of their travels in a multitude of ways and measured success, enjoyment, or failure by a variety of metrics. For all of that, within the Himalayan Club, and especially within *The Himalayan Journal* of the 1920s and 1930s there were broad categories of travel which had broadly similar aims and which utilised broadly similar motifs. Hunting expeditions, frontier tours, and recreational travel formed one strand, and will be addressed in the next chapter. Accounts of mountaineering formed another, and will be addressed in chapter five. In this chapter, however, I will be looking at ‘specialist exploration’. I have drawn this term from Kenneth Mason’s statement above.¹ I will make use of it for two reasons. Firstly, because it makes clear that this kind of travel was often conducted for specialist scientific purposes. Kingdon Ward is a prime example of this. For despite the variety of other disciplines

¹ Francis Kingdon Ward uses a similar phrase in an article for *The Himalayan Journal*. Kingdon Ward, ‘Botanical Exploration in the Mishmi Hills’, p. 51.

in which Kingdon Ward briefly dabbled (anthropology, zoology, etc.), his expeditions were ultimately aimed at collecting plants. More than that, though, the use of the term specialist places this exploration within its historical context. By the 1920s and 1930s the era in which great geographical anomalies like the source of the Nile remained to be solved was over, and the scope of scientific expeditions had consequently narrowed.

More than just an analysis of the content of *The Himalayan Journal*, this chapter also looks at the form, context, and production of scholarly material it published. My approach here is informed by the work of David Finkelstein who has cautioned against an approach which takes published narratives of exploration at face value, either scouring them for biographical details or examining the language and imagery to make general conclusions about the explorers' impressions and beliefs about a given place. Finkelstein takes issue with this approach because it fails 'to account for the process of publication in shaping explorers' "words" to begin with'.² He came to this conclusion from his own analysis of John Hanning Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of Nile*, which was substantially edited by the publishing house Blackwood. This process saw the ghost-writer John Hill Burton significantly re-shape Speke's original narrative account of his quest to find the source of the Nile in 1856-59 so that it would better accord with Blackwood's ideas about what made an account of exploration commercially viable.³ I mention this not because the accounts of travel in *The Himalayan Journal* were subjected to similarly substantial revisions, but because the question of form, context, and publication is vitally important in understanding the Himalayan Club's relationship with specialist exploration.

² David Finkelstein, 'Unraveling Speke: The Unknown Revision of an African Exploration Classic', *History in Africa* 30 (2003), 117-32 (p. 118).

³ Finkelstein, 'Unraveling Speke', pp. 124-25.

An analysis of the accounts of specialist exploration in *The Himalayan Journal* alongside unpublished material (principally correspondence and diaries) offers valuable insights. In these articles, the focus is very much on the scholarship itself, whether it be archaeology, hydrology, minerology, or any number of other disciplines, as both a part of, and a justification for, travel. More than that, though, the men whom I will describe in this chapter saw themselves as specialist explorers, working to expand and develop pre-existing scholarship and to bring it up to date. For although they were working towards the same ends as earlier Himalayan explorers, and in the same dramatic arena (the Himalaya), their work could take advantage of contemporary insights and knowledge to provide a more specialised and nuanced picture of the region. On closer inspection, however, this self-professed and rather wistful modernism belied significant continuities. Looking at the private correspondence and diaries of these men it becomes clear that older academic theories and ideas still had purchase amongst the specialist explorers of the Himalayan Club. In public, and as scholars, these men might not have defended these ideas, but an analysis of published and unpublished material by these individuals reveals that older ideas about India, Indians, and the Himalaya still informed their work.

The central argument of this chapter is that accounts of specialist exploration and scholarship in *The Himalayan Journal*, despite claims to modernity, specialisation, and shrinking horizons on the part of their authors, reveal a group of men with a deeply nostalgic conception of knowledge production in the Himalaya. Indeed, by analysing these accounts in tandem with the private correspondence and diaries of club members it becomes apparent that these men simultaneously defined the Himalaya in terms of nostalgia and opportunity. Nostalgia, because the mountains offered a reprieve and an alternative to India proper, but also opportunity because the mountains allowed them to engage in a form of scholarship which maintained many of the elements of past exploratory journeys. Unlike the heroic scientific

exploration of the nineteenth century, however, these travels did not hold out the possibility of ground-breaking discoveries. Instead, for the members of the Himalayan Club such travel allowed members to capture something of the spirit of these earlier pioneers whilst keeping abreast of contemporary developments in scholarship. It allowed them to fill in gaps, redress past errors, and suggest new interpretations of old work. Most importantly, however, this nostalgic conception of knowledge production allowed these men to locate themselves within a narrative of exploration which placed a premium on first-hand experience, and the empirical contributions of amateurs. Indeed, a desire to be at once an amateur and a specialist and to appeal to both universal and personal interests runs through these accounts of scholarship in *The Himalayan Journal*.

In terms of structure, the chapter will proceed in three parts. The first, will address the structure of *The Himalayan Journal* as well as the Club's conceptual and practical relationship with specialist exploration. I will examine the ways in which the Club mirrored contemporary organisations such as the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society, as well as the ways in which the Club engaged with the contemporary realities of science and scholarship in India. The second section will look at the private correspondence and diaries of *The Himalayan Journal's* specialist explorers, looking at the ways in which they privately described the Himalaya and Himalayan peoples, the distinctions and dichotomies they created and the discourses they engaged in. The final section will analyse articles by the same authors as in section two dealing with specialist scholarship in *The Himalayan Journal*. In doing this, I will demonstrate how the private beliefs and assumptions of the Himalayan Club's members informed their approach to scholarship in the *Journal*.

I. The Structure of *The Himalayan Journal*

The first annual edition of *The Himalayan Journal*, published in 1929, included an editorial by Geoffrey Corbett entitled 'The Founding of the Himalayan Club'. In this brief piece, Corbett provided a condensed version of the events and discussions detailed in the previous two chapters. 'We proceeded deliberately, remembering always that it's the first step that counts', Corbett began, before listing three matters which he and the other founder members had had to decide on before the Club could begin operations: 'What should the Club be called? What should be its objects?' And 'who should be asked to become founder members?' Regarding the first dilemma, Corbett related that "The Alpine Club of India" had been suggested, but seemed likely to scare those whose interest was not high mountaineering', a statement which belies the amount of ink spilled by Corbett, Mason, and others in trying to settle the matter of mountaineering qualifications and the precise nature of the Himalayan Club. On the second point Corbett wrote that: 'It was agreed that our objects should be based on the famous definition in the Rules of the Alpine Club'.⁴ These objects were closely mirrored in the Himalayan Club's own objective: 'To encourage and assist Himalayan travel and exploration, and to extend knowledge of the Himalaya and adjoining mountain ranges through science, art, literature and sport'. The final of these considerations, the question of who would be asked to become a founder member was covered in the previous chapters but the second point, regarding the objects of the Club requires further elaboration. For although the Himalayan Club took inspiration from the Alpine Club, its objectives (and indeed those of the Alpine Club) encompassed matters not strictly related to mountaineering. And *The Himalayan Journal* under the direction of Kenneth Mason, arguably took as much inspiration from the Royal

⁴ G.L. Corbett, 'The Founding of the Himalayan Club', p. 2.

Geographical Society, Royal Asiatic Society, Central Asian Society and other learned societies as it did the Alpine Club.

Even before the inaugural meeting of the Club, during the initial flurry of correspondence in the autumn of 1927, the Royal Geographical Society was being mentioned as a potential model. Indeed, Kenneth Mason, responding to Geoffrey Corbett's first letter to him regarding the formation of a Club made clear his belief that they ought to make it 'a mean between a specialised Geographical Society and a Climbing Club'.⁵ The similarities went deeper than surface level comparisons. The Royal Geographical Society which Felix Driver has described as having been 'part social club, part learned society, part imperial information exchange and part platform for the promotion of sensational feats of exploration', offered the Himalayan Club an example of an organisation which had 'achieved recognition and the legitimacy of its knowledge though its association with the empire'.⁶ Much as the feats of a minority of explorers in the heroic mode like Francis Younghusband and Ernest Shackleton had elevated and enhanced the reputation of the Royal Geographical Society so Mason hoped that within the Himalayan Club, climbing could 'grow naturally among the majority of members by association with the minority... the beginner will take the routes, study and enjoy the mountains, discover and cross the passes, and be tempted by the peaks'.⁷ But how was the Club to attract members in the first place?

The decision to include sport amongst the objects of the Club was one way. Another, was to provide a medium in which individual members' enthusiasms and interests, the sort normally captured by individual learned societies like the RGS, could find expression within

⁵ ACA, Letter from Kenneth Mason to Geoffrey Corbett, 16 October 1927, Himalayan Club, F12 Folder 1: Himalayan Club to 20-12-1927 Date of Issue of Founders Circular Letter of Invitation.

⁶ Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 25. William Lubenow, *'Only Connect': Learned Societies in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Suffolk: The Brydell Press, 2015), p. 109.

⁷ ACA, Letter from Kenneth Mason to Geoffrey Corbett, 16 October 1927, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 1.

the Himalayan Club. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, many of the founding members of the Himalayan Club believed it was not just important, but desirable, to include scientific and scholarly pursuits within its remit. By doing this, these men were trading upon a long association of science, scholarship, and empire. But what was it about science, and in particular scientific fieldwork which captured the attention of Victorian, Edwardian, and Interwar British audiences? To answer this question, it is helpful to first examine science, and scholarship more generally within an imperial context. And from the outset it is important to stress that while more sensational forms of scholarly fieldwork such as Speke's search for the source of the Nile in the nineteenth century (1856-1859), or the excavation of Tutankhamen's tomb by Howard Carter (1922), garnered significant publicity, more prosaic forms of scientific inquiry, especially those related to the extraction of natural resources constituted the bulk of scientific work performed in the colonies. Indeed, Michael Worboys has argued that 'the great bulk of colonial science, in all periods, was applied science and was about using science in the economic exploitation of the natural resources of the colonies'.⁸ A sentiment is echoed by the work of Deepak Kumar.⁹

Despite this, it remains the case that the more sensational or romantic forms of scientific and scholarly inquiry were those which most captured the public imagination. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century this romanticized notion of empiricism and scholarship had come to be seen as a defining and quintessentially British trait, one which had both facilitated the acquisition of the Empire and justified its continued existence. This contemporary enthusiasm for imperial empiricism was perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the British Empire Exhibition of 1924. The Exhibition, which had been created to celebrate the Empire and to

⁸ Michael Worboys, 'The Imperial Institute: The State and the Development of Natural Resources of the Colonial Empire, 1887-1923' in John MacKenzie ed. *Imperialism and the Natural World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 164-186 (p. 167).

⁹ Kumar, Deepak, *Science and the Raj: 1857-1905* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

make tangible its benefits for British subjects both at home and abroad also, as Roy Macleod asserts, made clear that ‘science overseas (was) an expression of British values’. Indeed, the interconnected relationship between empire and empiricism was brought home by the telegraphing of King George V’s opening remarks around the world by imperial cable. In just eight seconds the King’s message circumnavigated the globe, a powerful assertion of unity and technological progress.¹⁰

The scholarship which found expression in *The Himalayan Journal*, however, fell somewhere between the two poles of sensational or practical science. Like the Royal Geographical Society, the Club sought to maintain something of the prestige and romance of scientific exploration whilst also maintaining empirical standards. Thus, while the term amateur would be appropriate for many of the men who wrote these accounts for *The Himalayan Journal*, others were indeed respected scientists or scholars. And in much the same way as the club sought to capitalise on the climbing and travelling experience of its more senior members, so too did it try to put the experience and knowledge of its more renowned and distinguished scholarly members at the disposal of the Club’s general membership. The most obvious iteration of this tendency was *The Himalayan Journal* itself. Through its publication the Club could keep its members informed about a wide variety of scholarly and scientific developments in the Himalaya. Aside from the *Journal*, the Club also took steps to incorporate these interests into the structure of the Club. The clearest example of this was the Club’s introduction of scientific and technical correspondents. The men in these positions were, somewhat vaguely, described as being able to ‘assist and advise members on scientific and other subjects, and collect and classify information on such subjects, which may be obtained from members or otherwise, for publication or other purposes’.¹¹ Amongst the correspondents

¹⁰ Roy Macleod, ‘Passage in Imperial Science: From Empire to Commonwealth’, *Journal of World History* 4, no. 1 (1993), 117–50 (pp. 117–118).

¹¹ ‘Club Notices’, *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 135–142 (p. 137).

there were a few famous names such as Aurel Stein (archaeology), Lewis Leigh Fermor (glaciology), and Hugh Whistler (ornithology).¹² And the subjects covered were, in alphabetical order archaeology, botany, entomology, fishing and shooting, folklore, geodesy and geophysics, geology and glaciology, meteorology, ornithology, photography, surveys and maps, and zoology.¹³ The real impact that these technical and scientific correspondents had is difficult to gauge

In the second volume of *The Himalayan Journal*, B.O. Coventry, the Club's technical correspondent for botany, who was based in Srinagar, reported receiving enquiries regarding plant life in Kashmir, some of them from visitors to the state, others not. In the same report it is also mentioned that Coventry had sent specimens to Kew for verification, while the forthcoming publication of a book on plant life in Kashmir was also announced.¹⁴ Aside from answering correspondence, however, it is not clear whether Coventry's activities in this regard could in any way be attributed to the Himalayan Club. Coventry provided another update on his botanical work in the third volume of the *Journal* and in the next volume the Club's medical zoology correspondent, Dr. C. Strickland provided an update on his and others' work in that field during the year past.¹⁵ Some highlights of which included a 'collection of biting creatures' specially assembled for Strickland, an account of edible bugs produced by Strickland, and some observations on 'hare-disease'.¹⁶ There was also an update on geography and geology in Volume 5 (1933) after which these subject specific updates stopped being included in *The Himalayan Journal*.¹⁷ Whether this was due to a lack of activity, a lack of interest, or simply a lack of preparation is difficult to know. Kenneth Mason reported that he experienced difficulty

¹² Lewis Leigh Fermor took on his position in 1930. 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 02 (1930), 191-196 (p. 192).

¹³ 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* vol. 1 (1929), pp. 138-139.

¹⁴ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* vol. 2 (1930), 182-187 (pp. 186-187).

¹⁵ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* vol. 3 (1931), 157-165 (p. 164).

¹⁶ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* vol. 4 (1932), 215-221 (pp. 220-21).

¹⁷ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 05 (1933), 153-162 (p. 161).

in getting copies of articles on time as early as 1931 and he had to delay the publication of the 1938 edition of the *Journal* due to a lack of submissions.¹⁸ And although he was ultimately congratulated by the honorary secretary on the 1938 edition of the *Journal* which was claimed to have set ‘a new high standard’, Mason still had difficulty obtaining submissions the following year as well.¹⁹ Once again, though, it is hard to know what exactly was behind this.

Whatever the case may be, it is still noteworthy that Club founding members thought that the selection of these technical and scientific correspondents was a worthwhile endeavour. More than that though, the Club’s embrace of these specialist scholarly pursuits reflected ongoing changes which were affecting the scope, popularity, and appeal of geographical societies during the early-twentieth century. The historical geographer Michael Heffernan has provided one notable contribution to the study of this under-analysed time period, focusing on the role geography, both as an academic discourse and as a unified institution, played in the First World War. For Heffernan by ‘August 1914, British geography was at the dawn of a new era’. The era of heroic exploration and imperial expansion was largely over. ‘Most English geographical societies, established at the high noon of ‘geographical fever’ in the 1880s and 1890s, were in genteel decline’ and, the continued existence of the Royal Geographical Society owed much to its ‘greater willingness to move beyond the traditional concerns of travel and exploration to embrace more prosaic educational issues’.²⁰ Seen in this light the Himalayan Club’s embrace of technical and scientific expertise should be seen as a genuine attempt at engaging with the scholarly currents of the time, as well as an attempt to capture something of the prestige and excitement of ‘heroic exploration’.

¹⁸ ‘Club Notices’, *The Himalayan Journal* 03 (1931), 165-168 (p. 168). ‘Club Proceedings’, *The Himalayan Journal* 10 (1938), 220-224 (p. 223).

¹⁹ ‘Club Proceedings’, *The Himalayan Journal* 11 (1939), p. 211.

²⁰ Michael Heffernan, ‘Geography, Cartography and Military Intelligence: The Royal Geographical Society and the First World War’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 21, no. 3 (1996), 504-533 (p. 507).

Under the editorship of Kenneth Mason, who was a prominent figure within the Royal Geographical Society of the Interwar era (he was awarded the Royal Geographical Society Founder's Medal in 1927 for his surveying of the Shaksgam Valley), the Himalayan Journal made various efforts to engage with both scholars and scholarship. Before looking at these efforts it is best to make clear the general structure of *The Himalayan Journal*. Published annually, *The Journal* was divided into two main sections. The front matter consisted of articles written by members of the Club and some non-members (usually mountaineers) regarding a wide variety of subjects. The main body of each volume, with some variation in naming, consisted of: an 'In Memoriam' section, which provided obituaries of Club members as well as figures of interest to the Club; an 'Expeditions' section, in which both mountaineering expeditions as well as frontier tours by district officers, scholarly expeditions, and various other kinds of travel were recapitulated; a 'Reviews' section, in which members of the Club reviewed books on one of the various subjects covered by the Club's objects; a 'Correspondence' section, in which letters to the editor were published and responded to; a 'Club Proceedings' section, which detailed the events of the Club's annual general meetings, and any changes to the Club's rules and regulations; and finally, a 'Club Notices' section in which a wide variety of subjects and concerns were brought to the attention of members. Finally, in the first three volumes of the Journal a section entitled 'Library Notices' listed all the books which had been donated by members to the Club's burgeoning library.²¹

²¹ Nirmolini V. Flora has written an overview of this library during its existence in Simla (1928-1946), before its move to New Delhi. Flora's account details the founding of the Club and makes general reference to the contents of its library. The library at this time principally consisted of: monographs and route books donated by members, photographs, and volumes of the Journals produced by other mountaineering clubs and learned societies. Flora's account asserts the value of this collection but does not engage in much substantial analysis of its contents, focusing instead on the library itself, as an institution. Nirmolini V. Flora, 'The Library of the Himalayan Club, a Unique Cultural Institution in Simla, 1928-1946', *Libraries & Culture* 38, no. 4 (2003), 289–321.

Aside from the front matter, the ‘Correspondence’, ‘Reviews’, and ‘Library Notices’ sections were all engaged with contemporary scholarship. In the ‘Correspondence’ section readers could write to the editor regarding errors in others or their own articles or contest the conclusions of an article. In the first volume of *The Himalayan Journal*, for instance Evelyn Berkeley Howell (1877-1971), wrote to Mason to put forward his thoughts on the possibility that the Shyok Ice Dam (a glacier which served as a source for the Shyok River, a tributary of the Indus) might burst and trigger flooding along the Indus River. In that same volume the Correspondence section also included Mason’s response to Howell’s comments, politely doubting many of his claims.²² Understandably, the second volume of the Journal contained a more substantial ‘Correspondence’ section: there was a note from Edwin Pascoe correcting a false claim that he had put forward in a book review that he had written for that year’s *Journal*; the Political Agent in Gilgit H.J. Todd sent in a series of notes that he had collected whilst on tour in the district regarding the history of flooding in that region; there was another contribution on glaciers, this time from the German mountaineer Willi Rickmer Rickmers, and a submission from a Captain Roger North responding to a question posed by Mason in the previous volume asking for further information about the climbers from a 1927 expedition who had reached the summit of Pre Ghar (a mountain in Waziristan); and an analysis of the 1929 German expedition to Kangchenjunga from Edward F. Norton.²³

The ‘Reviews’ section reflected a similar engagement with scholarly questions and works. To look again at the first issue of the *Journal*, there were 11 books reviews in that volume alone. These reviews tended to emphasize the positive feature of works (especially those produced by members of the Club), only politely or obliquely hinting at things which could be improved. To look at a few examples, Francis Younghusband, in his review of

²² ‘Correspondence’, *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 126-128.

²³ ‘Correspondence’, *The Himalayan Journal* 02 (1930), 172-181.

Kenneth Mason's *Exploration of the Shaksgam Valley and Aghil Ranges* (a publication of the Survey of India), is munificent with this praise. 'The Himalayan Club', he wrote, 'starts with the advantage of having in this publication a kind of guide book to perhaps the most interesting and least explored part of the whole Himalaya'. Indeed, Younghusband was keen to stress the utility of Mason's account, which he found 'commendably compendious'. Younghusband concluded his account with a thinly veiled description of his own earlier travels in the region, citing this as proof that large expeditions were not necessary to travel in the region. He concluded his review by confidently declaring that 'unto a young subaltern all things are possible—especially now that he can have Major Mason's book in his pocket and the advice and guidance of the Himalayan Club, and I hope some decent boots, an ice-axe and a good rope'.²⁴

Most reviewers, however, were less grandiloquent and delved more deeply into the substance of their subjects. C.J. Morris's review of Perceval Landon's *Nepal*, is a good example. He began his write-up by contextualising the subject, noting the strict prohibition on British travellers to Nepal and the resulting paucity of first-hand accounts of the region. After this, Morris engages with Landon's work at length, describing his sections on the early history of Nepal as 'exceedingly difficult to follow' for 'anyone not well acquainted with early Indian history'. Morris does not blame Landon for this, however, because 'the only available record [for that period], the Vamshavali, or chronicle of the country, contains so much apocryphal matter that it is almost impossible to distinguish between fact and fiction'. And Morris was generally pleased with Landon's description of Nepal's history post-1845, and thought his analysis of Nepal's history from 1901 onwards constituted the strongest section of the book. Regarding the book's structure Morris wrote that 'the book gives one the impression of having been written as a series of independent essays, and would have been improved by more careful

²⁴ 'Reviews', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 108-126 (pp. 116-117).

arrangement'. And in the end, his review was rather mixed, with Morris questioning Landon's use of outdated terminology, idiosyncratic transliteration, and his lack of a bibliography.²⁵

Finally, the Library Notices section, which was only included in the first three sections of the *Journal*, listed all the books which had been donated to the Himalayan Club's library at Simla during the previous year. Listing the book title and author, the person who had donated it (some books were also purchased by the Club), and its classification within the various objects of the Club (Sport, Travel, Natural History, etc.). These books were available to the Club's members via an application, a small collection of books owned by the honorary local secretary in Calcutta was also available via application, and a list of books available at the Libraries of Army Headquarters, the United Service Institution, or the Survey of India was circulated to members separately.²⁶ By the fourth volume of the *Journal* the 'Library Notices' section had been merged with the 'Club Notices' section and the number of donations and purchases had decreased sharply (the first volume devoted eight pages to listing these contributions the fourth volume, only one).²⁷ And the sixth volume was the last to list individual donations and purchases. This could either have been the result of a dearth of new donations and purchases after this point, or, more likely, it was the result of poor internal communication between Mason, who moved to England in 1933, and the Club's librarian at Simla.²⁸

All three of these structural features of *The Himalayan Journal* can be seen in other journals produced by mountaineering clubs and learned societies. The most obvious model for the *Himalayan Journal* was the *Alpine Journal*, the journal of the Alpine Club.

²⁵ 'Reviews', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), pp. 113-116.

²⁶ 'Library Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 143-150.

²⁷ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 04 (1932), p. 225.

²⁸ In the eighth volume of the *Journal* Mason addressed the issue writing: 'It is regretted that no list of books added to the library since the 31st December 1934 has been received for publication in the *Journal*', 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 08 (1936), 180-184 (p. 184).

But the club also shared similarities with the journals of learned societies as well. *The Geographical Journal*, for instance, the literary organ of the Royal Geographical Society had a very similar structure to *The Himalayan Journal*: there was a front matter, consisting of a variety of articles on diverse subjects; a 'Reviews' section; a section entitled 'the Monthly Record' which was similar to the HJ's intermittently produced 'Notes' section which commented on a variety of developments in scholarship; as well as a section which detailed the proceedings of the Society's annual general meeting, roughly comparable to the HJ's 'Club Proceedings' section.²⁹ There were also crucial differences. First and foremost, the amount of material published by *The Geographical Journal* dwarfed that of the HJ. In 1929 alone, *The Geographical Journal* published two volumes, each consisting of six issues, with each volume running to over 600 pages. Aside from this the GJ included substantial indices and each monthly issue had roughly the same number of articles and reviews as the yearly edition of *The Himalayan Journal*. Other learned publications of the period were also equally prodigious. To take just a few examples, *The Mineralogical Magazine* (the journal of the Mineralogical Society), *Geography* (the organ of The Geographical Association), and, unsurprisingly, *The Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London* were all published quarterly and produced many more articles and reviews than the HJ.

Thus, it is ultimately safe to say that although *The Himalayan Journal* was similar in many ways to the journals of learned societies it was ultimately more in line with the *Alpine Journal*, than it was *The Geographical Journal*.

That said, *The Himalayan Journal*'s similarities with learned journals like *The Geographical Journal* should not be ignored. In particular, it is important to acknowledge the role that such journals played in bringing diffuse and disparate scholarship, often conducted in

²⁹ *The Geographical Journal* 74, no. 6. (Dec., 1929).

remote parts of the world, or the Empire, to the attention of a wider readership. In *Empire of Scholars*, Tamson Pietsch stresses the importance of imperial scholarly networks like these, that is, networks of scholars working in universities in the metropole as well as the colonies, in ‘bringing settler research to publication in Britain’.³⁰ More generally, Pietsch makes clear that the individuals within these networks were both ‘local and global actors... rooted in specific social and political communities’ as well as ‘wayfarers on international routes of scholarship’.³¹ And while the Himalayan Club itself, and by extension *The Himalayan Journal*, cannot be seen as constituting a network of scholars like those described in *Empire of Scholars* (in the first place, the Himalayan Club was an informal organisation), nor can *The Himalayan Journal* be seen as analogous in size and scope to *The Geographical Journal* or similar learned publications. It remains a fact that the Club did act like something of a network of scholars, bringing articles and reviews concerning Himalayan scholarly matters together in one place. Or perhaps, it is best to view the Himalayan Club as existing within a tangled, pre-existing network of scholarship, with various institutions and individuals utilising organisational as well as personal contacts to bring their work to publication.

To give an example of this. In a letter from Kenneth Mason to Arthur Hinks, the editor of *The Geographical Journal*, Mason makes clear the multiple contributions which had helped to produce Claremont Percival Skrine’s paper on surveying in Central Asia, which he would present to the Royal Geographical Society.³² Mason had turned Skrine’s preliminary sketch maps into more standardised form, and he had also supplemented this with information collected by the archaeologist Aurel Stein’s work in the region. And in the same letter Mason informed Hinks that he had hosted Philips Christiaan Visser and Jenny Visser-Hooft, a

³⁰ Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 112-113.

³¹ Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars*, p.3.

³² The paper was published in the November issue of *The Geographical Journal*. C.P. Skrine, Kenneth Mason, and W. B. Turrill, ‘The Alps of Qungur’. *The Geographical Journal* 66, no. 5 (1925), 385–410.

husband-and-wife duo from the Netherlands who would become well-known for their scientific expeditions in the Karakoram Range. Mason confided his hope that the two would bring back ‘a really good map’, and made clear that the Vissers’ expedition was, itself, a production of Mason’s various scholarly connections:

Their journey is the result of [General] Cockerill’s lecture to the R.G.S. on “Byways in Hunza” some three years ago. I have been trying to get someone to do this ever since, and got the Vissers on to it in London.³³

Thus, it is best to take *The Himalayan Journal* for what it was, the semi-learned publication of a voluntary association which maintained learned ambitions, but was not defined by them. More than that, though, it existed at the confluence of pre-existing personal and scholarly networks in the Himalaya, as well as Central and South Asia. Indeed, this ambiguous relationship with scholarship and with the form and style of learned journals is crucial in understanding the Club’s relationship with specialist exploration and scholarship, and in many ways cuts to the heart of the Himalayan Club’s identity during the 1920s and 1930s. And this tension between the personal and the professional, the scholarly and subjective, and in some ways even the imperial and the empirical, can also be seen in the contrasts (and similarities) between the private correspondence and diaries of the Himalayan Club’s specialist explorers and the material they published within *The Himalayan Journal*.

³³ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society, Letter from Kenneth Mason to Arthur Hinks, 4 March 1925, CB/9/1492, 1921-30 Kenneth Mason.

II. Subjective Impressions of the Himalaya

In the introduction to this chapter, I argued that the private written material of the Himalayan Club's members reveals a more nuanced conception of scholarship in the Himalaya than an analysis of published material in *The Himalayan Journal* alone could provide. In particular, I argue that these private writings suggest that older forms of scholarship, as well as older ideas, prejudices, and theories still held purchase amongst scholarly members of the Himalayan Club. To look at every individual who published a scholarly article in *The Himalayan Journal* would expand beyond the scope of this chapter. Therefore, in this section I will examine the writing of five men, five specialist explorers who were members of the Himalayan Club and who contributed to *The Himalayan Journal*, examining their private impressions of the Himalaya and its peoples. These five men were: the botanist, Francis Kingdon Ward (1885-1958); Frank Ludlow (1885-1972), a protégé of Kingdon Ward's and later a representative of the British government in Tibet; Kenneth Mason (1887-1976); Reginald Schomberg (1880-1958), an explorer and latterly a diplomat; and Aurel Stein (1862-1943), an archaeologist notable for his excavations in what was then known as Chinese Turkestan, modern day Xinjiang. These men were chosen because they were amongst the earliest contributors to *The Himalayan Journal*, more than that, they were all comparatively well-known figures whose work had attracted the attention of organisations like the Royal Geographical Society. Mason, Kingdon Ward, and Stein each received the RGS's Founder's Medal, the most prestigious award offered by the Society. Similarly, they were all, with the exception of Stein, roughly contemporary and were on friendly terms with each other and were aware of each other's work, travels, and opinions. This overview will not be comprehensive, but will focus on general tendencies within these writings. More specifically I will examine the ways in which these men's impressions of peoples and places in the Himalaya aligned with their own interests, pleasure, and fulfilment. This is partially because an attempt to examine all of the various cultural currents which shaped

imperial attitudes about the Himalaya would extend beyond the scope of this thesis but also because looking at the confluence of scholarship and pleasure in private correspondence helps to illuminate the less colourful scholarly material which was published in *The Himalayan Journal*.

To wit, I will examine these men's views on the Himalaya as a geo-cultural reality, looking at how they conceived of the region in relation to the rest of India, as well as the distinctions they drew within the mountains themselves. I will also explore their thoughts on Himalayan peoples, examining the ways in which their descriptions and engagement with local peoples aligned with popular historical, ethnographic, and anthropological theories. Before proceedings it should be made clear that I am not arguing that these private materials represent a strict departure from other published materials produced by these authors. Indeed, published monographs often noted or described the same features, peoples, and places. The difference is often tonal, with monographs tempering the sharper observations an author might make in a diary or in a letter. In the end, I will argue that it is the differences, as well as the similarities, between these private observations and published accounts in *The Himalayan Journal* which is significant.

In examining the ways in which these five men described the Himalaya it is first best to clarify what I mean by this term. In a way, the inherent difficulty in defining the word Himalaya is an appropriate reflection of the nebulous and poorly-defined sense in which these men often used the term. That said, broad definitions can be come to. First, although these writers were clear about which specific mountain range they were operating in, for my purposes I am using the general term Himalaya to refer to both the Himalayan range itself, as well as the neighbouring Hindu Kush, Karakoram, Pamir, and Kunlun ranges in the north-west and the Kangri Karpo and Hengduan ranges in the east. There were and are significant differences between the topology and cultures of these areas but the ways in which travel in these regions

was described was often broadly similar. What is more, all of these areas were covered within *The Himalayan Journal*. With that caveat in mind the men I am describing travelled in both eastern and north-western stretches of the Himalayas and to some extent, beyond (Kingdon-Ward, Schomberg, and Stein ventured beyond the mountains and into Central Asia and Tibet).

When defining the Himalaya as broad geo-cultural reality one of the primary ways these men understood the region was in opposition to India, and to Indian history, people, and climate. By the 1820s it was understood that the Himalaya was the highest mountain range in the world. This fact alone was enough to distinguish the Himalaya as a space apart. Aside from this distinction, however, the region also came to be distinguished by what it was not, in particular, it was defined by its climate. Here, David Arnold's notion of tropicality is useful. According to Arnold, in the early stages of European inter-continental exploration, during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, tropical spaces were seen as Edenic lands of bounty and abundance 'enlivened and elevated to heights of wonder and enchantment by the brilliant colors and curious appearance of the animals, birds, fish, and other creatures that inhabited these regions'.³⁴ Later on, however, what Arnold terms the 'scientific' understanding of the tropics came to predominate. This second phase of the West's relationship with the tropics qua 'the tropics' entailed a much more systematic attempt at understanding which involved 'observation, mapping, and classification'.³⁵ India, however, presented an ontological dilemma for the British and defied easy categorization. 'India was *in* the tropics, but not necessarily *of* the tropics,' Arnold argued, and as Mughal authority waned and British power grew, older conceptions of a Persianate India, which fitted neatly into existing orientalist

³⁴ Arnold, *Tropics and the Traveling Gaze*, p. 111.

³⁵ Arnold, *Tropics and the Traveling Gaze*, p. 113.

paradigms began to seem unfit for purpose.³⁶ Arnold describes this conceptual transition well and it is worth quoting him at length:

As the Orientalist respect for, and engagement with, the history, languages, and cultures of South Asia waned, so a new generation of travelers, naturalists, and administrators gazed unmoved on the monuments of India's past. Either they saw India as a land of poverty, disease, and famine, whose current state of pitiful backwardness negated the extravagant claims once made by Orientalists for Indian civilization, or they turned with relief from the scorched and dusty plains to the cool delight of the forests, hills, and mountains where nature reigned.³⁷

This notion of India, and in particular Calcutta and Bengal, as a places of disease, heat, and backwardness features in the private writings of the men mentioned above. In his correspondence with Reginald Schomberg, Aurel Stein makes frequent reference to the climate of India. On hearing of Schomberg's appointment to a position in the south of India for instance, Stein related that he had 'felt a strong moral objection to spending one's energy in facing moist heat and all that it means for the human environment'.³⁸ And on learning of Schomberg's eventual departure from his posting in 1941 Stein was relieved that Schomberg could soon leave 'behind the trials of the South Indian bad weather'.³⁹ Kenneth Mason felt similarly about the Indian climate. In a letter to a friend, Mason griped that India was 'not a white man's Country' and acknowledged that Calcutta might be known by some as the second city in the Empire, but for him it was 'an easy first for filth'. And he ended his letter with a

³⁶ Arnold, *Tropics and the Traveling Gaze*, p. 113.

³⁷ Arnold, *Tropics and the Traveling Gaze*, 136.

³⁸ The Archives of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, Letter 16, September 11 1936, Correspondence between Aurel Stein and Reginald Schomberg, RSAA/SC/SCH/2/53.

³⁹ The Archives of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, Letter 40, May 14 1941, Correspondence between Aurel Stein and Reginald Schomberg, RSAA/SC/SCH/2/53.

postscript instructing the recipient to ‘Read Mother India if you want to learn about the country!’⁴⁰

These negative depictions of the climate of India also extended to the peoples of India and coalesced with racist discourses founded upon scientific racism.⁴¹ Indeed, Mason’s reference to *Mother India*, is particularly telling. The work of an American journalist, Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (1927) was a polemic about the state of contemporary India, focusing in particular on the state and status of women. Mayo’s work located the origins of India’s supposedly regressive attitudes towards women in Hindu culture and the title of her work was meant as an ironic evocation of ‘popular nationalistic representations of the nation [India] as mother’.⁴² Mayo’s work was massively popular and hugely controversial and was intended as an apologetic for continued British rule in India. That Mason should mention the book in the year after its publication is therefore unsurprising. Focusing exclusively on negative depictions of contemporary India, however, obscures the fact that for these men there were South and Central Asian peoples whom they did admire. To understand this, however, the importance of the so-called ‘Indo-Aryan invasion theory’ must be addressed.

The Indo-Aryan Invasion theory had its roots in the philological endeavours of William Jones and other early orientalist who noticed a familial relationship between Sanskrit and Latin. This association led many to conclude that both languages must share a common ancestor and that, by extensions, so must Indian and European peoples. As Tony Ballantyne points out, notions of an Aryan (the word literally means nobles in Sanskrit) invasion, supposed to have taken place around 1500BCE, were deeply embedded in Indian literary culture, and could be found in the Rig Veda. The idea was not a European invention, nor was it new, but

⁴⁰ The Archives of the Royal Geographical Society, Letter to Gardner, 2 April 1928, CB/9/1492 1921-30 Kenneth Mason.

⁴¹ For more on the correlation between race, climate, and health see: Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*.

⁴² Mrinalini Sinha, *Spectres of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 1.

the conclusions and theories which colonial scholars derived from this idea, however, were novel.⁴³ Indeed, it was this revelation which provided an intellectual framework to buttress notions of India as stagnant or trapped in history. The Bronze Age Aryan invaders, in this account, gradually became weaker through interbreeding with the supposedly pre-existing Dravidian inhabitants of the subcontinent and the enervating effects of the Subcontinent's climate.⁴⁴ Within this view a once dynamic culture had been brought low by the climate.

In published monographs these racist distinctions were often set out dispassionately, in academic terms, as a matter of fact. In private, however, this was not always the case. In the private correspondence between the Aurel Stein and the Reginald Schomberg, for instance, the supposed distinction between India, especially south India, and the Himalaya, were seen as having implications for Schomberg and Stein's personal and career satisfaction. Stein, for instance, on hearing about a trip Schomberg had taken to South India in 1934 wrote that 'I am not surprised that you did not find much of interest to you in South India. It is a region which has never attracted me. All the more you will enjoy the return to the mountains'.⁴⁵ And throughout the remainder of the 1930s both Stein and Schomberg would continue to contrast southern India, which Stein sometimes referred to disparagingly as Dravidia, with the mountains of Northwest India and Central Asia.

By 1936, Schomberg's opportunities to travel to the mountains had grown few and far between, however, and that year he was appointed to a diplomatic post in the dreaded south. On hearing of this development, Stein tried his best to strike an optimistic note writing, 'I do not know where your official seat in South India will be', he wrote 'but [I] trust that you will not find yourself tied down to it too much'. And Stein also suggested that there would

⁴³ Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race*, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race*, pp. 31-51.

⁴⁵ The Archives of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, Letter 10, 26 September 1934, Correspondence between Aurel Stein and Reginald Schomberg, RSAA/SC/SCH/2/53.

undoubtedly be ‘plenty of interesting places to visit down south.’ Although, he ultimately doubted ‘whether prolonged residence, say in Pondicherry, would be quite in your line’.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, for Schomberg Pondicherry was exactly where he would end up, as a diplomatic representative of the Raj to the French colonial administration there.

One thing that is immediately striking about Stein’s comments, aside from the continuous disparaging of South Indian and South Indians, was the implication that Schomberg’s official work might be getting in the way of his true passions. This correlation between work and environment, that is between working in Central Asia and the mountains and working in Pondicherry, and career satisfaction, is telling. This same association can be seen in another letter from Stein to Schomberg, sent four months after his initial, cautiously optimistic missive, wherein Stein’s true feelings seem to emerge:

It is good to know you well and looked after by your Hunza retainers in that rather trying region of Dravidia, I greatly admire your courage in going there for some time; for I can well imagine that neither (the) climate nor (the) people could be congenial to one who has travelled long in bracing mountain regions.⁴⁷

Here Stein is making an implicit moral distinction between peoples of the Himalaya, Schomberg’s ‘Hunza retainers’ (the Hunza Valley is located in present day Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan) and southern Indians. Indeed, in the same letter Stein not only commends the loyalty of these men from Hunza but he also suggests that they too would suffer from the climate in the South: ‘that your Hunza people are keeping by you in such parts... shows their devotion to your person & their pluck too’.⁴⁸ Stein’s views accorded with cultural stereotypes which held that peoples from the northwest frontiers of British India were more warlike, manly, and noble

⁴⁶ ARSAA, Correspondence between Aurel Stein and Reginald Schomberg, Letter 15.

⁴⁷ ARSAA, Correspondence between Aurel Stein and Reginald Schomberg, Letter 16.

⁴⁸ ARSAA, Correspondence between Aurel Stein and Reginald Schomberg, Letter 16.

than the peoples of the plains of India. They might be uncivilized, but their Aryan ancestry (various isolated socio-ethnic groups were purported to be descendants of Alexander the Great) and masculine virtues made them worthy of respect.

Negative stereotypes, however, were often applied to Himalayan peoples as well, especially to peoples with more recognisably East Asian features like Tibetans and Bhutanese. Kingdon-Ward, for instance, in a diary entry which commented on an encounter with Tibetans on the road near Rangpo in Sikkim, remarked that ‘it was good to the smell the sour, rancid smell of a Tibetan again’.⁴⁹ This comment can be seen as both disparaging as well as complimentary, albeit in a backhanded way. In a similar vein, there are Frank Ludlow’s musings on the relative attractiveness of Bhutanese women taken from a 1933 diary documenting a journey through Bhutan and Tibet. ‘The Bhutanese are very kind and hospitable to us’. He wrote, but ‘none of the Bhutanese women can be called by any stretch of the imagination attractive. They cut their hair short and it is sometimes difficult to make up one’s mind whether the individual one meets is a man or woman’.⁵⁰ And in 1926 on his journey to survey the Shaksgam Glacier Kenneth Mason claimed that he had not yet ‘seen a good-looking or clean Ladakhi woman’.⁵¹

These negative depictions, however, were often compliments, of a sort, as well. Himalayan peoples might have been perceived to be dirty and uncivilized but they were deemed fundamentally decent and worthy of respect. This was in contrast to descriptions of Indians, and Indian nationalists, which grew particularly hostile throughout the 1930s. In 1938 Schomberg, in a letter to the noted explorer and spy F.M. Bailey, exclaimed that ‘the best we

⁴⁹ The Archives Collection at Kew Gardens, March 17, Rangpo Sikkim, Frank Kingdon-Ward Diary 1924: FKW/1/1.

⁵⁰ India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London, Frank Ludlow Collection D979 (Unpublished Diaries), May 27 1933, MSS EUR D979/8 (Bhutan and Tibet).

⁵¹ The Archives of the Royal Geographical Society, RGS Correspondence files 1921-45, *Copy of Journal of Shaksgam Expedition, 1926* (London: Royal Geographical Society, 1926), p. 223.

can do is to get our money out of the country whilst the going is good. The whole of this Indianisation and independence is unnecessary, as the Indian will find out when the Germans run the country'.⁵² Both Schomberg and Stein were also dismissive of contemporary Indian scholarship. 'Your distrust of Indian scholarship when it tries to follow modern lines of research is unfortunately justified in most cases', Stein wrote to Schomberg. And although Stein acknowledged 'exceptions of sound scholarship', in his opinion, this was largely the work of 'an earlier generation [which operated] before shortsighted and intrinsically reactionary nationalism infected the Indian intelligentsia'.⁵³

At this point it is best to stop and consider all of these various thematic strands. From their privately stated opinions, it is clear that these men's private views of the Himalaya and Himalayan peoples were shaped by a variety of ideological and intellectual theories: namely, Indo-Aryanism and climatic determinism. The prevalence of these ideas has already been well established in the historiography. What I wish to stress here is the relationship between these theories and the conduct of scholarly expeditions. As I have just demonstrated, for these five members of the Himalayan Club, their conceptualisation of the Himalaya was fundamentally a backwards facing one. The Himalaya existed at a remove from contemporary and even historical India, it was uncivilized and wild, and all the better for it.

This conception of the Himalaya, however, seems somewhat out of step with Kingdon Ward and Mason's championing of the specialist explorer and of empiricism. Indeed, in his inaugural address as Oxford University's first statutory professor in Geography in 1933, Kenneth Mason explicitly championed 'the present'. In the lecture, Mason focused on the utility of geography asserting that 'the ordinary citizen of a world empire such as ours will do

⁵² India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London, Letter to F.M. Bailey, August 9 1938, Schomberg Correspondence MSS EUR F.157 249.

⁵³ The Archives of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, Letter 30, 14 May 1941, Correspondence between Aurel Stein and Reginald Schomberg and the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, RSAA/SC/SCH/2/53.

well to study the history of that empire and the geography of our own time; for we live in the present'. Elaborating on this theme, Mason added that 'much of the guidance that we have for the future comes from a study of the historical past; but to be of use for the future it must be set in the geographical present. The present has always been the most important moment in geography'.⁵⁴

But this apparent disconnect between a private preference for an India located in the past and a Himalaya located outside the bounds of civilizational time entirely, and a desire to work at the cutting edge of science and scholarship disappears if one acknowledges the distinction between public and private thoughts. It is one thing to gripe privately to a friend, or in a diary which was only likely be read by men who already shared one's own prejudices and assumptions. That said, it is also important to acknowledge the positions of these five men relative to the Raj. Ludlow, Mason, and Schomberg were at various times employed in an official capacity by the British administration in India whereas Kingdon Ward and Stein were independent scholars who sometimes conducted work on behalf of the government. This is not to say that private opinions should be ignored, far from it. In this case, however, these private thoughts must be considered in light of changes in scholarship within India.

In archaeology for instance, Stein was a representative of the old guard, and a tradition dating back to the founding of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1861, which favoured a textually based form of archaeology. This textually based approach had informed the work of Alexander Cunningham, the first director-general of the Archaeological Survey of India, who sought to use the accounts of the 7th Century CE Chinese Buddhist traveller and pilgrim Xuanzang to discover and survey ancient Buddhist sites, thereby gaining a supposedly more

⁵⁴Kenneth Mason, *The Geography of Current Affairs: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 15th November 1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p. 6.

objective account of early Indian history.⁵⁵ Early in his career Stein had produced a translation of the *Rajatarangini*, a twelfth-century semi-legendary account of the kings of Kashmir. Stein had supplemented this translation with archaeological and topographical information he had gained from tours of the region.⁵⁶ As Thomas Trautmann and Carla Sinopoli put it: ‘The privilege of the text in the investigation of the South Asian past derives from an idea that is expressed by the early Orientalists of British India’, namely that texts give ‘access to the inward meaning of the South Asian past, as against the authority of sight which delivers only the outward and material side of South Asia’.⁵⁷ By the early twentieth century, however, under John Marshall’s tenure as Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India, this textual approach to archaeology had begun to fall out of favour, replaced by large scale excavations, such as those carried out at Mohenjo Daro in the 1920s.⁵⁸

Similarly, by the end of the nineteenth century climatic determinism had largely fallen out of favour. As Mark Harrison put it: ‘differences between human beings came increasingly to be seen as less amenable to environmental influences. This new conception of difference stressed heredity and the innate, unalterable characteristics of the “races” of Mankind’.⁵⁹ This focus on racial differences had some bearing on Anglo-Indians’ relationship to mountain spaces. As Dane Kennedy has argued, the rise of the hill stations was not merely a product of fears about the insalubrious effects of the Indian climate but also mirrored psychological and sociological changes which were occurring in the metropole throughout the Victorian era. Building upon the work of Jürgen Habermas, who argued that the emergence and subsequent

⁵⁵ Trautmann, Thomas R. and Carla M. Sinopoli, ‘In the Beginning Was the Word: Excavating the Relations between History and Archaeology in South Asia’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45 (2002), 492–523 (p. 499).

⁵⁶ Himanshu Prabha Ray, *Colonial Archaeology in South Asia: The Legacy of Sir Mortimer Wheeler* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 13.

⁵⁷ Trautmann and Sinopoli, ‘In the Beginning Was the Word’, 517.

⁵⁸ Prabha Ray, *Colonial Archaeology in South Asia*, p. 18.

⁵⁹ Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*, p. 12.

differentiation of private and public spheres facilitated the emergence of bourgeois society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Kennedy argues that, 'In India, where the British suffered heightened concern about the ways that private actions undermined public authority and public power corrupted private judgment, the boundaries between the two spheres were even more sharply drawn'.⁶⁰ This heightened focus on both self-restraint and outward displays of authority would come to dictate the patterns of life for British expatriates in India. The tension brought about by this desire to curate and control the self was, according to Kennedy, alleviated in the hill stations which 'presented a rare opportunity to reproduce the social conditions that gave their homeland its distinctive dynamic'.⁶¹ Hill stations 'provided a public space where the absolutist pretensions of imperial authority could be set aside and the necessity to conform to colonial normative codes could be tempered by the desire to satisfy personal needs'.⁶²

Thus, for the members of the Himalayan Club, both the Club and by extension the *Journal*, were spaces in which this tension between private and public could be eased. The Club was an escape from the struggles and perceived unpleasantness of contemporary India. And because the Himalayan Club was a club, rather than a society, its members could indulge their prejudices and predilections for older forms of scholarship. They could envisage themselves as a part of an unbroken continuum of exploration quite apart from the ongoing developments below the hills. Unlike the pioneers, however, this work was conducted in the footsteps of their more illustrious forbears, corroborating or correcting information rather than charting the unknown. This is not to say, of course, that scholarly articles in *The Himalayan Journal* deliberately ignored contemporary trends in scholarship. Rather, I am arguing that *The*

⁶⁰ Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (London: University of California Press, 1996), p. 6.

⁶¹ Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains*, p. 6.

⁶² Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains*, p. 7.

Himalayan Journal allowed these writers to accentuate those elements in their scholarship which accorded with their private prejudices about the nature of Indian history, Indian peoples, and the Himalaya.

III. Specialist Exploration in *The Himalayan Journal*

Before turning to Kingdon-Ward, Ludlow, Mason, Schomberg, and Stein's published material in *The Himalayan Journal* something must first be said about the broader range of scholarly material which found its way into its pages. *The Himalayan Journal*'s first volume, published in 1929, is notably lacking in content related to mountaineering. Indeed, there are two articles on glaciology, two relating to natural science, one concerning geodesy (the study of the Earth's geometric shape), five concerning exploration and travel, one concerning etymology, and none concerning mountaineering. And the *Journal*'s second volume contains only three articles, out of a total of 13 which could realistically be described as mountaineering orientated. This imbalance in coverage was gradually reversed by the mid-to-late 1930s, and mountaineering content came to dominate the journal almost exclusively in the years following the Second World War, nevertheless, it is interesting that in the first five or so years of the Club's existence there should be such a preponderance of amateur scholarly and epistolary content. There were a number of reasons for this.

Aside from the obvious physical demands of high elevation and the difficulty of provisioning expeditions, the most significant practical limitation on Himalayan mountaineering during the period was the prohibition on exhibitions to Tibet between 1924-1932. The first expedition to Everest was sanctioned by the Tibetan government in 1921. This reconnaissance mission was followed by attempts at the summit in 1922 and 1924, the latter of which significantly damaged Anglo-Tibetan relations and lead to prohibition on further

expeditions until 1932.⁶³ The source of the tension was a film produced by John Noel during the 1924 expedition, which not only included footage of Tibetans that was deemed culturally insensitive by the Tibetan government, but was also, on its release, accompanied by live performances by a group of monks who were described by British commentators as ‘dancing lamas’.⁶⁴ Because of this controversy, during the first five years of the Club’s existence, an expedition to Everest was out of the question. Still, there were a number of impressive peaks that were still accessible by would-be mountaineers such as Kangchenjunga, Nanda Devi, Nanga Parbat, and K2. Thus, the preponderance of non-mountaineers and of non-mountaineering content in the *Himalayan Journal* must also be explained in positive terms. The most obvious explanation is that these were men that Kenneth Mason, the editor of the *Journal*, knew and could count on to supply him with material in a timely fashion. More than that, Mason adamantly believed that there was a dearth of capable mountaineers in the Himalaya, so it is hardly surprising that he would turn to men that he knew.

Bearing that in mind, it is nonetheless interesting that many accounts of specialist exploration in the *Journal* felt the need to justify their inclusion. Hugh Whistler, for example, in an article concerning bird-life in Kashmir, began his article with an appeal to both amateur enthusiasts as well as tourists stating: ‘Kashmir is very rapidly becoming the playground of India’, he wrote, and the members of the Himalayan Club are ‘likely to see more of Kashmir in the immediate future than of the rest of the Himalaya put together’.⁶⁵ And since Whistler desired to see ‘avifauna represented in the inaugural number’ of the *Journal*, he felt that ‘its aspects in Kashmir are perhaps the most suitable to dwell upon’.⁶⁶ A similar appeal to the general membership of the Himalayan Club can be seen in J.B.P. Angwin’s article relating his

⁶³ Peter H. Hansen, ‘The Dancing Lamas of Everest: Cinema, Orientalism and Anglo-Tibetan Relations in the 1920s.’ *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 3 (1996), 712–47 (p. 737).

⁶⁴ Hansen, ‘the Dancing Lamas of Everest’, pp. 727-734.

⁶⁵ Hugh Whistler, ‘Some Aspects of Bird-Life in Kashmir’, *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 29-51 (p. 29).

⁶⁶ Whistler, ‘Some Aspects of Bird-Life in Kashmir’, p. 29.

surveying work in the Kagan Valley: ‘this account of a survey expedition into the Kagan valley will perhaps interest few members of the Himalayan Club who have penetrated the deeper recesses of the Himalaya’, he wrote. ‘It may, however, appeal to those who seek fresh experiences, or who have not the leisure, the means, or the opportunity for more lengthy expeditions’.⁶⁷ And the surveyor J. de Graaff Hunter prefaced his article regarding the magnetic attraction of the Himalaya with a rather belaboured pun:

Members of the Himalayan Club will not be surprised at the above title [‘The Attraction of the Himalaya’]; but many of them will not have in mind exactly the subject with which the article is to deal. Attraction is a compendious term which includes many very different meanings. Here it is to be used in a very special sense: and while this may at first sight appear prosaic, it leads to ideas which have a very absorbing interest to some minds.⁶⁸

The authors of these article felt the need to justify their article’s inclusion within the *Journal*. And they did this by stressing the ways in which their own specialist account of scholarship and travel could not only apply to fellow enthusiasts but also to the Club’s membership writ large. This perhaps reflected an insecurity that such work was too specialised to interest many members of the Club. It was also, no doubt, a reflection of some uncertainty regarding the nature and future of the Club. After all, the Club, despite its ostensible primary focus on mountaineering, had deliberately wide-ranging objects and it is easy enough to see how its individual members could have come to their own conclusions about how the Club might take shape. Most importantly, however, these prefaces are a reminder that the Himalayan Club was, despite its inclusion of scholarly subjects and its publication of scholarly articles, first and foremost a Club and not a learned society.

⁶⁷ Lieut. J.B.P. Angwin, ‘The Kagan Valley’, *The Himalayan Journal* 02 (1930), p. 48.

⁶⁸ J. de Graaff Hunter, ‘The Attraction of the Himalaya’, *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 48-60 (p. 59).

Turning now to the content of these article, and returning to the five men mentioned in the previous section I must first make clear that the following is not an attempt to smooth out the differences between disciplines. It is to be expected that an article dealing with archaeology would be different from an article on glaciology. Similarly, it would be anachronistic to argue that scholarship which was informed by orientalist ideas and theories was in some way less serious than other forms of contemporary scholarship. Bearing that in mind I argue that even in scholarly articles dealing with subjects as disparate as archaeology, glaciology, and botany, there was a preoccupation with the past, and a desire to contextualise contemporary research within and alongside discourses about Himalayan exploration which stretched into the past. More specifically, in their scholarly contributions to *The Himalayan Journal* the five authors mentioned previously all demonstrated a desire to locate their research within a broader narrative of exploration which stretched back to an era of supposedly more exciting and expansive discoveries.

In the fourth volume of the *Journal*, Stein contributed an article entitled ‘On Ancient Tracks Past the Pamirs’. The article, which Stein wrote after having been invited to do so by Mason, reads like what it is, ‘a survey,’ offering an historical overview of Central Asian history beyond the Pamir range. The article is framed almost like a travelogue, charting the various trails one might take to travel through the Pamirs and into the Tarim Basin. Stein was keen to stress that despite the forbidding topography and climate of Xinjiang it had long been a crossroads between east and west. Throughout the account he gives both historical overviews of locations as well as practical information for travellers. Stein’s account is wide-ranging moving from a discussion of Genghis Khan’s conquest of Samarqand to Marco Polo’s travels in the Wakhan Corridor in present day Afghanistan.⁶⁹ Crucially, throughout the article Stein makes frequent reference to the textual sources from which he derived his information, namely

⁶⁹ Sir Aurel Stein, ‘On Ancient Tracks Past the Pamirs’, *The Himalayan Journal* 04 (1932), 1-26.

the Tang dynasty Chinese traveller and Buddhist monk Xuanzang.⁷⁰ Xuanzang and his work was a common point of reference for Stein, and he makes mention of him in other works as well. In *On Alexander's Track to the Indus*, for instance, Stein describes Xuanzang as his 'Chinese patron saint', and in his various travels through North-west India and Central Asia Stein had come to rely upon Xuanzang's topographical indications.⁷¹ In many ways Xuanzang was indeed a fitting 'patron saint' for Stein. An inveterate traveller who seemed to relish travel for the sake of it, Xuanzang, travelled from China through Central Asia and across great swathes of South Asia. These travels had been motivated by Xuanzang's desire to see if Chinese translations of original Buddhist texts were accurate. Consequently he had set out for India to get to the source.⁷² This parallels Stein's desires to get to the heart of things through first-hand experience, whether it be the tracks taken by Alexander the Great or Xuanzang himself.

The rest of the articles which I will be analysing in this section came from the first volume of *The Himalayan Journal*. Francis Kingdon Ward, Frank Ludlow, Kenneth Mason, and Reginald Schomberg all contributed to this volume. Like Stein's article, these men's work also focused on solving, correcting, or expanding upon a problem from the past. In Kingdon Ward's 'Botanical Exploration in the Mishmi Hills', for instance, although he is at pains to stress that 'the Mishmi Hills are not new ground to the pioneer explorer, nor to the Survey of India, who mapped most of the unadministered trans-frontier territory on the quarter-inch scale in 1911-13', he still saw room for the botanist to make a contribution. Indeed, Kingdon Ward saw his mission as two-fold: 'the obvious one of discovering new species, and the more exotic

⁷⁰ Stein, 'On Ancient Tracks Past the Pamirs', p. 4.

⁷¹ M. Aurel Stein, *On Alexander's Track to the Indus: Personal Narrative of Explorations on the North-West Frontier of India Carried Out under the Orders of H.M. Indian Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p. 15.

⁷² Sally Hovey Wriggins, *Xuanzang: A Buddhist Pilgrim on the Silk Road* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 3-12.

one of finding old plants in new places'. Beside these more specialist missions Kingdon Ward had also set himself a grander mission. 'For some years I have been botanizing on the North-east Frontier of India', he wrote 'always in the hope of throwing light on a certain purely academic problem, which may be stated thus:

What happens to the Great Himalayan range after the Dihang-Tsangpo has drilled a passage through it, to form one of the greatest gorges in the world? Does it, like the river, turn round on itself and trend, if not west, at any rate south? Or does it continue in a general easterly direction?⁷³

Thus, Kingdon Ward was simultaneously presenting his article as a specialist contribution to the field of botany as well as an account of exploration aimed at solving a great geographical question.

Kenneth Mason's contribution to the 1929 journal, 'Indus Floods and Shyok Glaciers', which dealt with the possibility that Shyok Glacial Dam (a glacial dam being a wall of ice blocking a glacial lake) might break and cause the Indus River to flood, might seem like a straightforward example of contemporary scholarship. Mason's focus in the article, however, is firmly fixed in the past. 'In view of the interest roused by the glacier block in the upper Shyok', he wrote, 'and the effects of its possible burst and consequent floods, I have collected in this paper as much of the historical evidence of previous floods in the Indus basin as I have been able to find'.⁷⁴ It would, of course, be wrong-headed to suggest that just because Mason was utilising past data that his was a nostalgic, or back-wards facing article. Rather, it is the way in which Mason contextualised and presented data from the past in this work that reveals this. Mason begins his work with a preface, instructing his reader to remember the writers whose work he would be referencing 'had an extremely limited knowledge of the geography

⁷³ Kingdon Ward, 'Botanical Exploration in the Mishmi Hills', p. 52.

⁷⁴ Kenneth Mason, 'Indus Floods and Shyok Glaciers', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 10-29 (p. 10).

of the region', and were consequently 'somewhat liable to jump to erroneous conclusions'.⁷⁵ By stating this at the outset Mason, like Kingdon Ward was establishing a problem which had its origins in the past, and with which he was currently grappling. Mason then proceeded to set out a highly detailed account of all the available evidence he had been able to compile regarding the history of Indus floods going back to the early nineteenth century. He leaves any conclusions for his readers and limits himself to a dry recitation of dates, and short descriptions of the available evidence on flooding for a given year.⁷⁶ What is significant about Mason's account is his attempt to compile as much disparate data as possible within one account. More than that, it is the fact that Mason, despite his knowledge of surveying, was not a specialist in glaciology.

Ultimately, the inclusion of Mason's long article (it ran to a little over eighteen pages) could perhaps be seen as something of a vanity project, or an attempt to present *The Himalayan Journal* as a serious, scholarly publication. As was mentioned in the first section of this chapter, however, there was a certain degree of interest in the glacial dam at Shyok amongst the members of the Club, and Mason received unsolicited letters regarding the matter. Nor, indeed, was it the only article which dealt with the possibility of Indus flooding in the first volume of the *Journal*. Frank Ludlow also analysed the possibility of the Shyok glacial dam breaking in his article 'The Shyok Dam in 1928'. Ludlow had even less claim to relevant knowledge about the future of the dam, a fact which he acknowledged himself in the conclusion of his piece. 'I am painfully aware of the imperfections of my story', he wrote. 'To write usefully on such a subject I ought to have possessed an elementary knowledge of glaciology and engineering'.⁷⁷ Ludlow, however, was neither of these things, he was an amateur botanist. That he should choose to write about the fate of the glacier anyway, is significant. Ludlow's introduction to

⁷⁵ Mason, 'Indus Floods and Shyok Glaciers', p. 10.

⁷⁶ Mason, 'Indus Floods and Shyok Glaciers', pp. 13-29.

⁷⁷ Frank Ludlow. 'The Shyok Dam in 1928', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 4-10 (p.10).

the piece, which addressed false predictions of a break in the dam in 1928, suggests that the worries about break in 1929 were probably common amongst officials in the north-west of India.⁷⁸ Even bearing this in mind, Ludlow's account, which was essentially an account of travel mixed with detailed observations about the glacier, seems difficult to justify.

Reginald Schomberg's 'The Urta Saryk Valley', is even more difficult to see as a meaningful contribution to scholarship. His account of the Urta Saryk valley, located in the Borohoro mountains, an offshoot of the Tien Shan, amounts to little more than a description of the valley itself. He describes the dimensions of the valley, its topography, its flora and little else. Schomberg ended his brief contribution by adding that 'the Urta Saryk valley was completely deserted, for the Kazaks graze there only during the early winter. To me the absence of man was a great relief'.⁷⁹

Having presented these five different articles it could fairly be asked, what, if anything justifies their inclusion in a chapter dealing with specialist scholarship? For although Mason's article aspired to a strict empiricism, and Kingdon Ward and Stein's married travel with serious scholarly discussion, Ludlow and Schomberg's contributions would seem to stretch the definitional bounds of specialist exploration. These apparent differences, however, should not mask that which unites them: a trust in first hand-experience. For in each of these articles it is experience, the impressions and observations of an individual which constitutes the basis of scholarship. Even Mason's compendious notes were but a compilation of individual impressions. And each of these articles whether explicitly or implicitly, positioned itself as an account of scholarly exploration. Schomberg did the least to engage with contemporary scholarship but his descriptions were still worthwhile because they were from the field. And

⁷⁸ Ludlow, 'The Shyok Dam in 1928', p. 4.

⁷⁹ Reginald Schomberg, 'The Urta Saryk Valley', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 66-67 (p.67).

ultimately it was this, the marriage of experience in the field with scholarship which counted for men like Kingdon Ward, Ludlow, Mason, Schomberg, and Stein.

IV. Conclusions

At the start of this chapter, I argued that the Himalayan Club's relationship with specialist exploration, that is, with Himalayan travel which was conducted for erstwhile scholarly purposes, combined a nostalgia for the past with an optimism about the future possibilities for scholarship on offer in the Himalaya. In the first section of this chapter, I analysed the Himalayan Club in relation to contemporary learned societies like the Royal Geographical Society. I argued that despite scholarly ambitions the Himalayan Club was, at the end of the day, just that, a club, and as such was equally as concerned with pleasure, passions, and entertainment as it was the increasingly regulated scholarship which was becoming the norm in learned societies. In the second section of the chapter, I looked at a sample of specialist explorers' private thoughts and impressions of the Himalaya taken from correspondence and diaries. These private writings negatively contrasted India with the Himalaya and there were frequent disparaging comments about the state of contemporary India and about Indians more generally. These negative stereotypes and, conversely, positive stereotypes about the Himalaya, derived in large part from scholarship associated with the nineteenth century: namely the Indo-Aryan invasion theory and climatic determinism. And more generally, I argued that for Francis Kingdon Ward, Frank Ludlow, Kenneth Mason, Reginald Schomberg, and Aurel Stein, their vision of India was principally backwards looking. In the third and final section, I analysed the broader place of scholarly writing in *The Himalayan Journal* focusing on the five men whom I examined in section two. Despite their

differences in content, tone, and methodology I argued that all of these men placed great stock in empirical evidence, even if it came from amateur source.

Ultimately, then, the Himalayan Club had an ambiguous relationship with scholarship, and specialist exploration. On the one hand the Club's members were willing and sometimes even keen to adopt the mantle of specialism and on the other they still clung to ideas and theories which had emerged from an older amateur tradition. In some ways, this ambiguity must be accepted as a part of the Club which cannot be smoothed out or explained away. Academic practices and epistemologies change gradually and incompletely and it is difficult to generalise about a given time period without sacrificing nuance. For that reason, it is best to look at what united the Himalayan Club's attitudes towards scholarship with older traditions of colonial knowledge production in India. And here I would argue that many members of the Club deliberately clung to older methods of scholarship, older ideas, and older scholars themselves because of anxieties about the nature and future of British rule in India. It is here that the Himalaya, itself, becomes truly significant. Earlier in this chapter, I looked at the how the private correspondence of men like Mason, Stein, and Schomberg reflected a preference for the Himalaya because of the ways in which it was different from India. But the Himalaya also had a positive appeal for these men. In particular, it was the Himalaya's unique frontier status that captured their interest.

Thomas Simpson's recent monograph *The Frontier in British India* has shaped my thinking in this regard. Simpson argues that as Assam, Sindh, and the Punjab were annexed to British India in the 1840s the Himalayan frontier became an object of both anxiety and fascination:

From the outset, the supposed unruliness of upland and desert-bound regions beyond the formal administration of the Company-State was prized as well as feared. Frontier

communities and terrain threatened to overwhelm the state's resources by impacting prestige and income alike, not to mention the danger they presented to the life and limb of British personnel and colonised subjects. But for these very reasons frontiers became celebrated as proving grounds for individual men and for colonial rule.⁸⁰

Simpson argues that the Himalayan frontier presented imperial surveyors, administrators, and soldiers with unique opportunities. The frontier came to be seen as 'a space of openness and exception' which 'allowed agents of the colonial state to act in ways that contravened notions of what was viable or acceptable elsewhere and to ignore similar undertakings in the past that had conspicuously failed'. This view of the Himalayan frontier as a space of 'frontier forgetting' is one which I share.⁸¹

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, for the scholarly members of the Himalayan Club, knowledge production in the Himalaya 'relied on strategies of forgetting, overlooking, and occluding'.⁸² For them, the mountains and the great plateaux of Tibet and Xinjiang were places in which an individual Briton could still explore. Unlike the vision of the Himalaya set out by Simpson, however, the mountains were becoming less unruly; this was especially the case in well-travelled areas like Kashmir, Sikkim, and Himachal Pradesh, but it was also happening in Ladakh, the Karakoram, and other more remote areas of the Himalaya. Indeed, at the same time as the Himalayan Club valorised the remoteness of the Himalaya, they sought to diminish this very feature, to make the Himalaya more accessible because of, not in spite of, its remoteness. Because of this paradox, because they simultaneously aspired to specialist knowledge and amateur enthusiasm, the specialist explorers within the Himalayan Club constructed a fundamentally nostalgic vision of knowledge production within the pages of *The*

⁸⁰ Simpson, *The Frontier in British India*, p.5.

⁸¹ Simpson, *The Frontier in British India*, p. 6.

⁸² Simpson, *The Frontier in British India*, p. 6.

Himalayan Journal. One in which, the individual impressions, thoughts, and observations of individual Britons still counted for something.

Within this vision, the nature and scale of the discovery was less important than the process of exploration itself. And it was for this reason, in part, that Mason, and other early members of the Club believed that Himalayan travel could have a salutary effect on young officers. Exploration could, in a sense, be performed. As with mountaineering, the experience of scholarly exploration, predicated on empiricism and first-hand experience, was just as important, if not more so, than the actual results of the enterprise. And perhaps more subtly, conceiving of specialist exploration in this way allowed men like Mason, Stein, and others to reconfigure and repackage the history of specialist exploration in the Himalaya to suit contemporary realities. Rather than viewing the project of colonial knowledge production as a failure (in light of the increasing inevitability of Indian independence in one form or another) these men could re-imagine the imperial project as one of exploratory progress. The Empire and more specifically India, was a burden to bear, but the Himalaya was still a place in which the exploratory spirit that had supposedly assembled the empire in the first place could be inculcated and embraced. Whatever the ultimate fate of the British in India the scholarly work of these individuals on the roof of the world would endure.

Chapter 4: Recreational Exploration

Like the previous chapter the subject of this chapter is once again Himalayan travel. More specifically, this chapter deals with recreational upland travel, in particular that which was undertaken by military and political officers during short periods of leave or in the course of their work, often with a strong focus on hunting and often undertaken alongside friends, comrades-in-arms, or wives. These excursions could and did vary according to a variety of factors: the amount of leave available and the time of year in which it was given; the climbing ability or lack thereof of the participants; the region in which an agent was posted and any transport difficulties this posed. Above and beyond anything else, however, it was shikar (a Persian word meaning hunting) which underpinned many of these expeditions, constituting either the primary objective of an excursion to the hills, with some incumbent (and welcome) trekking thrown in alongside, or, at the very least an integral part of it. The primacy of hunting within the lexicon of Anglo-Indian leisure has been well established in the historiography, and was also acknowledged by contemporary observers. Indeed, the Himalayan Club's acceptance of shikar as an object of the Club was, in one sense, nothing more than an acknowledgment of the ubiquity of hunting in British India. The following, however, will not be concerned with hunting in this broader sense. Rather, it will examine a form of imperial recreation unique to the Himalaya, a form of travel that John Mackenzie has described as 'a combination of trekking, mountaineering and shooting which proved irresistible to officials, [and] army and forestry officers enjoying shooting leave'.¹ This particular form of mountain recreation has been given a fairly limited reception within the broader literature, but has the potential to significantly improve our understanding of contemporary imaginings of the Himalaya, as well as the role of British imperialism and imperialists therein. Within the context of this thesis,

¹ John MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 192-193.

however, it is not the practicalities of this travel which is of interest. Rather, it is the way in which these practicalities were translated into *The Himalayan Journal* that is of concern here.

The previous chapter addressed the foundation and first several issues of *The Himalayan Journal*, focusing in particular on the early preponderance of narratives of scholarly travel. In that chapter I argued that the Club's inclusion of such material, and indeed the inclusion of members whose travel was principally dedicated to science or scholasticism rather than climbing, served a vital conceptual function. Namely, that *The Himalayan Journal*, through its mixture of accounts of botany, ornithology, archaeology, etc. and mountaineering created a space in which a variety of different kinds of Himalayan travel could all be conceived of as exploration. In this chapter I will continue this analysis of *The Himalayan Journal*. Unlike in Chapter 3, however, which focused on 'specialist exploration', that is, on exploratory travel which incorporated or foregrounded scholarly purposes and pursuits, this chapter will focus on recreational travel.

I have chosen to dedicate a chapter to this kind of travel, which I will hereafter refer to as recreational travel, for several reasons. The most obvious being that the Himalayan Club made a point of including it as an object. And *The Himalayan Journal*, especially in its earliest volumes, contained many first-hand accounts of recreational travel and maintained a dedicated 'Expeditions' section, which detailed large scale mountaineering as well as smaller scale recreational expeditions. These recreational accounts, however, were often framed as mountaineering expeditions. Indeed, many of the expeditions which I will analyse in this chapter did have mountaineering as a primary objective. Other travellers, however, made little pretence about having serious climbing ambitions and framed their accounts in terms of the insights their travel might offer to both climbers and travellers alike.

Another reason for studying recreational travel is because of its popularity. Kashmir, in particular, was a popular destination for hunters seeking ibex, black bears, red bears, goral stags, and markhor. Though the popularity of Kashmir, as well as the western portion of the Himalayas more generally, was due to more than just the availability of large animals. Indeed, as John Mackenzie has argued, the popularity of Kashmir as a hunting destination rested on a belief that the mountains there were still ‘wild and remote’ even though the region itself was ‘tamed and half-familiar’.² This can be seen in preponderance of hunting memoirs produced by colonial officials which emerged during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.³

But the most important reason for examining recreational travel is because the members of the Himalayan Club saw it as a form of exploration in itself. It might not have compared to the journeys of Younghusband or F.M. Bailey, or to the climbing exploits of George Mallory and Alexander Kellas, but recreational expeditions were still seen as existing on the same continuum, with the same perceived benefits and attractions, albeit at different magnitudes of scale.

To that end, this chapter will proceed in three parts. The first, will address the historiography of recreational travel and hunting in the Himalaya. Hunting in India and the British Empire more generally, has received a significant amount of scholarly attention since the late 1980s, beginning with the publication of John Mackenzie’s *The Empire of Nature* and picking up pace in the twenty-first century.⁴ More recently, however, scholars have begun to

² John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 192.

³ Jim Corbett, *Man-eaters of Kumaon* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1944). is one of the best-known examples of this genre but members of the Himalayan Club provided several contributions as well. Including H. L. Haughton, *Sport and Folklore in the Himalaya* (London: Edward Arnold, 1913). C. H. Stockley, *Big Game Shooting in the Indian Empire* (London: Constable, 1928). C. H. Stockley, *Stalking in the Himalayas and Northern India* (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1936).

⁴ See Mackenzie. *The Empire of Nature*. William Beinart, ‘Empire, Hunting and Ecological Change in Southern and Central Africa’, *Past and Present*, vol. 128, no. 1 (1990), 162–86. Callum McKenzie, ‘The British Big-Game Hunting Tradition, Masculinity and Fraternalism with Particular Reference to the “Shikar Club”’, *The Sports Historian*, vol. 1, no. 20 (May 2000), 70–96. Kenneth Czech, *With Rifle & Petticoat: Women as Big Game Hunters, 1880-1940* (Maryland: Derrydale Press, 2002). And for some examples of more recent works see:

pay more attention to the specificities and complications of hunting in the Himalayas as a unique phenomenon unto itself. This scholarship has challenged the idea that British or European hunters acted alone in the Himalaya by illustrating the ways in which local labourers, hunters, and guides made hunting expeditions possible. Taking my inspiration from these works, particularly, from the works of Shafqat Hussain and Vijaya Ramadas Mandala, I will argue that despite this reality, for many British hunters travelling in the Himalaya their perception was indeed of being alone. Or, to put the point more finely, traveling in the Himalayas allowed British political and military officers to feel like autonomous individuals in a way that they did not think possible on the plains.

The remaining sections of this chapter examine the ways in which recreational travel expeditions were described and conceptualised within *The Himalayan Journal*. Section II looks at the content of self-authored narratives of recreational travel. Focusing on the ways in which these articles were framed within the *Journal* as well as the things that the authors of these pieces saw fit to publish. And, finally, section III deals with the ways in which trekking and mountaineering were seen in relationship to each other. This is accomplished through an analysis of both the integration of recreational travel into the broader superstructure of *The Journal* as well as accounts of trekking which could also be seen as mountaineering narratives.

This chapter, then, is ultimately concerned with the ways in which the Himalayan Club conceived of exploration. By conceptualising recreational travel as exploration, it is my contention that the Club sought to make *The Himalayan Journal* a space in which the average political or military officer could be seen as an explorer. This is a continuation of the argument, set out in the introduction and begun in chapter four, that the Club conceived of exploration as

Julie Hughes, *Animal Kingdoms: Hunting, the Environment and Power in the Indian Princely States* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2013). And Angela Thompsett, *Hunting Africa: British Sport, African Knowledge and the Nature of Empire* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

a spectrum: the specialist explorer represented its past, the recreational traveller its present, and the mountaineer its future. Underpinning this spectrum, however, was a vision of the Empire that was conceptualized in terms of the individual imperialist's experience of it. In the introduction I argued that *The Himalayan Journal* constructed an imagined Himalaya, one in which the mountains acted as a theatre of individualistic imperialism. In this chapter I will analyse perhaps the clearest expression of that vision.

I. Enter Shikari: Historiography, Hunting, and Recreation in the Himalaya

Hunting, as a broader phenomenon in the British Empire, has received a substantial treatment in the historiography and there is no need for it to be recapitulated at length here. That said, there are some works which have particular relevance to this project. John Mackenzie's pioneering monograph *The Empire of Nature* located the origins of the nineteenth-century hunting cult which emerged in Britain to a Romantic passion for all things medieval as well as an increasingly sex-segregated household which demarcated masculine and feminine spaces, with masculine spaces sporting antlers on the walls and potentially more exotic fare from the colonies.⁵ Both of these factors took on a unique salience in India. The adoption by Britons of forms of hunting which had been practiced by the Mughal nobility (In particular, tiger hunting) was seen as a useful marker of continuity between the Mughal and British Raj.⁶ Indeed, much like romantic movements in Europe, the British in India sought to locate a certain Indian identity in the past. Unlike European romantic movements, however, which often looked to rural peoples or to the peasantry for a putative national identity, British colonialists in India constructed a history of elites. Within this narrative the British had seamlessly assumed the mantle of ruling India from the Mughals who, themselves, were only the latest in a long line of

⁵ MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature*, pp. 28-29.

foreign dynasties on the subcontinent. After the Indian Rebellion of 1857, however, the pretence of Mughal continuity gave way to an apologetics of rule based on difference. The British had indeed assumed the mantle of Mughal rule, but by the mid-to-late nineteenth century this position was increasingly conceptualised as a burden.

This focus on differentiation could be seen in the creation of hill stations and the literal removal of Anglo-Indians from the heart of the empire for a significant portion of the year.⁷ Despite this change, however, hunting, alongside many of the other adopted or adapted trappings of Mughal rule remained much the same. Vijaya Ramadas Mandala in *Shooting a Tiger: Big-Game Hunting and Conservation in Colonial India* argues that in British India ‘hunting was not just a symbol but also a method of rule’.⁸ Indeed, Mandala stresses that both the British and the Mughals used hunting in a similar way and for similar purposes.⁹ For both empires, hunting was not only a means of symbolically displaying power but also a practical means of taming landscapes and peoples. Scholars have considered some of the continuities and ruptures between Mughal and British environmental practices.¹⁰ What has not received sufficient attention, according to Mandala, is the extent to which hunting was ‘embedded in everyday administration, [and] carried on in the midst of mundane file shifting as a welcome distraction’.¹¹

⁷ See Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains*. and Kenny, ‘Climate, Race, and Imperial Authority’.

⁸ Vijaya Ramadas Mandala, *Shooting a Tiger: Big-Game Hunting and Conservation in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 2.

⁹ Mandala, *Shooting a Tiger*, pp. 43-44. Mandala also makes reference to Anand S. Pandian, ‘Predatory Care: The Imperial Hunt in Mughal and British India’, *History of Sociology* 14, no. 1 (2001): 79-107, which provides a good introduction to this topic.

¹⁰ Regarding the latter Mandala draws specific attention to the work of the Imperial Forestry Service and to colonial forest policy more generally as being emblematic of British India’s utilisation, expansion, and reconfiguration of existing Mughal patterns of resource extraction. Some useful works on this topic include: Mahesh Rangarajan, *Fencing the Forest: Conservation and Ecological Change in India’s Central Provinces 1860-1914* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996). K. Sivaramakrishnan, *Modern Forests: Statemaking and Environmental Change in Colonial Eastern India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). and Gregory Allen Barton, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹¹ Mandala, *Shooting a Tiger*, p. 45.

With that in mind, both Mackenzie and Mandala draw a distinction between hunting conducted on the plains and hunting conducted in the hills. Indeed, as Mandala makes clear, the Himalayan foothills had already been identified as a superior hunting ground by colonial observers in the early nineteenth century. The stretch of the Doon Valley in Garhwal and Kumaon, for instance, had quickly become popular among European hunters because it not only provided ‘wooded forest cover with oak and pine trees,’ but also gave Britons the chance to ‘escape the disease-prone regions of the plains, tropical heat, the burden of epidemic outbreaks, and boredom’. Furthermore, hunting in the Himalayas could only be conducted on foot.¹² This was significant because it allowed for British hunters to symbolically divest themselves of some of the performative elements of hunting which pertained on the plains. Moving from the hills into the mountains, Markhor hunting offers an excellent lens through which to analyse this distinction between hunting on the plains and in the Himalayas.

In his article ‘Forms of Predation: Tiger and Markhor Hunting in Colonial Governance’, Shafqat Hussain presents a compelling analysis of markhor hunting (the markhor is a species of central Asian mountain goat prized for its horns). Hussain’s argument, in part, rests upon an understanding of the differences in practice between tiger hunting and markhor hunting. Hussain argues that the ‘British saw [the] hunting of man-eating tigers in the foothills and plains as an effort to prevent fierce and unpredictable nature intervening in their day-to-day governance practices in Indian society’.¹³ Tiger hunting, was not merely a means of protecting the material and personal resources of the British government in India, it was also a chance to display martial and masculine prowess, and to demonstrate Britain’s ability to act as protector of India and Indians against the forces of nature and supposed Oriental torpidity.¹⁴

¹² Mandala, *Shooting a Tiger*, p. 130, p. 135.

¹³ Shafqat Hussain, ‘Forms of Predation: Tiger and Markhor Hunting in Colonial Governance’, *Modern Asian Studies* 46 (2012), 1212–38 (p. 1212).

¹⁴ Hussain, ‘Forms of Predation’, p. 1214.

Markhor hunting, on the other hand, was not carried out in an effort to win the support of colonial subjects. Rather, it was enjoyed primarily as sport, an opportunity to display imperial and masculine virtues to be sure, but not an activity as fundamentally entwined with the symbolism of British superiority as tiger hunting. That markhor hunting could be enjoyed as such, according to Hussain, depended on two factors: the first, was the wide-spread and persistent 'colonial representation of the northern mountainous region [of British India] as a civilization-less area, and its people as savages, existing in a state of nature', the second was *begar*, a system whereby 'local people were forced, often with the threat of physical violence, to act as coolies, or porters, to carry the supplies of the shooting sahibs'. The first enabled would-be British sportsman to act more freely and enjoy themselves with less fear of letting the side down, or of shattering the façade of dignified British rule, the second, made such expeditions physically practicable. The irony of this is not lost on Hussain, who stresses that the supposed latitude for individuality which markhor hunting facilitated still depended on a system of blunt oppression. This is not to say that *begar* was popular amongst the British; indeed, Hussain, argues that *begar* was widely *unpopular* amongst British travellers and sportsmen, who 'associated [it] with oriental despotism' and could see that it 'violated principles of colonial governance' but 'used it nonetheless'. That *begar* could exist despite the overt unease of many British sportsmen and travellers depended upon the supposedly wild, uncivilized nature of the Himalaya, and of Himalayan peoples. Colonial hunters could justify their use of *begar* because the Himalaya was perceived to be outside the normal bounds of ethical governance.¹⁵

Hunting in the Himalayas, then, was unique and distinct from hunting in other parts of India. It was not entirely disassociated with the burdens and trappings of imperial rule (indeed disagreements and dissatisfaction with local porters were a persistent theme in narratives of

¹⁵ Hussain, 'Forms of Predation', pp. 1214-15.

recreational travel) but it was a marked improvement on the ritualized elephant hunt on the plains. Indeed, for the British shikari, the greatest feature of the Himalayas was its very remoteness. That is, the perceived difficulty of travelling and shooting in the mountains also meant that hunting there could be enjoyed as sport, rather than a ritual.

II. Depictions of Recreational Travel in *The Himalayan Journal*

Hunting, however, only formed a part of any given account of recreational travel detailed in *The Himalayan Journal*. Indeed, many authors took a panoramic view of their travel, noting and describing many of the same things that the authors described in the previous chapter did. To look at a characteristic example from the fourth volume of *The Journal*, ‘By Shonthar Gali to Rama, Astor’ by Captain J. Barron, one can see many of the same preoccupations in evidence. In his account, which detailed Barron and his wife’s journey from Srinagar to the Rama valley in what is today, Gilgit-Baltistan, Barron duly noted those things which might be of interest to other members of the Club. For the botanist, Barron noted that ‘a roam through the pine-woods [of Rama] may produce anchusa, orchids, king-cups, blue and yellow violets, dwarf primula, the true edelweiss, four-leaved clover and other plants of interest’. And for those interested in folklore Barron related the story of a supposedly mystical grazing ground near Nanga Parbat. According to legend, the grazing ground had been discovered by a hapless youth who had lost a string of ponies and suffered accordingly only to find, six months later, that they had returned to the slope ‘bursting with fat and leaping about with energy and good spirits’. Of chief interest, however, was the hunting.¹⁶

The first portion of the Barrons’ journey was wet and miserable. Higher up in the mountains, however, after a night of heavy snowfall Barron’s fortunes turned around and he

¹⁶ Barron, J. Captain, ‘By Shonthar Gali to Rama, Astor’, *The Himalayan Journal* 04 (1932), 59-66 (pp. 64-66).

reported finding ‘some very obliging snow pigeon which kept offering [him] rights and lefts as they flew around’. A couple of days later, basking in self-satisfaction after gunning down two rock pigeons with the same barrel Barron was informed about a Red Bear, ‘a grand male in full winter coat’, that had been spotted nearby. Barron tracked the bear and wounded it at 180 yards before following it down the slope of a mountain, pursuing it even after the poor creature had plummeted 50 to 60 feet down a waterfall. At this point the bear was too exhausted to carry on and Barron finished it at close range. This bear was apparently the pinnacle of Barron’s shooting for he does not provide any other accounts of his hunting.¹⁷

Barron’s account is fairly typical in its mix of hunting anecdotes, information about local customs and peoples, and practical details about his journey. It is an easy-going account of recreation, intended more as an advertisement for travel than a singular contribution to Himalayan studies. This is not to say that some accounts of recreational travel did not take a more sustained interest in scholarly matters. Indeed, in the same volume of *The Journal*, Lieut.-Col. C. H. Stockley (introduced briefly at the end of chapter 1) provided a blow-by-blow account of the local fauna, sparing his readers any superfluous observations of local colour in favour of a catalogue of his collections. Stockley recounted taking specimens of voles, marmots, butterflies, hares, fish and worms for the British Museum as well as plant samples for Kew.¹⁸ This is notable because Stockley was first and foremost a hunter, indeed he had even written a book, or rather several books on the matter.¹⁹

In general, though, despite their differences, these first-hand accounts of recreational travel in *The Himalayan Journal* displayed two pronounced, and seemingly contradictory tendencies. The first, was a tendency by the author to assure his or her reader that untrammelled

¹⁷ Barron, ‘By Shothar Gali to Rama, Astor’, pp. 62-63.

¹⁸ Lieut.-Colonel C. H. Stockley, ‘The Tsarap Valley, Eastern Lahul’, *The Himalayan Journal* 04 (1932), 101-111.

¹⁹ Two examples being the aforementioned *Big Game Shooting in the Indian Empire* (1928) and *Stalking in the Himalayas and Northern India* (1936).

hills, peaks, and valleys lay within reach of an ordinarily enterprising district officer. The second, was a tendency by the author (often the same author who had just promised his or her reader *terra incognita*) to detail their own travels in said region, and to set out the practicalities of doing so. The apparent contradiction being that by encouraging others to travel as they had done the author of a given piece was slowly despoiling the very thing which had drawn them to an area in the first place. This reality was generally appreciated by the Himalayan Club, however, and its members operated on the assumption that there were still, at least for the foreseeable future, an abundance of underexplored areas on offer. Indeed, members could feel some reassurance that even in relatively well travelled areas maps still needed to be improved, route books updated, and hunting conditions observed.²⁰

To look at just the first volume of *The Himalayan Journal*, there are three articles which deal with recreational travel ‘The Way to Baspa’ by Major D.G.P.M Shewen, ‘Two Easy Passes in Kanawar’ by R. Maclagan Gorrie, and ‘A Journey Through Spiti and Rupshu’ by Mrs. K. G. Lethbridge (she is labelled as such in *The Journal*). Each of these three articles, in their own ways, evidence the two tendencies described above. All of them made a point of stressing the opportunities which came with travel in their particular region, as well as the possibility of travelling where few had gone before. Shewen’s ‘The Way to Basa,’ for instance, details a journey to the Baspa Valley in Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh. Shewen begins his account by noting the ‘paucity of names in the Visitors’ Book’ at the comfortable bungalow in Sangla. This dearth of travellers surprised Shewen because the valley was, supposedly, ‘numbered among the most beautiful... in the Himalaya’. What is more, the road itself was easy and that there were bungalows all the way. Despite this, for reasons Shewen could not understand,

²⁰ For instance, C. H. Stockley, in ‘The Tsarap Valley, Eastern Lahul’ makes frequent reference to the quality of the maps on offer, giving specific information about the vintage of the maps he used, their source, and their correlation to conditions on the ground.

‘travellers on the Hindustan-Tibet highway seem[ed] to find other attractions’.²¹ Gorrie’s account begins with a similar assurance, promising trekking to 14,500 feet with no need for any technical mountaineering, and ‘magnificent views’ of the ‘Himalayan and Zaskar [a mountain range in Ladakh] snows’, as well as close-up views of the Kailas peaks, three of which are over 21,000 feet.²² K.G. Lethbridge, alongside her husband, travelled deep into the north of Himachal Pradesh, near the border with Ladakh.²³ The most exciting part of the Lethbridge’s journey came at the Takling La pass. At this point Lethbridge’s maps became unreliable, her local porters, ‘Spiti men’ developed altitude sickness, and they reached an altitude of 20,000 feet.²⁴

These two motifs of novelty and accessibility extended beyond the initial framing of an article. Shewen, for instance, attempted to strike a balance between the two. He was keen to stress the appeals of travel to the Baspa valley, noting its potential to appeal to climbers, artists, sportsmen, and what Shewen described as ‘scenery trippers’ alike. For the sportsmen, Shewen advised an expedition in the early summer, before the bharal (a kind of mountain sheep’ had ‘retired with the snow to the uttermost heights’. And to entice the climbers and ‘scenery trippers’ a photograph by R. Maclagan Gorrie was included alongside the text, depicting the Baspa valley with the Kanawar Kailas, rising to 21,000 feet, in the background. And in a particularly telling aside, Shewen related that he had been reliably informed that ‘Sangla may one day be the Zermatt of the Himalaya’.²⁵ All of which served to create an image of the Baspa Valley as something like an Alpine Playground, in which men and women with various

²¹ Major. D. G. P. M. Shewen, ‘The Way to Baspa’, *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 67-74 (p. 67).

²² R. Maclagan Gorrie, ‘Two Easy Passes in Kanawar’, *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 75-77 (p. 75).

²³ For more on the relationship between women and hunting in British India, and on the ways in which hunting (and indeed colonial life more generally) allowed for those women who were interested to engage in stereotypically masculine pursuits see Mary A. Procida. ‘Good Sports and Right Sorts: Guns, Gender, and Imperialism in British India’, *Journal of British Studies* 40 (2001), 454–88.

²⁴ Mrs. K. G. Lethbridge, ‘A Journey through Spiti and Rupshu’, *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 77-81 (p. 80).

²⁵ Shewen, ‘The Way to Baspa’, pp. 67-69.

interests could enjoy themselves in an area not yet swarming with tourists. Aside from these appeals to things familiar, or exciting, Shewen was also at pains to stress the supposed exoticism and remoteness of the valley.

In the article, Shewen achieved this first by correlating remoteness, and elevation with increasing evidence of Buddhist worship. In Rampur (a small town in Himachal Pradesh, not to be confused with the much larger Rampur in Uttar Pradesh), at 3000 feet, Shewen paid a trip to a Tibetan library containing a prayer wheel, which he takes to be 'the first sign of Buddhism on the road'. Twenty miles and 3000 feet from Rampur, in Sarahan, the signs of Buddhist and Tibetan culture increased accordingly. When he reached Sarahan, the town was in the midst of a fair, with participants decked out in blue flower headgear and music 'strikingly reminiscent of a Tibetan devil-dance or a service in a Buddhist monastery'. After Sarahan, Shewen noted that a 'tendency towards Buddhism' was in evidence all around.

To complete his rhetorical translation from the Plains, however, and from the civilisation of the Plains, Shewen portrayed his entry into the Baspa valley as one might describe the discovery of a new country. Before reaching the valley, however, Shewen first had to go higher, and further, into the mountains. At 7,000 feet, Shewen recorded that 'the forest suddenly opens out and the " Promised Land " bursts upon the view, a lovely scene backed by a fine snow peak'.²⁶ After this, Shewen and his party descended into the Baspa, which he described in Arcadian terms:

The way now leads down grassy slopes and across a peaceful smiling valley richly coloured with pink and russet crops in late summer. The river flows lazily across this valley and a country lane with yellow flowers and walnut-trees winds pleasantly for

²⁶ Shewen, 'The Way to Baspa', pp. 70-72.

two miles until another cliff is passed, beyond which is the forest rest-house with the wooden bridge below it, and Sangla village on the opposite bank.

The people of the Baspa were described as uncivilized, both in terms of technological progression as well as categorical cohesion they were:

...friendly and ready to help in any way, but dirty beyond description. They are rapacious in their demands, caring nothing for the State rates. Their religion seems to be a hybrid, calling itself Hindu, but savouring strongly of Buddhism, and a red Lama and his chela were met on the road spinning a prayer-wheel, a form of worship popular in the villages.²⁷

Despite this rhetorical framing, however, the Baspa valley was not an especially remote valley. Indeed, Shewen made clear that Baspa was easily accessible from the well-travelled 'Hindustan-Tibet Highway'.²⁸

That an area that was already populated and well-travelled by local peoples was not necessarily an impediment to 'discovery' by Europeans. Dane Kennedy has argued that the viability of this paradox derived 'in large measure from the transfer of maritime notions of space and methods of navigation and measurement to expeditions carried out across land.'²⁹ But in this case, the unique ways in which Europeans conceptualized the Himalaya, and more specifically, Tibet, are also important. James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (1933), the first major

²⁷ Shewen, 'The Way to Baspa', pp. 72-73.

²⁸ As was made clear in chapters 1 and 2, during the initial organisation of the Club there were voices arguing for a technical climbing requirement to mitigate against accounts like Shewen's. Brigadier Roger Wilson, for instance, believed that the Club 'should insist on a candidate having done something original' or they would receive a little more than stream of reports 'on the shooting ground of Kashmir – the Pilgrim Routes or... the trade passes into Thibet [sic].' Worse than their uniformity, however, was their content. 'These outpourings' Wilson wrote, 'consist for the most part of the most utter drivel, poetry, semi scientific jargon, the sensations of the body and of the soul.' Based on the evidence of *The Himalayan Journal*, Wilson's apprehensions were not taken seriously by Mason. See Alpine Club Archive, 4th January 1928, Letter from R. C. Wilson, Himalayan Club, F12, Folder 5: Copies of Replies to Circular Letter.

²⁹ Kennedy. *The Last Blank Spaces*, p. 6.

western literary work to be mainly located in Tibet, introduced the constructed idea of Shangri-La. The novel's utopian paradise was a unique invention but traded upon well-established cultural imaginings of Tibet.³⁰ Peter Bishop has argued that by the early-twentieth century 'entering Tibet was imagined as an initiation, as going across a threshold into another world, as going backwards in time'.³¹ Behind both positive and negative depictions of Tibet, lay an image of the country as isolated, both spatially and temporally. This image of an isolated Tibet drew upon two traditions. The first, which can be traced to the Middle Ages and the voyages of Marco Polo, saw in Tibet a land of half-familiar peoples and occult wisdom. The second tradition, of more recent vintage, had its origin in the so-called 'Great Game' between Britain and Russia, wherein 'Tibet became a cherished prize', a potential buffer zone which posed no threat in itself.³² Indeed, those involved in the Great Game utilized the image of Tibet as a mystical, almost mythical land, for pragmatic ends. Alex McKay, for instance, has argued that British frontier officials 'tacitly encouraged' the mystical image of Tibet as a means of promoting the idea of Tibet as a separate and independent state acting as a buffer between British India and both Russia and China.³³

Similarly, and moving beyond these more abstract depictions, travel between India and the supposedly isolated nation of Tibet was actually fairly common. Kyle Gardner, in *The Frontier Complex*, has argued that frontiers and borderlands more generally are too-often seen by historians as simple by-products of imperial rivalries and not appreciated for what they are, namely 'spaces and ideas produced over time through particular practices'. Regarding the

³⁰ It is notable that in Hilton's story it is a Catholic Missionary, and a host of Europeans, Americans, and Chinese who are the guardians of Shangri-La's treasure trove of accumulated knowledge. Similarly, the 'first editions of great books, priceless works of art, [and] music scores' collected there were drawn from the best of European culture. See Donald S. Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 5.

³¹ Peter Bishop, 'Not Only a Shangri-La', in Thierry Dodin & Heinz R  ther eds., *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections & Fantasies* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 201-221 (p. 208).

³² Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, p. 5.

³³ Alex C. McKay, 'The British Construction of an Image of Tibet', in Thierry Dodin & Heinz R  ther eds., *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections & Fantasies* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 67-89 (p. 83).

Himalaya (*The Frontier Complex* focuses on Ladakh) more specifically, Gardner argues that 'the process of transforming a historical crossroads into a frontier also transformed the colonial, and eventually the postcolonial, state'. According to Gardner, this process was crucial for British officials and administrators who sought to define and delineate India, and was a part of a broader mission of 'spatial reorientation' which sought make real 'a geopolitical vision that conceived of the world as a set of coterminous territories tied to, and dependent upon, geographical features'.³⁴

With this in mind, Shewen's descriptions of the Baspa valley takes on a different meaning. Indeed, his association of Tibetan and Buddhist cultural signifiers with remoteness and isolation from India, metaphorically, transformed the valley, which was within British India, into a frontier zone. This is not to say, that the border between British India and China in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand was actually a settled and stable matter, it was not (and is not today). What is significant about Shewen's account, however, and indeed many other similar accounts in *The Himalayan Journal*, is the way in which a frontier space had been described as a space for recreation. More specifically, it is the way in which this recreation, by nature of its occurrence in a frontier zone, has been translated into exploration that is of interest. All of this is not to suggest that the members of the Club saw the Himalayan frontier as a uniform space, or approached it as such. Instead, I am arguing that the Club's attitude towards the Himalayan frontier, like their attitude towards exploration more generally, existed on a spectrum. To demonstrate this, I will examine two articles, the first, 'Kulu,' by A. P. F. Hamilton is concerned with a district visible from Simla. The second, Mrs. K. G. Lethbridge's 'A Journey through Spiti and Rupshu' (mentioned earlier) took Lethbridge to the border with Tibet.

³⁴ Gardner, *The Frontier Complex*, pp. 2-3.

‘Any one who has stood on the ‘Ridge’ in Simla will have noticed the range of snow-clad mountains to the north’, A. P. F. Hamilton wrote. ‘But few, probably, know that these mountains lie, for the most part, in that small corner of British India called Kulu.’³⁵ Thus, from the outset Hamilton has carefully framed his article. He is not promising his readers a Shangri-La, or vistas unseen by the eyes of man, but he is still offering up the prospect of travel in an area which, he assumed, would be unfamiliar to many members of the Club. Hamilton then provides a geographical sketch of the district, its mountains, rivers, and its geopolitical boundaries. Most interesting, however, is his description of the landscape which, once again seeks to balance novelty and familiarity. ‘The scenery of Kulu is very varied’, he began, ‘on the whole it is more Alpine than Himalayan, but some of the side nullahs [gulleys/ravines] are typically Himalayan with their streams foaming over continuous cataracts and waterfalls, enclosed between great cliffs and almost impenetrable forest’. In other words, the valley itself was familiar and inviting, but there were still opportunities for those of more adventurous inclination to explore. In fact, Hamilton goes into some detail fleshing out the differences between the main valley, which was ‘wide open... unlike most Himalayan valleys... restful rather than grand’ and the side-valleys which were studded with ‘towering precipices’ and flanked by ‘gorge like side-nullahs’. If one was willing to brave the precipices, however, the scenery was of ‘a more gorgeous nature’ and those who were ‘prepared to go beyond the beaten track’ would find themselves rewarded for their labours when they found themselves in ‘glorious alpine pasture, high above forest and precipice’.³⁶

Following this more general description Hamilton provided detailed route information, listing the stages of various potential journeys and giving information on bungalows, elevations, and the conditions on the ground. At the end of his account Hamilton summarises

³⁵ Hamilton, A. P. F., ‘Kulu’, *The Himalayan Journal* 05 (1933), 75-84 (p. 75).

³⁶ Hamilton, ‘Kulu’, pp. 76-77.

the relative virtues and attractions of Kulu. For the fisherman, there was excellent trout fishing in the Beas Valley. For hunters, on the other hand, although the shooting in Kulu was ‘carried on under very pleasant conditions’, big heads could not be expected. There were ibex in the valley, but heads of over 40 inches were rare, and bharal were scarce, except in the main Parbati Valley, and even then, these had small heads as well.³⁷

Overall, the main attraction of Kulu for Hamilton seemed to be the ease in which one could indulge in mountain hobbies within close proximity of Simla. Indeed, Hamilton made clear his belief that a prospective traveller ‘need not be a mountaineer or a shikari to enjoy a trip to Kulu’. And, anticipating the objections of those who might label Kulu too heavily travelled to merit the attention of the Club, Hamilton had a reply:

There are those who say that Kulu is spoilt by the coming of the motor; they are surely wrong. Nature is still supreme, the forests, the mountains, the rivers are there just as they were centuries ago, and those who know how to appreciate the beauty of the hills will have eyes for nothing else.

And what is more, although Kulu could not boast any ‘giant peaks’ it still afforded ‘endless scope for the trained climber’ with ‘much unexplored country’ left to be travelled.³⁸

K. G. Lethbridge and her husband, having obtained two and a half’s month leave decided to travel deep into Himachal Pradesh and up to the border with Ladakh. For the Lethbridges, Kulu was only the first stop after Roorkee (Uttarakhand) and their journey would take them into a sparse mountainous terrain quite unlike the verdant scenery described by Hamilton.³⁹ Despite this Lethbridge’s account bears many similarities to Hamilton’s. The stages of her journey, like Hamilton’s, were broken down into a format similar to that of a route

³⁷ Hamilton, ‘Kulu’, pp. 82-83.

³⁸ Hamilton, ‘Kulu’, p. 84.

³⁹ Lethbridge, ‘A Journey through Spiti and Rupshu.’, p. 77.

book. And, like Hamilton, Lethbridge provides some description of the landscapes and peoples she came across, although these are more spare and less colourful than his. Lahul, for instance, the final stop on her journey, 'was a rock-garden full of flowers' and Kulu, Hamilton's proverbial paradise 'was a void of mist and cloud'.⁴⁰ Lethbridge also sketched out the more practical attractions of the journey, which for her, were elevation and hunting. Lethbridge makes frequent reference to elevation, understandably enough, for she spends much of her journey well above 10,000 feet, camping as high as 17,500 feet and, by Lethbridge's reckoning, just scraping 20,000 feet while crossing Kyungzang Pass, which led from Rupshu into the neighbouring Hanle province.⁴¹ In terms of the shooting, Lethbridge was equally enthused, and she seemed to take extra delight in hunting at high altitudes. Lethbridge spent a week at 17,500 feet hunting ammon (Lethbridge is here referring to argali, a species of mountain goat) and Tibetan gazelle (more commonly known today as goa, a species of antelope). Although she and her husband grew sick of mistaking kiang (a species of wild Himalayan ass) for other things, she still managed to bag a 42 ½ inch head from an Argali and a 12 ½ inch head from a Goa.⁴² Despite these adventures, Lethbridge ultimately makes clear that hers was a journey of relaxation and recreation and in the penultimate paragraph of her narrative she recounts a blissful week spent near Spiti, which was then 'in the prime of summer and full of glorious flowers', during which time she savoured in 'moving back slowly towards the Kunzam pass, enjoying the luxury of gentle marches, plenty of gossip and fresh yaks' milk to drink'.⁴³

Both Hamilton and Lethbridge's accounts are recognisable as examples of the same kind of travel writing. Their individual accounts may have described areas which were quite different from each other but the focus in both accounts was recreation. And both articles make

⁴⁰ Lethbridge, 'A Journey through Spiti and Rupshu', p. 81.

⁴¹ Lethbridge, 'A Journey through Spiti and Rupshu', pp. 77-81,

⁴² Lethbridge, 'A Journey through Spiti and Rupshu', p. 80.

⁴³ Lethbridge, 'A Journey through Spiti and Rupshu', p. 81.

a point of mapping out the stages of their journey so as to enable others to follow in their footsteps. They also, however, put a premium on isolation and autonomy. Hamilton's narrative made a brief mention of local porters, describing them as 'excellent on rock' but 'not used to ice and snow'. Aside from this brief mention, which focuses only on their utility, Hamilton's only other mention of local peoples comes in the form of a description of two temples and a simple recitation of village names.⁴⁴ Lethbridge pays more attention to her porters, presumably because her journey took her much further afield and to a much higher elevation than Hamilton. Once again though, Lethbridge describes porters, coolies in her words, principally in terms of their utility. Indeed, the whole matter is described tersely, almost like an inconvenience, with Lethbridge lamenting the 'duplicity' of her lambardar (the local official tasked with procuring porters for her party) and 'the natural aversion of the Kulu people to any hard work'.⁴⁵ Aside from these brief asides, however, both accounts portray a region almost entirely devoid of contemporary human habitation. Doing this, within the context of *The Himalayan Journal*, helped to render the Himalaya as a space in which Britons could act much more autonomously than on the Plains. Implicit in this vision of autonomy there was also an assumption of masculinity. By this I do not mean that the members of the Himalayan Club conceived of the Himalaya as an exclusively male space (this can be seen in the *Journal's* publication of Lethbridge's article). Rather, the Himalaya was a space in which masculine virtues, chief amongst them, autonomy, could thrive. As Mary Procida has argued, for some women, namely those who were already interested in stereotypically masculine pursuits like hunting, climbing, or travel, the presumed masculine character of the empire and imperial spaces could be liberating.⁴⁶ Indeed, the members of the Himalayan club were willing to accept and even embrace female members who were able to operate comfortably within the supposedly

⁴⁴ Hamilton, 'Kulu', pp. 75-84.

⁴⁵ Lethbridge, 'A Journey through Spiti and Rupshu', p. 77.

⁴⁶ See Procida, 'Good Sports and Right Sorts'.

masculine environment of the mountains. Ultimately, this vision of masculine autonomy extended beyond simple accounts of recreation, however, and in the next section of this chapter I will look at those articles in *The Himalayan Journal* which blended, work and recreation.

III. Recreational Travel and Mountaineering

Although the previous articles referenced in this chapter can fairly be classed as narratives of travel, rather than narratives of mountaineering, there were articles in which this distinction was not as clear cut. Or rather, there were accounts of mountaineering in *The Himalayan Journal* which bore many of the same hallmarks as accounts of recreational travel. Unlike articles written by famous mountaineers like Hugh Ruttledge, Eric Shipton, or Frank Smythe, however, these narratives were less focused on the technical aspects of a climb than on creating a holistic narrative in which climbing was but the main feature of a recreational expedition. Two excellent examples of this are G. B. Gourlay's 'Lhonak, 1930' from the fourth volume of *The Himalayan Journal* (1932) and Lieut. J. B. Harrison's 'A Visit to Nun Kun, 1934' in the seventh (1935). Both accounts detail the authors' attempt to climb mountains over 20,000 feet with a friend during a period of leave.

Gourlay began his account by reassuring his reader that climbing in the Himalayas was not the preserve of 'picked climbers, generously equipped and with ample time at their disposal'. Instead, he was keen to stress what he saw as the enormous untapped potential for amateur climbers in the Himalaya. 'There are countless peaks over twenty thousand feet offering excellent rock and snow climbing within the powers of the average climber', he wrote. 'Peaks that can be reached quickly and at no greater cost than that of a holiday of similar duration in the Alps'.⁴⁷ Thus, from the outset, Gourlay was framing his narrative in

⁴⁷ G. B. Gourlay, 'Lhonak, 1930', *The Himalayan Journal* 04 (1932), 123-134 (p.123).

much the same way as the other articles dealing with recreational travel outlined above. Once again there was the simultaneous appeal to both opportunity and remoteness, practicality and height; and the height of the mountains here does bare mentioning. Gourlay's 'countless peaks over twenty thousand feet' are taller than any mountain in the Alps, and indeed there are many dozens of Himalayan peaks which are taller than the highest peaks in North America, Denali which only just tops 20,000 feet and South America, Aconcagua (23,838 feet). Consequently, Gourlay's claim that such peaks were 'within the powers of the average climber' is significant. At once he is elevating the skills of the average climber by associating him with such heights and yet he is also, implicitly, diminishing the mountains, both explicitly, by comparing them to the Alps, and implicitly, by suggesting they were a suitable location for a holiday.

Indeed, throughout the account Gourlay was at pains to prove that the Lhonak valley, a river valley in Sikkim originating in the Zemu Glacier at the base of Kangchenjunga, was within the reach of an average political or military officer during a period of leave. Gourlay recounted that he had been inspired to travel to Lhonak because of the 'glowing account... brought back by the International Himalayan Expedition'. This expedition, which had consisted of German, Swiss, Austrian, and British climbers had initially set out to climb Kangchenjunga, having failed in this regard, they proceeded to climb four peaks over 23,000 feet.⁴⁸ Inspired by this expedition Gourlay clearly penned his article with the intent of inspiring others like he had been inspired. Thus, on finding that he and his friend, a certain W. Eversden, had a month's leave in October of 1930, they both set their sights on climbing in the area.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ G. O. Dyhrenfurth, Prof., 'The International Himalayan Expedition, 1930', *The Himalayan Journal* 03 (1931), 77-91 (pp. 77-79).

⁴⁹ Gourlay, 'Lhonak', p. 123.

Getting to Lachen, near the entrance of the Lhonak Valley was a straightforward affair. Gourlay cited Percy Brown's *Tours in Sikkim* as a useful guide, and made clear that there were rest houses at various stages of the journey and that, by motor, Lachen could be reached in five days from Calcutta.⁵⁰ Indeed, the relative ease of getting to the foot of the great mountains of the Kangchenjunga massif was one of the primary draws of Lhonak. In many of the other accounts of recreational travel in *The Himalayan Journal* getting as far as the Lhonak Valley would have represented the apex of a journey. Gourlay and Eversden, however, had their sights set on summits. And upon reaching the valley they settled on Lhonak Peak (21,460 feet) because this had not been climbed the International Himalayan Expedition. And it is here, that Gourlay's account begins to blur the line between a narrative of recreational travel and a more strictly mountaineering-centred account.

Gourlay and Eversden set out to climb the mountain in four days, with five days supplies and seven porters. After departing their base camp, the party began to deal with ice. According to Gourlay 'the going was rough' during this stage of the journey 'but the gorgeous scenery compensated [for it]'. Nearing the summit bad weather forced Gourlay to turn back, and during the return journey one of the porters from Lachen, Lew, went snow blind. And both he and Gourlay had to be carried by another porter at various stages of the journey back to base camp. Despite these setbacks and their failure to reach the summit Gourlay dubbed the expedition a success. 'We had done what we had set out to do and had had a wonderful holiday'. He wrote. 'With more experience we could have accomplished more, and I am therefore including some brief notes which may be useful to anyone contemplating a similar journey to Upper Sikkim'.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Gourlay, 'Lhonak', p. 124.

⁵¹ Gourlay, 'Lhonak', pp. 127-131.

These brief notes consisted of extensive appendices: the first detailed the route Gourlay had taken; there were two sections detailing recommended rationing for the journey, with this being further subdivided into ‘Porters’ and ‘European’ categories (the primary difference being that the European rations contained meat and confectionary while the porters’ rations consisted primarily of necessary staples like rice, ghee, and lentils); and the final section documented their expenses.⁵² All of which mark this narrative out as distinct from both other accounts of recreational travel as well as articles written by more famous mountaineers (which will be addressed in the next two chapters).

Lieut. J. B. Harrison’s ‘A Visit to Nun Kun, 1934’ is very similar to Gourlay’s account, the most substantive difference being that Harrison’s expedition was aimed at the Nun Kun Massif on the border between Kashmir and Ladakh. Like Gourlay, Harrison undertook his journey during a period of leave with a friend. Indeed, Harrison makes very clear that his expedition was purely recreational writing: ‘I must make it quite clear that we were on a climbing holiday, and had no ulterior scientific motives’. Despite this, Harrison and his companion Weller, felt like they ought to make a gesture at scientific purposes so Gourlay, after remarking on the beauty of some irises in Kashmir, was made the expedition’s botanist, ornithologist, and psychologist, while Waller became its geologist, photographer, and archaeologist’. This aside was clearly intended to be humorous, but it does speak to the inextricable association of science with exploration outlined earlier in this thesis.⁵³ Also, like Gourlay, Harrison and his companion’s expedition had been inspired by a written account of mountaineering, in this case the famous husband and wife mountaineering duo Fanny Bullock Workman and William Hunter Workman’s *Peaks and Glaciers of Nun Kun* (1909). Harrison depicts his journey into the mountains in much the same way as Harrison,

⁵² Gourlay, ‘Lhonak’, pp. 131-14.

⁵³ J.B. Harrison, Lieut., ‘A Visit to Nun Kun, 1934’, *The Himalayan Journal* 07 (1935), 53-66 (p. 54).

describing the people and places he encountered along the way.⁵⁴ And in a final similarity, Harrison was also denied a summit but, like Gourlay, he maintained a sanguine attitude. Having failed to take the view from the summit of Nun, one of the mountains which comprised the massif, Harrison and his party settled for a view from the 'White Needle' a crest on the mountain some 22,000 feet high. The view from the 'White Needle', however, was obscured by cloud cover. Because of this Harrison arrived at his camp 'feeling rather tired and depressed'. The next morning, however, Harrison felt happy with what they had achieved, and noted that 'one's outlook at 20,000 feet is different from what it is at sea-level', suggesting that he had become over-ambitious the previous day and recognised that his expedition had still achieved a great deal, especially considering their lack of preparation.⁵⁵

Both Gourlay and Harrison's accounts, then, must be seen as existing somewhere between Hamilton's journey to Kulu and accounts of mountaineering expeditions like those written by Paul Bauer and Hugh Rutledge for *The Himalayan Journal*. Like other accounts of recreational travel in the *Journal*, Gourlay and Harrison were keen to stress the practicalities of their journeys. That is, they were keen to render themselves relatable to the average members of the Club and to encourage others to undertake ambitious climbing expeditions of their own in those parts of the Himalaya which were accessible to European travellers like Sikkim and Kashmir. And it is especially noteworthy that both of these accounts were themselves inspired by the exploits of previous mountaineers. Indeed, all the accounts within this chapter can be seen in this way, as staging posts on the way to better and higher things. The less ambitious accounts, with the frequent depictions of hunting (it should be noted that there is no talk of hunting in Gourlay or Harrison's accounts) could serve as an enticement to the novice while bigger and bolder accounts could spur the amateur to try their

⁵⁴ Harrison, 'A Visit to Nun Kun, 1934', pp. 53-54.

⁵⁵ Harrison, 'A Visit to Nun Kun, 1934', pp. 62-63.

hand at more ambitious climbs. Assuming these accounts actually spurred men (and women) into action, then Corbett and Mason could rest assured that the Club was fulfilling its primary objective: attracting more men to the Himalaya.

IV. Conclusions

What is one to make of recreational travel within the Himalayan Club? For, in one sense, all the travel that was depicted within *The Himalayan Journal* could be labelled recreational. As was made clear from the outset, however, this chapter is concerned with a very specific type of Himalayan travel, namely that which incorporated hunting and which was undertaken during periods of leave by military and political officers on or near the Himalayan frontier. As the third section of this chapter demonstrated, however, even this specific form of travel cannot be seen as entirely discreet. Indeed, to reiterate a point I have made at various points within this thesis, for the Himalayan Club, exploration, and by extension travel, was seen to exist of a spectrum. What then, is core feature of accounts of recreational travel within *The Himalayan Journal*? Was it an emphasis on travel as a kind of recreation in itself? Was it a desire to promote travel to remote or elevated areas? Or was it a negative qualification (they were not scientific, or they were not strictly dedicated to climbing)? Ultimately, the answer must lie in some mix of the three.

The more important question to ask is why was climbing seen to be the pinnacle of Himalayan exploration in the first place. Why was it the benchmark against which all the accounts of Himalayan travel within *The Himalayan Journal* were measured? And why was it that the founding members of the Club believed it could be a beneficial pursuit for young colonial officials? An obvious answer, and one which is not to be discounted, is that the sheer height of the Himalayan mountains, alongside a culture of recreational mountaineering that had

greatly expanded in popularity throughout the nineteenth century made such a view inevitable. Indeed, the next two chapters will look at the state of Himalayan mountaineering during the 1920s and 30s, contextualising it within this broader narrative of recreational climbing. Before that, however, looking at narratives of recreational travel offers unique and specific insights. In particular, bringing contemporary scholarship on hunting in India to bear on histories of mountaineering, travel, and Anglo-Indian culture reveals that alongside a certain conception of masculinity, individuality, or more accurately individualism, was a vital factor in shaping patterns of Anglo-Indian recreation.

Scholars have already written at length on the relationship between gender and hunting in the British Empire.⁵⁶ Vijaya Mandala has complicated this picture of colonial hunting culture in India by focusing on hunting as a practical means of controlling peoples, places and environments. Shafqat Hussain has added much nuance to our understanding of hunting in the Himalaya specifically, focusing on the ways in which hunting there was conceived of and enjoyed by colonial officers and administrators. Hussain, through his study of markhor hunting in the Himalaya, makes clear that this form of hunting appealed to colonial officials because of the perception that it allowed the individual Briton greater latitude to express and enjoy themselves. Although colonial narratives underplayed the importance of local labourers in facilitating hunting the popular perception was that this sort of hunting was fundamentally different from that which took place on the plains, and in particular tiger hunting. Another, earlier, work by Hussain expands upon this notion of difference. He argues that by the time that British India's northwest frontier had been 'pacified' and its boundaries with Russia fixed and stabilised in 1895, its representation among British and other Europeans [had begun] to

⁵⁶ See Czech, 'With Rifle and Petticoat'. Mackenzie, 'The Empire of Nature'. Mckenzie, 'The British Big-Game Hunting Tradition'. And Procida, 'Good Sports and Rights Sorts'.

undergo a transformation'.⁵⁷ With the era of initial confrontation and partial subjugation over, hunting on the frontiers had, according to Hussain, come to be more a matter of differentiation than domination. Hussain goes on to argue that British hunters in the Himalaya distanced and differentiated themselves from local Himalayan hunters through an identification with the notion of fairness.

The insights from this scholarship, especially that of Hussain's, re-shape our understanding of recreational travel. In particular, the notion of hunting as differentiation can be expanded upon to include travel more generally. In the Himalaya, British travellers could not only differentiate themselves from India and Indians but they could also distinguish themselves from other Britons, or indeed from their jobs. Like with hunting, travel in the Himalaya allowed the British traveller to come into his own. All the accounts which were analysed in this section made an effort to illustrate the ways in which the environment of the Himalaya could be enjoyed by Britons and Europeans more generally. And a simultaneous effort to stress opportunity as well as isolation permeates these articles. Isolation and remoteness were virtues to be pursued by the would-be traveller, and the paths which led to places in which these virtues could be found were to be shared generously amongst the members of the Club. In the heights of the Himalaya, or even in the hills north of Simla, the average colonial officer could escape contemporary realities and explore. This exploration could be simple or it could be grand and expansive, it did not really matter. What was important was the act itself.

As was made clear earlier, the inclusion of hunting and sport within the objects of the Himalayan Club was not only done to encourage young men to join the club, it was also

⁵⁷ Shafqat Hussain, 'Sports-hunting, Fairness and Colonial Identity: Collaboration and Subversion in the Northwestern Frontier Region of the British Indian Empire', *Conservation and Society* 8, no. 2. (2010), 112–26 (p. 112).

included because it was genuinely believed that such expeditions could expand the general understanding of the mountains. Thus, even recreational travel could be conceived of as exploration. But, to bring back another point I made earlier, the conception of exploration utilised and practiced by the Club was much more interior and self-centred than past incarnations. And in recreational travel, one can see an excellent example of this. These travellers sought new ground, and unseen vistas, even if they were not necessarily to be found at the absolute extremes of Himalayan verticality. Whatever one's abilities, gaining access to the Himalaya held out the prospect (even if it was in many ways artificial) of solitude and individuality. And in much the same way that exploration existed on a spectrum for these men and women, so too did individualism. The higher one climbed, the more one's journey shrank and compressed until it was little more than a story of an individual, or a handful of individuals, standing alone against nature. With altitude came greater chances for individual expression and individual experience. Indeed, past a certain elevation, it was no longer even a matter of acting out a more idealised version of imperialism, it was a matter of survival. In the next two chapters I will analyse mountaineering, that is, high-altitude climbing, both with the Himalayan Club and within the Himalaya more generally. In doing this I will further examine this notion of a move towards interiority and individual experience through an analysis of both the structure and output of the Club, as well as the written material of famous mountaineers who were members.

Chapter 5:

‘A solid core of men who have done things’: Mountaineering and the Himalayan Club

The subject of this chapter is mountaineering. More specifically, this chapter analyses the Himalayan Club’s institutional relationship with mountaineering by examining the various ways in which it was depicted within *The Himalayan Journal* as well as the ways that it was practically encouraged by the Club. In the previous two chapters I argued that the founding and early members of the Himalayan Club understood both scholarly and recreational travel to be forms of exploration. Here, I argue that mountaineering was also conceived of as a form of exploration. Indeed, for the founding members of the Club promoting the cause of mountaineering was seen to be much the same as promoting the cause of exploration, with mountaineering simply being a new and exciting form of it. In the introduction to this thesis, however, I argued that despite this broader acceptance of mountaineering as a form of exploration, it differed in crucial ways from other forms of exploration that had come before it.¹ For although mountaineering held out the possibility of travelling where no person had been before, it did not have the potential to reshape human understanding in the same way that the great voyages associated with the Age of Discovery had. Mountaineering was a more individual and interior process; it was a competition between an individual and the natural world, a test of endurance, bravery, and masculinity, and the results of a successful climb were, likewise, largely interior: a sense of achievement, sublimity, or transcendence, rather than something outside the self. In this chapter, I will argue that British officials’ conceptions of the Himalaya, their role in the region, and British imperialism more generally, helped to shape the ways in which climbing was conducted there. I will argue that a foundational belief in the

¹ Reuben Ellis argues that the conceptualisation of mountaineering as a form of exploration began in the nineteenth century. To be specific, he argues that ‘by the 1890s mountains were more noticeably and categorically being added to the list of open questions pursued by exploration’. Reuben Ellis, *Vertical Margins*, 12-13.

importance of first-hand experience by Europeans, both in dictating the course of empire, but also in making the places and peoples they ruled comprehensible, shaped the way mountaineering developed during the Interwar Period and after.

One of the recurring themes in this thesis thus far has been the efforts of the Himalayan Club's founding members to instil a passion for mountaineering and travel in young colonial officers and administrators in India. The previous chapters have outlined some of the ways in which the Club sought to do this. Namely, it embraced hunting and sport as an object of the Club whilst also seeking to capitalise on the prestige of scientific exploration. With both of these pursuits, the knowledge and experience of earlier travellers could inform and guide the travels of contemporaries. Indeed, from the outset the Club placed a great premium on experience. This can be seen in the response Geoffrey Corbett received to a missive he had sent to the Foreign Secretary of India Sir Denis Bray in 1927 asking for his advice regarding the formation of the club. Corbett recorded that Bray offered the following, rather anodyne suggestion: 'What you want' he said 'is a solid core of men who have done things'.² By this, Bray meant that the Club would need men with first-hand experience of the Himalayas, men who had lived, travelled, and worked in the mountains and who knew them, or at least a section of them, well. In other words, Bray's advice was to seek out the wisdom of the man on the spot, that is, the members of the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India (whose number never exceeded 180 covenanted officers), military personnel, and all the other assorted travellers, traders, and frontier taxonomists who constituted what might, to borrow a phrase from Alex McKay, be called a frontier cadre.³ The role of the so-called man on the spot in shaping British policy in India was a contested matter at the time (with frequent

² Geoffrey Corbett, 'The Founding of the Himalayan Club', p. 2.

³ Christian Tripodi, *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and the Tribal Administration on the North-West Frontier 1877-1947* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), p. 21. Alex McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj: The Frontier Cadre 1904-1947* (Richmond: Curzon, 1997).

misunderstandings and disagreements emerging between Whitehall and the colonial officials who operated on the frontiers of the Empire) but outside the realm of policy making, empirical experience of a place was generally favoured to the exclusion of academic study or theorizing.⁴ Indeed, the supposed attributes which lead policy makers in London to distrust the advice of the ‘man on the spot’: his narrow and prejudiced prospective; his tendency to favour unilateral decision making; and perhaps most crucially, the perceived torpidity and un-improvability of frontier spaces themselves; were exactly the things which made these postings appealing to frontier officials themselves.⁵ Similarly, it was just these conditions which made first-hand experience so important to the members of the Himalayan Club.

The man on the spot could be of great use to less ambitious travellers, or those with scholarly aims. But regarding mountaineering, Corbett, Mason, and the other founding members of the Club, believed that there was a dearth of competent climbers in India and that this made it difficult to achieve anything like the same results for climbers. But there was still experience to draw upon and one of the chief aims of the Club was to bring this disparate experience and knowledge together in one place. And it was here, once again, that the man on the spot, or rather *men* on the spot, came into play. For while it was individual experience that drew men to the mountains, the reality was that individuals could not hope to attain the pinnacles of the great Himalayan giants single-handedly. This may seem like something of a truism: that mountaineering at extremely high altitudes required provisions and teamwork (what Peter H. Hansen refers to as the brotherhood of the rope, or belay) seems self-evident.⁶

⁴For more on the composition of the political services see ‘Chapter 1: Who Were the Politicals?’ In Christian Tripodi, *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and Tribal Administration on the North-West Frontier 1877-1947* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011). And for a characteristic example of one such conflict between the ‘man on the spot’ and Whitehall see Hansen, ‘The Dancing Lamas of Everest’.

⁵ McKay contends that much of this tension arose because frontier agents tended to favour a ‘forward’ policy, towards frontier relations, which sought to create buffer state between India and Russia, and latterly China, whereas metropolitan authorities tended to favour ‘masterful inaction’, that is an approach which sought to preserve the geopolitical balance of power through diplomatic means. McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*, pp. 12-13.

⁶ Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man*, p. 11.

And this is not even taking into account the porters who had to carry provisions to base camp and the government officials (many of whom were members of the Himalayan Club) who provided maps and information, secured permission for travel, and offered advice lodging as well as a friendly face on the way from ‘civilization’ to the mountains.

The archetype of the solitary mountaineer has already been interrogated by Peter H. Hansen, who, in *The Summits of Modern Man: Mountaineering After the Enlightenment*, argues that a new focus on ‘firsts’ and on individual achievements in climbing during the nineteenth century can be seen a product a certain conception of modernity. That is, he sees the conceptual transition of mountains from places of danger or sublimity to discreet challenges to be overcome as historically determined.⁷ And on a practical level Hansen explores many of the ways in which climbing was a collective endeavour. Robert Macfarlane, in *Mountains of the Mind*, charts a similar evolution in the history of mountaineering, though his is an account which blends personal observations with historical analysis in a style that is broadly literary.⁸

Stewart Isserman and Maurice Weaver’s *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes* (2008) provides the most thorough account of the history of Himalayan mountaineering since Kenneth Mason’s *Abode of Snow* in 1955. The book presents an excellent narrative account of the history of Himalayan mountaineering from the late-nineteenth century until the twenty first and does acknowledge the connections between Himalayan mountaineering and imperialism. Indeed, their summary of the expeditionary culture of the Interwar Period is an insightful one:

The expeditionary culture of the age of empire... was a paradoxical thing. It was bound up with visions of imperial destiny that assumed the rule of white Europeans over

⁷Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man*, pp. 11-12.

⁸ Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: Adventures in Reaching the Summit* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004).

darker-skinned Asians and drew many of its conventions from the hierarchical order of the English public school and the British Army. At the same time, it harbored individual climbers who were often misfits in their own societies, romantic rebels who found a spiritual purpose and freedom in the mountains unavailable to them through conventional pursuits at home.⁹

Throughout *Fallen Giants*, however, Isserman and Weaver are more concerned with providing a history of climbers and climbs than with exploring this expeditionary culture at length.

Peter Hansen, Sherry B. Ortner, and Gordon T. Stewart, on the other hand, have examined this expeditionary culture in some depth. Hansen examines the confluence of imperial ideology, geo-politics, orientalism, and mountaineering in 'The Dancing Lamas of Everest: Cinema, Orientalism, and Anglo-Tibetan Relations in the 1920s' as well as the ways in which the conquest of Everest in 1953 fit in with changing conception of the Empire.¹⁰ While Sherry B. Ortner and Gordon T. Stewart have looked at the complex role of Sherpa climbers and porters in the history of Himalayan mountaineering.¹¹ These works have greatly expanded our understanding of the ways in which mountaineering was shaped by broader imperial ideologies. What has not been sufficiently addressed in this scholarship, however, are the ways in which conceptions of individualism and comradery, sometimes competing sometimes complementary, shaped mountaineering in the Himalaya. To put the point more explicitly, the

⁹Isserman and Weaver, *Fallen Giants*, p. xi.

¹⁰ Hansen, 'The Dancing Lamas of Everest'. And Peter H. Hansen, 'Confetti of Empire: The Conquest of Everest in Nepal, India, Britain, and New Zealand', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2000), 307-32.

¹¹ Ortner looks at the complex motivations sherpa climbers and porters had for participating in European climbing expeditions. Sherry B. Ortner, 'Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering', *Representations*, no. 59 (1997), 135-62; while Stewart looks at the western reception of Tenzing Norgay, who reached the summit alongside Edmund Hillary in 1953. Gordon T. Stewart, 'Tenzing's Two Wrist-Watches: The Conquest of Everest and Late Imperial Culture in Britain 1921-1953', *Past & Present* 149 (1995), 170-97.

ways in which imperialism influenced the practicalities of climbing in the Himalaya has heretofore been under-analysed by historians.

In this chapter, I will argue that British officials' conceptions of the Himalaya, their role in the region, and British imperialism more generally, helped to shape the ways in which climbing was conducted in the region. In particular, I will argue that a foundational belief in the importance of first-hand, empirical experience by Europeans, both in dictating the course of empire, but also in making the places and peoples they ruled comprehensible, guided the development of mountaineering in the Himalaya during the Interwar Period and after.

The relationship between knowledge production and imperialism in South Asia, both practically but also ideologically was examined in chapters 1 and 4 of this thesis so a brief synopsis here will suffice. Drawing inspiration from historians like Nicholas Dirks, Matthew Edney, Peter Gottschalk, James Hevia, and Ronald Inden, whose works, in different ways, assert the significance of knowledge production in shaping India as both a colonial and post-colonial entity, I have argued that it equally important to examine the ways in which the production of knowledge shaped those who were producing the knowledge themselves.¹² My approach here is similar to Thomas Simpson has examined the ways in which the practice of cartography in the Himalayas, through its imprecisions, difficulties, and physical demands, shaped the way in which the men involved came to view both the mountains and cartography itself.¹³

¹² Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Peter Gottschalk, *Religion, Science, and Empire: Classifying Hinduism and Islam in British India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

¹³ Thomas Simpson, "'Clean out of the Map'", pp. 3-36.

Throughout, I have argued that Himalayan Club maintained a nostalgic conception of both exploration and imperialism, in which the program of imperial expansion had been driven or inspired by actions on the frontier. Knowledge production on the frontiers, whether it be cartographic, ethnographic, linguistic, or anything else, had been the *modus operandi* of imperial expansion and discovery. And the individuals (usually men) who had undertaken this knowledge production had supposedly acted alone or with a few close companions, and were inspired by individual passion and adventure rather than a desire to improve, dominate, or conquer. The man on the spot could be seen as an extension of this process, an empiricist tasked with making his individual territory comprehensible, both because it served the Empire but also because the processes involved were, in themselves, personally edifying.

The founding members of the Himalayan Club, inspired by this belief, envisioned themselves as gatekeepers of the mountains, a collection of unique individuals whose combined knowledge and experience of the mountains could facilitate more and greater mountaineering as well as a better class of imperialist. But this vision of the Club, the vision of Corbett, Mason, and their circle, moulded by experience in the ranks of the Indian military and political services, was not the only one on offer. From the very beginning there were those who saw the Club in less esoteric terms, men like W. Allsup and E.O Shebbeare, formerly of the Mountain Club of India.¹⁴ And throughout the 1930s many mountaineers maintained a largely transactional approach to the Himalayan Club, making use of its advice and resources when it was advantageous, politely ignoring them when it was less so. But, in a way, this was exactly what the Club had always intended. An organisation predicated on the pre-eminence of individual experience and discretion could hardly be surprised when individuals exercised this prerogative. Indeed, by the Club's own standards this was a mark of success, even if it meant

¹⁴ Indeed, by Kenneth Mason's own (retrospective) reckoning the Eastern section of the Club, maintained a different identity throughout the Interwar years, shaped by the legacy and character of the Mountain Club of India. See Mason, *Abode of Snow*, p. 191.

a diminished role for men of Corbett and Mason's vintage. Thus, to expand upon the argument presented above, this chapter will argue that the imperialistic character of the Himalayan Club and its assumptions about the importance of individual imperialists did play a part in shaping the nature of Himalayan mountaineering, but it also, by design, set the stage for an emerging mountaineering culture less explicitly tied to the colonial state, but still shaped by its legacy.

I will make this argument by examining the actions undertaken by the Himalayan Club and its members to facilitate high-altitude climbing during the period 1929-1939. Amongst these actions, three distinct types of contributions emerge: the publication of detailed accounts of climbs as well as pertinent information about current and future expeditions in *The Himalayan Journal*; the provisioning of supplies, shelter, and permissions for expeditions; and the creation of the so-called 'Darjeeling Porter Registry'. The next chapter will then proceed to analyse the broader state of mountaineering in the Himalaya during the 1920s and 30s by looking at mountaineering literature produced by members of the Club. Before proceeding, however, the distinction between the assistance to mountaineers described in Chapter 4 of this thesis and that of the current chapter requires some explanation. Chapter 4 examined the ways in which the Club sought to encourage military and political officers to take up mountaineering as a complement to shikar or amateur pursuits like botany or ornithology. The Club published a plethora of accounts from young men and women of this class who simultaneously stressed the feasibility of their travels whilst also trading upon the currency of more thrilling expeditions like those of Hugh Ruttledge, Eric Shipton, and others to add romance and excitement to their narrative. This chapter, on the other hand, will look at the ways in which the Club sought to practically assist expeditions to the great Himalayan peaks Kangchenjunga, Nanda Devi, Nanga Parbat, and of course, Mount Everest.

I. *The Himalayan Journal* as a Resource

The first and perhaps the most readily apparent historical contribution of the Himalayan Club to high altitude mountaineering, is to be found in *The Himalayan Journal*. For although the inaugural edition of the Journal in 1929 lacked any accounts of major contemporary climbing expeditions, from 1930 onwards their number steadily increased. The 1930 and 1932 editions had accounts written by Paul Bauer of his expeditions to Kangchenjunga. The 1934 edition took a marked interest in Everest with three different articles written by Hugh Ruttledge and members of his expeditions, and each of the subsequent volumes of the journal until the final pre-war edition in 1940 contained at least two, with some containing five (Vol. 8), or even 6 (Vol. 9.), accounts of major mountaineering expeditions by one of the climbers involved.¹⁵

Unlike the accounts of recreational travel which were examined in the previous chapter, these accounts were generally sparse, practical descriptions of the climbs themselves. The American mountaineer Charles Houston's article 'A Reconnaissance of K2, 1938' in the 1939 edition of the *Journal* (Vol. 11) is a typical example of this. The article begins with a very brief description of Houston's quarry, K2, which he described, in a brief digression into purple prose, as the 'King of the Great Karakoram, and crown-prince of all the summits on the earth'.¹⁶ After which, his account turns to practical matters with a brief appraisal of the previous attempts on the mountain. 1902 saw an Austro-Swiss party attempt the mountain. Approaching from the north-east, they had only reached 20,00 feet. In 1909, the Duke of Abruzzi, Luigi Amadeo of Savoy, 'led a splendid expedition to K2' which reached a height of 22,000 feet (K2 is 28,251 feet), and identified the western ridge of the mountain, rather than the southern as the most likely path to success. Aside from these two expeditions no other attempts on the mountain had

¹⁵ The 1937 edition, for instance, contains two separate accounts of climbing Everest from Hugh Ruttledge and Michael Spender, an article from both Bill Tilman and Eric Shipton on Nanda Devi, another article from Tilman on the Zemu Gap near Kangchenjunga, and an article on Saltoro Kangri by John Hunt and James Waller.

¹⁶ Charles Houston, 'A Reconnaissance of K2, 1938', *The Himalayan Journal* (1939), 114-127 (p. 114).

been made, although various travellers (including Kenneth Mason, Bill Tilman and Eric Shipton) had come close to the mountain.¹⁷

Houston then makes note of considerations like the timing of the expedition, out of all the months between May and October, June and July were the only months in which Houston could go, and devotes a paragraph to listing its members: alongside four other Americans, the party was joined by one Captain N. R. Streatfeild of the Royal Artillery, who had been appointed by the Government of India; as well as Pasang Kikuli, a sherpa climber who had accompanied Bill Tilman on a previous expedition.¹⁸ Houston's account is divided into three sections, *The Approach*, *The Reconnaissance*, and *The Attack*. For the most part, these sections read like a diary, with Houston documenting his progress in miles for each day, as well as pointing out features in the landscape and changes in the weather. Ultimately, Houston was driven back by poor weather conditions at a height of 26,000 feet (some 2000 feet from the summit).¹⁹ At times Houston's account makes for rather dry reading, but the intention behind the article is obvious, to both facilitate further (and hopefully successful) attempts at the mountain (Houston's party did not intend to reach the summit) as well as to make clear the successes of his own party and the things they learned in their attempt.

With this basic structure in mind a number of themes emerge from these accounts regarding the nature, composition, and conduct of mountaineering expeditions. In particular, the provisioning of expeditions and the relationship between European climbers and their porters (and often fellow climbers) are both frequent subjects of discussion. Both issues will be addressed later in this chapter but before proceeding to the other kinds of material within

¹⁷ Houston, 'A Reconnaissance of K2, 1938', p. 114.

¹⁸ Houston, 'A Reconnaissance of K2, 1938', p. 115.

¹⁹ Houston, 'A Reconnaissance of K2, 1938', p. 125.

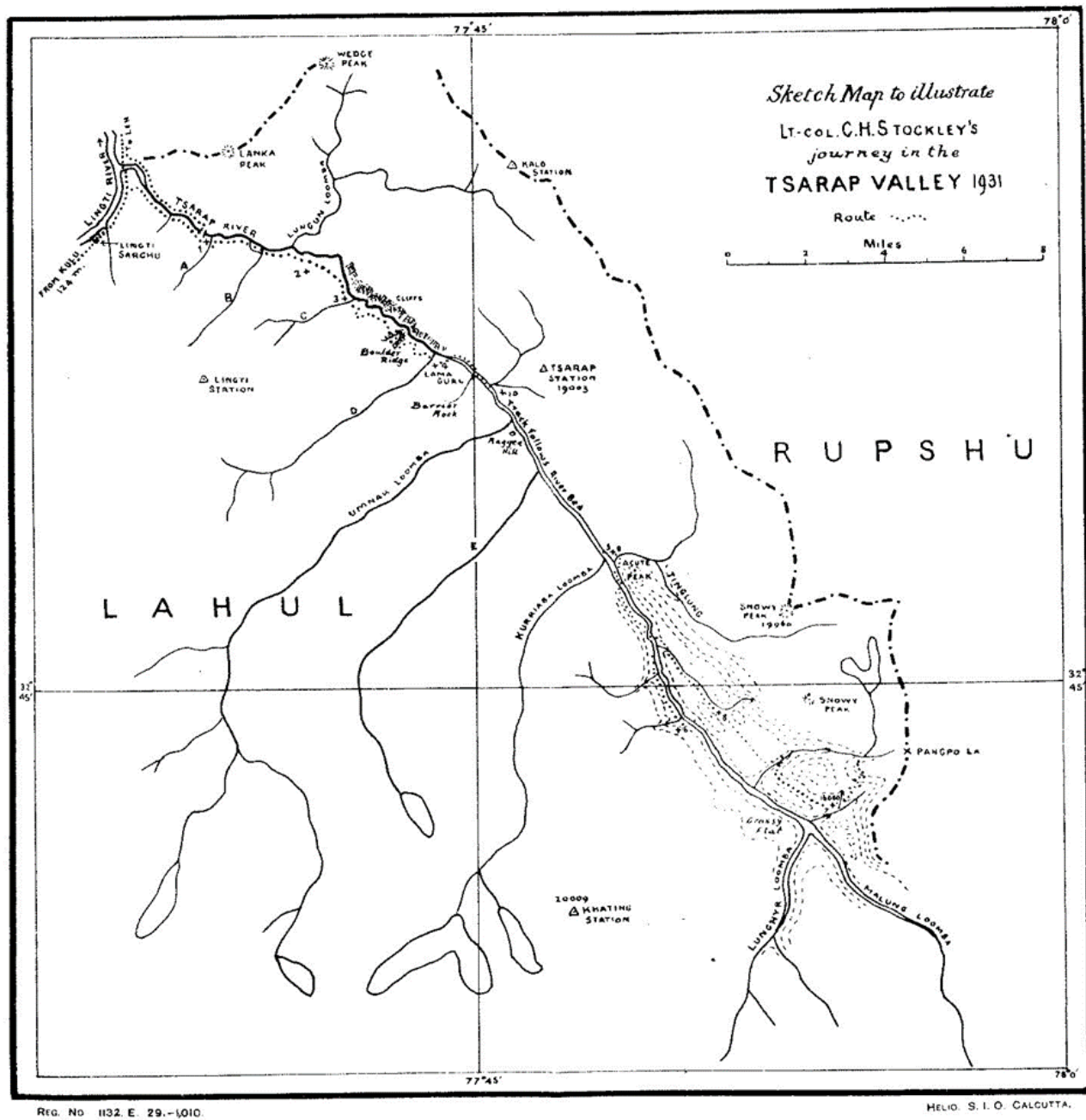
The Himalayan Journal there is one other element of these mountaineering accounts that is worth lingering on and that is the inclusion of sketch maps.

Captain E. St. J. Birnie's article, 'An Exploration of the Arwa Valley, British Garhwal' in the fourth volume of *The Himalayan Journal*, which details the travels and climbs of Frank Smythe's expedition in the Arwa Valley south of Kamet following their successful ascent of that mountain in 1931, contains an excellent example of such a map. The map, which folds out of the journal so that it measures two full pages across and two full pages down is at a scale of one inch to two miles and depicts, in relief, Birnie and Smythe's progress through the Arwa Valley on the boundary between the contemporary Garhwal District and the Tehri Garhwal State in what is today, Uttarakhand. On the map blue contour lines indicate 500 ft. and brown contour lines indicate 250ft. and the expedition's progress is charted with a dotted black line. The map also indicates passes reconnoitred, peaks climbed, and makes note of each of their camps from base camp to camp V. Perhaps most significantly, however, in the bottom right corner of the map is printed 'Helio. S.I.O. Calcutta', indicating that the map included in the *Journal* was a heliozincographic representation of Birnie's original sketch. That is, Birnie's original sketch had been translated into a larger scale at the Survey of India Office in Calcutta through the process of heliozincography (also known as photozincography), a photoengraving process involving zinc plates.²⁰ Birnie's map is of a kind with many others in *The Himalayan Journal*, indeed, in the same volume another article by Birnie, 'The First Ascent of Kamet' also contained a map reproduced by the Survey of India, as did Giotto Danielli's 'My Expedition in the Eastern Karakoram, 1930,' Lieut.-Col. C.H. Stockley's 'The Tsarap Valley Eastern Lahul,' and Sir Aurel Stein's 'On Ancient Tracks Past the Pamirs'.²¹ Some of the maps

²⁰ Captain E. St. J. Birnie, 'An Exploration of the Arwa Valley, British Garhwal', *The Himalayan Journal* 04 (1932), 35- 45 (p. 45).

²¹ Captain E. St. J. Birnie, 'The First Ascent of Kamet', *The Himalayan Journal* 04 (1932), 27-34 (p.34). Giotto Danielli, 'My Expedition in the Eastern Karakoram, 1930', *The Himalayan Journal* 04 (1932), 46-54 (p. 54). Stockley, 'The Tsarap Valley Eastern Lahul', p. 110. Stein, 'On Ancient Tracks Past the Pamirs', p. 24.

Figure no. 5.2: Map from 'The Tsarap Valley Eastern Lahul'



Stockley, 'The Tsarap Valley Eastern Lahul', p. 110.

Chapter 2 of this thesis explored the way in which Kenneth Mason's *Routes in the Western Himalaya, Kashmir, &c. Volume 1. Pūnch, Kashmīr, & Ladākh* (1929) served as an inspiration for the Club's efforts at creating route books for various regions of the Himalaya and there is no need to repeat that narrative here. What is significant, however, is that mountaineers should have included, alongside a description of their journey in words, sketch maps like these, which fit their expeditions into a broader effort by the Club to assemble knowledge about the Himalaya. By doing this, mountaineers were acting in the same vein as earlier exploratory pioneers like Francis Younghusband, William Jones, or even Captain Cook who, in their different ways, expanded the horizons of the British Empire. Indeed, the collaboration of the Survey of India in the production of these maps speaks to the premium that was placed on accuracy and quality.²³ This effort to make mountaineering an empirically rigorous pursuit can be seen as a part of what Reuben Ellis had dubbed 'The Royal Geographical Society style' in writing about mountaineering. That is, it can be seen as part of the move towards writing about mountaineering as a form of exploration, which had certainly become dominate by the late 1920s. For as Ellis puts it: 'Exploration writing, as full of adventure or muted by understatement as it might be, is inherently representational, empirical, technological, statistical and often political'. This stood in contrast to earlier mountaineering writing which celebrated the 'sublimity of the eternal'.²⁴ And, the inclusion of well-produced, accurate maps alongside accounts of mountaineering can and should be seen as a manifestation of this.

And *The Himalayan Journal* made other efforts to present a logical, empirical, and ordered view of mountaineering in the Himalayas. Aside from publishing accounts like Houston, Danielli, and Birnie's (supplemental maps included) the Club also made sure to keep

²³ In fact, in 1929 the Club was temporarily housed in the Survey of India's office at Simla see 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), 128-136 (p. 135).

²⁴ Ellis, *Vertical Margins*, pp. 12-13.

readers abreast of all the major expeditions taking place in a given year including those not detailed by the climbers themselves in a personally authored article for *The Himalayan Journal*. This was most readily apparent in the ‘Expeditions’ section of the *Journal* which appeared in every issue after 1930 and provided brief accounts of expeditions great and small in the Himalaya during a given year. The entries in this section typically occupied two to four pages and described a shooting trip to Lahul in much the same way as Reginald Schomberg’s exploration of the Altai Mountains or a Dutch climbing expedition in the Karakoram.²⁵ That such disparate expeditions could all be included and treated as equals within a single section is a reflection of the Club’s faith in the ability of any expedition, great or small, scientific or otherwise, to contribute to the knowledge base of the Club.

Aside from this section of the *Journal*, the ‘Club Proceedings’ section also contained a plethora of information regarding past, present, and future expeditions. The expeditions discussed in this section were almost exclusively climbing expeditions, and it was primarily those aimed at climbing the highest Himalayan peaks which found their way into these pages. A year prior to Houston’s attempt at K2, for instance, in the ‘Club Proceedings’ of that year’s edition (Vol. 09, 1937): the *Journal* noted that 1936 had seen a successful Anglo-American attempt at Nanda Devi, successful German attempts at Siniolchu and Simvu, a successful Japanese expedition to Nanda Kot and an unsuccessful French attempt at Gasherbrum I. Looking ahead, the Club advertised an upcoming German expedition to Nanga Parbat led by Karl Wien later that year (1937) as well as a probable return to Gasherbrum I by the French in 1938 as well as outings in the Karakoram by the Japanese and the Germans on Kangchenjunga. The advertisement of these past and future expeditions was not done purely to satisfy the

²⁵ See ‘A Shooting Expedition in Lahul, 1929’, ‘Lieut.-Col. Schomberg’s Journeys in the Tien Shan and Altai, 1927-29’, and ‘The Netherlands Karakoram Expedition, 1929-30’, in ‘Expeditions’, *The Himalayan Journal* 02 (1930), 101- 121 (pp. 111-112, pp. 104-107, pp. 109-111).

curiosity of the HC's members, however, with the Club's secretary, writing that: 'In all probability the Himalayan Club will be asked to select liaison officers [for the expeditions listed above in 1938 and 1939]'. The secretary went on to request that 'any member who would like to be considered should send in his name to the Honorary Secretary'.²⁶ By placing this request in the 'Club Proceedings' section of the *Journal*, the Club made clear its belief that one of its roles, alongside the more traditional activities of a social club, was liaising with prominent mountaineering expeditions. The assumption being that the Club's members: political officers with the necessary connections or clout to secure travel permissions as well as a knowledge of local conditions, specialist experts in the form of local or scientific and technical correspondents, or fellow mountaineers with pertinent experience; could be called upon to assist an expedition, especially one undertaken by non-British expeditions.

Members of the Himalayan Club did indeed serve as liaisons for various expeditions: E.O. Shebbeare and H.W. Tobin accompanied Paul Bauer's expedition to their base camp on Kanchenjunga in 1929; three members of the Club joined the International Expedition to the same mountain in 1930; Lieut. N.R. Streatfield joined a French expedition on their expedition to Gasherbrum I in 1936 and an American expedition to the Karakoram in 1938; and Lieutenant S. H. J. Whitehead of the Royal Garhwal Rifles served as the liaison officer for a German expedition to Garhwal that same year.²⁷ This is only a selection of the official liaison roles described in the pages of the journal.²⁸

Climbers, in their own accounts of an expedition, were often quick to acknowledge the help provided by members of the Club, but this did not stop them from detailing the ways in

²⁶ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 09 (1937), p. 193.

²⁷ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 02 (1930), pp. 185-86. 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 03 (1931), p. 161. 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 09 (1937), p. 191. 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 11 (1939), 208-213 (p. 209).

²⁸ In 1939 a panel of all members interested in acting as a liaison was created to avoid delays, with all members of the panel being informed immediately of upcoming expeditions. 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 11 (1939), 214-219 (p. 219).

which they disagreed, or perhaps tactically disregarded, the advice of the HC. I use the phrase tactically disregarded because on reading these accounts it is not so much a matter of climbers' disbelieving or discounting the advice and contributions of experts, be they in the Himalayan Club or elsewhere, so much as a faith in their own initiative and judgement.

Marco Pallis (1895-1989), for example, a British climber of Greek descent who was not a member of the Himalayan Club but wrote for *the Himalayan Journal* exemplifies this considered approach to expert advice. Describing his expedition to Reo Purguil in 1933, for instance, Pallis wrote that his party of four, who had climbed together before in the Alps but not in the Himalayas felt confident enough in their ability to 'live together... in the wilds without quarrelling' to 'reject the advice of those who pressed [them] to take a transport officer with actual Indian experience for fear of making a hopeless muddle of [their] portage'.²⁹ Instead, Pallis took the advice of the veteran mountaineer T.G. Longstaff (1875-1964), a founding member of the HC who, according to Pallis, acted as the 'guru' for their party. Longstaff, according to Pallis, had told him that if they 'took the trouble to study languages, and used common sense and observation' then they would be able 'to run [their] own show all right'.³⁰ This statement by Longstaff should not be taken as a dismissal of the Himalayan Club's efforts, but rather a reflection of his and the Club's deep-seated belief in individual autonomy (at least for those of the right sort). The Club existed to facilitate expeditions and to provide information and expertise to would-be climbers, but it was never intended to be prescriptive in its approach to mountaineering.

Ultimately, though, what is most significant about *The Himalayan Journal's* engagement with high altitude mountaineering is the way in which it is aligned with the Club's other pursuits. Mountaineering could, like any other form of travel, help to fill in the blank

²⁹ Marco Pallis, 'Gangotri and Leo Pargial, 1933', *The Himalayan Journal* 06 (1934), 106-126 (p. 106).

³⁰ Pallis, 'Gangotri and Leo Pargial, 1933', pp. 106-107.

spaces of the map which could be found in the highest reaches of the Himalayas and routes were charted, maps created, and experts put at the disposal of members in the hopes of doing precisely that. More than that, though, the Club's climbing members believed it was important to describe and contextualise their narratives in an impartial and empirically rigorous way. Unlike accounts of recreational travel for which interest had to be generated, these accounts of high-altitude climbing were seen to be sufficiently interesting in themselves. Rather than advertising such climbs, then, the Club sought to do everything it could to make further climbs possible. And one way of doing that was to break down the elements of a climb into recognisable and repeatable parts. This can be seen through the detailed written accounts provided by climbers as well as in the maps which many of them produced to accompany their journeys. Similarly, liaison officers could ensure that the relevant information, permissions, and supplies were obtained by a mountaineering party. And these last two features, provisions and permissions, require further examination.

II. Provisions and Permissions

One way that the club believed that it could be immediately useful to climbers was by provisioning expeditions. Indeed, Gerard Mackworth Young (1884-1965), the honorary secretary of the Himalayan Club wrote in the inaugural edition of *The Himalayan Journal* (1929) that 'There is no matter on which travellers in the Himalaya require information more than on equipment'. To that end Mackworth Young recorded that it had 'been decided to appoint a Sub-Committee to examine the question, and to prepare a note on the equipment and stores suitable for various types of Himalayan expeditions'.³¹ This sub-committee consisted of five members of the Indian military stationed across the Northwest of India at Waziristan,

³¹ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), p. 132.

Ambala, Landsdowne, and Quetta, and an advertisement was placed in the 'Club Notices' section of that volume (vol. 1, 1929) for members with experience of Himalayan travel to send in 'lists of equipment which [had] been found useful to any one of the members' under a variety of headings.³² Aside from standard mountaineering equipment the list also included objects required for non-mountaineering leisure pursuits like hunting, fishing, and skiing. The Eastern Section of the Club, in typical fashion, moved more quickly to actually put rentable equipment at the disposal of members. The 'small stock of equipment' assembled by the Eastern section consisted of only a few tents and some climbing equipment.³³ Based on this evidence one might easily conclude that the Himalayan Club did not have much to offer expeditions, materially, during the years 1929 to 1939. And while it is safe to say that the Club was not capable of fully outfitting large expeditions (in 1938 the *Journal* still reported the Eastern Section had only 'a small stock of climbing equipment'), they also reported in 1935 that 'the Club's stock of equipment has been put to good use and it is hoped that it might be possible to supplement this by certain tents and equipment belonging to the 1933 Mount Everest expedition'.³⁴ What is more, providing advice about or actually provisioning equipment was only one of the ways in which the Club sought to materially assist both members and visiting climbers.

Constructing mountain huts - purpose-built structures offering shelter and sometimes food to mountaineers - was another way in which the Club sought to materially assist expeditions. The construction of these structures had become a popular initiative of German and Austrian mountaineering clubs in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, by the turn of the century individual chapters of clubs competed amongst themselves to see who could erect the largest and most lavish lodges.³⁵ This large-scale construction boom coincided with and also

³² 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 01 (1929), p. 140.

³³ 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 04 (1932), 221-224 (p. 224).

³⁴ 'Club Proceedings'. *The Himalayan Journal* 07 (1935), p. 196.

³⁵ Keller, *Apostles of the Alps*, pp 35-40.

facilitated a massive expansion in tourism to the Alps. Thus, the decision of the Himalayan Club to pursue the construction of such huts must, again, be viewed as a somewhat complicated endeavour by the Club.

The idea that the Club might construct any such huts was first brought to the attention of the general membership in the 1931 edition of the *Journal* (Vol. 3.) wherein it was reported that both the Central and Eastern Sections of the Club had received proposals to construct huts in the Liddar Valley in Kashmir and in Sikkim with the idea being to 'locate both huts in places where they [would] be of equal benefit to climbers and to skiers'.³⁶ At the time of writing, 1931, however, the sites for these huts had not finally been selected, and the Maharajahs of both Kashmir and Sikkim had yet to be approached (the latter was a member of the Club), although there was 'an ample balance at the Club's disposal to cover the cost of both projects, if finally approved'.³⁷ It took until 1935 for the final plans for the Sikkim huts (by this point the initial hut had become two, connecting the Lachen and Lachung valleys) to be drawn up: the Maharajah of Sikkim had consented to donate land, wood, and stone, and one Rai Sahib Faqir Chand Ali, the State Engineer of Sikkim, had drawn up the plans for their construction (and been awarded membership in the Club as a result).³⁸ By 1937, however, only one of the two huts had been completed and it was not until 1938 that the second was completed (the Kashmir hut seemed to have fallen by the wayside).³⁹ The completed huts, however, were not inconsequential. The first hut, in the Jha Chu Valley had a fourteen square ft. living room with a stove and five bunk beds, a kitchen, and a loft reached via a trap door. The second hut, in Mome Samdong was virtually identical, although it was smaller, and in place of bunk beds it

³⁶ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 03 (1931), p. 164.

³⁷ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 03 (1931), p. 164.

³⁸ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 07 (1935), p. 196.

³⁹ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 10 (1938), p. 222. 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 11 (1939), pp. 210-211.

simply had a loft on which bedding or sleeping bags could be laid out. Each was rentable for a fee of Rs./2 a night or RS./8 for an entire party.⁴⁰

It is, perhaps, somewhat unfair to judge the Himalayan Club by the speed at which it established these mountain huts, just as it is somewhat unfair to judge it for the paucity of mountaineering equipment at its disposal, especially as the interruption posed by World War Two could not have been predicted by the Club in the early 1930s. Moreover, the Club, or rather a large number of its members, could make themselves useful in other ways, in particular, by dint of their positions with the Government of India. Take, for instance, this passage from Günther Dyhrenfurth (1866-1975), a German and later Swiss mountaineer, describing the various ways in which the Himalayan Club and its members assisted his international expedition to Kangchenjunga in 1930 (amongst the European climbers involved there were five Germans, three Englishmen, two Swiss, and one Austrian):

Our considerable baggage, weighing about six tons, was allowed into India free of customs duty, and all formalities were quickly settled. At Delhi we had the honour of being invited to lunch with the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, a member of the Himalayan Club. Field-Marshal Sir William Birdwood, the president of the Club, was kind enough to attach a Gurkha to the expedition, while Mr. G. M. Young, the honorary secretary, kindly forwarded our request to pass through Nepal to His Highness the Maharaja. In Calcutta, Messrs. G. B. Gourlay and Shebbeare, and the German vice-consul, Dr. Eberl, gave us advice and every assistance, while in Darjeeling, Lt.-Colonel H. W. Tobin put himself at our disposal in the kindest way for the organization and management of our transport.⁴¹

⁴⁰ 'Notes', *The Himalayan Journal* 12 (1940), 137-143 (pp. 137-138).

⁴¹ Prof. G.O. Dyhrenfurth, 'The International Himalayan Expedition, 1930', *The Himalayan Journal* 03 (1931), 77-91 (p. 79).

Thus, at every stage of their expedition, a member of the Himalayan Club was on hand to assist Dyhrenfurth's expedition and to smooth its ingress into the mountains. And it is here, at least during the period covered by this thesis (1929-1940) that the Club's members made a real difference in facilitating mountaineering. As the passage above demonstrates, at each stage of Dyhrenfurth's journey a different member of the Club, a different man on the spot, was ready to smooth the passage of his journey by securing the necessary permissions and using their connections to facilitate travel.

When discussing recreation, climbing, and travel in the Himalaya it is imperative that one does not underplay the importance of security concerns in shaping official policy in the region. Even after the frontiers of the East India Company and later the British Indian government's Himalayan frontiers came to be understood there were still anxieties about their security. Indeed, Kyle Gardner, has argued that 'the security of this frontier, once technologically integrated into a cartographically unified space, was increasingly doubted by an anxious imperial regime after 1857'. According to Gardner it was just such anxieties (principally a fear of Russian invasion) which had led to the British Invasion of Tibet in 1903-04.⁴² Fears of imminent Russian invasion had abated somewhat by the 1920s but a similar anxiety about foreign incursions and the desirability of buffer states led to a post-war policy which sought to keep Tibet both independent and isolated from other nations.⁴³ Within this paradigm maintaining favourable relations with Tibet was of paramount importance and the question of who could enter Tibet and for what purposes was a crucially important issue. Aside from this, the question of non-British travellers seeking permissions to travel in those parts of the Himalaya which were under British control was also important. Anyone travelling in the frontier regions was a potential security threat and had to be carefully vetted and monitored.

⁴² Kyle J. Gardner, 'The Ready Materials for Another World: Frontier, Security, and the Hindustan-Tibet Road in the 19th century Northwestern Himalaya', *Himalaya* 34 (2014), 71-84 (p. 80).

⁴³ Wendy Palace, *The British Empire and Tibet, 1900-1922* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), p. 141.

Seen in this light, the Club's involvement in securing permission for foreign mountaineering expeditions to climb in the Himalaya is significant. It shows that the club not only sought to bring together the knowledge and experience of its members, it also sought to make use of their clout and authority as well.

An example of the omnipresence of Himalayan Club's members on the Himalayan frontier, and especially in Sikkim, can be seen in a flurry of correspondence concerning the death of one Edgar Francis Farmer, a recent American graduate in engineering from NYU and an employee of Standard Oil who, with no real experience of climbing, perished on Kangchenjunga on the 27th of May 1929.⁴⁴ The news of Farmer's disappearance and presumed death was first reported to the Foreign Secretary of India by the resident in Sikkim, James Leslie Rose Weir, a member of the Himalayan Club and its Honorary Secretary for the Chumbi Valley and Eastern Tibet in a telegram dated the 18 June, 1929.⁴⁵ Weir related that Farmer, who was 'duly warned in Darjeeling of the dangers of attempting assaults on high peaks' had nevertheless proceeded with 'no experience of mountaineering' and 'no proper equipment' to attempt to climb Kangchenjunga.⁴⁶ Efforts by a representative of the American Consulate in Calcutta, acting on behalf of Farmer's mother saw Weir, H.W. Tobin, E.O. Shebbeare (of the Forest Service) and J.G. Acheson (the deputy foreign secretary in India), all of whom were members of the HC, become involved.⁴⁷ Ultimately, despite the Farmer family's desire that 'no stone be left unturned' Colonel Tobin, in his correspondence to Acheson, noted (with a hint of disapproval) that Farmer, 'breaking promise crossed Nepalese frontier and established 3 camps on glacier running south from Kinchinjunga [sic] on the 26th of May'. Ignoring the protestations

⁴⁴ 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 02 (1930), p. 120. And *India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London*, File 4844, IOR/L/PS/11/305 (Records of the Indian Foreign Secretary).

⁴⁵ 'Club Notices', *The Himalayan Journal* 02 (1930), p. 194.

⁴⁶ *India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London*, File 4844, IOR/L/PS/11/305 (Records of the Indian Foreign Secretary), File 4844, IOR/L/PS/11/305.

⁴⁷ *India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London*, File 4844, IOR/L/PS/11/305 (Records of the Indian Foreign Secretary), File 4533 in IOR/L/PS/11/305.

of his ‘inadequately shod porters’ Farmer ascended a treacherous ice face to take some photographs and never returned. Tobin’s opinion was that any search was hopeless and was, moreover, convinced such a search would be impossible ‘without strong organised Europeans... apart from the Nepalese government’s objections’.⁴⁸

In the second volume of the Himalayan Journal, in a sub-section of the ‘Expeditions’ section entitled ‘The Tragedy of Kangchenjunga, 1929’ it was lamented that Farmer ‘who had the ideal build for a climber and possessed courage and determination’ had, nevertheless, been brought low due to ‘the obsession of his ambition’.⁴⁹ Farmer’s folly had not simply been his refusal to heed the advice of the man on the spot but also perhaps, in a way, his Americanness, or rather, his non-Britishness. A man like Marco Pallis, despite his Greek descent, had nonetheless been educated at Harrow and in the trenches, and was therefore equipped to ‘run his own show’.⁵⁰ For men like Pallis consulting the relevant authorities was simply a matter of course, a consultation with the relevant authority required little more than a letter to a friend or acquaintance or a letter from one such to a friend or acquaintance of their own on one’s behalf.

Personal relationships, however, did not always trump geo-political concerns, as can be seen by returning to the matter of travel permissions. For the Himalayan Club’s members did take an active role, both officially and unofficially, in matters relating to travel in the Himalayas. Kenneth Mason, for instance, became involved in an exchange with J.G. Acheson regarding an attempt by John Noel to secure permission from the Darbar (State council) of Sikkim to climb Kangchenjunga in 1929. John Noel had listed Mason as a reference in his application but had been denied permission by the Government of Sikkim probably, according to Acheson, because of ‘his behaviour during the last Everest expedition [1924]’ in particular

⁴⁸ BLIOA, File 4844, IOR/L/PS/11/305.

⁴⁹ ‘Expeditions’, *The Himalayan Journal* 02 (1930), 101-121 (pp. 120-121).

⁵⁰ Witt, Richard C. H., ‘Pallis, Alexander (1850–1935), cotton merchant and translator’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 27 May 2010.

because of his inducement of ‘five Llamas (sic) to go with him to England for exhibition purposes.’⁵¹ Noel, here, is referencing the so-called ‘Dancing Lamas’ of Everest controversy, a diplomatic incident between the government of Tibet and Britain caused by the ‘performances’ of five Tibetan lamas prior to screenings of John Noel’s *Epic of Everest* in 1925. The Tibetan government had deemed both the lamas’ performance as well as the depiction of Tibetan people and Everest itself in Noel’s film to be offensive, and as result further expeditions to Everest were forbidden until 1933.⁵²

Acheson wrote to Mason to prevent him being ‘influenced by other versions of the episode’.⁵³ Mason, in a lengthy reply to Acheson (with Himalayan Club headed paper), made it clear that he had only really been concerned with two other members of Noel’s party, a Mr. Walter Wood and Miss Hodgson [Mason gives no first name] who had come to him with a letter of introduction from a founder member of the Himalayan Club in Switzerland. Mason went on to state that he only requested specific permission for Wood and Hodgson, without Noel, to travel to Kangchenjunga, which had been promptly granted by Weir (who was then resident in Sikkim). Ultimately, the affair amounted to little as Wood and Hodgson would not be separated from Noel and the latter, going against Mason’s suggestion of attempting Nanda Devi, made for Nun Kun, on the border of Kashmir and Ladakh instead. Mason had supplied them with maps from the Survey of India and had hoped that that would be the end of the matter.⁵⁴ Wood and Hodgson, according to Mason, were disappointed but understanding. Noel, on the other hand, could not be made to understand ‘that his action was at all culpable’ for the ‘ill-feeling in Tibet’, and he maintained that he had obtained all the necessary permissions. Mason concluded his message to Acheson by writing that he ‘did not know the rights or wrongs

⁵¹ *India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London*, File 6923, IOR/L/PS/11/305.

⁵² Hansen, ‘The Dancing Lamas of Everest’, pp. 712–47.

⁵³ *BLIOA*, File 6923 in IOR/L/PS/11/305.

⁵⁴ *BLIOA*, File 6923 in IOR/L/PS/11/305.

of the matter' and that he was not 'really concerned' either. 'I did what I could for my friends' he wrote, but 'he fully realised that the Sikkim Darbar has an absolute right to refuse to admit Noel if it wishes, as of course it has'. Mason was only disappointed because the expedition had held out the possibility of 'getting a really accurate stereographic survey of the Kangchenjunga region'.⁵⁵

I bring up this incident, and the incident of Farmer's disappearance, not because they indicate any great success in securing permissions by the Club, because they do not but, rather, because they are indicative of the interconnectedness of the Himalayan Club's members and the frontier establishment in India. This can be seen in the Himalayan Club's own assessment of its efforts. In 1934, for instance, in the 'Club Proceedings' section of the Himalayan Journal (06) it was reported that the Club had made 'two very satisfactory arrangements with the officials of Darjeeling and Sikkim'. Firstly, it had been agreed that 'members of the Himalayan Club applying for passes to travel in Sikkim [would] be able to obtain these more promptly if they mention[ed] in their application that they [were] members of the Himalayan Club'. This did not, however, obviate the need to speak to the Political agent in Sikkim (in 1934 this was Frederick Williamson, a founding member of the Himalayan Club) to obtain permission for fifteen or more days of travel in Sikkim.⁵⁶ And, secondly, the Club had arranged for the rules governing dak bungalows (a sort of traveller's shelter) in Darjeeling to be relaxed so that 'bona-fide travellers who have been touring off the bungalow routes and are not able to arrive at a particular bungalow on the day on which they have booked it' would 'not be charged double fees as previously'.⁵⁷ Both of these arrangements provide further evidence of the deep and

⁵⁵ BLIOA, File 6923 in IOR/L/PS/11/305.

⁵⁶ ACA, Copies of Replies to Circular Letters, Himalayan Club, F12, 1-3.

⁵⁷ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 06 (1934), p. 188.

abiding relationship between the Himalayan Club as an unofficial organisation and the official governmental institutions in which its members operated.

Ultimately, then, whether they succeeded in securing permissions or not, whether they succeeded in making a substantial difference in the material provisioning of expeditions the Club and its members were nonetheless intimately involved in the process of granting official permission to travel in those parts of the Himalaya in which they held sway. More than that though, the Club's desire to utilise the official clout of its members to smooth the progress of travel and climbing in the Himalaya can, once again, be seen as a part of the Club's broader faith in the man on the spot. A district officer or political agent could be relied upon not just to have the ear of the relevant authorities (even if they could not always succeed in the end) but also to be willing to bend the rules slightly, or to put aside what might be considered over-cautious geo-political prudence in favour of adventure, excitement, and exploration.

III. The Darjeeling Porter Registry

Looking back on the achievements of the Himalayan Club Kenneth Mason, in *Abode of Snow*, his history of Himalayan mountaineering and exploration published in 1955, argued that it was the Eastern Section of the Club, 'primarily composed of the old members of the Mountain Club of India' who had had the left the most long-lasting impression on mountaineering in the Himalaya. While the Club, writ large, had quickly proved its worth by helping expeditions from abroad with 'their early arrangements and with their transport' establishing a system whereby if 'a party had no knowledge of the language or the country, a member of the Club would assist it and, if he could spare the time, sometimes go with it'.⁵⁸ A practice Mason

⁵⁸ Mason, *Abode of Snow*, p. 191.

claimed was common with large expeditions originating from Europe, he even argued that the Government of India sometimes made it a precondition of their granting permission to travel.

It was due to ‘the enthusiasm and energy’ of the eastern section, however, that the Darjeeling Porter Registry, which Mason deemed to be the Club’s most lasting achievement, came into being. The registry’s origins lay with Mallory and Irvine’s 1924 expedition to Everest, whereafter the 15 porters who had been ‘fit and ready after the disastrous storms to go high to the North Col and above’, earned the nickname ‘Tigers’ and were sought after for subsequent expeditions.⁵⁹ According to Mason these men ‘were among the first to be registered, although it was some time before they were given numbers’. Gradually, a list of ‘competent and reliable porters’ grew and the ‘steadiest and best trained became eligible for the distinction of a ‘Tiger’s badge’.⁶⁰ Mason then listed some of the men who had been awarded this status (Tenzing Norgay was among them), writing that all of them, ‘from a ‘coolie status’ rose to be fine mountaineers and colleagues under the training of skilled European alpinists’. More than that though, Mason proudly related that many of them, in his telling, ‘climb now for the joy of climbing,’ financial considerations aside.⁶¹ Mason’s teleological reading of the Darjeeling Sherpa Porter Registry conceals a more complex picture. For although many members of the Club did see Sherpa porters as climbers in their own right, they were still not seen as equals to their European counterparts. Moreover, the complex motivations of Sherpa climbers themselves, were not factored into this picture.

The Himalayan Journal first mentioned the Darjeeling porter registry in the 1935 edition (Vol. 7.). In the ‘Club Proceedings’ section of that volume the membership was informed that the process of registering Darjeeling porters had begun in earnest. ‘In conjunction

⁵⁹ Mason, *Abode of Snow*, p. 191.

⁶⁰ Mason, *Abode of Snow*, p. 191.

⁶¹ Mason, *Abode of Snow*, p. 192.

with this' a series of so-called 'chit books' (small notebooks) were also being prepared for each porter. The books were described as small and contained 'a photograph of the owner on the first page' and were each 'wrapped in a mackintosh wallet'.⁶² The next year, 1936, the register was already being lauded as a success, in particular for offering members the option of choosing men 'suited for particular jobs'. And in the space between the 1935 and 36 editions of the *Journal* it was reported that 'two Darjeeling men, Palten and Da Tondrup, both of whom were on Nanga Parbat last year, were sent up to Kashmir to join Mr. Waller and Captain Hunt on their attempt on Peak 36 in the Karakoram, and [that] both earned warm praise'. And, in another climb some distance from Darjeeling 'Da Tondrup and two other men went to Garhwal with Mr. Auden [John Bicknell Auden]'. And amongst the porters themselves the Club reported that there was 'a great keenness... to earn their Himalayan Club chit books and a place in the register'. And that 'many men whose connexion with mountain-climbing in Sikkim goes back a number of years, came to the see the Honorary Secretary, Eastern Section, in Darjeeling.'⁶³

By the time of the publication of the ninth volume of *The Himalayan Journal* in 1937, a substantial list of rules and regulations for the employment of Porters through the Himalayan Club had been drawn up. The rules, which had been passed by the committees of both the Central and Eastern sections of the Club in 1936 set out both general, philosophical principals governing the employment of porters registered with the Club as well as more concrete regulations, including an advisory list of porter's kit, rations, and the relevant amount of each to be taken on a typical high-altitude expedition. Although the rules were not in any way legally binding the Club nonetheless hoped that travellers would 'co-operate in adhering to the letter and spirit of the rules'. Regarding the general principles guiding the Himalayan Club's approach to the employment of porters, the Club had three primary ambitions: first, the Club

⁶² 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 07 (1935), pp. 192-194.

⁶³ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 08 (1936), pp. 175-176, 179.

desired, on receipt of a formal written application specifying the number of porters required and the desired time period, to be able to assist an expedition as much as possible in employing suitable porters; second, the Club desired to keep 'rates for porters to reasonable amounts' and stipulated that any porter employed via the Club had to be provided with full equipment and suitable rates of pay, rations, and compensation; and finally, that the suitable rates of pay would be set by the Eastern Section of the Club.⁶⁴

To that end, and turning to the more specific regulations set out by the Club, or rather, by the Eastern Section of the Club, matters like the rates of pay (porters' travel expenses to and from Darjeeling had to be covered, and the rate of pay had to be kept at 12 annas a day, with full rations, below the snowline and 1 rupee a day above), compensation for injuries (30 Rs. for the partial or whole loss of a single finger or toe and 10 Rs. for any subsequent digits, 400 Rs. for the loss of sight in both eyes, etc.), and equipment (some 14 items of basic clothing and bedding) were all listed. Interestingly, there was also a section on *baksheesh*, in which the Club advises a rate of 10-15% on top of a porter's ordinary wages.⁶⁵ The Club also provided both an 'Advisory List of Porter's Kit for High-altitude Climbing' and 'Specimen Lists of Rations for Porters.' From the former some sample items include: 1 windproof suit with hood, aero-wing canvas or similar material (cost about Rs. 30), 1 pair European climbing-boots well nailed, and 1 pair crampons (recommended). From the latter list which takes the rations of the Rutledge's 1933 Everest Expedition and another expedition some sample items are: 4 ounces of biscuits, 2 ounces of Ovaltine, 2 ounces of sardines, and 3 ounces of raisins, prunes, or dried fruit.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 09 (1937), p. 199

⁶⁵ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 09 (1937), p. 200.

⁶⁶ 'Club Proceedings', *The Himalayan Journal* 09 (1937), pp. 200-202.

The last major development in the Club's porter registry prior to the Second World War was the decision taken on 6th of February 1939 to 'create a superior grade of Himalayan Club Porters, composed of those with considerable climbing experience.' This superior grade of porters was to be known as the Tigers, and they were to be given badges with a tiger or a tiger's head on them and be remunerated at a higher rate of pay (8 annas more per day than other men on the registry).⁶⁷ Explaining the decision to call this group Tigers the *Journal* offered a rather convoluted (as well as condescending) explanation:

There were a number of criticisms of this name [Tigers], but none of the alternatives appeared suitable. 'Climbers' is a term already used for Europeans of the party; 'guides' would give a false impression, for it is most undesirable that the porters should be looked upon as guides in the Swiss sense; and since the name 'Tiger' has been fairly constantly used since the Mount Everest expedition of 1924 for the picked porters who have gone high, it has been adopted as the best name put forward.⁶⁸

This statement reveals a good deal about the ways in which Sherpa and Bhutia climbers (for they were climbers) were viewed by their European employers and fellow mountaineers. It shows that although Sherpa climbers were viewed with respect and admiration by the members of the Club, they were not seen as equals. For although individual 'Tigers' often accompanied European climbers to the summit they were still not deemed to be climbers in their own right. And the choice of tiger as a name is telling for it identifies Sherpa climbers not with their logical, European comrades, but with animals, brave, powerful animals, but animals nonetheless.

⁶⁷ 'Club Proceedings', The Himalayan Journal 11 (1939), pp. 155-156. 'Notes', The Himalayan Journal 12 (1940), p. 141.

⁶⁸ 'Notes', The Himalayan Journal 12 (1940), p. 141.

This is not to say that the members of the Himalayan Club saw Sherpa climbers as unthinking animals, indeed they saw them as would-be mountaineers in the European mould. What this teleological reading of Sherpa climbers in the Himalayas did fail to account for, however, were the differing motivations to climb which existed for European and Sherpa climbers. The anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner, has argued that the differing motivations to climbing between Sherpa and European climbers led to a differing approach to climbing deaths:

For the sahibs [European climbers], the risk of death is what makes the sport glorious; for the Sherpas there is nothing noble about the risk at all; there is only a kind of threat that must be managed, negotiated. For the sahibs, ordinary life pales before the intensity of mountaineering; for the Sherpas, mountaineering is simply the best-paying way to support ordinary life.⁶⁹

Ortner acknowledges the fact that Sherpa climbers could and did have other motivations to climb as well (though, perhaps, she does not give these enough credence) but emphasizes the significance of these differing motivations for climbing. Because of their more practical motivations for climbing, Sherpa porters often took a more measured and cautious approach to risk. This, in turn, invited accusations of cowardice from some European mountaineers. And this is born out in much of the mountaineering literature, where Sherpa injuries were frequently dismissed as nuisances and incidences of caution chalked up to superstition or cowardice.

The Club's porter registry, however, in its desire to establish regular pay and conditions for porters, can be seen as an acknowledgment of this reality. Moreover, the Club was not indifferent to the deaths of Sherpa climbers and made efforts to memorialize those who did

⁶⁹ Sherry B. Ortner, 'Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering', *Representations*, no. 59 (1997), 135–62 (p. 140).

lose their lives.⁷⁰ Indeed, Sherpa climbers were even given write ups in the ‘In Memoriam’ section of the Journal. In 1931, for instance, a Sherpa climber named Chettan was included following his death on Kangchenjunga that year. The obituary presented Chettan as an apprentice who had been instructed in his craft by British climbers. And in the piece Chettan was described as ‘intelligent and quick to learn’, and ‘cheerful – sometimes too cheerful’. The obituary ended with a particularly telling anecdote. T.G. Longstaff, the writer of the piece, who had climbed with and employed Chettan before, related that Chettan had once refused a present of money, preferring instead to take Longstaff’s knife as a reminder of their experiences together. Longstaff had been greatly impressed by this gesture, and finished his account by stating that ‘he [Chettan] understood what mountaineering means to us and shared our interests to the full’. He then concluded by arguing that Chettan had been ‘on the road to be a guide, with all that word implies among mountaineers, which is that the servant becomes a companion and a friend’.⁷¹ For Longstaff and the members of the Himalayan Club sherpas could indeed become climbers in their own right, but this could only occur if they were properly instructed. That is, if they adhered to the vision and practices of British mountaineers.

⁷⁰The Club erected a memorial to the Sherpa, Chettan, who lost his life climbing Kanchenjunga in 1931. ‘Club Notices’, *The Himalayan Journal* 03 (1931), p. 165.

⁷¹ ‘In Memoriam’, *The Himalayan Journal* 03 (1931), 115-120 (pp. 115-117).

IV. Conclusions

Ultimately, the Himalayan Club's relationship with mountaineering was complicated. In the first place, the Club's founding members believed that a club on the scale of the Alpine Club was impossible due to a dearth of competent climbers in India. Thus, like with other forms of Himalayan travel the Club sought to make itself useful by putting the wisdom, experience, and connections of its collected membership at the disposal of the individual member. As with recreational travel, the Club sought to bring together the disparate and diverse experience of its membership into one place. Indeed, bringing together this first-hand experience was seen as the best way to encourage and facilitate mountaineering in the Himalaya. In *The Himalayan Journal*, mountaineers offered practical and concise accounts of their climbs with an eye towards helping subsequent expeditions. The Club also helped to provision individual climbers and expeditions and to secure permission to travel. Finally, the Club sought to regulate the employment of Sherpa porters both with an eye towards efficiency but also to protect the welfare of these men.

All these efforts rested on an assumption that climbers could share their own individual experiences to advance the cause of mountaineering in the Himalaya. As this chapter has demonstrated, however, the location of the Club at the edge of Empire, that is, on the Himalayan frontier, fundamentally shaped its attitude towards mountaineering. In the published narratives of climbing which were included within *The Himalayan Journal*, efforts were made to compress and condense these journeys into an empirically sound and helpful format. More than that, the Club sought to present an overview of all the major climbing expeditions which had taken place in a given year. This empirical focus was part of a broader turn towards conceptualising mountaineering as a form of exploration that had begun in the late-nineteenth century. The Club's efforts to secure permission to travel for mountaineers further reveals the Club's entanglement with imperial ideology and government. For although

the Club was never an official organ of the colonial state, many of its members were and were willing to use their connections to help fellow climbers and Club members. Equally telling was the Club's relationship with sherpa porters. Because here, one, can see that although the Club professed an ideal of mountaineering as a universal human pursuit its relationship with Sherpa climbers was fundamentally shaped by imperial ideology.

The Himalayan Club's desire to put the man on the spot at the disposal of individual climbers made the Club unique and different from other mountaineering organisations in Europe. It seems almost too obvious to state but it is important to make clear that the Himalayan Club was an imperial organisation. Or rather, it was an imperial organisation which sought to promote mountaineering in the Himalayas. The focus on the Club's character versus its intentions here is important because, as the next chapter will demonstrate, mountaineering in the Himalayas was shaped by forces outside the Club's control as well.

Chapter 6: Interwar Mountaineering in the Himalaya

This chapter will be an examination of the ways in which mountaineers wrote about climbing and their experiences in the Himalaya during the late 1920s and 1930s. It will examine the ways in which mountaineers conceived of themselves and their fellow mountaineers in relation to changes within mountaineering in general and within Himalayan mountaineering more specifically. In particular, this chapter will look at the response of a number of prominent mountaineers to the lingering memory of World War I; the relationship between nationality, nationalism and mountaineering; as well as what can, with the benefit of hindsight be seen as a process of gradual de-mystification and athelticisation. Doing this reveals a body of literature which mirrors many of the foundational assumptions of The Himalayan Club.

Before proceeding it is first necessary to make a definitional as well as a methodological distinction. First, it should be made clear both who and what, precisely, is being analysed in this chapter. In the previous chapter, the focus was primarily on the Himalayan Club's efforts to facilitate and encourage mountaineering and mountaineers in the Himalaya. This chapter will look at those mountaineering expeditions and those mountaineers who explicitly set out to climb exceptionally tall mountains. More specifically I will be examining long-form writing on mountaineering by prominent climbers who were also members of the Himalayan Club and who wrote for *The Himalayan Journal*.

Turning now to methodology. I have drawn from two primary bodies of evidence for this chapter: mountaineering monographs and *The Himalayan Journal*. Prominent mountaineers did indeed provide accounts of their expeditions to the *Journal* but, unlike in the published accounts of their expedition, these accounts were generally highly technical and presumed an audience who were both well acquainted with mountaineering and interested in the practicalities of climbing a given mountain. In their monographs, however, and in particular

in the introductions to them, mountaineers felt free to present their vision of mountaineering as well as the Himalaya itself. Before proceedings that due to the interruption of the Second World War some of the accounts I reference were published at a later date than the actual expeditions described. Far from being a drawback, however, looking at these accounts which in some ways bridge the divide between the 1930s and 40s provides unique insights into the changing nature of mountaineering. In particular, ideas and themes which were developing in the 1930s became more explicitly elucidated.

With those distinctions in place I will argue that, despite the existence of any number of personal beliefs or perspectives, the two overarching impulses ran through contemporary descriptions of Himalayan mountaineering in the late 1920s and 1930s were a desire to find transcendence through individual effort and exertion on the one hand and an acknowledgment of the importance of teamwork on the other; allowed mountaineers to overcome, or at the very least, accept, the idea that the age of heroic exploration and perhaps even imperial expansion was at an end. The writings which I examine here help to reflect and clarify the Himalayan Club's position within a broader culture of mountaineering, after all, if mountaineering was at the cutting edge of exploration, it is important to address how mountaineers themselves saw their craft.

I. Mountaineers on mountaineering

I will begin with Hugh Ruttledge, a man who was very much preoccupied with the changes outlined above. In particular, he was concerned with the character of both mountaineers and mountaineering in an increasingly technical and de-mystified pursuit. Born in 1884 to a family with existing ties to India (his father was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Indian Medical Service) Ruttledge passed the Indian Civil Service exam in 1908 and served throughout India, most prominently as the city magistrate of Agra and then Lucknow.¹ Like so many other members of the Himalayan Club, however, it was a posting to the Himalayan foothills, at Almora, and a subsequent desire to trek, hunt, and get to grips with his district, which drew him to climbing. After his early retirement in 1929, Ruttledge was able to devote himself more whole-heartedly to mountaineering, undertaking expeditions to Nanda Devi before leading his first expedition to Everest in 1933.²

Ruttledge, who would ultimately lead two ambitious British expeditions to Everest (one in 1933 the other in 1936), began his account of these journeys, *Everest: The Unfinished Adventure*, with an examination of the appeal and relevance of mountaineering to the English public. In doing so, Ruttledge also made clear his own conception of mountaineering, at least in its idealised form. Ruttledge acknowledged outright that a popular embrace of mountaineering was by no means a given. Indeed, the English, according to Ruttledge, were not a people naturally predisposed to mountains. In his mind John Bull was perfectly content to leave the secrets of mountains ‘to be investigated by esoteric and amiably eccentric bodies of men who, for reasons best known to themselves, would rather risk their necks unaccountably on a mountain than respectably in the hunting field and who prefer frost-bite to sun-bathing’.³

¹ Salkel, Audrey, ‘Ruttledge, Hugh (1884-1961), mountaineer’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 23 Sep. 2004.

² Salkel, ‘Ruttledge, Hugh (1884-1961)’.

³ Hugh Ruttledge, *Everest: The Unfinished Adventure* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Limited, 1937), p. 3.

Despite, this natural-born indifference to mountaineering Ruttledge suspected a change was afoot. ‘People in all walks of life’, he observed, ‘who might have been indifferent to an immediate success, [were] beginning to observe that a section of their fellow-countrymen [had] embarked upon an enterprise of great difficulty, and [were] now engaged in the peculiarly British pastime of enduring a number of reverses preparatory to achievement’.⁴ Ruttledge, here, is playing on a trope which could be traced back to the reign of Elizabeth I, one in which plucky, enterprising Englishmen overcame seemingly insurmountable odds through cunning, derring-do, and sheer bloody-mindedness.⁵ This was a trope which, with varying degrees of sincerity, was frequently employed by mountaineers in the written accounts of their expeditions. More than that though, he is obliquely acknowledging that with the South Pole recently conquered (1911) Everest had assumed a new prominence in the eyes of the press and the public. Everest was the next, and perhaps the final, frontier of exploration.

In light of this newfound interest and perceived good will Ruttledge goes on to expound the various ways in which mountaineering, specifically mountaineering on Everest, could be justified to various segments of the public.⁶ Being self-consciously English, however, and therefore well aware of the perils of an overly earnest appeal to higher principles, Ruttledge made it clear that he believed a simple justification was all that was ultimately required.⁷ Mountaineers, he wrote, echoing George Mallory’s famous line, climb ‘because they like doing it, and that is an acceptable explanation’.⁸ Eric Shipton, another prominent Interwar Himalayan

⁴ Ruttledge, *Everest: The Unfinished Adventure*, p. 3.

⁵ Quite apart from successes against the odds Stephanie Barczewski argues that the notion of ‘heroic failures’ was key in the rhetorical justification of British imperial expansion as well as the eventually diminution and loss of empire in the twentieth century. Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Heroic Failure: The British* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

⁶ Ruttledge, *Everest: The Unfinished Adventure*, pp. 4-6.

⁷ The supposedly anti-intellectual, or pragmatic character of the British has been a long-running motif in the popular imagination. For a work which challenges this notion while also examining the prevalence of this idea of British anti-intellectualism see: Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁸ Ruttledge, *Everest: The Unfinished Adventure*, p. 9.

mountaineer, made virtually the same point in his own account of climbing, in this case describing Nanda Devi. He wrote: 'To the early explorer of the *Haute Savoie* and to people who, like myself, have come under the spell of the high Himalaya the reason for exploration remains the same – *we do so because we want to*'.⁹

This decidedly un-romantic (or perhaps de-romanticised would be the better term) approach to climbing could not really be seen as something new to the Interwar period, but its endurance in the face of the enormity of the challenge posed by Everest, and other extremely high Himalayan peaks requires some comment. Ruttledge, for instance, was at pains to reject, on the one hand, the 'spirit of nationalism' which he thought had invaded most sports on the continent, and which had produced 'very disquieting attitude towards mountaineering' there, as well the fantastical embellishments and fabrications of the press, holding fast to his belief that 'public interest in this kind of adventure [was] in no need of artificial stimulation'.¹⁰ Seen in this light, the understated tone of Ruttledge, Shipton, and other British mountaineers' accounts must be contextualized within the broader picture of both international sport and mountaineering. As Pierre and James Riordan put it: 'Sport became truly international only after the First World War'. And it was only really 'then that politicians began to appreciate its potential as a vehicle of national values and policies—even for demonstrating and advertising the potency of a political ideology'.¹¹ While this element of international competition was most clearly evident in athletics it was also to be found in mountaineering. In particular, for Germany and for German and Austrian climbers, mountaineering became a matter of national pride and redemption with first Kangchenjunga and then Nanga Parbat capturing both the public and

⁹ Eric Shipton, *Nanda Devi* (first published in 1936 by Hodder & Stoughton) in Shipton, Eric & H.W. Tilman, *Nanda Devi Exploration and the Ascent: a compilation of the classic mountain-exploration books Nanda Devi and the Ascent of Nanda Devi* (London: Bâton Wicks, 1999), p. 27.

¹⁰ Ruttledge, *Everest*, pp. 7-11.

¹¹ James Riordan, 'Introduction,' in Pierre and James Riordan, eds., *Sport and International Politics: The Impact of Fascism and Communism on Sport* (London: E & FN Spon/Routledge, 1998), 1-2 (p. 1).

official imagination. Indeed, Nanga Parbat eventually came to be known as the ‘mountain of destiny’ amongst German mountaineers due to both its difficulty and an emerging sense that it was a ‘German’ mountain.¹²

To look at a prominent and characteristic example, the German mountaineer Paul Bauer, a man who would lead multiple expeditions in the Himalayas, both to Kangchenjunga and Nanga Parbat, and who would also come to oversee both the German and Austrian Alpine Associations after Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, in some ways, saw mountaineering in a strikingly similar way to his English contemporaries.¹³ ‘We think of mountaineering as an expression of a man’s strength and health’, Bauer wrote, ‘there is no more need to explain his motives than there is to search for the ‘*élan vital*’ of life itself’.¹⁴ This sentiment resonates with the blunt apologetics of Ruttledge, Shipton, and George Mallory, but in other ways, however, Bauer’s views were markedly different.¹⁵ For instance, Bauer claimed to have written up his account of climbing Kangchenjunga so that others might ‘learn and pass judgement, and from our experience perhaps imbibe a little of that stern, warlike, disciplined spirit which was our heritage from the Great War, and which we proudly treasured up in our souls’. This allusion to the First World War was far more direct, and far more bellicose, than anything written by contemporary British mountaineers during the 1930s. Still, despite the fact that his generation, Germans and English alike had ‘fought often enough for possession of a trench, a farm, or a

¹² H. Höbusch, *Mountain of Destiny: Nanga Parbat and Its Path into the German Imagination* (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2016).

¹³ Höbusch, *Mountain of Destiny*, pp. 36-37.

¹⁴ Paul Bauer, *Translated by Sumner Austin, Himalayan Campaign: The German Attack on Kangchenjunga the Second Highest Mountain in the World* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Oxford, 1937), xii.

¹⁵ In his toast at the United Services Club dinner in 1929 Bauer toasted the memory of George Mallory and Andrew Irvine, both of whom perished on Everest in 1924, and Alexander Kellas who died one day’s journey from Everest in 1921. Bauer’s tribute to these men, whom he described as having ‘sacrificed their lives during their gallant attempt on Mount Everest’ is reminiscent of the way in which he and others of his generation, describe those who perished in the Great War, although, perhaps, without that conflict’s taint of betrayal and disillusionment. ‘Club Proceedings’, in the *Himalayan Journal* 02 (1930), p. 190.

few trees', Bauer thought that 'in the struggle to conquer the world's highest peaks' where 'man is face to face with such overwhelming natural forces... all nations should be allies'.¹⁶

Bearing the complexities of Bauer's conception of mountaineering in mind, Ruttledge and Shipton's reticence and attempts to contrast themselves with German mountaineers seems less like an expression of some in-built English modesty than a deliberate pose. For although it was certainly true that mountaineering did attain a different and more sinister resonance in Nazi Germany than in Britain, at the level of rhetoric, mountaineers from both countries often wrote about their experiences in the Himalaya in a similar register. German mountaineers might have been more open about acknowledging their competitive ambitions, but one could very well argue that blithe British high-mindedness was just nationalism of a different sort.¹⁷

Indeed, returning, to Ruttledge's account of his expedition to Everest, it is safe to say that despite he and his contemporaries' tone of understatement, deliberate and unfavourable comparisons with German mountaineers, and professions to simplicity of purpose, the romanticism of climbing was still very much alive in their imagination. This romanticism, however, was different sort from that which had come before and from their German contemporaries. As Alan McNee in his monograph *The New Mountaineer in Late Victorian Britain* put it: 'as Romantic discourses about mountains became marginalized, so the physicality and athleticism that replaced them gave rise to a new version of the sublime'.¹⁸ This new vision of the sublime, which McNee calls the 'haptic sublime' emerged in the late

¹⁶ 'Club Proceedings', in the *Himalayan Journal* 02 (1930), p. 190., p. xi, p. 112.

¹⁷ The German climber Fritz Bechtold for instance, believed that, like 'England, where the conquest of the earth's highest summit, Mount Everest, [was] regarded as a national event', Germany deserved 'a mountaineering expedition akin to it', that is, he believed that Germany deserved a mountain of its own. Fritz Bechtold, 'The German Himalayan Expedition to Nanga Parbat, 1934', *The Himalayan Journal* 07 (1935), 27-37 (p. 27). Or there is Frank Smythe's account of his experiences with Bauer's expedition in 1930. Everyone in the expedition was gifted a flag, Smythe's however was 'red ensign' with 'the stripes the wrong way round,' which Smythe ended up using as a handkerchief in a moment of weakness. In Frank S. Smythe, *The Mountain Vision* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1941), p. 243.

¹⁸ Alan McNee, *The New Mountaineer in Late Victorian Britain*, p. 2.

Victorian era, amongst a group of men McNee labels New Mountaineers. McNee's prototypical New Mountaineer was 'unapologetic about his modernity', happy to utilize new technology, and had banished the sublime from their mountaineering discourse. Rather than an outwardly directed sublime, however, McNee defines the haptic sublime (haptic here, meaning related to physical sensation) as an 'insistent emphasis on the quality of [the] physical experience of mountaineering'.¹⁹

And Ruttledge goes some way to reiterating a version of this haptic sublime himself, offering a corrective to the rather glib assertion he made earlier that mountaineers climb because they like doing so, writing:

Reference was made above to the facile and, for its purpose, adequate explanation that men go to Everest because they like doing so. Of course they do – the climbing of this mountain [Everest] may be fairly regarded by mountaineers as the arrival at Mecca is regarded by adherents of Islam.²⁰

Ruttledge's allusion here immediately calls to mind the physicality of the Hajj, and the final perambulation of the Kabbah. Later in his introduction Ruttledge makes the point even more explicitly, writing that, for mountaineers, 'matters of the spirit are jealously guarded within' and presented to the world as 'lighthearted flippancy'. Putting aside this public posture, however, Ruttledge argued that 'there is no disguising conduct, especially when all veneers have been stripped away by the chisel of hardship'.²¹ And, in the end, Ruttledge did make some comment on the inner life, or rather, the correct mental attitude of a successful mountaineer, again focusing on physicality and the individual:

¹⁹ McNee, *The New Mountaineer in Late Victorian Britain*, p. 149.

²⁰ Ruttledge, *Everest: The Unfinished Adventure*, p. 12.

²¹ Ruttledge, *Everest: The Unfinished Adventure*, p. 12.

From a subjective standpoint he may, if very advanced, be like Kipling's hero, and accept triumph or disaster as equal imposters, regarding his duty as an end in itself. A more positive attitude may be adopted by the man who regards the effort he is about to make as the highest expression of himself, and as a test rather than a demonstration. Another will be sensitive to the age-old belief of the East, that mountains are holy ground, with all that that implies of sacrifice.²²

Ruttledge thus concluded his introduction and by extension his defence of mountaineering with an appeal to esoteric eastern mysticism, chivalry, and quixotic idealism all at once, expressing his hope that the challenge of Everest could be met without any recourse to what, in his mind, would be considered undue mechanical intervention. As he writes, 'for myself I believe that, in spite of all difficulties, we *can* maintain the good old ways without impairing efficiency. I will go farther and say that Mount Everest is far more likely to admit us to her topmost pinnacle if we approach her as votaries of a cult untinged by materialism'.²³

Francis Younghusband, a source of inspiration for many in the Himalayan Club, and an explorer who would no doubt be counted among Ruttledge's 'materially untinged votaries' made the point even more grandiloquently in his introduction to Frank Smythe's *Kamet Conquered*. 'Man likes to be his best,' he wrote:

But often nothing short of a Himalayan peak can extract it from him – can compel him to be his fittest in body, alertest in mind, and firmest in soul. So he is drawn to the mountain. And the mountain makes a man of him. And he is grateful.²⁴

²² Ruttledge, 13.

²³ Ruttledge, Everest, 11.

²⁴ Francis Younghusband, 'Preface' in Frank Smythe's *Kamet Conquered* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1932), xv-xvi (pp. xv-xvi).

Ruttledge and Younghusband's conception of mountaineering as a test, an interior experience simultaneously aimed at achievement but eschewing an undue fixation on success in favour of character accords with the work of Paul Gilchrist who has suggested that mountaineering, for men during the Interwar period, acted as a salve for masculine anxieties, and the collective traumas of the first World War. The war exposed Victorian and Edwardian codes of manliness as an unattainable ideal next to the petrifying fear of oblivion'.²⁵ Climbing offered some respite from this condition and Gilchrist asserts that, for these survivors of war mountaineering could be approached on something like a spiritual level but was also 'for many in the immediate post-war period profoundly therapeutic as bodies re-emerged from the Alps more resilient and strengthened by the experience'.²⁶ Thus, although McNee's haptic sublime might have emerged during the late-Victorian era, the experience of World War I made its pursuit all the more appealing to the survivors.

Frank Smythe, for instance, a uniquely peripatetic but not un-characteristic figure in the history of Himalayan mountaineering (he was at various points an electrical engineer, a pilot in the Royal Air Force and an employee of Kodak), wrote that for some climbing enthusiasts mountaineering could be something like a religion.²⁷ The hypothetical 'mountain-lover' as Smythe described him, did not worship mountains, nor 'regard his craft as a religion'. Rather, for Smythe's mountaineering devotee, climbing provided 'an answer to mental and spiritual as well as physical urges'. Indeed Smythe, quoting Psalm 121, claimed that the message underpinning the quote: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" was not incompatible with the most "technical" and exacting of rock-climbs'.²⁸

²⁵ Paul Gilchrist, 'Mountains, Manliness and Post-war Recovery', p. 283.

²⁶ Gilchrist, 'Mountains, Manliness and Post-war Recovery', pp. 282-83.

²⁷ Arnold Lunn and A.M. Snodgrass, 'Smythe, Francis Sydney (1900-1949), mountaineer and author', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 23. Sep. 2004.

²⁸ Frank S. Smythe, *The Mountain Vision* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1941), p. 18.

Beyond just providing meaning, however, mountaineering could also help the climber to transcend his fears. Smythe, for instance, admitted to having ‘been very frightened on numerous occasions when anticipating danger’ but felt ‘a curious feeling of impersonal detachment’ when actually confronting it head on. In fact, Smythe concluded that for him, ‘to die in the heart of Nature seem[ed]... an eminently satisfactory death’. Any anxiety about death was alleviated by the revelation that ‘the body, composed of the same substances as the mountains, the fields, the trees, the streams, and the air, [was] resolved through the agency of the same forces that created it back into the same materials’. To die in war, however, ‘to die at the hand of a fellow-man through the agency of an explosive or machine’ filled Smyth with ‘horror and loathing’. Indeed, facing one’s fears on a mountain could be a positively enlightening as well as enlivening experience. This is not to say that Smythe believed in taking unnecessary risks or deliberately sought out danger. Rather, he simply meant that unlike fear in war, which produced ‘in its train a deadening of the finer instincts, leading finally to a brutal conception of life, a modicum of the same emotion in mountaineering’ according to Smythe ‘quicken[ed] the appreciation of beauty’. Indeed, and again conjuring up a vision of McNee’s haptic sublime, Smythe believed that ‘the charm of mountain-climbing [was] not in the climbing, in success, nor in failure, but in the great range of emotions provoked through these physical experiences’.²⁹

This embrace of physicality, of the haptic sublime, allowed climbers to deal with fear in a constructive way, to escape from the anxieties of war and to rebuild a more positive form of physical masculinity outside the harrowing, if decidedly masculine, theatre of war. More importantly, though, at least for those who bemoaned the colouring in of the blank spaces on the map, the Himalaya offered up a near endless array of mountains to climb. Indeed, even for those who took it upon themselves to climb great peaks like Everest, Nanda Devi, or

²⁹ Smythe, *The Mountain Vision*, pp. 257-258.

Kangchenjunga, lesser peaks still had an appeal all their own. Indeed, for Smythe, mountaineering was best appreciated ‘on previously untrodden mountains’ and he thought it ‘infinitely better fun to find a way up a low peak, or cross an easy range, without the need to refer to a guide-book than to follow someone else’s directions on a long and difficult climb’.³⁰ But even if a climber could find a peak all his own, or a glacier untouched by the feet of man, in the Himalaya, he would almost certainly not have been alone.

The historian Peter H. Hansen, in *The Summits of Modern Man: Mountaineering after the Enlightenment* addresses the popular motif of the solitary mountaineer. In particular, he asserts that by the studying the written accounts of various mountaineering expeditions in both the Alps and the Himalaya that ‘a particular strand of modernity’ can be discerned, one ‘in which modern man stands alone on the summit, autonomous from other men and dominant over nature. This modern man’ he continues ‘envisions the summit as an exclusionary space that may be occupied in succession, but not simultaneously’.³¹ The emphasis on individuality here is crucial, for while the great heroes of mountaineering are remembered individually, they almost never acted alone and Hansen seeks to dispense with both the notion of mountaineering as a heroically individualistic endeavour, as well as teleological conceptions of the sport’s development. ‘Histories of discovery or mountaineering’ he writes ‘are usually told as if they follow an ineluctable and inexorable process of enlightenment, disenchantment, secularization, rationalization, and self-assertion when such categories are themselves forms of mythmaking’.³² But, as I will argue, mountaineers operating in the Himalaya during the interwar period were quite aware of this ‘mythmaking’ and although they readily participated in it, they displayed a far greater self-awareness of both the artificiality of this construct, as

³⁰ Smythe, *The Mountain Vision*, p. 10.

³¹ Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man*, pp. 11-12.

³² Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man*, pp. 11-12.

well as the role played by others in making their ascents possible than the popular image of these mountaineers allows.

Indeed, it is important to note that all the mountaineers referenced in this chapter believed that any successful attempt at Everest, or any of the other Himalayan giants such as Kangchenjunga or Nanda Devi, would have to rely on teamwork, or perhaps something a little bit stronger than that, to succeed. Smythe, for instance, believed that a successful ‘climbing party must be something more than a collection of expert mountaineers; it must’ he asserted, ‘be a team, and like a team of Test cricketers, one that pulls together in every department of the game’. This was, according to Smythe, because mountaineering brought out the extremes in men, for good or ill. ‘An old friend of civilisation’ for instance ‘may be a useless companion on a mountain’.³³

For all his emphasis on the climbers, themselves, however, Smythe was also aware that his party, and any large mountaineering party was made up of many more people than just a core group of European mountaineers. Indeed, Smythe estimated that his expedition ‘was probably the largest climbing expedition that ever visited the Himalayas’ up to that point. But while the size of his expedition might have been deemed necessary Smythe made clear his belief that large expeditions such as his were often ‘unwieldy and top-heavy’ and that small expeditions had their advantages, in particular an ability to, as he put it ‘live more on the country’.³⁴

A reliance on one’s comrades did not, of course, preclude individuality or self-expression and Rutledge strikes a neat balance between the two. The ideal expedition, in his eyes, would be a homogenous party, by which he did not mean that all the mountaineers in a party should be from the same country, but, rather, one which could rely upon ‘the willing self-

³³ Frank Smythe, *The Kangchenjunga Adventure* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1946), p. 41.

³⁴ Smythe, *The Kanchenjunga Adventure*, pp. 422-423.

subordination of each member to the common interest'.³⁵ He also conceded, however, that within an expedition 'we cannot deny to each his individuality, and it will be found that in most men of this type that individuality is strongly marked, for they are not exactly gregarious by nature.' And that 'the sport of mountaineering fosters independence of character'.³⁶

Indeed, individuality and experience counted for a lot if a team were compatible. The mountaineer Bill Tilman, for instance, in *Mount Everest, 1938* makes clear that he accepted the leadership of that expedition with 'some diffidence'. But 'took comfort from the thought that with men like E.E. Shipton, F.S. Smythe, and N.E. Odell amongst' his party, he could relax, 'listening with becoming gravity to their words of wisdom; only 'waking up occasionally to give an approving nod'.³⁷ Despite the tone of 'lighthearted flippancy' here, it is clear that Tilman placed great stock in his fellow climbers. But it was not just fellow Britons whom climbers like Bill Tilman and Eric Shipton relied upon. Sherpa porters were an integral part of these expeditions (especially those aimed at Everest). As Eric Shipton put it, when describing his expedition to Nanda Devi in 1936:

For the next five months we were to live and climb together. And the more we saw of the Sherpas the more we grew to like them. Porters all the time, they were also fellow mountaineers and companions, in turn playing the parts of housekeeper, cook, butler, pantryman, valet, interpreter and, on occasion, entertainer.³⁸

All of this raises a fundamental question: how could men who so valued 'untrodden valleys' and individual, transcendent experience accept the necessity for such unwieldy, populous expeditions? The most obvious answer of course, is that, at least in the Himalaya, it was a

³⁵ Rutledge, *Everest: The Unfinished Adventure*, 12.

³⁶ Rutledge, *Everest: The Unfinished Adventure*, 12.

³⁷ H.W. Tilman, *Mount Everest, 1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 14.

³⁸ Eric Shipton, *Nanda Devi* (first published in 1936 by Hodder & Stoughton) in Shipton, Eric & H.W. Tilman. *Nanda Devi Exploration and Ascent: a compilation of the classic mountain-exploration books Nanda Devi and the Ascent of Nanda Devi* (London: Bâton Wicks, 1999), p. 49.

necessity. And although Tilman could look back with nostalgia on past expeditions, like those of T.G. Longstaff who ‘with no tent and one piece of chocolate, very nearly climbed Gurla Mandhata, a peak in Tibet north of Garhwal, 25,555ft high’, the realities of climbing, facetious quips aside, meant that summing mountains like Everest or Kangchenjunga would require a bit more than chocolate and derring-do.³⁹ Indeed, it could be taken as a general rule that the better charted a mountain range, the more frequently it was climbed and the closer it was to civilization, or comfort in the form of huts, the more readily individuals could climb there unencumbered by companions or concerns about safety. Still, as was outlined above, for British mountaineers in the 1930s there existed a belief that a small group of like-minded individuals was all it took to construct a successful mountaineering party. Porters might be a necessity on the way there, but on the mountain itself, a small party of European and seasoned sherpa climbers was considered to be ideal. But there is more to this picture than sheer necessity. As for Himalayan mountaineers like Shipton, Tilman, Ruttledge, and Smythe, as well as for the members of the Himalayan Club, comradeship and teamwork, the assembly of strong-willed individualists in pursuit of a common goal was something valuable in itself. Eric Shipton, for instance, had this to say about his expeditions to both Kamet and Everest:

I had a mighty longing to detach myself from the big and cumbersome organisation which for some reason had been thought to be necessary for an attack on the more lofty summits of the earth, and to wander with a small, self-contained party through the labyrinth of unexplored valleys, forming our plans to suit the circumstances, climbing peaks when opportunities occurred, following up on our own topographical clues and crossing passes into unknown territory.⁴⁰

³⁹ Tilman, *Everest*, 4.

⁴⁰ Eric Shipton, *Nanda Devi*, p. 28.

But for the more active members of the Himalayan Club, there was a deeper resonance to this comradeship. The Himalaya was still a region situated on the frontier of an imperial possession in which Britons constituted a vanishingly small minority. In the rocky fastnesses of the high mountains, however, the members of the Himalayan Club could locate a vision of imperialism as they believed it ought to be: a space in which individual imperialists, working together with an idealized native partner/apprentice could pursue the haptic sublime in a theatre of individualistic imperialism.

II. Conclusions:

The two trends which I have identified in the mountaineering literature of the 1930s - a desire to find transcendence through individual effort and exertion on the one hand and an acknowledgement of teamwork on the other - mirror the primary objectives of the Himalayan Club. Indeed, as I have argued throughout this thesis the Club placed great stock in the ability of individual members to broaden the horizons of knowledge, to deepen the collective understandings of routes and conditions, peoples and places, to explore. Much like these mountaineers, the Club had also come to conceive of exploration as a more interior process, something which was to varying extents both performative and sincere. Indeed, unlike the popular image of Himalayan mountaineering in the early-twentieth century, which sees climbing as a jingoistic struggle for national prestige, mountaineers themselves were less concerned with nationalistic rhetoric than they were with their own subjective experience of climbing. For these men climbing was an individual and personal experience, though it could be shared. And much like the small group of climbers which proceeded to attempt a summit, the Club believed that a group of likeminded, distinct individuals, working together, could achieve a great deal so long as the individual members of the group were strong in themselves.

Accepting these similarities, it remains to be determined how much these similarities were due to the fact that this climbing was taking place in the Himalaya and how much of it was due to the fact that the Himalayan Club was a mountaineering club. Or, put another way, were the mountaineers referenced in this chapter responding to the Himalaya as mountaineers or as representatives of a world-empire operating on an important frontier. The answer, unsurprisingly, is that it was both. The preference for individual and subjective experience, for empirical autonomy and distance from civilization (in particular Indian civilisation) can, in one sense, be seen as an extension of broader phenomena within Anglo-Indian culture since 1857: a desire to differentiate British rulers from Indian ruled, and to preserve a unique and distinct British identity. On the other hand, it can be seen as a product of changes which were occurring in Western Civilisation more generally and in mountaineering more specifically. That is, it was a product of a move from an exterior sublime to an interior one, derived from the individual's responses to physical sensation. Likewise, these mountaineers' emphasis on teamwork can be seen as both a pragmatic reaction to the nature of climbing in the Himalaya as well as a reaction to an increasingly hostile political environment in India. That is, just because it was necessary to attempt a summit with a small party of fellow climbers, this did not mean that climbers could not attach romantic significance to that fact. Indeed, in the small company of British and Sherpa climbers who reached for the summit climbers like Hugh Ruttledge, Eric Shipton, Frank Smythe, and Bill Tillman could locate a less complicated vision of the imperial experience, one in which the conceit of empire - that the British really were in India to improve and expand the horizons of its peoples - could more plausibly be defended. Of course, the reality was more complex.

This chapter has demonstrated how the broader culture of Himalayan mountaineering aligned and coalesced with the Himalayan Club's own guiding mission. Both the Himalayan Club and individual Himalayan mountaineers sought after individual sensory and emotional

experience, what Alan McNee calls the haptic sublime. And throughout the 1930s this individual experience in the Himalaya was inextricable from the imperial context in which it was occurring. At the same time, these moves towards individual and subjective experience, would quickly take on new and different significance following the independence and partition of India and the subsequent exodus of many of the Himalayan Club's original membership. That, however, is a question for another time. For now, it is merely important to acknowledge that during the 1930s mountaineering, as a form of exploration, could exist alongside and within a conception of imperialism which conceived of itself as something like an extension of exploration. Likewise, a move towards interiority in mountaineering and exploration more generally, fit the mood of colonial administrators and soldiers who were increasingly frustrated, bored, or anxious about the future of the British in India.

Conclusion: The Mountaineer and the Imperialist

At its core, the Himalayan Club of the late 1920s and 1930s was an organisation which was dedicated to exploration. Motivated both by nostalgia and optimism about the future, the Club conceptualised exploration as a spectrum of activities ranging from the great voyages of the age of discovery to recreational travel, scientific exploration, and mountaineering. The Club's founders, many of whom were high-ranking, middle-aged or elderly members of the political and military elite of India, were nostalgic for a putative golden age of exploration. But they were also optimistic and excited by the new possibilities for exploration that the Himalaya offered. This mix of nostalgia and optimism led the Club to envision the Himalaya as something like a theatre of individualistic imperialism. In the mountains, the Club's founding members hoped to capture something of the exploratory spirit which they believed had been at the heart of all that was best about the empire. Indeed, the founding members of the Club believed that mountaineering could also offer something of this exploratory ethos to a younger generation whom they worried did not live up to the standards of the empire prior to the First World War. For the members of the Club, a dearth of blank spaces on the map did not mean that exploration was dead. Instead, the Club identified mountaineering as both the next logical frontier of exploration as well as an ideal means of shaping imperial agents. And for the club, a superior imperial agent was coterminous with a certain conception of masculinity. To be a man, at least the sort of man that the club desired, was to be an individual, to be an autonomous agent who viewed things empirically as a matter of course while still taking decisive action. This conception of colonial masculinity depended on other factors as well, namely, that the man in question had been educated at a public school, that he was sporting, and that he was white. It was men like this who had, according to the club, been at the heart of the empire during its expansionist phase and it was men like this who would ensure its future. In the Himalaya, that is in the broader region stretching from the Pamirs to the Eastern Himalaya,

sometimes including Tibet and modern-day Xinjiang, the Club had located the perfect theatre in which to perform this masculine, individualistic imperialism. It was a frontier space in which the burdens, boredom, and complexities of India could be put to one side.

I use the term theatre deliberately, because the various kinds of exploratory travel that the Club promoted had something of a performative element to them. That is, the kinds of exploratory travel which the Club promoted were less concerned with tangible conquests and achievements (although these were still important) than they were with an individual's experience of exploratory travel. This can be seen in the Club's initial efforts to encourage young colonial officials to travel and climb in the Himalaya. The founding members of the Club, many of whom were of an older generation that had arrived in India prior to the First World War, believed that travelling and climbing in Himalaya could offer these younger men something of the empire as they believed it had been in their youth. That is, an empire which was expanding, and in which there were still great geographical puzzles to be solved and blank spaces left on the map. More than that, though, they believed that this travel could offer an escape from the realities of governing India in the 1920s and 1930s.

That imperial official might wish to escape the responsibilities of rule, especially during the interwar period, is not an especially novel claim. That escaping these responsibilities could be seen by these older officials as being beneficial to empire, however, is, and requires some explanation. As I have demonstrated, many of the founding members of the Himalayan Club believed that moulding a successful imperial agent required one to get away from civilisation, or the army cantonment, and into the mountains. This position was predicated on an assumption that the empire should be concerned with exploration and adventure and an implication that this was not the contemporary state of affairs. Indeed, many officials worried that the men who were filling positions within the I.C.S. were of a lower social status than their generation and that their priorities were misguided. It could almost be said that for many older officials the

worry was not that younger men did not take their duties seriously but, rather, that they took them *too* seriously. Worse still, even during periods of leave these younger men did not always dedicate themselves to noble pursuits like trekking, shooting, or climbing, but rather wasted their time on modern frivolities like cinema-going or motorbiking.

This emphasis on recreation and its relationship to the well-being of the empire is historiographically significant. Scholarship concerned with imperial culture, that is on the culture of those responsible for administering Britain's overseas colonies, has too often operated on an assumption that such culture was predicated on hegemonic ideas and ideologies, ignoring the lived experience of these individuals. To put a finer point on it, scholars have not paid sufficient attention to the ways in which imperial agents negotiated and understood these ideas. In particular, more work is needed to understand the ways in which these individuals conceptualized the empire within their own lives and careers. Based on my study of the Himalayan Club, I argue that many colonial officials in British India in the 1920s and 1930s saw the empire as a responsibility, but also, crucially, as an opportunity for personal fulfilment. More than that, though, this personal fulfilment could, in the right circumstances, be coterminous with the good of the empire. The reason for this, I argue, is because a romantic conception of the empire's past, predicated on a belief that its expansion had been driven by heroic, individual acts of exploration, had taken hold amongst colonial officials. This nostalgia was not purely backwards looking. Older officers could hope that mountaineering might instil in their successors something of the exploratory spirit they believed had existed in their own youth while younger officials could imagine a future in which the decline of the empire might even be a relief, a chance to explore again without the burden of rule.

It is, of course, salutary to reiterate that the Himalayan Club was a social club and that I am not arguing that the opinions of its members can be taken as representative of an entire social class. Nevertheless, it is significant that in all of the volumes of *The Himalayan Journal*

between 1929 and 1947 it was only after the Second World War that politics entered its pages, and then only briefly in the form of editorials explaining the changing nature and frequency of the journal. Indeed, throughout its interwar existence *The Himalayan Journal* whether by accident, design, or both, obscured many aspects of contemporary life and politics in the Himalaya. After all the Club was operating on a contested frontier, dividing empires, with unstable borders and unstable internal politics. Thus, it is interesting that the Club should present an image of the Himalaya as a theatre of individualistic imperialism, devoid of contemporary politics and largely de-populated of local peoples. For the members of the Club, the Himalaya was a space in which nostalgia could be made real. And the decisions which were made at the Club's inaugural meeting reflected this: an unofficial policy of discrimination towards perspective Indian members, wide-ranging objects which encompassed far more than mountaineering, and policies which ignored the changing nature of the Himalayan frontier over time.

And from the Club's founding in 1928 until the outbreak of the Second World War the Club consistently made efforts to help the individual explorer. For the specialist explorer, that is, for the traveller whose primary objective was scholarly or scientific, *The Himalayan Journal* provided a means for individual members to keep abreast of a wide array of contemporary developments in Himalayan studies. The Club also created technical and scientific correspondents and secretaries who could advise members about their own individual specialisms or about the districts in which they worked and were familiar. For the recreational traveller, the Club allowed hunters and sportsmen to write for the *Journal* and to see their narratives alongside those of famous travellers like Aurel Stein or prominent mountaineers like Hugh Ruttledge. These accounts also served a practical purpose by providing useful information to would-be travellers.

For mountaineers, the Club provided both practical and rhetorical support. *The Himalayan Journal* provided an overview of all the significant mountaineering expeditions taking place in a given year and the Club also helped mountaineers to provision their expeditions and to secure permission to travel and individual members were often on hand to assist expeditions. And the creation of the Darjeeling Porter Registry enabled travellers to hire experienced Sherpa porters within a regulated system that also afforded these porters a modicum of safety and fairness.

Underpinning all these efforts, however, was a fundamental belief in the value of individual experience, both as a source of knowledge but also as a good in itself. For the members of the Himalayan Club individual, empirical experience was seen to be the foundation of knowledge production in the Himalaya. The liminal nature of the region as well as the physical limitations imposed by extreme altitude made it difficult to impose a uniform epistemological framework on the region. Like Thomas Simpson, I share in the belief that these perceived limitations could, and were, also seen as positive features of the region. Because of its frontier nature, its difficulties, remoteness, and perceived wildness the Himalaya was a region in which the latitude for individual action was much greater than in lowland India. Or at least that was the perception of the members of the Himalayan Club, who saw the Himalaya as a space in which they could act out an idealised form of imperialism.

And it is here, again, that the Himalayan Club offers unique insights to the historian. This thesis, through its examination of the Himalayan Club contributes to a variety of different historiographies. It contributes to a scholarship on mountaineering which considers the cultural dimensions of climbing. Scholars like Paul Gilchrist, Peter H. Hansen, Alan McNee, and Caroline Schaumann have all added to this scholarship. My study of the Himalayan Club, through its focus on both the Himalaya and the Interwar Period expands and deepens this scholarship both temporally and chronologically. Taking inspiration from Alan McNee's

notion of the haptic sublime I have argued for a broader move toward interiority and individualism in both mountaineering and other forms of highland recreation in the 1920s and 1930s.

This thesis also expands upon an existing scholarship relating to sport in British India and in the Himalaya more specifically by examining the confluence of hunting, travelling, and climbing in the Himalaya. Scholars like John Mackenzie, Vijaya Mandala and Shafqat Hussain have all made valuable contributions to this body of work. Mandala argues that hunting in British India had both symbolic and practical implications as an instrument and feature of imperial rule. This thesis is unique, however, in its engagement with first-hand accounts of hunting and recreational travel as a form of knowledge production. That is by engaging with these accounts as a form of exploration I have shown that contemporary observers and commentators believed that the empirical evidence generated by hunting could help to expand the general understanding of the Himalaya. Indeed, taking inspiration from a wide variety of scholarship relating to colonial knowledge production this thesis argues that mountain travel and climbing must be considered as both acts of recreation and knowledge production.

The most significant contribution of this thesis, however, relates to imperial culture during the 1920s and 1930s. Namely, I argue that a nostalgic conception of exploration and the imperial past, coupled with boredom, disillusionment, and anxiety about the contemporary state of the British Empire, led many colonial administrators, political agents, and military officers to seek refuge in the Himalaya. In the Himalaya, these men (and some women) believed they could act out an idealised form of imperialism and exploration, away from the burden of imperial administration. This was due to the perceived liminality of the Himalaya, its remoteness, its geographical extremes, and its supposedly uncivilized character. In the Himalaya, they believed that the individual or, more specifically, the individual imperialist could still count for something. More than that, for these men and women individual

satisfaction and fulfilment had increasingly come to be seen as coterminous with the good of the Empire.

For the founding members of the Himalayan Club, to be an explorer, to get out into the mountains away from civilization and experience unseen vistas, was to be a good imperialist. And ideas about exploration itself had become more interior and more individual as well. To climb a great mountain, even Everest, was as much a battle against oneself as it was nature. Indeed, despite the pomp and fanfare which greeted the successful ascent of Everest in 1953, mountaineers themselves disavowed nationalistic motivations for climbing, favouring instead interior and individual motivations. Likewise, other forms of exploration, whether it be scholarly exploration, or simply the exploration of side valleys by recreational travellers, had become more interior as well. By the 1920s and 1930s, for British colonial officials, exploration was as much a performance, and an experience, as it was a project with definite and delineated aims.

The implications of this argument are twofold. Firstly, it complicates the notion that colonial officials were pessimistic about the future of the Empire during the 1920s and 1930s. While I am broadly in agreement with this view, I think it is important to emphasize that not only were there aspects of the Empire which colonial officials in India were proud of, but there were also things which made them optimistic about the future. By this I mean that the interior turn in narratives of exploration and recreation allowed some colonial officials to conceive of the Empire not as an enduring project but, rather, as something to be taken advantage of while it lasted. For such individuals the Empire was often a burden but it presented unparalleled and perhaps diminishing opportunities to seek after personal satisfaction and achievement.

Secondly, by conceptualising high-altitude climbing as a form of exploration it is possible to capture something of the unique character of mountaineering in British India during

the early-twentieth century, because during the 1920s and 30s mountaineering in the Himalaya was fundamentally shaped by the imperial character of the Himalayan frontier. Both for visiting mountaineers and for colonial officials who climbed, mountaineering in the Himalaya was shaped by broader trends in the sport as well as British imperialism itself. Indeed, the Himalayan Club, during the 1920s and 1930s can only be seen as both mountaineering and an imperial organisation.

Ultimately, the founding members of the Himalayan Club were inspired to create the Club because of a belief in the power and importance of individual explorers. The Club saw the Himalaya as a place in which individuals could perform and participate in exploration, variously conceived. They may or may not have been disillusioned with the contemporary state of British India, but these men found hope and refuge in the notion of the individual explorer. Quite apart from the imperial projects which they had inadvertently launched, the explorer, as both an archetype and a real historical figure, was immune to the vicissitudes of fate and the rise and fall of empires. And in mountaineering, the Club had found the perfect outlet for this exploratory impulse. Indeed, one could argue, that the sudden shock of India's independence and partition belied strong continuities in attitudes toward climbing in the Himalaya. Because thousands of would-be climbers still flock to the mountains to feel something of this exploratory sensation. And many of the hierarchies and practicalities of travel and climbing in the Himalaya remain much the same today as well. One could even argue that, for many, the Himalaya has remained a theatre of individualism, even as British imperialism has faded into memory.

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