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LHASA IN 1937

F. SPENCER CHAPMAN

*Evening Meeting of the Society, 13 December 1937*

I SPENT the spring and early summer of 1936, as a member of Marco Pallis' expedition, climbing and bird-watching in the neighbourhood of the Zemu glacier and Lhonak in the north of Sikkim. Towards the end of June I happened to be staying with Mr. B. J. Gould, the Political Officer of Sikkim, in his Residency at Gangtok. Ever since the famous mission of Sir Francis Younghusband to Lhasa in 1904 the Tibetan Government have occasionally invited the Political Officer of Sikkim to visit their capital. It happened that in the spring of 1936 Mr. Gould was invited to Lhasa, and he asked me if I would like to accompany him as his private secretary to help with ciphering, and to undertake survey, photographic, and natural history work. I would like to record my deep gratitude to Mr. Gould for giving me the chance of fulfilling one of my most long-cherished dreams.

I spent a very busy month taking a refresher survey course at Mussourie and collecting the necessary photographic equipment and trying to pick up the elements of the most complicated Tibetan language before we left Gangtok on the last day of July 1936. The other members of this diplomatic mission were Brigadier P. Neame, v.c., d.s.o., H. E. Richardson, i.c.s., the British Trade Agent at Gyantse, Captain W. S. Morgan, i.m.s., also stationed at Gyantse, two wireless officers from the Royal Corps of Signals, E. Y. Nepean and S. G. Dagg, and the invaluable and charming Rai Bahadur Norbhu, o.b.e., the British Trade Agent at Yatung, who acted as interpreter for the Mission and who had preceded us to Lhasa. This was therefore the largest diplomatic mission ever to visit Lhasa, and we spent practically six months there from August 1936 to February 1937.

On political matters I am not qualified to speak. I shall therefore confine myself to my own departments and to a general account of Lhasa as it is to-day, especially in so far as it has changed since the visit of Sir Charles Bell, who spent nearly a year there in 1920-21.

The thirteenth and greatest of the Dalai Lamas had died in 1933, and during our visit a Regent was in charge of affairs while the next reincarnation was being sought by a complicated system of divination. Meanwhile

the Norbhu Lingka, the summer palace of the Dalai Lamas, was open to our inspection; we were allowed to visit it and to take photographs there as often as we liked. Its grounds, half a mile to the west of the Potala and a mile to the west of the city of Lhasa, are surrounded by a high wall pierced by several ornamental gateways. Within are magnificent groves of trees and beautiful gardens. In a more private enclosure is an artificial lake surrounding a small island on which there is an exquisite pagoda where the last Dalai Lama would spend many hours each day in meditation. Scattered in the grounds are several small but attractive palaces roofed with highly glazed tiles surmounted by golden turrets. In the lake pavilion and in several rooms of the palaces were heavy silken cushions on which the Presence—as the Dalai Lama is called—would sit cross-legged in Tibetan fashion either in meditation or when engaged in affairs of state. We noticed that in nearly every such room things were prepared for the apparently imminent appearance of the next ruler. His tea cup, bell, and prayer wheel were put ready, while frequently a bowl of fruit or other food stood upon the carved wooden table before the seat. The rooms were all beautifully clean and ready for immediate occupation, though the new incarnation, when divine signs and portents have at last led to his discovery, will be only a child and will have to spend some years being most carefully taught and prepared for his office before he can come to occupy his palaces at the Norbhu Lingka.

The last Dalai Lama was extremely fond of animals and he had a small collection in the Norbhu Lingka. Though his herd of stately Mongolian camels still roam the thorny waste land between the summer palace and the Lhasa river, the rest of his menagerie seems to miss his loving care. Two *shou*, the almost extinct Sikkim stag, are still tethered on one of the lawns. A monkey is chained to a pole; some Demoiselle cranes and a pair of Monal pheasants are confined in cages; while on the pond are numbers of half-tame bar-headed geese and Brahmany ducks. But only a few remain of the fierce Tibetan mastiffs which used to inhabit the stone kennels standing at frequent intervals beside gateways and before the doors of the palaces. Roses, hollyhocks, sweet-williams, and many other familiar flowers abound; bamboos grow to a height of 20 or 30 feet; and apples and peaches bear fruit, at a height of nearly 12,000 feet above sea-level. But the lawns are now untended, the borders unweeded, and most of the annuals have seeded themselves and are forcing their way up in the cracks between the paving stones and on the granite staircases.

The most striking part of the Norbhu Lingka is the Dalai Lama's stables. Here there is room for some fifty ponies, and above every stall is an enchanting fresco in bright colours on the wall. Many are of equestrian subjects: Pegasus-like horses with scarlet wings, a man leading a pony laden with symbolic jewels, and a diagrammatic painting showing the bones and arteries of a horse. On each side of the stable entrance are two larger paintings: one the conventional sign of welcome, a Mongolian leading a tiger; and the other a work of art calling to mind an Italian primitive, a man leading an amiable-looking elephant. I was able to take both black-and-white and colour photographs of these paintings. They have a peculiar charm, and, though occasionally incorrect in perspective, exhibit a rare economy of line and colour.

The Tibetans, although they are remarkably fond of flowers, are not notable gardeners. In the summer nearly every window and verandah is adorned with pots of gay blooms, but only at the Norbhu Lingka and at the homes of the Regent, of Tsarong Shap-pe, and the Lhalu family did I see what could be described as gardens. Here there were flagged paths bordered by beds in which plants were set, often still in their pots. In this way a continuous show of flowers can be maintained, for as soon as one kind is over, another, about to flower, is put in its place. Thus the Regent's garden had for August and half September sunflowers, which grew to a height of 6 feet; from then until the middle of October coreopsis, which was 4 feet high; and finally Michaelmas daisies, which for some reason did not do well. After the middle of November the beds were manured and left empty.

There are few lawns in Lhasa. Where animals are prevented from cropping the grass it is usually plucked by hand. The city is surrounded by *lingkas* or parks, which are square walled enclosures, often as much as 100 acres in area, wherein trees are planted. In these there is usually a small summer house for picnics but no flowers of any sort. The trees are for the most part willows, which are usually pollarded every few years, and black or white poplars. The greatest variety of trees is seen in the Norbhu Lingka, but the finest individual specimens grow beside the temple of the State Oracle at Netchung, a mile from Drepung monastery. In the gardens walnuts, apricot, peach, and apple trees, bamboos, cypress, and pines are grown. The apples and peaches grown in Lhasa are undersized and lacking in sweetness, but the walnuts are large and delicious. Better fruit is imported from south-eastern Tibet.

There are a certain number of vegetable gardens in which cabbages, peas, beans, and potatoes grow excellently, also a root which is intermediate between a turnip and a radish. I saw glass frames only in Tsarong's garden. The seeds are usually forced in boxes indoors and it is here that most of the perennial plants are taken for the winter, though these are few, as nearly all the flowers are annuals grown from seeds which the gardeners collect themselves or obtain from India. The perennials I observed were a few roses, hollyhocks, chrysanthemums, carnations, phlox, and Michaelmas daisies.

All who have visited Lhasa are captivated by the enduring wonder of the Potala, the monastery-palace of the Dalai Lamas. Built, storey above storey, on the summit of a 700-foot hill that rises from the level plain it completely dominates the landscape. Its exquisite setting, in the centre of the green vale of Lhasa, surrounded by a circle of austere mountains, its phenomenal size, and the inspired restraint of its decoration, combine to make the Potala the most beautiful and impressive building of the world. It seems to have grown there rather than to have been built, so perfectly does it harmonize with its surroundings.

On the summit of the Potala are golden pagoda-like shrines covering the tombs wherein are embalmed the mortal remains of former Dalai Lamas. The tomb of the last Pontiff has only recently been completed and it is interesting to see that the work done in Lhasa to-day is apparently indistinguishable from similar work carried out at various times since the seventeenth century when the palace, in its present form, is supposed to have been built. The actual tomb runs up through several storeys of the building, and it can be

seen from the photographs of Sir Charles Bell taken in 1920 (see his 'Tibet past and present,' p. 54) that some structural alteration has been made. The part containing the tomb is a small red-washed block on the left of the central similarly coloured portion. Formerly this was white, and therefore not included in the most sacred part of the Potala.

The great depth of unbroken wall below the lowest windows is to make a platform for the building on its narrow sharp ridge of rock. Thence the even rows of small windows lead up to flat roofs sparingly ornamented with turrets. The irregular height of the different blocks of the building gives variety, and the whole is crowned with glittering pavilions on the summit. The lower walls of Tibetan buildings are of granite blocks; the upper storeys of the houses often of mud. In the dry Lhasa air, with annual rainfall of 14 inches and negligible snowfall, these mud walls last for about a hundred years.

Along the top of nearly every Tibetan roof is a broad maroon-coloured band bordered above and below by a string course of square beam ends. This is made by laying willow twigs horizontally and cutting them vertically like a half-used haystack. These osiers are stamped down with mortar which has been mixed with a reddish dye. The resulting matt surface forms an ideal background for the golden monograms and emblems which are usually placed there. This dark band can be seen right along the top of the various blocks of the Potala.

The inside of the building, compared with its superb exterior, is disappointing. It would be interesting to have an architect's report on its construction and condition. Dark passages, slippery with centuries of spillings of Tibetan buttered tea, lead with no apparent design from assembly hall to shrine, and from temple to private apartment.

The Tibetans have never learnt to construct an arch. In all their rooms a number of square poplar pillars support the heavy roof beams, which themselves uphold transverse willow poles placed a foot or 18 inches apart. In the larger halls the roof is supported by composite pillars formed by several smaller tree-trunks clamped together with iron bands. Above these transverse poles, smaller branches are laid at an angle giving a pleasant herring-bone effect. On top of these are small twigs on which is laid the flooring of the upper storey. The vertical and horizontal beams are painted red and picked out with conventional designs in gold and bright colours. The smaller roof poles are painted a bright milky blue.

When the last Dalai Lama died, the faithful from many parts of the Buddhist world contributed what they could towards the ornamentation of the inner tomb or *chorten*, which must be about 60 feet high. The framework is of solid silver; it is covered with exquisitely worked gold leaf embellished with gifts of onyx snuff-boxes, strings of amber and pearls, turquoise head ornaments and charm boxes, pieces of lapis lazuli, amethyst, coral, and other semi-precious stones. Around the foot of the shrine are shelves whereon are displayed more precious presents: gifts from the rich monasteries of Mongolia and China, and from the ancient and noble families of Lhasa. Here are chalice-like golden vessels, heavy silver bowls and butter lamps, marvellous examples of cloisonné, rare porcelains and vases, meticulously wrought metal work, and curiously fashioned china plants in glass cases. Against one wall are



*Panorama of the Chomolhari range from Tuna, with Chomolhari on*



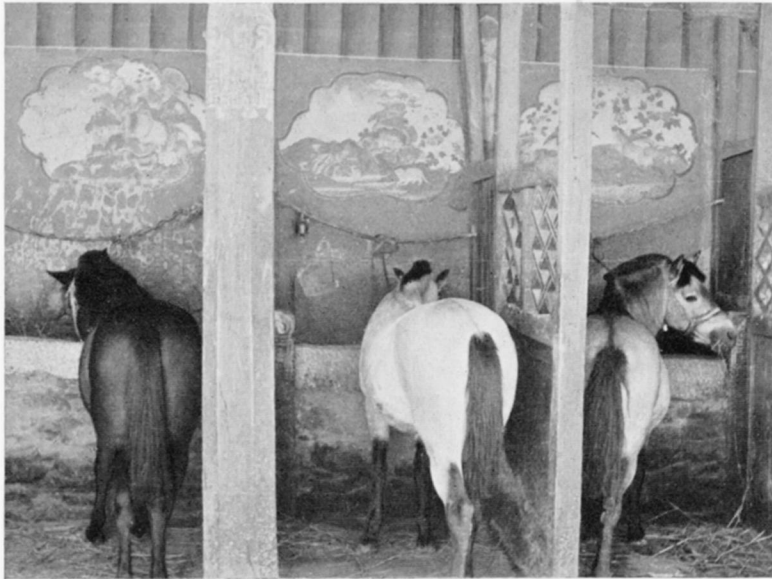
*The vale of Lhasa, showing the Potala and, to its right, Lhasa city. At the foot of the mountains (centre) Hill, and immediately behind it Kundeling monastery. The Norbhu Lingka lies to the extreme left*



*Chomolhari range from Tuna, with Chomolhari on the extreme right*



*Lhasa city. At the foot of the mountains (centre) is Sera monastery. To the left of the Potala is the Iron Norbhu Lingka lies to the extreme left*



*Frescoes over the stalls in the Dalai Lama's stables*



*Conventional painting of a Mongolian leading a tiger, signifying welcome*



*Three ladies*

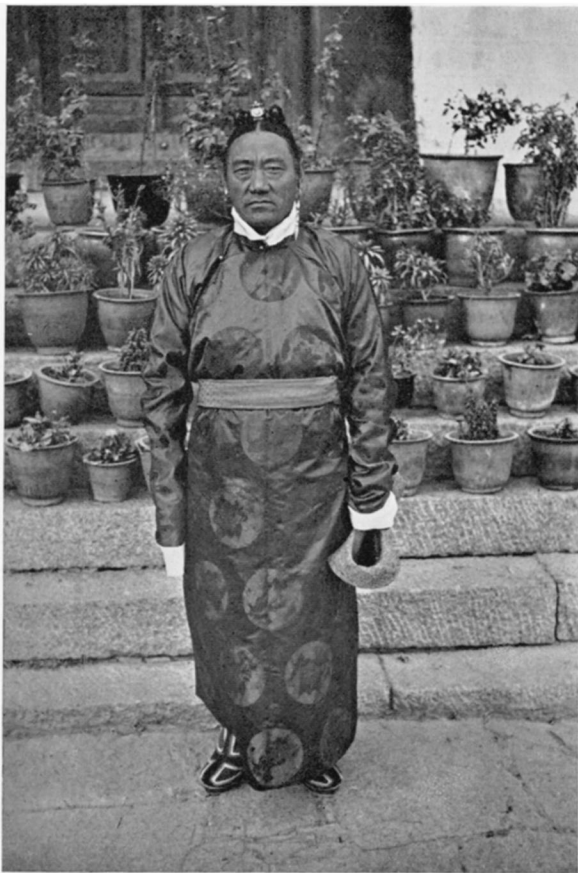




ables



er, signifying



*Tsarong*



*Three ladies of high rank, with Tsarong's wife in the centre*



images of different Buddhas, and holy books set in carved alcoves, and in front of the tomb are immense silver butter lamps always burning to the memory of the saintly ruler.

All visitors to Lhasa come to pay their respects to this shrine, and many Tibetans make long pilgrimages for this especial purpose. It was probably on account of this that there were an unusual number of nomads in Lhasa during the winter months. These swarthy independent-looking people come down from Amdo, Golok, the high desolate Chang Tang, and the far Mongolian border. Many of them bring herds of yaks and sheep with them, carrying loads of wool, salt (which they collect from the shores of the great brackish lakes), and yak dung. A part of this curiously assorted merchandise is paid as their year's taxation at the Potala. The rest is exchanged for *tsamba* (parched barley meal) which they are unable to grow up on the arid wind-bitten plateau where they live.

Groups of these attractive-looking people would be seen in the early morning making the prescribed holy walk around the precincts of the city. They turned their prayer wheels as they walked, while their lips moved with continuous repetitions of the holy formula.

Little is known about these magnificent people. Had one the requisite knowledge one could tell by examining the clothes and the curious head-ornaments of the women from what far corner of high Central Asia the family had come. One woman had her hair tied into innumerable small plaits sewn on to the top of a long strip of scarlet and green chequered cloth which hung almost to the ground. The squares of this were ornamented with Chinese dollars, cowrie shells, rows of trouser buttons, and fragments of agate and turquoise. Another wore over her forehead a disc as large as a saucer made from concentric rows of coral and turquoise, while her hair was divided into two series of plaits which were looped at each side to her belt. Over her nape hung a square of cloth ornamented with ivory and bone objects.

These nomads are noted bandits when occasion offers; and it was interesting to see how diffident and shy they seemed in the presence of the sophisticated and self-assured townsmen. It would be fascinating to return with them to their homes, often many months' journey to the north of Lhasa, and to find out more about the generations of self dependence and fortitude that have gone to the making of these proud sunburnt men with a faraway look in their eyes. But the language problem would be difficult: though they could understand my halting Lhasa Tibetan, and were vastly amused thereby, I could make nothing of their sing-song vernacular and even our Tibetan servants found them almost impossible to understand.

During our stay the young Regent was the highest official in Lhasa. One of the incarnate lamas in charge of the six small but important monasteries in the vicinity of Lhasa is usually elected to fill this office; but the present Regent was chosen by the late Dalai Lama shortly before his death. He was the only Lhasa official who was too great to be permitted to visit the small house between the Potala and the Norbhu Lingka which had been lent to us by the Abbot of the nearby Kundeling monastery. The young Prime Minister, the four Cabinet Ministers, the four Grand Secretaries corresponding to a Lama Cabinet, the monk and lay Commanders-in-Chief, the Abbots of Drepung

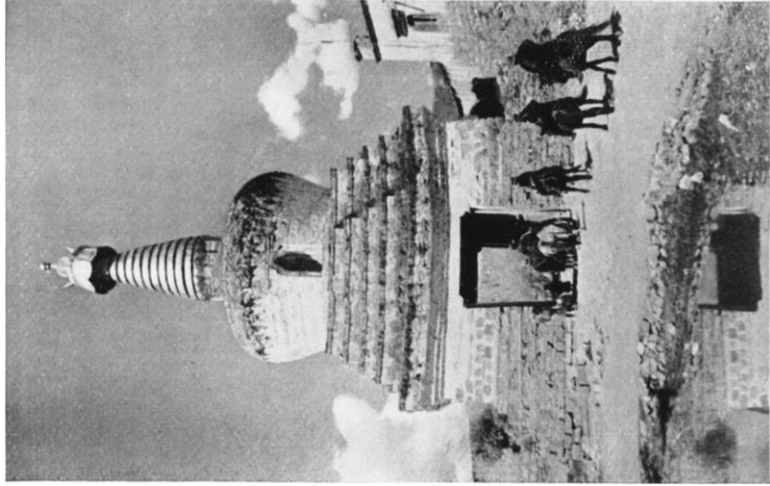
and Sera monasteries, and even the State Oracle from Netchung all came to pay their respects and to present white silk scarves of greeting.

One of our most arduous tasks as members of a Diplomatic Mission was to eat formidable lunches with each of these ministers in turn. Preceded and followed by gaily dressed mounted servants, we would leave our house at about eleven o'clock and ride to our host's residence, which might be in a park-like enclosure on the outskirts of the city, or perhaps opening off some squalid back street where we would have to splash through flood-water and filth.

Having reached our host's front door, which would be of exquisitely carved woodwork painted in bright colours, we would ride into a cobbled courtyard, often of great size. Here would usually be mules or yaks laden with bales of coarse wool, the real wealth of Tibet, ready to be sent down to Kalimpong from where it would eventually be shipped, curiously enough, to America to be made into carpets. Servants dressed in long robes of indigo-coloured home-spun cloth would steady our ponies while we dismounted on to granite blocks ornamented with carved swastikas placed on either side of the entrance door. The lower storey rooms are given up to granaries, store-houses, and the offices of stewards and senior servants. We would then climb a rickety wooden ladder to the first storey; it is curious that the Tibetans, such marvellous external architects, have never learned to build stair-cases inside their houses. Our host would usually come down to meet us, and after exchanging scarves with him we would go into the main sitting-room for a preliminary meal of tea, dried fruits, sweets, and biscuits. Later on the main meal would be brought in: to begin with many small dishes of boiled mutton, yak tongues, preserved prawns, dried fruits, and always small nuts and sunflower seeds. Then these *hors d'oeuvre* dishes would be put to one side and a series of large china bowls of steaming savoury courses would succeed each other. There would be sea slugs, sharks' fins, mushrooms, bamboo roots, meat balls, stuffed eggs, and many other delicious and highly spiced dishes. We would always eat with chopsticks, which in any case are difficult to manipulate, and especially so when dealing with such slippery things as sea slugs and sharks' stomachs. *Chang*, a local barley beer, would always be served by attractive "chang girls" who force reluctant guests to drink as much as, or preferably more than, they can manage. The Tibetans have the most charming natural manners, and they are excellent if exacting hosts. It would often be four or five in the afternoon before we were allowed to return from these banquets.

The Tibetan living-rooms are extremely decorative and comfortable, though we often found them rather cold, as it is their custom to put on an additional silken fur-lined robe rather than to warm the room. Although glass has to be carried on the backs of pack animals from Kalimpong or Gangtok, it is gradually replacing the Tibetan windows of ornamental trellis work covered with oiled canvas.

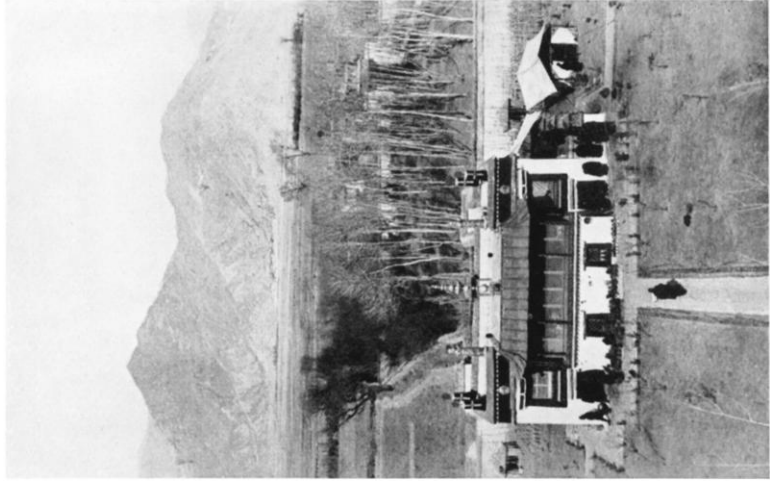
A few signs of Western influence would appear in the houses. There might be framed portraits of Political Officers who had formerly visited Lhasa, and such things as gramophones and silver tea sets, usually gifts from these visitors. But it was rare to see their own characteristic and beautiful scheme



*Pierced chorten forming the western gate of Lhasa*



*A street in Lhasa with the Potala in the background; on the left is a prayer pole*



*The Regent's summer palace*



*Yaks threshing corn*



*Flailing barley*



*Nomad sewing a bag of salt, carried on the back of a sheep*

of decoration upset by the juxtaposition of some tawdry representative of an alien civilization.

Prior to our visit the only wireless transmission set in Lhasa was one in the possession of a Chinese who, together with the apparatus, was left in Lhasa after General Huang Ma Sung's mission of 1932. We presented portable reception sets to several of the officials.

There is no cinema there, though our 16-millimetre projector provided a most popular series of entertainments. Films of themselves, especially in colour, proved most popular, closely followed by Charlie Chaplin's early successes, one of the Jubilee procession, and a Rin-tin-tin film called "The night cry."

The Lhasa postal and telegraph system is most efficient. It is in charge of a Tibetan monk who was trained at Kalimpong and who speaks adequate English. The line was laid from Kalimpong over the Jelep La as far as Gyantse by the 1904 Mission. In 1921-22 it was continued to Lhasa. It is maintained by Nepalese line-men, with occasional visits—as far as Gyantse—from English engineers. The muleteers sometimes take the posts for fire-wood and amuse themselves by throwing stones at the insulators, but during our visit we were always able to telegraph messages to India. The Potala is connected by telephone with the Post Office.

Stamps, in five values and colours, are printed at the Lhasa mint; they are current only within Tibet. Post-runners carry the mails to Gangtok (our letters were re-stamped at Gyantse). Running from dawn to dusk in relays of about 8 miles they covered the 330 miles from Lhasa to Gangtok in from eight to ten days.

Several of the larger houses and official buildings of Lhasa are lit by electric light instead of by the traditional lamp of a wick burning in a bowl of mustard oil or yak butter. The origin of this anachronistic streak of our civilization is a strange story. The Dalai Lama, inspired by Sir Charles Bell, decided to augment their Tibetan education by sending four boys to school in England, where they spent several years at Rugby. These were trained as a soldier, a surveyor, a mineralogist, and an electrical engineer. Ringang, who installed the hydro-electric plant at Lhasa, after three years at Rugby, had spent a further three years at an engineering college in England. Not only is he in charge of this installation and of the mechanical side of the state mint, but he is the interpreter to the Kashag or Cabinet, a district magistrate, and a municipal officer; he still speaks the most perfect and idiomatic English. Although he was too busy to spend very much time with us we found him a most entertaining and intelligent man. Gonkar, the soldier, died soon after he returned to his native land. Mõndõ, the monk, was trained as a mining engineer, but as his activities were alleged to have disturbed the local spirits and ruined the crops, he fell into disfavour, and spent several years as a magistrate of a remote and unimportant village. He is now a prosperous Monk Official with an office (the Tibetan word literally means "nest of papers") at the Potala. Kyipup has given up surveying and is now a city magistrate and in charge of the company of Lhasa police. As an educated man in Lhasa is one who can write perfectly the complicated Tibetan script, the Rugbeians, after so long an absence from home, seemed to be uneducated.

Now their natural merit or the advantage of their education in England has asserted itself, and they are all three in potentially important positions. They are all primarily Tibetans, whatever Western knowledge they may have acquired.

Perhaps the most interesting personality in Lhasa to-day is Tsarong, a man who was at one time Commander-in-Chief of the Army and a Cabinet Minister, but who now has no official position. He represents a rare thing in Tibet—a layman, not of noble birth (his father was one of the Dalai Lama's archers) who, by his own efforts and merit, has risen to high position. Normally the lay officials are selected from a few ancient and noble families; only in the monasteries do all men stand a reasonably equal chance of preferment. Tsarong has built himself a fine house on the outskirts of Lhasa and his family is as delightful as one could meet in any part of the world.

Although this house had glass windows, a stone staircase, electric light, and a bathroom, it is yet typically Tibetan in detail. The finest room in the house is the altar room devoted to the worship of Buddha. Along one wall of the room are huge gilt images of different deities adorned with jewelled diadems and necklaces of solid amber. In front of these are holy water vessels and curious symbolic images made of butter and *tsamba* mixed into a paste and dyed different colours. There are also silver *chang* pots, porcelain vases and, oddly enough, a terrestrial globe. The floor of the room is of small pebbles and earth beaten down and polished to the consistency and appearance of marble by the continual passage of servants' padded footwear. The walls are ornamented with *tankas*—paintings on fine canvas of some religious subject framed in heavy silk brocade cut from the dress of the departed person for the benefit of whose soul the *tanka* is made. These paintings, often of great size, are of rare beauty though the subjects, to our eyes, are often macabre. The richness, contrast, and depth of colouring is only surpassed by similar frescoes on the walls of Drepung, Sera, and other great monasteries near Lhasa.

At one time it seemed possible that we might go up beyond Lhasa, perhaps as far as Jyekundo, some 500 miles to the north-east of Lhasa. This would have involved crossing the headwaters of the Salween and Mekong rivers and a considerable amount of little-mapped country. If it could have been done without offending susceptibilities I had hoped to carry out some survey work. As we did not go beyond Lhasa the instruments were not even unpacked.

Daily meteorological observations were taken during our stay, including the maximum and minimum temperature and the barometric pressure each day, together with notes on the force and direction of the wind, cloud formations, etc. There were only two falls of snow during our visit, and no rain after September. During the afternoons of parts of December and January dust storms would blow from the west with almost monotonous regularity.

Notes were made on the distribution of plants, birds, and animals. Some five hundred species of plants were collected for the herbarium at Kew, and are being identified. Seeds were also collected. As both Richardson and I were very interested in birds we were able to make very valuable observations, which with the botanical notes will later be published in the appropriate journals.



On the journey to and from Lhasa we passed close beneath the exquisite sentinel peak of Chomolhari (24,000 feet), and I resolved to attempt its ascent.<sup>1</sup>

Having been fortunate enough to obtain permission from the Tibetan and Bhutanese authorities, I reached Phari on 12 May 1937, accompanied by C. E. Crawford, of I.C.I., Calcutta, and three Sherpa porters. Enlisting six local men to carry loads we crossed the Sur La into Bhutan, and, as the existing map is only an approximation, spent several days working our way over rocky cols and across deep valleys clothed in pine and juniper forest before we could reach the long southern ridge merging into the snow and ice arête, which seemed to afford the only possible approach to the summit.

After sending back our Phari men the five of us camped on May 16 at 18,500 feet on some névé at the foot of the Giant's Fang, an 80-foot pinnacle of rock which breaks the ridge at the point where the ice starts. Two days later, after many vicissitudes, we had traversed the mile-long lower part of the arête and camped at 20,000 feet some way up the steeper final cone of the mountain. One porter had been left behind at the last camp; now the party was forced to divide again. Crawford, whose leave had almost expired, and one porter, returned; while Passang, the only fit survivor of the Sherpas, came on with me. On May 20 we crossed a formidable ice-fall, and after being held motionless on an uncomfortably steep slope for two hours by a blizzard and thunderstorm, we excavated a platform for our bivouac tent at 21,500 feet. Next day, after eight hours of straightforward kicking and cutting of steps, we reached the summit of Chomolhari and were rewarded with a superb view over the cloud-chequered Phari plain to Everest, Makalu, and all the major peaks of Sikkim.

Our descent started unpropitiously, as a sudden slip resulted in an unpremeditated slide of several hundred feet. We returned to our bivouac camp and attempted to get below the ice-fall, but were stopped by another blizzard. It took us four days to get off the mountain, as knee-deep soft snow and vile visibility daily impeded our progress. On almost every day that we were on Chomolhari it would cloud over between nine and twelve in the morning, and the visibility would be reduced to a few yards owing to falling snow and the lack of any dark object on which to focus the eyes. As crevasses abounded we were thus forced to camp each day after a few hours' advance.

Various fortuitous circumstances added to the discomfort of our descent. Passang was suffering from snow-blindness, having broken his glasses, and, having climbed brilliantly on the ascent, was now virtually a passenger. Our clothes and sleeping-bags became wringing wet owing to absorption of snow melted by the fierce sun; even the matches in my inner pockets disintegrated so that we could not use the primus for warmth or cooking. The zip fastener on the tent opening jammed so that snow continuously blew inside. On one occasion, owing to clumsy handling of the rope as I jumped, I fell 30 feet down a crevasse which was so wide that the only possible way of egress was to cut steps and handholds up one wall. But the clogging new snow and bad visibility were our most formidable and persistent enemies.

<sup>1</sup> A fuller account of the climb was published in the *Alpine Journal* for November 1937, and in the *Himalayan Journal* for 1938.

It was May 26 before we returned to Phari after an exhausting 20-mile walk from the foot of our ridge.

### DISCUSSION

Before the paper the PRESIDENT (Professor HENRY BALFOUR) said: Mr. Spencer Chapman spent many months in Lhasa in 1936-37, and is going to give us an account of the city and its surroundings. He is also going to add to his lecture an account of his remarkable ascent of Chomolhari. I have no doubt that some of you have read the preliminary accounts of that expedition and will be anxious to hear directly from him something of his achievement. Mr. Chapman not only has a good deal to tell us, but also has a considerable number of slides and some films to show, and I call upon him at once to speak to us.

*Mr. Chapman then read his paper, and a discussion followed.*

The PRESIDENT: It seems to me really but a few years ago—just at the beginning of this century—that Lhasa was still a “forbidden city.” As we have with us this evening one who played the star turn in the unveiling of Lhasa, I think you will be glad to hear some remarks from him: Sir Francis Younghusband.

Sir FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND: What I liked especially in the wonderful slides we have seen this evening was the revelation they gave of the culture, the artistic ability, and the good manners of the Tibetans. When we went to Lhasa the great fear of the Tibetans was that we would “spoil their religion,” as they expressed it; and this I take it included their whole culture, because in Tibet the entire life of the people, their art, their politics, and everything else is ruled by religion. When, chiefly through the great abilities of Sir Frederick O’Connor, we were able to break down that idea, they suddenly gave way and were ready to agree to anything in the way of a treaty. They did not trouble much about the treaty once they had made up their minds that we were not going to spoil their religion.

I would like to thank the lecturer for the most delightful lecture he has given us and for having brought back such wonderful films and slides. They have given us an idea of this magnificent country and afforded a real revelation of the inner life of Tibet. I am sure we were all much thrilled by Mr. Chapman’s account of the ascent, and more particularly the descent, of Chomolhari, which we saw for three months exactly opposite our tent.

Sir FREDERICK O’CONNOR: I certainly did not expect that in one day in London I should spend an afternoon at the Central Asian Society looking at moving pictures of Lhasa taken by a lady and gentlemen who have just returned from that city, and that in the evening at the Royal Geographical Society I should be looking at still and moving pictures taken by a young gentleman who had also returned quite recently. I do not think that any here ever expected to meet a young man who would tell us about a visit to Lhasa as a sort of *hors-d’oeuvre* and finish up with an account of a single-handed ascent of one of the highest, and most difficult mountains in the world as the sweet. It was a wonderful performance.

I should like to refer to one or two recollections aroused by the pictures. First, the young man named Norbhu, now a prominent official on the staff of the British agent in those parts. When we went out there one of the first things Sir Francis Younghusband drew attention to was the fact that, although we had been on the frontier for a number of years, there was only one interpreter on the whole of that frontier. It was necessary when I was left behind there to try to train two or three young men to speak both English and Tibetan. I asked

a schoolmaster at Darjeeling school to send me one or two promising boys, one of whom was Norbhu, thirteen years old at the time. He has remained on the staff ever since and has been a most useful helper in every way. He is now actually in Lhasa supporting our policy there in every respect.

Another picture which brought a recollection to my mind was that of the beggars. Tibet is full of beggars, some professional and some amateur. As a mark of gratification when we had signed the treaty Sir Francis said he would give a present of a *tankha*, a small coin worth 4*d.* or 5*d.*, to all the beggars in Lhasa. On the appointed day—we thought there would be about a couple of thousand of them—we, to our amazement, saw the whole plain black with beggars. There were about 11,000, and we had to draw the line somehow. We put a few people on the edge of the crowd, and any beggar who rode up on a caparisoned horse was turned back and not given a present!

The PRESIDENT: We have listened to remarks from two of the pioneers in the opening up of Lhasa. I now call upon one who has recently been in Lhasa and is, in fact, the most up to date of those who have been there. It is fortunate that Mr. Suydam Cutting is with us to-day.

Mr. C. SUYDAM CUTTING: When listening to Mr. Spencer Chapman's lecture I felt how much valuable information we are now obtaining in connection with Tibet. There certainly is a tremendous lure about Tibet, especially in the United States, and probably because people there are suddenly beginning to realize something about it that is true. It is no longer a land of the occult, the unknown, and the mystic. We are now getting into Tibet and learning something about the people and the country, and we are all particularly grateful for information such as we have had this evening.

The PRESIDENT: I do not think there is any doubt whatever as to our having had an intensely enjoyable and most instructive evening. You have shown your appreciation throughout the lecture by your applause and also by extremely hearty laughter. I find it difficult to define exactly what has pleased me most: the extreme ease with which Mr. Chapman has delivered the lecture, or the humour with which it has been punctuated, or the excellence of the pictures he has shown. No doubt many of you were prepared for a selection of admirable pictures of Tibet, because you probably saw the coloured films exhibited not long ago by Mr. Gould. Those were also taken by Mr. Chapman, and they do him every credit as a photographer.

There is one hope in my mind, and that is that some day Mr. Chapman will be tempted to return to Tibet to explore that northern region to which he referred. It is very little known, and certainly the people in that northern area should prove of great interest if they could be studied intensively. And if Mr. Chapman will only bring back a further selection of splendid photographs, his journey, which I sincerely hope may materialize, will be well worth while. After all, the pictures which we have enjoyed to-night will be a valuable record for all time, preserving a graphic record of the region in the most perfect manner, and preserving it when contact with exotic cultures will have brought notable changes. I know you will all wish to thank Mr. Chapman very heartily for the most delectable evening he has given us.