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# Monks, Spies and a Soldier of Fortune

The Japanese in Tibet

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**For Naoko**



## THE DALAI LAMA

A great deal has been written about British and other European travellers in Tibet, but of the Japanese little is known. Yet most European travellers came at the head of expeditions and only an exceptional few made an effort to learn the language or the ways of our country. Japanese travellers on the other hand generally came on their own and in almost every case lived in Tibet just as we Tibetans did.

Many of these Japanese travellers were Buddhist priests who came to study our religion. One or two of them were accomplished scholars. Several worked for the good of Tibet during our years of unchallenged independence. Yajima, for example, helped to develop the Tibetan armed forces. Teramoto and Aoki worked to establish relations between Tibet and Japan. Even after the Chinese invasion Tada and my friend Dawa Sangpo (Kimura Hisao) continued to assist the Tibetan refugee community.

I am pleased that an account of Japanese travellers in Tibet before 1950 is being published in English. The book tells the story of the years of Tibetan independence from a less well-known point of view. I hope that bringing to light the nearly forgotten adventures and accomplishments of these men will lead to yet better understanding between the Japanese and Tibetans of today and attract support to our cause from all directions.

December 28, 1994

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# Glossary of Chinese Characters

Readers wishing to follow in the Japanese originals, on Chinese maps, or who are simply curious, may find the following glossary of names, place names, and other terms useful.

## PERSONAL NAMES

Aoki Bunkyo	青木文教
Chiang Kai-shek	蔣介石
Fu Tso-yi	傅作義
Kawaguchi Ekai	河口慧海
Kimura Hiaso	木村肥佐生
Ma Pu-fang	馬步芳
Ma Hung-kuei	馬鴻逵
Nanjo Bunyu	南條文雄
Narita Yasuteru	成田安輝
Nishikawa Kazumi	西川一三
Nomi Kan (Yutaka)	能海寬
Otani Kozui	大谷光瑞
Otani Sonyu	大谷尊由
Tada Tokan	多田等觀
Teramoto Enga	寺本婉雅
Yajima Yasujiro	矢島保治郎



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PLACE NAMES

Alashan	阿拉善
Batang	巴塘
Chamdo	昌都
Chengdu	成都
Chinghai	青海
Chungking	重慶
Dege	德格
Huhehota (Suiyan)	綏遠 (厚和)
Kalgan	張家口
Kansu	甘肅
Kham	西康
Kokonor	青海湖
Kumbum	塔爾寺
Lhasa	拉薩
Litang	裏塘
Ninghsia	寧夏
Pailingmiao (Baatu Haalga)	百靈廟
Sanchuan	三川
Sining	西寧
Tatsienlu (Dartsendo, Kanting)	打箭爐
Tibet	西藏
Yamen	定遠營

OTHER TERMS (TITLES, ORGANIZATIONS, ETC.)

Dalai Lama	達賴喇嘛
Higashi Honganji	東本願寺
Ko Ah Gijuku	興亞義塾
Ko Ah In	興亞院
Military Intelligence	特務機關
Nippon Rikkokai	日本力行會
Nishi Honganji	西本願寺
Panchen Lama	班禪喇嘛
Shina Jihen	支那事變
Tetsugakukan	哲學館
World Travelling Society (Without Funds)	世界無錢旅行會
Zenrin Kyokai	善隣協會



# Prologue

During the first half of the twentieth century, Tibet began to open its doors to a fascinated West. When Colonel Younghusband led his expeditionary force to Lhasa in 1904, a team of journalists went along and in no time were producing books about their experiences. A British survey team was given access to previously unmapped areas of Tibet, and British Trade Agents were placed in the Chumbi Valley, in Gyantse, and in Gartok in the west. Lhasa, however, remained stubbornly out of bounds after Younghusband's departure, and it was not until 1920 that Sir Charles Bell, for many years a close friend of the Dalai Lama, was allowed to go there and live there for a year.

Meanwhile, it went practically unnoticed that Lhasa had a number of Japanese residents including Buddhist monks, spies, adventurers, and one soldier of fortune; for just as Britain and Russia played out their Great Game, Japan played its own. Theirs was smaller, and was conducted almost entirely by individuals, since there never really was any clear Japanese government policy, and in the end whatever potential lay in relations between these two Buddhist countries was never realized. What remains are the stories of the men who pitted themselves against the physical and cultural obstacles presented by Tibet.

In not a single case was any sort of expedition mounted: each one went alone, backed at most by a temple or a sympathetic group of friends at home. Even the secret agents (some of whom proved the least competent of the lot) were expected to make their own way under cover. So these men present us with a face of Japan not often seen, as a country and culture best known for its group activities and its follow-the-leader mentality, here produced a group

of solitary travellers who would have to be considered remarkable for any time or culture.

It is also noteworthy that none of these travellers took any scientific instruments along. While the West insisted on mapping, measuring and categorizing everything that came under its scrutiny, the future world leaders in technology and gadgetry opted for involvement on a personal level.

As early as 1899, two Buddhist monks named Kawaguchi Ekai and Nomi Kan were separately trying to find ways into Tibet from Nepal and China respectively. They shared a number of traits: absolute and uncompromising determination, superhuman scholarship, a belief that Buddhism's time was at hand, and a horror of sex. They also shared the same teacher, a venerable sage named Nanjo Bunyu, the father of modern Japanese Sanskrit studies, who had taken the usual step of going to the West to learn about the East, studying for eight years under Max Mueller at Oxford.

In the end it was Kawaguchi who would almost miraculously survive the many trials of his bizarre adventure to haphazardly complete the most successful exploration of Tibet to date by any foreigner. Nomi, meanwhile, was to make three unsuccessful attempts, only to be turned back by suspicious officials, bandits, and destitution. His eventual fate will probably never be known for certain.

While these two starry-eyed priests searched for lost scriptures and harboured dreams of a worldwide Buddhist revival, a more secular Japanese presence was beginning to manifest itself. Accompanying Nomi on his first try in 1899 were two companions who had been foisted on him by the Japanese Legation in Peking. They were Narita Yasuteru, in the pay of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, and Teramoto Enga, a priest of a rather different stamp from Kawaguchi and Nomi (in spite of having also been taught by Nanjo Bunyu). Narita soon retired on the lame excuse that he had nothing with him suitable as a gift for the Dalai Lama, but Teramoto was an altogether more persistent character. Though he made only a brief trip to Tibet in 1905 and spent most of his time in China, he was probably to have more influence over Tibetan-Japanese relations than any other individual. Working at different times with the Japanese military and the diplomatic

corps, as well as with the Higashi Honganji sect and its rival ultra-nationalist Nishi Honganji, he seems to have been a bit of a freelance diplomat. His connection with the Nishi Honganji was particularly important, for it marked the first active participation in relations with Tibet by that sect's fanatically xenophobic, racist and nationalist abbot, Count Otani Kozui.

Then, at the end of 1910 a very odd character turned up in Chamdo in eastern Tibet. With hair down to his shoulders, a long handlebar moustache, and a rucksack with a sign on his back declaring himself to be the head of the 'World Travelling Society (Without Funds)', Yajima Yasujiro appears to have been more than half a century ahead of his time. When the British, always alert for those they considered to be poaching on their territory, learned that he was a Russo-Japanese War veteran, and that he had worked his way across China partly by giving *kendo* lessons to Japanese troops stationed in Chengdu, they were quick to suspect him of being a spy. They seem not to have learned that he had also worked in a Chinese laundry and peddled patent medicines. It might also have eased their suspicions had they discovered that he had obtained his discharge from the army by feigning madness.

At this point Yajima was about a year into what was meant to be a round-the-world trip, but Tibet so captivated him that though he did eventually go nearly around the world, it was only to come right back to Tibet the next year after a stop of only two days in Japan.

Yajima ushered in the second decade of the century, and the one that was to belong to the Japanese in Tibet. When Sir Charles Bell returned from his year-long residence in Lhasa in 1921, he wrote, with understandable satisfaction:

It was an especial pleasure to think that I was the first European who had ever visited Lhasa at the invitation of the people themselves. . . . As matters turned out I was destined to stay there longer than any other Westerner had stayed for a hundred and seventy-five years. (Bell, 1946/1987, p. 253)

This was, of course, true enough as far as it went, for the men who had outdone him in every respect were not 'Westerners'. Aoki Bunkyo and Tada Tokan, representing Count Otani, hereditary abbot of one of Japan's largest sects and cousin by marriage to the emperor, had also gone as a result of an invitation from the

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Dalai Lama. Kawaguchi made his return trip to Shigatse and Lhasa as a result of a similar one from the Panchen Lama. Yajima may have entered stealthily, but he remained there with the blessing of the Tibetan government. All of them stayed longer than Bell's year, and Tada, in fact, was there for ten.

The association between the Dalai Lama and Count Otani's two representatives is given only passing mention by Tibetan historians, while the British do their best to ignore it altogether. In Japanese eyes, both these men were great successes, rising to high positions as trusted advisers to Tibet's spiritual and political leader. It is most likely that the Dalai Lama, in his quest to bring his country into the twentieth century while retaining its independence, saw in Japan a supposedly Buddhist country which had done just that but could in itself pose a threat, for he kept the envoys at arm's length while using them to satisfy his curiosity.

Of the two, Tada was a genuine religious scholar who spent most of his time engrossed in his studies at one of Lhasa's great monasteries. His relations with his colleague Aoki were often cool because of the latter's rumoured liaison with a Lhasa widow. At any rate, Aoki's motives were almost wholly secular. Among other things he translated military manuals into Tibetan, claims to have designed the Tibetan national flag, and was sent on a mission to buy machine guns for the Tibetan army.

On New Year's Day 1915, the most important holiday of the Japanese year, it is said that the four Japanese in Lhasa – two teetotal celibates, one worldly priest, and an earthy soldier of fortune – met for a New Year's party. It is a pity that no one left a first-hand account.

This promising decade for Japanese-Tibetan relations was to come to nothing after Count Otani was disgraced in 1914. Though his ultra-nationalist motives in Tibet may have been suspect, he was at least aware of the country's importance, and without him guiding the politics of his wealthy sect and liaising with the government, the Japanese would hardly notice the Land of the Snows again until it began to figure in their military plans during World War II.

By the time they got around to acting, it would – perhaps fortunately – be too little too late. In 1939 an agent was sent disguised as a Mongolian, and with very vague instructions. But though he stayed more than a year, mostly in Shigatse, he left

having learned next to nothing. The next Japanese to live in Lhasa would be two spies, Kimura Hisao and Nishikawa Kazumi, who had so lost sight of their mission that they did not even arrive in Lhasa until after the war was over. They were, however, between them not only to make two of the most remarkable overland journeys of the twentieth century, but over the next five years were to be eyewitnesses to the last days of an independent Tibet before the long Chinese night fell.

This is a surprising list of travellers to have remained so little known. Kawaguchi, Tada and Nishikawa made extensive studies of Tibetan Buddhism long before this became fashionable in the West. Kawaguchi, Kimura and Nishikawa were travellers as distinguished as any; Kawaguchi and Yajima were eccentrics the British might proudly have claimed; while Teramoto and Aoki were political schemers who would not have been out of place in a Kipling novel.

Just why they have remained so little known is difficult to say, but it is probably a combination of language difficulties and disillusion with Japanese militarism. In Japan itself they are little better known than they are in the West. In their determination not to face up to the past, and to ignore their disgraceful record in Asia, the Japanese have even confined to obscurity the individuals in whom they could have justifiable pride.

But this is more than the story of nine men: it is also the story of early-twentieth-century Tibet and its years of independence as it tried to learn how to relate to the rest of the world. It is, as well, a forgotten chapter in Japanese history that did not quite come off. Perhaps, as Tibet again moves slowly and hopefully toward independence, the accomplishments, as well as the failures, of these men may take on a new relevance.



# Chapter One

## Death in the Borderlands

Though they probably never met, it is natural to think of Kawaguchi Ekai and Nomi Kan together. Both were teetotal Buddhist priests – albeit of different sects – who had been inspired by the same teacher and were bored by the daily work expected of a temple priest. Neither received any significant help from his temple. Both believed that a worldwide Buddhist revival was on its way, and at least partly in preparation for this they were determined to bring to the world the Tibetan translations of the Buddhist scriptures. They were both trying to get into Tibet at the same time, though from opposite directions. Neither seemed to know when to give up and admit defeat. When lesser – or more sensible – men would have turned back after robberies or betrayals, both Nomi and Kawaguchi kept going, with fatal consequences for one of them.

There were important differences in their characters and backgrounds as well. Nomi was born into a family of hereditary parish priests, while Kawaguchi had to struggle against his artisan father for permission to enter the priesthood. Nomi showed a talent for getting along with Japanese officials and soldiers, while rubbing many ordinary people up the wrong way. With Kawaguchi it was the opposite: officials of all races were anathema to him while he had a real knack for getting along with the poor, and the outright rogues of the world, whom he professed to despise. And while Kawaguchi resisted all assaults on his precious celibacy, Nomi gave in and married: then almost immediately left on the trip from which he would never return.

Nomi Yutaka (he changed his name to Kan, an alternative

pronunciation of the same character, on his Buddhist initiation) was born at a temple called Jorenji in Shimane Prefecture, western Japan, in the first year of the Emperor Meiji. That fateful year, 1867, marked probably the greatest turning point in Japan's long history: the year when the country began turning its back on its own past, and hurtled headlong into an industrialized future. His childhood was not particularly happy, for his father died when he was eight years old and he was raised by an uncle, another priest, in Hiroshima. It was always understood that someday he would take over Jorenji.

He never seems to have been particularly pleased with the prospect – his horizons were always wider than that – and he set about making a career for himself as a perpetual student. Money was always a problem, though it would not have been had he simply settled into the family business, and he had to return to Jorenji several times when his cash ran out. Jorenji thus became for him like a resented parent whose influence he wanted to escape, but upon whom he was financially dependent.

Like most Japanese since Meiji times, he believed that English was the world's most important language. Unlike most, he seems to have gained a working knowledge of the language, and even published his own little philosophical magazine in English entitled 'Wisdom and Mercy'.

Outside of delaying taking up the abbotship of Jorenji, Nomi seemed in no way sure of what he really wanted to do until in 1891, at the age of twenty-four, he came under the influence of Professor Nanjo Bunyu at Tokyo's Tetsugakukan, the 'Hall of Philosophy'. Professor Nanjo had spent eight years at Oxford studying under Max Mueller, one of the great Sanskrit scholars and eccentrics of an eccentric age. Though he was acknowledged by both Indian and Western scholars as a leader in his field, and though he regarded India as his true home, Mueller never actually went there. Perhaps as a consequence he developed some rather peculiar ideas; for example, that Hinduism was a dying religion and should be replaced by Christianity for the good of all concerned. His scholarly work on ancient texts, however, was much more sound than his philosophy. Always willing to devote time and energy to deserving students, Mueller inspired in Nanjo a desire to hunt up rare and important manuscripts. It was while he was in

Oxford that Nanjo heard of the Tibetan translations of the Sanskrit scriptures, whose existence had been discovered for the West by the Hungarian scholar Csoma de Kōros, and it was the inspiration to find these that he passed on to both Nomi and Kawaguchi (who graduated from the Tetsugakukan the year that Nomi began).

As early as December 1892, Nomi wrote in his notebook: 'I am determined to go to Tibet.' About the same time he climbed Mount Fuji as the first part of his physical training. Kawaguchi, as we shall see in the next chapter, was now unhappily ensconced as the abbot of a large Tokyo temple, and had not even begun to think of going to Tibet.

In the following year, 1893, Nomi graduated from the Tetsugakukan and wrote an article entitled 'The Necessity of Exploring Tibet', which later formed part of a short book he published himself called *Buddhists of the World*. In it he takes a rather alarmist view of the world situation, seeing Britain, Russia, France and China all converging for a great battle on the Tibetan plateau, a battle that might well spell the end of Tibetan Buddhism. Japanese scholars, he feels, should get there first, with the intention of learning everything they can, and helping to preserve this ancient heritage. Nomi explains why this is so important. He had been reading translations of European literature on Buddhism, which again led him to overreact with the prediction that a great Buddhist revival was at hand. European scholars, he felt, were on the verge of comparing the Chinese and Sanskrit Buddhist texts, which would put them way ahead of Japanese Buddhists and make the latter look a little foolish.

He may have been on to something here. One of Buddhism's most notable characteristics, and one of the main reasons for its rapid spread, is that wherever it went, its character was slightly altered by local customs and beliefs. Japanese Buddhism was originally based not on the Sanskrit or Pali scriptures, but on Chinese translations of them which were heavily influenced by Taoism and Confucianism. Once in Japan the beliefs were further influenced by an emperor-centred Shinto. One of the most significant alterations (and this will become important later on in our story) was that the original pacifist message of the Buddha had all but disappeared, and the faith gradually became an instrument of the repressive militarist state.

Nomi felt that before the West discovered just what had been going on in Japanese Buddhism, the Japanese owed it to themselves to make translations into *English* of all the standard texts from Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan. This he called 'the strategy of controlling the enemy by advancing first', and it is significant that he found no way to express this except in military terminology. The most urgent task, he felt, was to bring the Tibetan scriptures from Tibet, before the whole country was turned into a vast battlefield.

These are interesting thoughts to look back on with a century's hindsight. Much of what Nomi predicted has come about, though he was fifty to sixty years early with his more dire prophecies. Britain invaded Tibet in 1904, China in 1910. Russia was always threatening from the wings, but was too far away to carry out anything but covert work (though even the British, who should have known better, thought the Russians were on the point of invading). But while all this created more than a few ripples on the surface, it never really touched the Buddhist heritage. That would take a far more brutal and efficient invasion involving a concerted attempt, which lasted from 1959 to 1980, to wipe out the Tibetan heritage. This in turn would lead to a wave of translation into English, and the strong Buddhist revival in the West that Nomi thought was already happening.

Back in the 1890s Nomi discovered that no one else seemed willing to take responsibility for the task of bringing out the Tibetan scriptures, so he decided to do it himself. But more mundane considerations intervened. In 1889 he had borrowed ¥270 (about \$135) from his parishioners so that he could continue his studies, and in return had signed an agreement that as soon as he had finished he would come back to Jorenji and take up his duties. He concluded by promising never to do such an 'immoral' thing as move away to another area. Now he wanted not only to move to another area, but to travel to one of the most inhospitable parts of the world as part of a scheme to translate ancient scriptures into a barbaric tongue. His parishioners, mostly uneducated farmers who wanted someone to conduct their funerals and impart some ethics to their children, could hardly be expected to be sympathetic.

For a while Nomi behaved himself, running the local Buddhist Youth Club and writing a history of the temple. But in February 1894 he noted in his diary an odd little private ceremony he

performed. Cutting off a lock of his hair, wrapping it in paper and putting it away in a box, he left instructions that should he be lost on his Tibetan journey, this was to be treated as his body, and a funeral was to be held for it. He also wrote up a series of rationalizations about why going to Tibet would be good for everyone. He did not wish to go for fame or profit, but 'for the sake of the country' and 'for the sake of Buddhism' – as well as for the sake of Jorenji, so that its name would live on in history. The *karma* of his parishioners would also benefit if they were to let him go, and of course after it was all finished he would return to Jorenji and work diligently for the rest of his life.

The headquarters of the sect, the Higashi Honganji in Kyoto, thought little of his plan, and turned down his request for ¥500 travelling expenses. Meanwhile, deciding that yet more academic work was in order, he returned to Tokyo, where he lived in Nanjo's house and studied Sanskrit and Chinese for two years. He also seemed to have retained some social conscience, and started a school on a remote island where the inhabitants were known for their hostility to the outside world (another teacher who returned to the same island ten years later to do the same work found it so frustrating that he was driven to suicide).

By now it was 1897, and though it was Nomi who had first come up with the idea of going to Tibet, Kawaguchi was first off the mark. Nomi's diary entry for 23 June 1897 plaintively remarks: 'Rain since 9 p.m. yesterday evening. Kawaguchi Ekai left for Tibet.' Since he uses the incorrect character for 'kawa', he must have heard this story rather than read it.

Over the next months Nomi wrote and published a large number of essays about Tibet, and it seems that he badgered the Higashi Honganji with equal vigour, for he finally wore them down and they agreed to sanction his trip. But just when he seemed to be free, another problem reared its head. Not only were his parishioners unhappy about losing the priest with whom they had been so patient, but relatives were insisting that he marry, and in fact had already made the arrangements. Though the actual participants in a marriage might be allowed to meet and approve of one another, in the rural Japan of the 1890s they really had little say in the matter.

It is a shame that we have no record of the meeting between Nomi and Sasaki Shizuko, his prospective bride, and that none of their letters has survived. She seems to have understood from the start that he was determined to set off for Central Asia almost immediately, and not to have objected. She could simply have been a very sensible girl who wanted the status of being a married woman without having to put up with the inconvenience of a husband. He, in turn, might have hoped that by having a wife to leave behind he would gain so much stature that his parishioners would relent, as in fact happened. But it can hardly be considered a normal marriage when the groom goes off on an open-ended venture only a few months after the wedding, and all that is really known is that he apologized, but begged his wife's leave to accomplish his aims 'for the sake of the country and for the sake of Buddhism.'<sup>1</sup>

Nomi had had the foresight to wind up his life in Japan before the ceremony. His parishioners were duly impressed with his seriousness. After his wedding, in May 1898, there was no longer anything left to stop him, and in November he turned up at Nanjo's house in Tokyo to say goodbye.

The early months of 1899 found Nomi in Chungking. There was a Japanese Consulate here, and a Japanese military presence, which had been established in 1896 after the First Sino-Japanese War. Japan was now a member of the Imperialist Club.

Nomi seems to have been received enthusiastically by the consul, and here we have a real contrast with Kawaguchi, who encountered only one Japanese consul in his travels – in Singapore – and had a flaming row with him. Consul Kato negotiated with local officials and obtained all the travel permits Nomi would need, including one for Tibet. It was unusual to be granted a travel permit for Tibet by the Chinese, and Nomi was duly proud. Its worthlessness was soon to be demonstrated.

At least for a time his persistent financial problems had been eased, though hardly solved, by ¥600 sent from the Higashi Honganji. On the eve of setting out for Tatsienlu he wrote the following to Nanjo Bunyu (to whom he always wrote far more regularly than to his wife):

Sorry I have not written to you, though your letters have reached me. I am glad to hear that Kawaguchi succeeded in reaching Tibet from India. I read an article about him in a Japanese paper sent to the Consulate.

Recently a Western couple went to Tibet from Chinghai. The husband is missing and the wife came back to Tatsienlu alone. I have read another article about yet one more Westerner who went to Tibet.

My preparations are well under way and I am planning to leave here on 1 April, arriving at Tatsienlu by the end of the month. On the orders of the Japanese Consul in Peking I am supposed to be joined in Tatsienlu by Narita and a Japanese monk. After two or three months' preparation we will go to Tibet together. (Murakami, 1989; trans. Berry)

Kawaguchi was in fact still in Nepal, and would be for another fourteen months, but though Nomi believed that he had succeeded in reaching Tibet, he shows no disappointment at not being first. The Western couple he mentions must be the Dutch missionary Petrus Rijnhart and his Canadian wife Susie. Their baby also died during their tragic failure to reach Lhasa. The Japanese monk was Teramoto Enga.

Tatsienlu, which a later traveller described as 'a starting point for those whom faith or the spirit of adventure have driven out into the unknown like caravels across the ocean,' (Guibaut, 1949, p.7) was the true racial and cultural boundary between China and Tibet. The name itself is a Chinese corruption of the Tibetan Dartsendo (it is also called Kanting, just for good measure). The traveller, coming from the east, is in China before reaching Tatsienlu, and will see only Chinese people and Chinese villages, but proceeding west he will find himself in country that is purely Tibetan.

Of the three directions from which Tibet was approached by Japanese, this route via Tatsienlu was to prove the most frustrating, in spite of being so well travelled owing to the town's importance as the main tea depot between China and Tibet. It lies in a narrow gorge cutting through a snowcapped mountain range. At its northern end two rivers meet and rush through the town, the two halves of which were joined in Nomi's day by three bridges. Travellers have described the town as being constantly enveloped

in mist from the rushing river, which is so noisy that trade has to be conducted at a shout. Here gathered people from all over Tibet, western China, and even as far away as Nepal. What brought them was tea.

Probably no nation in the world drinks as much tea *per capita* as Tibet. Since it is mixed with butter, salt and natural soda, it is a major source of nourishment as well as a refreshment, and Tibetans are known to drink up to sixty cups a day. A tremendous amount is consumed in the monasteries, where it is constantly drunk while the monks chant and pray. It was always a great source of chagrin to the British that the Tibetans never developed a taste for Indian tea, but stuck doggedly to that grown in China.

Tea, shaped into the form of bricks, was brought this far by Chinese porters who left it at the ornate Chinese-style eastern gateway of the town, for no male porters were allowed to operate within the walls. Instead, it was taken over for them by a unique crowd of rough and colourful Chinese and Tibetan lady porters, whose guild controlled tea portage inside the town. They transferred it to the packing houses, where it was sewn into bales encased in uncured leather which could withstand the difficult high-altitude journey ahead, and even repeated dunking in rivers. It was then again the turn of the ladies to take the packed tea to the yaks waiting in the pastures outside the north gate.

Tatsienlu's political status at the time was ambiguous. Too far inside China to be considered really part of Tibet, largely Tibetan in culture, yet Chinese-speaking except within the walls of its four monasteries, Tatsienlu was still ruled by the King of Chala, who was tolerated by the Chinese as long as he was not too assertive. It was typical of the world of small border kingdoms that separated Tibet and China, and was not too unlike the Tibetan-speaking kingdoms along the borders with Nepal and India.

Nomi makes no mention in his letters of the lady porters or the tea trade. To him Tatsienlu was only a jumping-off point.

What he thought of the two companions who were foisted on him at this point is not recorded. Word of his plans had reached the Japanese Legation in Peking through Consul Kato. The head of the Legation already had two Japanese on his hands who were talking of going to Tibet, and this would have presented an ideal opportunity to get rid of them.



Narita Yasuteru was official. Financed by the Foreign Ministry, he was at the beginning of a five-year plan for the exploration of Tibet. He spoke Chinese but no Tibetan, and was planning to disguise himself as a priest with the blessing of Nomi's Higashi Honganji. At any rate, it hardly matters what Nomi thought of him. It is not even certain that they even met in Tatsienlu at this point, or if he arrived after Nomi and Teramoto had already gone west. What is known is that Narita turned back before he had even properly started. His reasoning was that if he got to Lhasa he would surely meet the Dalai Lama, and he must be prepared with suitable gifts of the sort that would be unobtainable here in the borders. Why he had not thought of this before is anyone's guess, and one can only wonder if either the company or the proposed rigours of the trip were not to his liking.

Teramoto Enga was a very different sort of person from either of the other two. Five years younger than Nomi, he was also better prepared. During the years while Nomi had been fighting with his parishioners, Teramoto had been studying Mongolian, Chinese, divination and Buddhism at Peking's Yung-ko-hung temple. This was Peking's Tibetan Buddhist temple, which had been established for the use of the Imperial Family. As Manchurians they were followers of Tibetan Buddhism and regarded the Dalai Lama as their family chaplain.<sup>2</sup>

The Higashi Honganji sent Teramoto a confidential letter for the Dalai Lama. Nomi had a similar one from the same sect, but there seems to have been no previous connection between the two. It is interesting to note that the scant Japanese interest in Tibet at this point seemed to come almost entirely from the Higashi Honganji, a large and important subsect of the popular Shinshu sect of 'Pure Land' Buddhism. All this was soon to change dramatically.

Nomi and Teramoto left Tatsienlu on 8 July 1899. Though they were together for the next several months, Teramoto's remarkably detailed diary makes only passing reference to Nomi here at the beginning, once along the way, and when they parted.

There were two routes, and they chose the southern one that would take them through the towns of Litang and Batang, then on to Chamdo. Their travel passes got them as far as Batang, but beyond that not even the garrison commander in Tatsienlu could guarantee. They wrote of their first day out being as cold as winter,

despite the fact that it was July. Nomi was bitten by a mastiff (almost a rite of passage for Tibetan travellers) and lost consciousness from the pain. The rest of the trip continued in much the same vein.

On the second day they encountered their first bandits, an undetermined lot who disappeared when one of the guards rode forward and warned them that if the foreigners he was escorting came to any harm, the government would take retaliation on their tribe. It took them thirteen difficult days to reach Litang, where they stopped to rest for two weeks. There was a Chinese garrison here as well, but by now the real power lay with the 3,600 Tibetan monks, and through them with the Dalai Lama in distant Lhasa. A sign of just how little power the Chinese had was that the Indian rupee was in circulation here, and porters could not even be hired without paying off the monks. A group of Ghorkha soldiers returning to Nepal from Peking had been held up in Litang by the monks for three months.

It was only another nine days to Batang, and the two men departed with the several hundred Nepalese who made life difficult for them by occupying any rooms that were available along the way. The two Japanese had to borrow a tent and camp out, and they were often wet at night.

It was during this stage of their trip that a very revealing incident occurred, and it brought forth one of the rare mentions of Nomi in Teramoto's diary. They were in a bad mood, having got soaked during the night, and since it was too wet to make a fire, they had only *tsampa* (roasted barley flour) mixed with water to eat. Both their escorts and servants occasionally gave them problems. One had tried to rob them during the wet night, and one of their horses had disappeared. When one of the escort began to lag behind, Nomi's temper snapped. He ran back and began to punch the man, who was about to retaliate by smashing Nomi's head with a large rock when Teramoto intervened. Had Teramoto not been there, it could have spelled the end to Nomi's travelling career, and this incident may well give us a clue to what happened later.

Batang is a striking place, and though it is at an altitude of no more than nine thousand feet, it has a real Tibetan feel about it. Eric Teichman, who probably knew this area better than any other Englishman, called it 'a rich little oasis in a desert of wild mountains'. When Teramoto and Nomi were there it was still

## *Monks, Spies and a Soldier of Fortune*

governed by two Tibetan *Deba*, or chieftains, who ruled from their separate castles around which the village clustered. At this same time Kawaguchi had taken up residence in a border village called Tsarang, remarkably similar to Batang despite being several thousand miles away in northern Nepal. But he was there for a year, perfecting his knowledge of Tibetan grammar, while Nomi and Teramoto managed only a few short weeks in Batang.

And here we can see another big difference between these two and Kawaguchi. In disguise, never in a hurry, always happy to stop for a few months or even a year, Kawaguchi also had the ability to fit in, to make himself liked (as long as he was not dealing with consuls or officials). In Tsarang the villagers even tried to arrange a marriage for him. Nomi often seems to have rubbed people up the wrong way. There is certainly no evidence that he or Teramoto tried to make friends with their Nepalese travelling companions, who could have been very useful to them. Instead there was talk among the Ghorckhas of the two Japanese being Europeans, and it went far enough to arouse suspicions and cause the Chinese in Batang to obstruct their further progress. Eventually these officials even rescinded the permission they had granted for them to take the road to Chamdo, though just how useful Chinese travel permits would have been beyond Batang is debatable.

Later Teramoto cut out the following article from the *Shanghai Daily News*:

Some time ago I told you of an attempt about to be made on the part of two Japanese 'bonzes' to reach Lhasa. They have now returned to Tatsienlu after expending nearly two months in Batang where the Lamas effectually barred their way across the frontier. Disappointing to the Japanese, characteristic of the Lama. One of the 'bonzes' will remain in Tatsienlu while the other goes to Peking, presumably to procure power from the suzerain China to force himself upon his co-religionists. Query – Is it religious fervour or political enterprise? There are those who affirm it to be the latter.

As Kawaguchi got the story from an official in Lhasa later, however, they were turned back because it was not sufficiently clear that they were Buddhist priests.

Teramoto, never one to stand still for long, turned back immediately and headed for Chungking to inform Narita that following them would be a waste of time. Nomi made a half-hearted attempt at striking out west dressed as a Chinese monk, but was turned back when he was sighted by Chinese cavalry. He returned to Tatsienlu 'with tears of regret'.

Tibet had just shown the two travellers that it was to be no pushover, yet it must also be admitted that theirs was a singularly amateurish attempt, and there were certainly lessons to be learned by anyone willing to learn them. There had, for instance, been no serious effort at disguise. They had simply travelled openly with a Chinese escort, and expected the Tibetans to stand aside and let them in. In addition, both of them showed a lack of that most important quality for travellers to remote regions: patience.

Nomi returned to Tatsienlu on 22 October 1899, after a round trip lasting more than three months. While Teramoto hurried off to Peking and Japan, Nomi decided to make the best of his situation. Winter was coming on, so it would be the worst time to travel on the Tibetan plateau, and for once he decided to slow down and make the most of a place. There were four Tibetan monasteries in Tatsienlu, each with its own collection of valuable manuscripts. Some of these had been specifically requested by Nanjo, and Nomi was able to send them via Teramoto. They would have particularly pleased Max Mueller, who had recently died.

Most of the next seven months were spent in Tatsienlu, where Nomi was apparently busy with a number of draft translations, but unfortunately all record of his activities, along with the translations, has been lost. If he ever made any friends or had any life outside of his studies, we will never know. He certainly made no useful contacts.

To the north of Tatsienlu lies the town of Dege, also situated in a deep gorge, and home of the most important printing press in this part of Tibet.<sup>3</sup> It also lay astride the second route to Chamdo. Planning to pick up the Dege editions of the Tibetan canon he had ordered, and then hoping to continue on to Chamdo, Nomi left Tatsienlu in early May 1900. He seems to have learned nothing from his previous failure. Again there was no attempt at disguise (though of course he would have been well known in Tatsienlu by

now), but more seriously, his abrasive personality again got in the way. He had problems with porters in Dege, and before he could decide what to do, all his money was stolen. Since he had taken the wise precaution of leaving some money in Chengdu for such an eventuality, there was nothing for him to do but return. This second attempt was even quicker and less successful than the first, and a wiser man would perhaps at this point have begun to realize his limitations.

But Nomi seems never to have known when to give up. By chance he found an old school mate whom he had not seen in twelve years living in Chungking, but he wasted little time there, hoping to have another try at Tibet during the summer. Having failed at the relatively (but only relatively) easy tea routes from Tatsienlu, he now turned to one of the most difficult and inhospitable caravan routes in the world: from the northeast through Chinghai.<sup>4</sup> By early July he was in Sian, and by the end of the month in Lanchow. From there he set off immediately for Sining, the fortified Muslim capital of Chinghai; then to the small settlement of Tongkar, a day's journey to the west, where he finally arrived after a journey of three months and 1,500 miles.

Here, ten thousand feet up on the old Silk Road, he was a world away from the deep green valleys of the eastern borders. Though Tongkar was politically in China, there were few Chinese there. Most of the people were Muslims with a distinctly Middle Eastern look, but there were also some very wild-looking Buddhist nomads from the area he was heading towards: Tsaidam Mongolians and Tangut Tibetans.

In Sining he learned of two ways across Chinghai to Tibet: an official southern route that had fallen into disuse, and a northern one still used by caravans and pilgrims. Even so, this route was not marked in any way, and the whole region was so sparsely populated and hostile that caravans of fewer than a hundred members had no chance at all. Anyone hoping to get into Tibet this way would have to wait for one of the annual caravans that usually departed in the spring to avoid the impossible high-altitude winter. Provisions were unavailable, so that each person needed at least two pack animals just to carry enough food for the journey, and another animal to ride, since deep and swift-flowing rivers crossed the route. The few tribes that lived along the way were not only constantly at war with

one another, but seemed to regard caravans much as a poacher regards wild rabbits.

The prospects were hardly encouraging, but Nomi managed to make them worse. He must quickly have realized that he had arrived at the wrong time of year, and that it would be impossible to travel this hostile route alone, yet he ignored the obvious solution. Not far off the road between Sining and Tongkar is the great monastery of Kumbum, the largest and most respected centre of Tibetan learning outside the political boundaries of Tibet. From a student's point of view being at Kumbum is almost as good as being in Lhasa itself, but it seems that Nomi paid it no more than a quick visit. One cannot help but feel that in this situation Kawaguchi would have settled in at Kumbum, ingratiated himself with trader monks who would form part of the next caravan to Lhasa, passed an examination or two during the winter, and left with the traders in the spring, working his passage by conducting ceremonies and giving grammar lessons. Nomi simply continued on to Tongkar, though there was no chance of a caravan for many months.

Several days after he arrived there a decree was issued to the effect that only Tibetans, Chinese, Mongolians and Muslims would be allowed into Chinghai. This seems to have been directed at a large Russian expedition, or perhaps even an arms caravan. Hoping that the decree would not be strictly enforced, Nomi went about whatever preparations were possible.

It is not really certain what happened next except that according to his account his luggage and most of his money, which he had rather foolishly left at his inn, were stolen while he was out. Could he have made enemies again, perhaps by trying to badger porters and camelmens into an impossible lone midwinter crossing? We will never know, but he was so thoroughly discouraged by this latest robbery that he retreated to Chungking, where he arrived in early October. This whole Chinghai venture was so badly managed, coming on the heels of his earlier failures, that anyone following his adventures can have few doubts about Nomi's qualifications as a traveller and an explorer. He himself never seems to have got the message, and the more blatant his failures the more determined he became.

Back in Chungking he learned that the vague rumours of a

Muslim rebellion he had heard in his travels were in fact the distant rumblings of the rising by the 'League of Harmonious Fists', a rising which the West called the Boxer Rebellion. Though Nomi did not know it, Teramoto was working with the Japanese forces as an interpreter, and would be involved in an incident that would have far-reaching effects on the future of Japan–Tibet relations. Nor would he have any way of knowing that on the fourth of July Kawaguchi Ekai had finally succeeded in sneaking across the Nepal–Tibet border, had completed a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash with a family of congenial brigands from Kham, and was now thoroughly lost in western Tibet, but making his way vaguely in the direction of Lhasa. Narita was well into the next phase of his own plans. Nomi, meanwhile, was taking a five-month break – not in a place like Kumbum or Tatsienlu, which would have been relevant to his purpose, but in the Chinese city of Chungking. If he had any self-doubts, he never mentioned them.

A sentence at the end of his brief notes on the Boxer Rebellion contains the name Idogawa. This was Major Idogawa Tatsuzo, the military attaché in Chungking. Since the Consulate was shut down for the moment as a result of the Boxer Rebellion, Idogawa and his military interpreter Harada Tetsuzo were now Nomi's Japanese contacts in Chungking.

While he was in Chungking he caught up on the news. Rumours that the Tibetans were sending an envoy to the Russians had him worried.

According to translations of articles from English magazines in Chinese newspapers, it seems the Tibetans are sending an envoy to Russia. From then on friendly relations are promised between those two countries. This should not happen, but I know that last year 50 or 60 Russians went to Tibet via Sinkiang and Chinghai. I know the lamas don't like foreigners in their land, so I do not understand this attitude.

I wonder if Kawaguchi succeeded in getting into Tibet. It is best to have as many Japanese as possible there to open ties between the countries. I hope more people from the East will follow. (Murakami, 1989; trans. Berry)

Again we can see that for all his faults as a traveller, Nomi seems to have been commendably free of personal ambition and jealousy.

He also took the time to write a remarkably dull letter to his wife, one of the few fragments of this scant correspondence that survives.

Last year on my travels I caught cold, and I also was ill two or three times from bad food or water, and have taken medicine for a cold. I quickly made a complete recovery and made the return trip safely. Due to my natural good health I have travelled far without serious illness, so you do not need to worry. I know you are not the kind of person who complains or is bothered by other people's talk, so take care of yourself. (Murakami, 1989; trans. Berry)

By now Nomi was seriously short of money. Of his three tries, two had been terminated by robberies, and it was probably foolish of him to go on at this point without recouping his funds, but he was getting restless, and left Chungking in February 1901 having decided on yet a fourth route: from the southeast through Yunnan, and a final do-or-die attempt.

So far, for all the distance he had covered, he had not really got anywhere. He had yet to go beyond settled areas or well-travelled trade routes, and the furthest points of his journey – Batang, Dege and Tongkar – were still at the time politically part of China. It was always just at the point when the journey should properly be starting that Nomi managed to offend someone or get robbed and be forced to turn back. In addition, he seems to have been one of the most unlucky travellers imaginable. A certain amount of luck is necessary to any venture of this sort. As Peter Fleming put it in *News From Tartary*:

every improbable enterprise, as long as it is carried out in a sensible and modest way, has a kind of divine right to one slice of luck every so often . . . every now and then you are entitled to expect – to demand indeed, if only you knew who to apply to – some specific, unmistakable manifestation of good fortune, no matter on how small a scale. (Fleming, 1986 p. 102)

This traveller's fortune, for whatever reason, was never to smile on poor Nomi Kan.

In Yunnan itself, Nomi could expect to find a good deal of foreign influence. There was a fair amount of competitive trade



between the European powers who were vying for influence here, and this was coupled with an active missionary presence. Nomi was to find Japanese matches, blankets and umbrellas, and since they were re-exported to eastern Tibet, he could hope for a fairly well-trodden trade route. But there were unexpected difficulties even getting as far as the capital of Kunming. The constant rain, mud and heavy winds were bad enough, but in addition the unsettled nature of the countryside was exemplified by violent anti-missionary activity. In Yunnan at least four churches had recently been burned by rioters, the French had withdrawn many of their missionaries, and all the merchants went about armed.

The Manchu Dynasty was weakening, literally falling apart at the seams, and in many remote areas the only really effective administration was carried on by the secret societies. Before the fall of the Manchus, some of these secret societies were slightly more respectable organizations than they later became: utopian revolutionaries, albeit financed by crime, who always regarded the Manchus as foreigners and held as their ideal the restoration of the previous Ming Dynasty. Since he was a poor and solitary traveller, Nomi was probably left alone by these groups, but their influence would have been all-pervasive in these parts, and they would have been dangerous people to be on the wrong side of.

Nomi did not stay long in Kunming but left almost immediately for Dali, four hundred kilometres to the west and that much closer to Tibet, where he arrived on 16 April 1901. He left again three days later. On the eighteenth he wrote to Nanjo:

I am about to set off for the interior with very little money. Each step gets harder, and the way ahead is beset with worries. But I entrust all troubles, and even my life, to the Buddha, and am determined to go northwest from Yunnan. I am sending back the servant who came with me from Chungking with my letter to Japan. After this I think communication will be difficult. I am leaving tomorrow. . . .

Kunming, 18 April 1901. (Murakami, 1989; trans. Berry)

After this warning, no one was surprised at first when nothing was heard of Nomi. But as the months stretched to years, hope faded

and anxiety turned to resignation. It was not until July 1905, more than four years after his letter from Dali, that there was any news of Nomi Kan: a postcard to his family and parishioners from a fellow parishioner who had joined the army and been stationed in China.

I understand that you all must be worried about the fate of your son, as we are also. I have just heard from an army chaplain that he died in the middle of December last year in Tibet. This news comes from a reliable source and I believe it to be the truth. (Muramaki, 1989; trans. Berry)

A separate letter soon arrived containing more details and, most significantly, quoting Nomi's old acquaintance, Major Idogawa, who had allegedly told the following story to the chaplain.

'On the way back from Tibet in January last year, I happened to stay at the inn where Mr. Nomi Kan died. I found that "Nomi Kan of Japan, Shimane Ishimi Koku Nagagun Hasa mura" had left a poem on the wall. The meaning of the poem was, "Sadly, I am to be killed by the natives of this area." I questioned the local people and they told me that indeed he was killed around the middle of December last year (1903). I was so shocked. I noted the poem in my notebook and kept it with me. Unfortunately I cannot find it now. I wrote down the details, including the poem, and sent them off right away to Japan, but my letter seems to have been lost in the mail.' (Murakami, 1989; trans. Berry)

Already this leaves us with a number of unresolved questions. In particular: why should both Idogawa's notebook and the mail to Japan, both containing the same information, go missing? Possibly it would all have been resolved had the affair remained private, but the letter was forwarded to Professor Nanjo, who immediately wrote an article based on it which appeared in the Buddhist newspaper *Chugai Nippo* on 15 July. The article attracted nationwide attention, and it was used as the basis for a series of tributes and obituaries that appeared in newspapers all over the country throughout July.

Then quite suddenly, on 31 August, Major Idogawa wrote to Professor Nanjo to say that it was all untrue:

At the beginning of April at the Buddhist ceremony held for the troops here I talked to Chaplain Ohara. Since he told me he was a friend of Nomi, I informed him that I knew Nomi had made it as far as Dali. I never said anything about what occurred after Dali, particularly the things I am supposed to have said about him being killed. I have read articles in the *Jiji Shimpo* and the *Osaka Mainichi* and was surprised to see how far from the truth the articles were. I have also been asked about this by Harada Tetsuzo, the military interpreter who was stationed with me here in Szechwan for some time and who also travelled to Yunnan with Nomi in the spring and summer of 1903 (!), and knows him well. I told him that the articles were all untrue. . . . (Murakami, 1989; trans. Berry)

What had happened? The answer would seem to lie in whatever sort of work Idogawa was engaged in. Already Japanese expansionist policies were clear, and in 1904 Japan went to war with Russia. Russia's supposed intrigues in Tibet would bring about an almost simultaneous British invasion there, the 1904 Younghusband Expedition, so there was no lack of intelligence to be gathered. It is more than probable that Idogawa and Harada went to places where they officially had no business, and that it was necessary to keep this secret. The British and Japanese were supposed to be allies at this point, and Japanese spies sneaking around Tibet would not have been appreciated. It is even possible that Idogawa and Harada might have asked Nomi to help out.

Whatever the case, Idogawa probably wrote to the family thinking it would go no further, and was shocked to find articles based on his private correspondence written up in the newspapers. His superiors would have thought even less of it. A military censor had probably already taken care of his letter, his notebook 'disappeared' and his entire career may have hinged on his denial. He later became a lieutenant general, and never again confirmed the story.

We are still left with an intriguing time gap. Nomi's final letter was written in April 1901. The alleged murder took place around the middle of December 1903, two and a half years later. It is by no means clear from Idogawa's remarks where he found the poem and heard the stories. Was it in Yunnan, or during a foray deep into Tibet? His denial and later secrecy suggest the latter. But what was

Nomi doing all this time?

There are a number of possibilities (and unless the date – 1903 – when Nomi and Harada were supposed to have gone to Yunnan is the mistake it appears to be, these possibilities are infinitely increased). Most likely is that he finally changed his mode and speed of travel, and found a congenial monastery, or monasteries, somewhere just inside Tibet, where he could live and study. A second possibility is that he was engaged by Idogawa or others to do some intelligence-gathering. He was desperately short of money, and it is always easy for a Japanese (even one as unorthodox as Nomi) to rationalize that his country's needs and those of Buddhism correspond. If this was the case, anyone as incompetent as he had demonstrated himself to be could easily have been caught out by the secret societies and summarily dealt with. And then there is always the chance that he might have gone mad and simply wandered around as a beggar pilgrim for several years: one more would hardly have been noticed in this part of the world.

Though the exact circumstances of his death must remain a mystery, perhaps it is just as well that he died in the attempt to accomplish the one thing that meant anything to him, for he could only have been disappointed by what happened in the years to come. He quite simply came along fifty years too early. The Western fascination with Zen in the 1950s and 1960s, and the later spread of Tibetan Buddhism, would have delighted him. He might well have taken his place beside Alan Watts, D.T. Suzuki, and Kalu Rimpoché; but a world about to embark on two world wars, Fascism, and the Russian and Chinese Revolutions (the latter bringing about the accompanying realization of his prediction about the suppression of Tibetan culture) would have provided very stony soil indeed.

And so, leaving Nomi to rest somewhere in the borderlands, we will now take up the story of his far more successful rival, Kawaguchi Ekai.

# Chapter Two

## On the Road to Nature's Mandala

Kawaguchi Ekai was a man full of contradictions. A sensitive and rather fanatical linguist who was well aware that his life would depend on his ability to disguise himself, he came to know the ordinary Tibetan-speaking peoples of Nepal and Tibet to an extent unmatched by previous travellers. He was to live with them, mediate their marital quarrels, preach to them, teach and be taught by them, treat their illnesses and in turn have his own treated by them, and even get involved in romances and fist fights. Yet he always claimed not to like Tibetans, and somehow he never really understood Tibetan Buddhism. In the end his unreasoning attacks on some of its beliefs and hallowed figures nearly spoiled all his accomplishments.

His indifference to poverty and hardship gave him unequalled freedom of movement, but on the other hand his ability to forget even the simplest directions ensured that he would waste much of his time walking around in circles. Lost and alone, he would be swept away in near-freezing rivers, felled by convulsions, cough up blood, and be robbed of all his possessions. Often he had to force his frozen and exhausted body to cling to life through meditation, but through it all he never lost his determination or his sense of humour.

When we compare Nomi and Kawaguchi, and look at the question of why one succeeded while the other never really got anywhere, the matter of luck cannot be ignored. As we have seen, that 'slice of luck' to which every traveller is entitled never really came Nomi's way, while for Kawaguchi it was there at every turn.

Of course their personalities had something to do with this, and often Kawaguchi's luck was made to happen. Nomi had trouble with porters everywhere. We have seen him lose his temper and start beating a member of his party, and one cannot avoid the suspicion that when he was robbed it was by people who knew him and had reason to dislike him. Kawaguchi was also robbed a number of times, but always by total strangers who had nothing against him. Only once did two servants try to take him on. Not only did he outsmart them, but he was careful never to travel with a retinue again. The friends he made on his way west to Mount Kailash meant that there were people he knew who could help him on the way back. And if you asked him, he would even tell you that he had prepared his *karma*. He was possibly the only vegetarian explorer on record, and instead of accepting going-away presents from Japanese friends he made them promise to give up practices like fishing or serving chicken in their restaurants.

The other key to Kawaguchi's success is that he simply never turned back. He might get held up, as he did in Darjeeling, Kathmandu and Tsarang, but when he did he stayed put, learned whatever he could, and forged ahead when it became possible.

Perhaps it was his early life that prepared him for this. From the time when he embraced Buddhism at the age of fifteen, Kawaguchi was always bucking the system, and he must have got used to delays in achieving his aims. His father, a bucket maker from the coastal town of Sakai, not far from Osaka, was horrified when his eldest son refused to follow in the family trade, and it was his mother who stepped in and took his side, cooking him the vegetarian meals he began to insist upon, and sneaking him books to read (she had 'married beneath herself' and never had much patience with her husband's illiteracy). His home life was a constant battle, with the young man secretly reading half the night, then falling asleep over his carpentry.

Probably the only really happy period of his youth occurred during his confused student days when he had escaped from the family. He tried a number of different courses of study, as well as degrees of asceticism, once living for an entire week on nothing but pine needles. His most concerted study was done at the Tetsugakukan under Nanjo, but though they were to correspond later, he never seems to have been as close to the professor as was Nomi.

After leaving the Tetsugakukan at the age of twenty-five, he was granted the rectorship of a large and important Tokyo temple, the Gohyaku Rakanji ('The Temple of Five Hundred Buddhas'). As a rector he was a disaster; for Kawaguchi was a scholar monk, not an administrator, and the daily running of a temple was nothing more to him than an irritant. Leaky roofs were not repaired and, one suspects, funerals were sometimes forgotten. He resigned after only a year, renouncing his monastic ties as well (though he continued to live by the strict vows he had taken) in a huff over alleged immorality among the hierarchy. His intention was to move to the headquarters of his sect, the Obakusan temple near Kyoto, to live in seclusion and study the large collection of Chinese scriptures there.

But this attempt to live as a hermit did not mean an end to his conflicts. He was not particularly welcome at Obakusan after his resignation, and he was further disgusted by what he found at the temple. Priests were living openly with women, nappies were hanging on the lines, and the finances were embroiled in corruption. This sort of thing seems to have been accepted by most Japanese, and only lone voices objected. Even twenty years later the president of Tokyo Imperial University was able to write of the state of Buddhism in Japan:

Most of our religious leaders are idle, unlearned, unintelligent, and wholly degenerate. . . . Can spiritual healing come from men who are leading bad lives and who violate all the rules of their profession? . . . It is hard to find more than one duly qualified teacher of religion among a thousand priests . . . the influence of religion in Japan is zero. (Anderson, 1955, p.42)

Kawaguchi was one of those lonely few 'qualified teachers of religion'. To anyone who had taken *shojin* vows – involving vegetarianism, celibacy, not eating after noon, and abstinence from alcohol – at the age of fifteen, the sort of goings-on he found at the temple were anathema. Once he again made his views known, it was a struggle for him even to get permission to read in the library. When he did, his conclusion from three years of reading was similar to Nomi's: in addition to being written in a language inaccessible to the average Japanese, the texts were hopelessly inadequate.

Unlike Nomi, Kawaguchi had no ambition at this point to translate the scriptures into a more internationally understood language like English. He was more interested in making them available to his own countrymen by translating them into colloquial Japanese. But before he did this he really thought he should at least have a look at the Tibetan versions which, he had learned from Nanjo, were the closest to the old Sanskrit texts, most of which had been lost during the Muslim invasions. Never mind that this would involve learning a difficult language from scratch and finding a way into a country that was as hostile to strangers as his own had been at the time of his birth.

As we have seen, Nomi began to think of going to Tibet when Kawaguchi was still abbot of the Gohyaku Rakanji. It is possible that Kawaguchi could have heard of these plans, but equally probable that he came up with own idea independently. It was just the sort of excuse that was tailor-made for such a misfit who had become a monk in the first place to escape society's expectations, and then found it impossible even to get along with his Order.

All his acquaintances considered him mad and tried to dissuade him, but he was used to this sort of thing from dealing with his father, and right from the beginning he showed the sort of determination that was to see him through. 'If I die, well and good,' was a typical comment. 'It will be like a soldier's death in a battlefield, and I should be gratified to think that I fell in the cause of my religion.' It is interesting that here we have a second gentle Buddhist expressing himself in military terminology.

He then went for the sinners among his friends, getting pledges to give up alcohol and tobacco, fishing and serving chicken in restaurants in lieu of going-away presents. Later to deride all forms of superstition in others, Kawaguchi would remain firmly convinced that it was the *karma* from saving the lives of so many 'finny and feathered creatures' that brought about some of his own narrow escapes from death.

When he left Japan in June 1897, he really had no idea of how he was going to get to Tibet, and it was a remark by Fujita, the Japanese Consul in Singapore, that caused him to lay out his future course. Fujita told him, rather sarcastically: 'There are only two ways of accomplishing your purpose: namely to force your way by sheer force of arms at the head of an expedition, for one, and to go as



a beggar, for the other. May I ask about your programme?’ That was the extent of the assistance Kawaguchi got from the Consular Service, but it was enough. He decided on the spot that the latter course was for him.

In fact he had little choice. His entire financial reserve consisted of ¥500 that had been hastily raised by former parishioners when they realized that he had spent so much time working up good *karma* that he had completely forgotten about how he was going to support himself.

Fortunately for his future plans, while he had little head for practical matters, as a scholar he was painstaking and thorough. That was why his first stop was Darjeeling, the hilltop town in Bengal next to the border with Sikkim where he could consult the foremost expert of the day on Tibet: the notorious scholar/spy Surat Chandra Das. Das had been to Tibet twice in the pay of the British, disguised as a Sikkimese holy man. When word had spread in Tibet about his identity after his second escape, severe reprisals had been taken against his friends (including one of Tibet’s greatest scholars, who was sewn into a bag and thrown into a river), and his very name became synonymous with evil.

Das agreed to take on this strange little man as a student, perhaps just to keep an eye on him. For the next year and a half Kawaguchi studied under Das’s supervision with several teachers for up to ten hours a day. For much of this time he was living at the home of a married monk named Lama Shabdung, where he seems to have become a member of the family, and found the women and children to be the best teachers. Even then he was not confident about his accent, and would eventually assume the disguise of a Chinese monk who had lived in Lhasa. This was chancy, since he spoke no Chinese, but his ploy of claiming to speak only an obscure dialect, along with his impressive command of the written language, always saved him with Chinese speakers.

In fact, Kawaguchi was not the first Japanese to come to Darjeeling with hopes of continuing to Tibet. In 1894 a young priest named Kawakami Sadanobu had gone there after the death of his friend and fellow Sanskrit student Azuma Onjo. Azuma had studied in Ceylon, Madras, and Bombay before dying in Bombay at the age of only twenty-six, and it had been his dying wish that Kawakami go to Tibet to try extend the range of their studies. The

following year he was still in Darjeeling, and he returned home in 1897 having gone no further.

Earlier still was Japan's most daring traveller to date, Colonel Fukushima Yasumasu. After being stationed as military attaché in Berlin, he returned to Japan in a bold solitary journey on horseback across Siberia, Mongolia and Manchuria, in much the way Younghusband had travelled in his youth. Just how much of an obstacle Tibet presented is shown by the fact that Fukushima turned back in Darjeeling without even giving it a proper try. Courage, determination, strength and stamina might be enough for Siberia, but Tibet would require something more. It was the failure of this famous overland traveller that had led Consul Fujita in Singapore to look askance at the little monk.

In fact Kawaguchi proved far more shrewd than either of his predecessors. Realizing that he was far too well known in Darjeeling to have any chance with the direct route through the Chumbi Valley (though this, for some reason, is precisely what Chandra Das recommended that he do), he backtracked to Calcutta in early January 1899 to throw suspicious pursuers off the scent, and then made a pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya, site of the Buddha's Enlightenment.

His real object was Nepal. He had decided on Nepal over Bhutan not only because no Japanese had ever been there before, but because the birthplace of the Buddha at Lumbini was within its borders, and somewhere inside the country there was supposed to be a large collection of the Mahayana scriptures in Sanskrit. But Nepal was almost as difficult to get into as Tibet itself. After losing large chunks of itself to the British, and having the example of colonized India on its doorstep, the Nepalese government had developed a justifiable paranoia about colonization, and closed its doors to all foreigners. Tibetan and Chinese pilgrims on their way to and from the Buddhist holy places of India were exceptions, so Kawaguchi hoped that with his disguise he would have no difficulties.

A day or two later, at Sagauli, where the railway line ended a day's walk from the border, he had his first slice of luck. He was just about to settle down and learn Nepali when he met, by chance, the one person in Nepal to whom he carried a letter of introduction. This was an important Nepalese ecclesiastic named

Buddha Vajra, the second Chiniya Lama and abbot of Boudhanath, the great stupa and Tibetan centre in the Kathmandu valley. Since the Chiniya Lama spoke not only Tibetan and Nepali but Chinese as well (his father had been Chinese, hence the title), Kawaguchi's disguise was put to a severe test. But he survived so well, largely due to his knowledge of Chinese characters, that the two became firm friends, and Kawaguchi was able to enter Nepal as the guest of this important man, and also stayed as his guest at Boudha, four miles outside Kathmandu. Nomi Kan had just arrived in Tatsienlu.

Kawaguchi was in Boudha at the time of the great winter pilgrimage from Tibet and northern Nepal. Boudha at the time was considered actually to be Tibetan soil, in the same way as the grounds of a foreign embassy are considered legally part of that country. During the winter, as Tibetans from all walks of life descend to escape the harsh Tibetan winter on their way to the pilgrimage centres of India, Boudha could indeed be a corner of Tibet. Here, under the huge brooding eyes of the Buddhas of the four ages, Kawaguchi first came to know the carefree and devout, if somewhat grimy, people of Tibet – a people at home wherever there is room to stretch out and make a cup of buttered tea (using tea that had undoubtedly passed through Tatsienlu on its way from China).

It was to the poorest – mendicant pilgrims who could afford neither passes nor bribes to get them across the border – that Kawaguchi turned for information on secret routes into Tibet. From what we know of him it is difficult to imagine Nomi sitting in the sun with these disreputable – albeit deeply religious – characters, picking their brains as they picked lice out of their robes. And so, even had he tried a route through Nepal, Nomi would not have learned – as Kawaguchi did – that his best chances of success were to take a route via either Lo (better known in the West as Mustang) or Dolpo, two of Nepal's most remote and, at the time, least-known districts. Fortunately, there was also a very good excuse for heading off in this direction: anyone making a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash, 'Nature's Mandala' and one of the holiest spots in the world for Hindus and Buddhists alike, would take this route. Though Kawaguchi's real goal was U-Tsang, or central Tibet, where he would find the finest teachers and the most complete collections of scriptures, he was never averse to a

little pilgrimage on the side, even if it did involve a detour of a thousand miles or more.

The Chiniya Lama told him that going that way would be to invite death. The pilgrim, of course, replied that he would consider himself 'well repaid if I met death while on a pilgrimage to a holy place'.

The way led first through Pokhara, and Kawaguchi headed west from Boudha in March 1899 in some state, mounted on a white horse (a gift from the Lama) and with a retinue of four servants, two of whom had plans to murder him. From Pokhara he went north towards the Thak Khola Valley, the centre of an extensive salt trade between Tibet and India that had made its inhabitants both wealthy and sophisticated.

If Kawaguchi had a way of making his good luck happen, he could do the same with bad luck. One of his favourite pastimes was writing poetry, and one day he was so wrapped up in a poem he was composing about the scenery that he was knocked off his horse by some of it – a low branch. He narrowly escaped falling into a deep ravine, and bruised his hip so severely that he could not move for several days. Luckily the area they were now in was too well inhabited for his murderous servants to take action, and as soon as possible he was back on his horse, writing poems and heading towards the Tibetan border. By this time another of the servants, an old lady, had told him all about the two murderers' plans, so he was well prepared.

Tucked behind the massive peaks of Annapurna and Dhaulagiri at about 9,000 feet in the arid and windswept Thak Khola Valley, the small town of Tukche was in those days one of the most sophisticated places in Nepal outside the Kathmandu Valley. Salt was to Tukche what tea was to Tatsienlu, the town being the main staging point where Tibetan salt was exchanged for Indian grain, and Kawaguchi had an introduction from the Chiniya Lama to the leading salt trader and district magistrate, Harkaman Serchan. His mansion, the chapel of which Kawaguchi occupied, was the centre of an ancient trade route that stretched from the plains of northern India to northern Tibet, and the courtyard below the chapel was always full of Tibetan traders at this time of year. It was the perfect place to pick up gossip.

In Tukche, Kawaguchi was able to demonstrate that the gentle

celibate teetotaler masked a cunning schemer. In spite of all his moralizing about alcohol, he was never above using it to further his aims. He encouraged his two untrustworthy servants in a drinking bout until each accused the other of planning to kill him, and with this evidence he paid them their wages plus a little more, then sent them away in disgrace. This was just about the time when Nomi was waiting for Teramoto to join him in Tatsienlu.

It was also in Tukche that Kawaguchi met a learned Mongolian monk named Serab Gyaltzen, who lived in a village called Tsarang in the tiny kingdom of Lo some days' march to the north, a kingdom similar in many ways to those along the border between Tibet and China. The unfortunate Serab had studied for twenty years in Lhasa for his *geshé* degree, but after passing his examinations he had been exiled to this wild Tibetan-speaking border kingdom for lechery. He was just the sort of character whom the strictly celibate Kawaguchi always seemed to take up with, and since he had just discovered that the route he meant to take to Tibet had been reinforced with border guards, he decided to visit his new friend's home. It was that much closer to Tibet itself, and from it he could keep an eye on developments and an ear open for rumours. There would be no going back to Kathmandu or Darjeeling for him at the first sign of a setback.

In the end he stayed in this little kingdom for nearly a year, studying Tibetan rhetoric, penmanship and grammar (which was to become something of an obsession with him) and engaging in violent religious disputes with his quick-tempered Mongolian teacher. They also shared the duties of looking after the health of the village, for Kawaguchi's maternal grandfather had been a doctor, and his medical books had been among his reading when he was young.

In spite of the fist fights with his friend (over 'the merits of certain saints'), and not having a bath for a year, Kawaguchi enjoyed his time in Tsarang, where he traded his white horse for some of the scriptures he had been searching for. Ever mindful of the task ahead, he also spent his hours off running up and down hills with a load of rocks on his back to develop his muscles and lungs. He gave the villagers the plausible explanation that this was a religious penance.

But it was also here that he began his criticisms of the Tibetan

way of life. The dirt got on his nerves. The people's habits were 'too loathsome, even unto sickening, to recall to mind'. But at least he felt that living there had thoroughly prepared him for what he would have to endure in Tibet. Nor did their leisure activities meet with his approval. Alcohol and tobacco were favourite forms of entertainment, but worse, 'their ruling passion is that of carnal love'. To read his comments, one would think the people were engaged in one continuous orgy. He managed to assert himself in a small way by making the price of his medical treatment abstinence from either alcohol or chewing tobacco. This undoubtedly contributed to his success as a doctor, since it is probable that many complaints were the result of overindulgence.

His vegetarianism and asceticism, on the other hand, made him a hit with these simple people, who were quick to respect a way of life they had no wish to emulate. They decided to keep him around with the most counterproductive tactics possible: a plan for trapping him into marriage with one of the headman's pretty daughters. Of all Kawaguchi's vows, celibacy was to give him the most difficulty with the free-and-easy Tibetans. As soon as he discovered the plot, he fled in panic from the village where he had been so happy for more than a year. The only way he could go was south to the town of Marpha, which was just north of Tukche and the jumping-off point for Dolpo, the route he now planned to take into Tibet.

Here he carelessly allowed his correspondence with Surat Chandra Das to be discovered. Das, as has been previously mentioned, was thought of in Tibet as the very incarnation of evil, and since Tibetans were passing through this Buddhist village all the time, his name was well known. Anyone associated with Das would fall under immediate suspicion of being a spy himself, and since the economy of the Thak Khola Valley depended in equal parts on the salt trade and smuggling, the last thing anyone wanted was attention from Kathmandu. The village split over whether he should be allowed to stay.

In a sense this was the best thing that could have happened to Kawaguchi, for this was the only time in his entire trip when his determination seems to have begun to waver. Two things happened to put him back on course. One was a report in the Mahabodhi Society's newsletter, which Das enclosed with his letter, that Nomi

and Teramoto had failed in their attempt from Tatsienlu. The other was his arousal of local suspicions. He had to go somewhere, and now there was only one way to go. And so he set off on his trek into the high wastelands behind the eighth-highest mountain in the world, with a porter and provisions supplied by Marpha's headman. After a few days he told his shocked porter that he wanted to continue alone, and on 4 July 1900 he finally passed alone and secretly into Tibet. Nomi had recently been robbed in Dege, and was now on his way to Chinghai.

No one knows for sure just where Kawaguchi crossed the border. His own account is no help: he was seldom even sure which direction he was heading in. But he did know he was in Tibet, and he celebrated with a bowl of *tsampa*, the Tibetan staple. It was not long before he sighted his first tents and, not entirely sure what he should do, he resorted to a cross between meditation and divination called *danjikan sanmai*. What is superstition to one man is sacred to another; a lesson Kawaguchi, who always ridiculed Tibetan superstitions, never seemed to have learned for himself. The results of his meditation told him that it would be safe to call at the tents, where he was hospitably received and passed on to a local hermit named Gelong Rimpoché.

His first few days in Tibet were auspicious enough, and far easier than the extremely rugged trek across Dolpo had been. He and Gelong Rimpoché hit it off (though Kawaguchi regarded most hermits as charlatans), had detailed religious discussions, and developed a way of talking to one another in riddles. The Rimpoché's assistant helped the ever impractical traveller to mend his boots, and when he continued on his way it was with strong soles and replenished stores.

The whole rationale behind coming this way had been to make a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar, so this was the direction in which he set out, only to be plunged immediately into the most appalling difficulties. Over the next few days river crossings, blizzards and malnutrition were very nearly to prove the end of him. Just as bad was the way he always either forgot directions or got them wrong, and he was seldom going in the right direction. His favourite medicine, a traditional Japanese concoction called *hotan* (in which for some reason he was never to lose faith) had a habit of sending him into convulsions and causing

him to bring up mouthfuls of blood. His vows did not allow him to eat after noon, and if he missed the deadline he would starve rather than give in to temptation. Once he survived a night in a blizzard by meditating warmth into his body.

Just when he was on his last legs, after only a week in the country, his luck turned again when he came upon the tents of an incarnate lama named Alchu Tulku, who had broken his own vows to marry a woman whose beauty impressed Kawaguchi deeply. Shocked as he was by these domestic arrangements, he could hardly object too strenuously to a couple who saved his life and nursed him back to strength. In any case, he was to find the marriage a stormy one. On his last night with them after observing the 'erstwhile beauty' in a towering rage, 'her face a burning red and undergoing the most disagreeable contortions I have ever seen', he could only shed tears of sympathy 'for all my brethren of the Order whose moral weakness has betrayed them into breaking their vows of celibacy'.

Almost as soon as he had left Alchu Tulku's tents and struck out on his own, his troubles began anew; and when, three weeks later, he finally reached the pilgrim road near Mount Kailash, and was taken in by a family of friendly brigands from eastern Tibet, he had again nearly succumbed to exposure, convulsions, starvation, thirst, and freezing river crossings. The pilgrims, who really were part-time thieves when they were not on pilgrimage, were only too happy to have someone they regarded as a learned lama join them to read the holy word for the duration of their pilgrimage.

But though his physical troubles were now over for a time, in another way he found himself in greater danger than ever. For these rough-and-ready pilgrims, like the villagers of Tsarang, decided they liked him; and none more so than an affectionate and aggressive nineteen-year-old named Dawa, who decided he would make the perfect husband. Her strategy, backed by the rest of her family, was to throw a little temptation in his way. Again and again the hapless celibate was manoeuvred into situations where he would be alone with the bold young lady he describes as 'a comely little thing'. A heart that could face the greatest privations and the coldest winds of the plains with equanimity quailed in the face of her relentless onslaught. 'I am neither a piece of wood nor a block of stone,' he plaintively informs us in his record of the journey, yet



in the end we are assured that he 'remained true to the teachings of the Blessed One'.

In the company of this family, Kawaguchi made the difficult circuit around the holy mountain that is considered the centre of the universe by so many Asians. While a number of Western travellers had in fact been here, none of them had bothered to do the circuit (the next to do so would be Sven Hedin). While he did his one leisurely round, the men in his party did three and the women two, and he even resorted to a yak for the most difficult parts. One can hardly blame him. He knew that he would soon be on the difficult road back across western Tibet to Lhasa, and the pilgrim trail, rising as it does to eighteen thousand feet at the Dolma La, was gruelling enough without hurrying. At the holy lake of Manasarovar he made some remarkable geographical observations, just about all of them wrong. A good example is the way he castigates Western geographers for not noticing that the lake is shaped like a lotus flower.

Also while in the Kailash area he had a chance to inform the world of where he was. Kailash is not far from the Indian border, and during the pilgrimage season many merchants from India show up at the temporary markets. Having overcome the suspicions of one such merchant (who thought he was an Englishman in disguise), Kawaguchi felt confident enough to despatch letters with him to Chandra Das and two friends in Japan.

It is during his account of the pilgrimage in his book that he makes one of his most vitriolic attacks on the eighth-century Indian mystic Padmasambhava, a man many consider to be Tibet's patron saint. This attack was occasioned simply by seeing an image of Padmasambhava being worshipped beside that of the Buddha, and indeed many Tibetans (particularly adherents of the oldest sect, the Nyingmapa) consider him to be a second Buddha. But this was too much for Kawaguchi.

Why should he be so upset with the saint who subdued Tibet's demons, making the country safe for Buddhism? Padmasambhava came from a very different tradition from the Japanese monk, and while this is not the place for a long explanation of Tantrism, it is enough to note that Kawaguchi showed no interest whatsoever in trying to understand this dominant force in Tibetan Buddhism, but railed against it at every opportunity. In so doing he concentrated

on the more spectacular practices of Tantrism, which are really relatively rare. Padmasambhava, for example, lived with a number of woman who were 'spiritual consorts' – a concept Kawaguchi made no attempt to understand – and indulged freely in alcohol and other vices. These practices are only for the most spiritually advanced, and Kawaguchi could not bring himself to admit that they might have any value. For him the man whom legend credits with establishing Buddhism once and for all in this most Buddhist of lands was 'a devil in the disguise of a priest, and behaved as if he had been born for the very purpose of preventing the spread of the holy doctrines of Buddha'. Since he seems to have expressed his opinions quite freely, it is no wonder that he made enemies as well as friends.

The end of the pilgrimage was marked by the family's resumption of hunting, and hints were thrown out that the learned lama's usefulness was at an end, unless he wished to join them as a family member. The crisis came when the family broke in on him and little Dawa as she was making a final assault on his virtue. The two branches of the extended family split over the propriety of her behaviour, and soon a major brawl ensued in which Kawaguchi's worst fears were realized, with them all accusing one another of the most heinous crimes. In trying to keep the peace, Kawaguchi was knocked all but unconscious by a roundhouse punch. After an uneasy final night in the tents, he parted from them the next day after they had sold him two worthless sheep to act as his pack animals.

In spite of his worries over the profession of the family, Kawaguchi had been correct to try and stick with them as long as possible. They had for the most part treated him with remarkable generosity and kindness, and he was all but incapable of surviving alone. As soon as he left them he was again plunged into the kind of difficulties that always came his way, this time with the added attraction of highwaymen. The first highwayman he encountered, seeing that he was a priest, let him off on the condition that he perform a divination to tell them where wealthy traders were likely to be. Making up a bogus ceremony, Kawaguchi sent them in the direction he judged least likely to be profitable, though with his sense of direction they probably struck it rich.

Winter was now coming on, and though this meant the snow-fed

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rivers he had to cross were now lower, they were also half frozen, and he often had to break the ice before he could even begin. Snow-blindness was a new problem for him and sleeping in the open was now colder than ever. So desperate did he become that once, when he was turned away from some tents, he convinced the inhabitants that he had the power to curse them if he was not let in.

The next bandits he met did not bother to ask for a divination but simply took everything except his bedding and holy texts. Though there was a custom of leaving a victim with three days' worth of food, they were frightened off (by horsemen who then disappeared) before Kawaguchi had the presence of mind to ask.

His one hope, since he was now doubling back to Lhasa more or less along the route he had come by, was to find people he knew. At the absolute low point of his journey, after wandering around snow-blind for three days without food, he was rescued by a nomad, only to be attacked and severely bitten by the family mastiffs. But he was now back in a area he knew, and the next day he was taken to the tents of an old friend and previous saviour: Alchu Tulku's beautiful wife, who had run away from her husband. If he had been upset by their living together in the first place, he was horrified that the vow, once broken, was further mocked by the couple's breaking up, and as soon as he had regained some strength he devoted it to bringing them back together.

Taken to Alchu's tents, he was treated with traditional Tibetan remedies (which he later derided) for both snow-blindness and dog bites. He also preached to the couple on 'all imaginable sins and vices conceived by man', and they loved it. After ten days of rest and recovery in the lama's tents, which he paid back with his sermons and the dubious service of reconciling the warring couple, he was again on his way.

His first stop was a revisit to the cave of Gelong Rimpoché, indicating that he had now returned to a spot not far from where he had entered Tibet more than three months before. It was obvious that the holy man had him largely figured out, and in veiled terms recommended that he give up. When he refused, Gelong Rimpoché, convinced of his sincerity, gave him every assistance, and Kawaguchi set off once more on the long walk to Shigatse and Lhasa. By the standards of most of the world

he would still be in the wilds, but at least now he was following a more or less recognized trail where he could expect to come across post towns every four or five days. And now his luck returned as he found tents to lodge in almost every night.

In the small town of Tradun, which was in fact due north of Tsarang, he had an unpleasant encounter with Tsarang's town drunk, who harboured his own suspicions about him. Again he saved the day, as he had in Tukche, by getting the man so blind drunk that he was incapable of mischief. Soon his luck was to get even better when a caravan of merchant monks took him in as their grammar instructor, and with them he travelled almost all the way to Shigatse, though one member of the party, jealous of his learning, tried to cast suspicions on him.

Now back to full strength from the relative comfort of the tents, he could not resist a detour to the monastery town of Sakya, headquarters of one of Tibet's four main sects, and former capital of the country. The monastery has one of the finest libraries in the country, and this is the sort of place where we might have expected Kawaguchi to settle down for a period of concentrated study. Yet here he made one of his biggest blunders, and one he was lucky to get away with at all. One of the greatest flaws in his personality was his inability to allow other people their own beliefs. If he disagreed with something, that simply made it wrong in his view. Though he was tolerant enough with the simple and uneducated, he had no patience whatsoever with scholars and lamas who behaved in ways he could not condone.

And so, when he was granted an audience with the Sakya Lama, he made a point of not showing the proper respect – because the Lama was not celibate (he was not celibate for the excellent reason that his particular line passes from father to son, unlike most Tibetan lineages, which are passed through incarnate lamas). He could hardly have expected to have been welcomed by the rest of the monastery after this, but he still called on another high lama from whom he hoped to receive instruction. When he found this lama playing with a boy whom he suspected was his son, he was so disgusted that he left this great treasure trove of knowledge without so much as a second glance.

His brief stay at Shigatse's Tashi Lhumpo was hardly more satisfactory. Tashi Lhumpo is the most important monastery outside

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Lhasa, because it is the headquarters of the Panchen Lama, second only to the Dalai Lama in status. Here, again hoping for instruction, he called on the Panchen Lama's tutor, who was reputed to be one of the greatest experts on Tibetan grammar. To his surprise, he found the tutor unable to answer even the simplest questions, and was referred to a learned physician along the way to Lhasa in a hilltop monastery called Engon. Freshly disgusted, he left as soon as he had a glance at the young Panchen Lama in a procession. One of the most tragic figures of twentieth-century Tibetan history, this Panchen Lama was later to be manipulated by the British and the Chinese into an unwanted rivalry with the Dalai Lama. He and Kawaguchi were later to develop a close friendship spanning many years, as the Japanese monk too became involved in the strained relationship between Shigatse and Lhasa.

Following his hurried departure from Shigatse, Kawaguchi's next disappointment proved to be the great grammarian of Engon, who did not even seem to know the difference between Tibetan and Sanskrit grammar. In his frustration, Kawaguchi never seemed to consider the possibility that he was making such a bad impression that these teachers along the way were having a little fun with him. Anyone who slandered the great saints of Tibetan Buddhism and behaved disrespectfully towards high lamas could hardly expect just to walk into a monastery and demand instruction, and it is very odd that a man who showed such patience with the physical aspect of his travels should be so impatient intellectually.

He was just about to give us another startling example of this sort of inconsistency, for now, having hurried through Sakya and Shigatse, just on the threshold of Lhasa, he inexplicably stopped. He was within a week's walk of the holy city, in good health and well fed, so except that it was now January, and very cold, there is no obvious reason for this halt.

Perhaps it shows just how much at home he felt. Though he had been robbed and lost his money and possessions time and time again, he had been able to recover his funds through offering priestly services, and was now as well off as he had been on his entire trip. The closer he got to Lhasa, the less suspicion he encountered and the more demand he found for his services. It was as if anyone this close to the capital was beyond suspicion.

First he stopped for five days at New Year at a small village. This

was New Year by the Western calendar, as it had been celebrated in Japan since the Meiji Restoration, rather than by the old Lunar calendar, so no one in Tibet would have any idea that it was a special day. Kawaguchi always made a point of performing a secret ceremony on this day, and these ceremonies are interesting because they show that he, no less than Nomi, was a captive of the idea that Buddhism and Japanese nationalism were somehow related. 'As Buddhism teaches us it is our duty to pray for the health of the sovereign . . . on New Year's Day . . . and for the welfare of the Imperial Family' (Kawaguchi, 1979, p. 260). He was also in the habit of praying 'for the greater prosperity and glory of the Empire of Japan'. That two men travelling specifically in search of the original scriptures uncorrupted by either Chinese or Japanese influences could be so susceptible to these ideas shows how pervasive they must have been.

In another village, called Mani Lhakhang, he administered first aid to a child who had been so ill that when he recovered it was accounted a miraculous raising of the dead. Offered shelter with the local squire over the winter months, he decided to accept, and from January until mid-March he read the scriptures and frolicked in the snow with the village children, including the one whose life he had saved.

When the time came to leave his comfortable surroundings and strike out for the capital, Kawaguchi first climbed to the Yamdruk Tso, the beautiful and strangely shaped 'Turquoise Lake' at about fifteen thousand feet.<sup>1</sup> Here he took up with a jocular soldier from the Nepali Legation in Lhasa who was walking back and forth between Nepal and Tibet trying to decide whom he missed more, his mother in Nepal or his girlfriend in Lhasa. Kawaguchi thoroughly enjoyed his company, and one is uncomfortably reminded of the Nepalese who ended Nomi's first trip in Batang.

After a walk of six days (he was slowed down by sore feet, for the winter of indoor living had caused him to go soft) he entered the holy city on 21 March 1901, just a month after Nomi had written his final letter to Professor Nanjo. Going straight to the Jokhang, Tibetan Buddhism's most revered temple, he offered thanks in front of the image said to have been carved during the lifetime

of the Buddha, which had come to Tibet thirteen hundred years before via China with the Chinese bride of King Srontsan Gampo. He tried to find a friend from Darjeeling, but when he went to his father's mansion he was informed that he had gone mad. Deciding that a madman who knew his secret was the last thing he needed at this point, he walked the four miles northwest to Sera, the second-largest monastery in Tibet, which then had over five thousand monks, and gained temporary admission to one of the colleges.

Kawaguchi was to stay fourteen months in Sera and Lhasa. While he was at Sera, in addition to studying, passing examinations, and tracking down rare manuscripts, he again began practising medicine, excelling in setting the broken bones of Sera's famous 'warrior monks'. These young men were more proficient at martial arts than they were at studying, chanting and praying, and supported themselves by performing menial tasks or hiring themselves out as bodyguards. They would form the first line of defence were the monastery to be attacked, and even in times of peace they sometimes engaged in pitched battles with their counterparts from Sera's rival monastery, Drepung. Since a favourite sport was duelling over the favours of young boys, there was plenty of work for a doctor, especially one who would treat them for free. Though Kawaguchi was often severely critical of what he saw as greed and hypocrisy among high lamas, he was almost completely uncritical of these simple men who knew little of the religion they professed and fought over young boys.

So well known did his work among the warrior priests become that word of it reached the thirteenth Dalai Lama, and the 'Sera Amchi' ('Doctor of Sera') was summoned to a private audience at the Norbu Lingka summer palace. This was a worrying moment. In spite of his professed disregard for most Tibetan lamas and the incarnation system in general ('an incarnation of all vices and corruptions'), Kawaguchi always held Tibet's spiritual and temporal leader in the highest respect, and he did not like deceiving him. He was also worried that a man who spoke Chinese and was supposed to be possessed of unusual spiritual powers would see through him. Had that happened, he was determined to admit his identity and throw himself on the Dalai Lama's mercy.

Though this was the first ever meeting between a Dalai Lama and

a Japanese, there would be many more during the next twenty years – not only in Tibet, but in China and India as well. Thubten Gyatso, the thirteenth Dalai Lama, was only twenty-six at this time, but even that was comparatively old for a Dalai Lama. Using a combination of cunning and loyal cooks, he had managed to avoid the early death suffered by most of his predecessors since the seventh. His stewardship was to see one of the most difficult and dangerous times for Tibet and its people, and would be crowned by nearly forty years of independence.

But though Kawaguchi survived this meeting, he had now drawn a good deal of unwanted attention to himself. His book-collecting activities were unusual enough to be remarked upon, and his meeting with the Dalai Lama made him a centre of attention. Above all, his continuing success as a doctor left him with very little time to study. When an aristocratic friend, a monk and ex-Minister of Finance who had been forced out of office owing to his excessive honesty, offered him a room in Lhasa, he was happy to accept.

The two men became acquainted when Kawaguchi treated a nun who turned out to be the man's mistress. Typically, Kawaguchi thought highly of him in spite of his 'ill-famed deeds of love' (Kawaguchi, 1979, p. 338). As with Alchu Tulku and his wife, he would preach to this elderly couple (they were now both in their sixties), and 'they often repented with tears of the folly they had committed with each other when young' (ibid., p. 333). Yet they made such a charming couple that he could not help but sympathize with them in spite of behaviour that brought 'shame on Buddhism' (ibid., p. 332).

The ex-Minister introduced him to his half brother, the Ganden Tri Rimpoché, traditionally one of the most learned men in Tibet, and one of the few non-incarnate lamas to be honoured with the title 'Rimpoché'. Kawaguchi indicates that the Tri Rimpoché seems to have seen through his disguise, but instead of turning him in, he replied favourably to his request for instruction. Of all the Tibetans Kawaguchi met during his years in Nepal and Tibet, he had the most respect for this venerable figure, who would be left in charge of the country by the Dalai Lama during his exile in China from 1904 to 1909.

Altogether, Kawaguchi had a wonderful and productive time in Lhasa. He studied both at Sera and privately with one of the most



learned lamas in the land, lived with a noble family in Lhasa, listened to gossip both high and low, collected many of the books he was after, met many people, and made many friends. Perhaps he listened to a little too much gossip, for his extensive report on the activities of the Buriat Mongolian lama Aguaung Dorje ('Dorjieff') has often been cited as proof that he was spying for the British.

Dorjieff was an extremely shadowy and sinister figure from the British point of view, but one might reasonably have expected Kawaguchi to look on him with more sympathy. The Buriat Mongols lived in Russian territory north of Outer Mongolia. St Petersburg had the good sense not to molest or persecute this Buddhist minority in any way, and was rewarded with complete loyalty. Dorjieff was probably the greatest Buriat scholar. He had lived and studied in Lhasa for many years, and had even become one of the Dalai Lama's tutors. While Kawaguchi was in Lhasa he was a trusted adviser to the Dalai Lama and was promoting Russian interests in all sorts of ways, though it is unlikely that he was preparing Tibet for Russian occupation, as the British believed. It was essentially the interests of Central Asian Buddhists he had at heart, and he hoped to create a theocratic empire of Mongolians and Tibetans headed by the Dalai Lama, but under the protection of the Tsar.

While it is true that it was largely on Dorjieff's account that the British invaded Tibet in 1904, there is really no evidence to suggest that information from Kawaguchi had anything to do with this decision. It is more likely that Kawaguchi was simply doing a little amateur undercover work that he hoped might be noticed by Tokyo, for ever since the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-5), Japanese and Russian interests in the Far East had been on a collision course. His inability to see any virtue in Dorjieff's activities is one more proof of the pervasiveness of Japanese nationalism at the time.

Kawaguchi was undoubtedly the first to observe the unintentional effect that Japanese policy had on Tibetan awareness. Though the Chinese had claimed a form of sovereignty over Tibet for many years, whatever practical value this claim might have had was now long gone, and it was certainly not accepted by most Tibetans. But while the Tibetans considered Chinese claims as at most an irritant, and regarded the Chinese officials

called *Ambans* as ambassadors while the Chinese thought of them as governors, it had always been thought that the Chinese were too strong militarily to defy openly. But when word reached Lhasa that an obscure Buddhist island nation had humbled mighty China militarily, Chinese prestige plummeted. Kawaguchi once asked a government official what he thought of a Chinese Imperial decree, and was told that Tibet 'was not obliged to obey an order which the Chinese Emperor issued at his own pleasure'. His conclusion on the relationship between Tibet and China was that 'the Tibetans are utterly indifferent to most of the decrees coming from China, and treat them like so many gamblers' oaths' (Kawaguchi, 1979, pp. 520-1).

In one respect only was Kawaguchi's trip a failure. More than anything else he wanted to come clean about his identity. He had been given the signal honour of being received by the Dalai Lama, whom he deeply respected, and he felt that he owed it to him, and to his friends (as well as to his countrymen in Japan), to let them know who he really was.

In fact, his story was being whispered all over Lhasa. There were certainly several merchants who knew him from Darjeeling, including one named Tsa Rongba who, along with his wife, was to suffer considerably for having been associated with him. Tsa Rongba in turn made the mistake of telling another merchant who had just returned from an official trading trip to China, where he had been impressed by the chivalrous behaviour of Japanese troops during the Boxer Rebellion. Though the merchant swore himself to secrecy, he was later to tell no less a person than the Dalai Lama's brother. This was a serious miscalculation. The merchant had expected to be rewarded with a monopoly on what he saw as the lucrative trade between Tibet and Japan, but to the Dalai Lama's brother the Japanese were no better than the British or the Chinese.

Then the same young nobleman whom Kawaguchi had tried to find on his first day in Lhasa – the one who had gone mad – resurfaced and attempted to blackmail him. The Ganden Tri Rimpoché, of course, had already indicated that he knew something of his secret, and eventually Kawaguchi even told the

ex-Minister who he was; but when he mentioned that he had written a letter to the Dalai Lama admitting everything, his friends were horrified. It is in fact more than probable that the Dalai Lama had guessed something about the 'Doctor of Sera', but the forces of conservatism were very strong in the country. The Dalai Lama was still very young, and though he might have been curious about the outside world, he was not yet such an absolute ruler that he could automatically have his way over a matter so delicate as foreign intruders.<sup>2</sup>

Matters were coming to a head. There was talk of making the Sera Amchi one of the Dalai Lama's official doctors – a move that Kawaguchi felt must be resisted at all costs, for the higher he was placed, the harsher was likely to be his punishment when he was inevitably found out. Unsure of what to do, worried about getting his friends into the sort of trouble that had been the lot of those who had helped Chandra Das (and none too pleased about the prospect of Tibetan prison and torture for himself), he again resorted to the mystical. He first tried *danjikan sanmai*, and the answer he got was that it would be to everyone's benefit if he quietly left the country. Then he went to his tutor, the Ganden Tri Rimpoché, and put the question to him in veiled terms, asking if some patients would get better if he went on pilgrimage. The lama said they would. Finally, a mysterious voice came to him in one of his favourite spots, the debating garden at Sera, telling him to leave. Without delivering the letter he had written to the Dalai Lama, he slipped quietly away while Lhasa was astir with the investiture of the Panchen Lama, and within a month he was back in Darjeeling.

But while the trip to India had none of the physical difficulties of Kawaguchi's earlier journeys, it is worth a quick look because he was the first outsider to describe the difficulties of passing through the Chumbi Valley and what he calls its 'challenge gates', a system as awkward as any ever devised for entering or leaving a country. Later, after the treaty following the Younghusband Expedition, and the final expulsion of the Chinese, this valley would become one of the few places in Tibet reasonably open to the outside world, but for the moment all was mystery.

If it was almost impossible to sneak into Tibet, it was not much easier getting out. Part of the problem was that the Chinese, whose

presence was hardly noticeable in most of the country, made an attempt to assert their authority here by garrisoning the frontier with soldiers and bureaucrats. This made it necessary for travellers to produce documents in both Chinese and Tibetan. The system, in fact, accomplished exactly what it set out to do: which was to discourage any travellers but those on essential business or trading missions.

There were five separate checkpoints where bribery and corruption were so common that they virtually amounted to government policy, and once the traveller reached the final one he had to double back again to the third. At Phari, a cold and dirty town huddled at the base of a fortress, the last settlement on the plateau before descending into the valley, a witness had to be produced who would swear (for a suitable fee, of course) that you were going to India on business for a short time, and would be coming back. Delays of up to a week were common here while a 'witness' was found and the local officials decided whether it was worth their while to tend to business. The next checkpoint, twenty miles on at Chumbi Samba, and the third, at Pimbithang, were mere formalities the first time around, but another document was needed from the fourth, at Tomo Rinchen Gang. The strictest examination was at the border town of Yatung, but this was only the beginning. Provided everything was in order and the local official had been properly bribed, you would now get a note to take back to the fourth gate. There the paper would be countersigned and the traveller sent back with yet more papers to the third gate, where he was supposed to pick up a document in Chinese. Only then could he return to Yatung where, if all went well, he would finally be authorized to leave the country. The whole process took a minimum of a week to ten days, even for officials on pressing government business. For others it could take weeks, or even months.

When Kawaguchi arrived at Phari he and his engaging porter, named Tenba, had been travelling together for some weeks. They had developed a routine whereby Tenba always secured them good lodgings either by hinting that his master was the famous 'Doctor of Sera' on an urgent mission for the Dalai Lama, or by throwing all truth to the winds and saying he was an important incarnation in disguise. His master's attempts at objecting only made Tenba's

story more convincing, and the act they put on together at the border posts was to get them through in record time.

They used every ruse possible. At times they strongly hinted that they were on a mission concerning the health of the Dalai Lama, and they got around a truculent but henpecked Chinese official when Kawaguchi treated his Tibetan wife for hysteria and got her on his side. Tenba did most of the legwork, doubling back while Kawaguchi sat in Yatung and waited. In the end he made it through the checkpoints in the unheard of time of three days, and on 15 July 1902, just a little over two years after entering Tibet, he crossed the Jelap La into India.

After waiting for his extensive baggage of holy texts to catch up in Kalimpong, and paying off Tenba with the last of his money, he continued to Darjeeling and Das's Lhasa Villa. His former teacher had assumed that he was long dead, and soon he very nearly was, as he almost immediately came down with his first serious illness in three years: a virulent form of malaria he had picked up in the Teesta Valley between Kalimpong and Darjeeling. It was a month before he had any real energy, and some time during this month (quite possibly while he was delirious), his brains were picked by his old friend.

No one knows quite what he said, or what was passed on to Calcutta by Das, but judging by what was later published in his book, there was probably a good deal about Dorjieff and a caravan load of Russian arms he supposedly inspected. Since Das was one of the most important agents working for the British, it is a logical enough assumption that some of the information that led to the Younghusband Expedition came from Kawaguchi through him. But in the end, Kawaguchi knew little more than could be learned from the St Petersburg newspapers, and no real evidence has ever come to light that he was working either directly or indirectly for the British, although it is true that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had just been signed.

While the Japanese monk was laid up, his friends back in Lhasa were not faring at all well. When it had come out that the 'Doctor of Sera' was not who he claimed to be, the official he had duped at Yatung had cooked up a fantastic story about him really being an Englishman and the brother of a high official in the Indian government who had used magical powers to escape. The resulting

anger rebounded on those who had helped him, or even known him, in Lhasa. Tsa Rongba and his wife, his elderly teacher from Sera, and the merchant who had revealed his secret to the Dalai Lama's brother were all imprisoned and said to be undergoing torture.

Humanity and compassion are not qualities we normally associate with explorers, which is perhaps one reason Kawaguchi never liked being referred to as one. Now that he had completed his journey safely, there was nothing for him to do but go home and collect his laurels, but he showed himself to be more in the tradition of Livingstone than Stanley when his conscience would not allow him to do this while others suffered for his sake. This had been one of his greatest worries since he had heard of the execution of Das's teacher, and now all his precautions had come to nothing.

His first impulse was to go straight back to Tibet and try to help them somehow, but he was so well known that he would have been arrested in Yatung and would have been no use to anyone. Besides, he had just been very ill and lacked the stamina for a trip to Tibet. He considered going to Peking and petitioning the Chinese emperor, but in spite of China's claim to sovereignty in Tibet, as he put it, 'The Tibetans listen to Chinese advice when it is acceptable, but any order that is distasteful to them is utterly disregarded' (Kawaguchi, 1979, p. 519).

In the end he decided to go back to Nepal, and to try to persuade the government there to intercede on behalf of his friends. Largely because of its feared Ghorkha troops, Nepal was regarded in Lhasa with a good deal more respect than was China, whose prestige, as we have seen, had nosedived since the Sino-Japanese War. In hopes of getting an introduction to the Maharaja of Nepal he planned to go first to Delhi, where an official Japanese delegation, under a Lieutenant General Oku, was in attendance at the Durbar in honour of the coronation of Edward VII.

In Calcutta, and later on his way to Delhi, by chance Kawaguchi met a number of Japanese Buddhists, some of whom he knew from the Tetsugakukan, all of whom tried to dissuade him from putting himself into further danger or difficulty by travelling to Nepal. This all came to a head at the Dak Bungalow in Bodh Gaya, where Kawaguchi and his friends had gone to visit Count Otani Kozui,

the aristocratic young heir to the abbacy of the Nishi Honganji. This is our first look at the man who was to become so instrumental in Japanese–Tibetan relations, and he does not come off very well. While praising Kawaguchi's courage, he urged him to think only of his personal position and not to expose himself to useless danger. Somehow, even right here at the spot where the Buddha had received Enlightenment, the element of compassion which is so central to the Buddhist way of life had passed by the future abbot of one of Japan's largest and most influential sects. One wonders if it was Kawaguchi's long exposure to Tibetan Buddhism, no matter how much he might deride its superstitions, which brought about his own determination in this situation.

The others kept him up all night, and would not let him rest until a compromise had been reached. In the end Kawaguchi agreed that if he could persuade General Oku to forward his letter directly to the Nepalese government, he would forgo his own trip. He should have known better – or perhaps he did. These would be the first official Japanese he had dealt with since Consul Fujita in Singapore five years earlier, and the results were to be even less satisfactory.

When he presented himself at the official Japanese tents, the military officers were horrified by his bearded figure. To them he looked more like a local beggar than a member of the most forward-looking race in Asia. He was given a lecture, a cup of tea and some stale bread (he had not eaten for two days), and thrown out on his ear. Remarkably, even after this humiliation, he did not give up. Back in Calcutta, he somehow obtained an introduction to the Rana Prime Minister of Nepal, sneaked back into the country, and made a thorough nuisance of himself until he was presented to the Prime Minister and the king who were, by a stroke of luck, hunting near the border. Allowed to proceed to Kathmandu on the excuse that he was a religious mendicant hoping to acquire any Sanskrit Buddhist texts that might be in Nepal, he was reunited with his old friend the Chiniya Lama.

The Nepalese were not entirely sure what to make of this determined and irritating guest. Was he a beggar, a spy, a sincere holy man, a lunatic? He waited until he was in Kathmandu before revealing the real purpose of his trip, on the logical assumption that the further he was from the border, the less likely they were simply

to deport him. Eventually he managed to convince the Prime Minister of his sincerity, though not without repeated grillings about the real purpose of his trip and who had funded him. He was simply not believed when he claimed to have supported himself for six years. But since the Nepalese government was always eager for news of its insular neighbour, and particularly what the Russians might be up to there, his interrogators pumped him for all he was worth.

Perhaps Kawaguchi's experiences with his countrymen at Bodh Gaya and Delhi had already given him a hint of what to expect at home, for while he was in Nepal, he already began laying plans for his return. Since it was difficult to collect all the Sanskrit texts he wanted right away, he offered to come back in a year or two, bringing with him a set of Japanese scriptures in trade. The high-caste Hindu rulers of Nepal must have been bemused by all this, but after all, they ruled a large minority of Buddhists who lived peacefully with their Hindu neighbours.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, with his letter to the Dalai Lama in the hands of the Nepalese, who promised to forward it, there was nothing more for Kawaguchi to do, and it was time to go home. Taking a ship from Bombay, he arrived back in Kobe just a month short of six years since his original departure.

Japan is probably one of the most difficult countries in the world to return to, and Kawaguchi used all his talents for offending people to make it even worse. Though he was at first greeted as a hero, he quickly proceeded to pile error on to error with a public that was sceptical anyway.

Soon it became obvious that a lot of people simply did not believe his stories. First of all there was his travel account, serialized in a hundred and fifty-five parts in two newspapers. The problem was that he did not write this himself, but let journalists write it from a marathon series of interviews. In 1909 this would be published in translation as *Three Years in Tibet* (he included the year in culturally Tibetan Tsarang), though it never seems to have undergone any rigorous editing.

The book is thoroughly enjoyable on one level as a revealing self-portrait of a bungling, likable, but often fearfully bigoted bag



of contradictions. A psychologist would have a wonderful time pulling apart the celibate who dwelt at length on his love affairs; the devout scholar monk who would come to blows rather than come to terms with another branch of his own religion; the madcap adventurer who struck up easy friendships with beggars, smugglers, and lecherous monks, but was really happy only when he was engaged in solitary study; the sensitive linguist who professed to despise the very people he got along with best.

But allowing the account to be written by journalists who did not really know what they were talking about was to cause untold difficulties. As soon as the articles began appearing there was an outcry from the Tokyo Geographical Society, and Kawaguchi was openly called a fraud. They came up with twenty-five specific points that proved he had not been to Tibet at all. Furthermore, they claimed to be backed up by someone who *had* been there. This turned out to be Narita Yasuteru, whom we last saw retreating from Tatsienlu.

Narita had in fact succeeded in reaching Lhasa on his third attempt on 8 December 1901, nine months after Kawaguchi. He was particularly chagrined at the attention Kawaguchi was getting, since he had believed himself to be the first Japanese to reach the Holy City.

Compared to Kawaguchi's adventures, Narita's journey is little more than a footnote. After his initial failure from Tatsienlu, he had again been defeated by the same route. Finally he had made it via Darjeeling disguised as a Chinese merchant. He stayed only two weeks in Lhasa, and though he succeeded in meeting the Dalai Lama's Chinese translator, he was unsuccessful in arranging an audience with the Dalai Lama himself. He seems to have been equally unsuccessful in his primary task of gathering information on British and Russian intrigues in Lhasa, and though he was said to have taken the first photographs of the Tibetan capital, those published were all taken around Darjeeling and Kalimpong. He left for unknown reasons on 25 December.<sup>4</sup>

Since he had been on a secret mission for the Foreign Ministry, he was anxious not to let his name be used in public, which must have appeared cowardly to Kawaguchi and his supporters. Narita wrote to Das under an assumed name with a list of doubts, but the latter came out strongly in favour of Kawaguchi (though he

did add that the monk's 'poetic turn of mind' led his imagination to run away with him).

Before Das's answer had arrived, Kawaguchi was forced into a public debate with the Geographical Society. He won easily, but this was hardly the returning hero's welcome he could have hoped for. He had been disappointed in not being recognized as an international Buddhist hero by the Tibetans, but at least he had been prepared for their constant suspicion, much as he might have wanted to regard them as Buddhist brothers. On returning home he could have expected a little more than to have his experiences among the Tibetans ridiculed and discredited.

Worse was to come, as his lectures stirred up trouble as well. Supposedly Buddhist Japanese audiences laughed at the idea of incarnate lamas, and accused Kawaguchi of making it all up. Heads of monasteries and other important religious leaders in Tibet, from the Dalai Lama right down through minor figures like Kawaguchi's friend Alchu Tulku, are chosen as children, believed to be the reincarnations of their predecessors – a concept that should not have been difficult for Japanese Buddhists to grasp. A tabloid newspaper embarked on a campaign of slander against him, accusing him of everything from being a charlatan to cavorting with a Shimbashi *geisha*. All in all, he must have been glad that he had already laid the groundwork for his return to Nepal.

When Kawaguchi came back to Japan, Nomi's family had still heard nothing of him. His wife, Shizuko, was beginning to have dreams of him as a convict, returning home dispirited and carried on a stretcher. In 1904 she went to Tokyo alone (a fairly bold thing for a woman of the time to do), and called on Nanjo Bunyu. Kawaguchi, preparing for his second journey, was also an occasional visitor to the professor's house. After obtaining Nanjo's permission, Shizuko asked Kawaguchi to look for information on her husband's fate, and gave him her photograph of him.

Before he left again, two events took place on the world stage that were to affect his plans, but were completely out of his control. The first was the Russo-Japanese War, which began in February 1904. There was probably no real reason for a war at this point besides muscle-flexing on the Japanese side and overconfidence from the Russians who were moving in on territory the Japanese felt they had won in the First Sino-Japanese War. Whatever

issues existed were all in Manchuria and Korea, and whatever the outcome, the Koreans and Manchurians would be the losers. However, the war was immensely popular in Japan, and the decisive defeat of an established European power in eighteen months of hard fighting was a matter for great national pride, extending to some of the Japanese Buddhist sects. We shall also see later that Russia's poor showing would lead to a Tibetan re-evaluation of what Russia's part in their own affairs should be.

The second event of importance was a full-scale British invasion of Tibet under Colonel Francis Younghusband that has come down to us – rather misleadingly – as the Younghusband 'Expedition'. For years there had been minor border disputes, frustration on the British side that the Tibetans would not trade with them, and now an overreaction to suspicions that the Russians were becoming influential. The two events were probably not directly connected, in spite of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, although that treaty did imply that the British would let the Japanese alone in Korea while the Japanese did the same with the British in Tibet.

The courageous but outgunned Tibetans were defeated again and again (several times only to reoccupy the uncomfortable positions from which they had been ejected), and Younghusband entered Lhasa in August 1904. The Holy City had fallen, and now, for the first time, Europeans freely walked its streets and visited its shrines. But the Dalai Lama was gone, having left Kawaguchi's former tutor, the Ganden Tri Rimpoché, in charge. It is traditional for the Dalai Lama to get himself out of harm's way in the face of an invader, for whoever is in possession of the Dalai Lama is in possession of the soul of Tibet. This simple tactic has left more than one invader empty-handed.

The invasion was to have several consequences of importance both to Japanese-Tibetan relations and to Kawaguchi. The Dalai Lama would spend the next six years in Mongolia and China, and during that time he would have the opportunity to get to know a number of Japanese. Of more immediate importance to Kawaguchi was that Younghusband made a point of releasing any prisoners who had been arrested for assisting foreigners. These included not only his Sera tutor but two others imprisoned for assisting Das more than twenty years earlier. The ex-Minister had already been

released to assist his half-brother, the Tri Rimpoché, to negotiate with the British.

The Russo–Japanese War did Kawaguchi little good. This time he was hoping to leave with a decent amount of money, but the war made money hard to come by. Yet he was not willing to delay his trip because of it, since it would make him look more like the spy that some suspected him of being.

In October 1904, when Younghusband had left Lhasa with his treaty and the Russo–Japanese War was at its height, Kawaguchi again boarded a ship from Kobe to Calcutta. With him he had thirty crates of luggage containing everything from the scriptures promised to the Prime Minister of Nepal to a mechanical pump and a couple of samurai swords. After some delay in Calcutta, where he became friends with the poet Rabindranath Tagore and stayed as the guest of his family, he obtained permission to go back to Nepal. There he stayed again with the Chiniya Lama and collected so many manuscripts that a law was later passed forbidding their further export.

If Kawaguchi had hoped for a quick return to Tibet, he was to be disappointed. He was too well known and still rather controversial, and since the Younghusband Expedition the British exerted far more control over who went into Tibet. He was not finished yet, but it would be a long time before he was able to return.

In spite of the sometimes spectacular flaws in his book, Kawaguchi was probably the first outsider to present the world with a picture of the Tibetans as real people. Previous travellers had tended to look at the population of the country they were so anxious to travel in as simply dirty and bigoted impediments to their aims. Kawaguchi's survival depended on him relating to people from all walks of life, and from him we get the first detailed look at what went on in tents and monasteries.

# Chapter Three

## A Mongolian Lama of Great Learning and Attainments

Of all the Japanese to go to Tibet, Teramoto Enga spent the least time there (with the exception of Narita) but probably expended the most energy, and had the greatest long-term effect. During the ten years between 1899 and 1909 he was constantly on the move. We are likely to find him anywhere from Western Szechwan to Amdo, from Lhasa to Wu Tai Shan. He studied Tibetan and Mongolian in Peking and Kumbum under a high Mongolian lama named the Achia Khutughtu, was instrumental in a little-known but significant event during the Boxer Rebellion, and after his almost ceremonial three-month trip through U-Tsang he was hosted by both Frederick O'Connor in Gyantse and Charles Bell in Chumbi, and even met Lord Curzon in Simla.

But this was only the beginning. After a quick trip back to Japan he returned to the thick of things: meeting the Dalai Lama in exile at Kumbum, arranging for him to meet Japanese religious leaders at Wu Tai Shan, helping to organize his visit to Peking (as well as an abortive trip to Japan), advising him on important issues, and laying the groundwork for future relations between the two countries. Then just at the height of his career, when he was given the freedom of Tibet by its leader, for some reason he seemed to burn out. Returning to Japan when he was still under the age of forty, he spent the rest of his life teaching, and never did any serious travelling again. Nor, according to his son, was he ever particularly interested in talking about his Tibetan adventures. Possibly as a

result, his diary was never properly edited before it was published, and is one of those frustrating documents that is burdened with detail, but at the same time short on solid information.

Besides the fact that he was also a Buddhist priest, Teramoto Enga had few similarities with either Nomi or Kawaguchi. Little is known about his early life except that he cut off his studies at the Buddhist Otani University in Kyoto in order to go on his travels. While both Nomi and Kawaguchi had been driven principally by religious motives, into which a bit of politics inevitably intruded, Teramoto's motives combined religion and politics for the first time in a way that was soon to become familiar in Japanese relations with Tibet.

His original motivation was a desire to help China. Essentially, he was a Buddhist missionary who lamented the sorry state of Buddhism in that country, and since Japan had gained so much from China in the past, he felt it was his duty to help bring about a Buddhist reformation there. Thinking along these lines could not help but take him back to basics through Mongolia and Tibet, since he also studied for a time under Nanjo Bunyu, and he began studying Mongolian and Tibetan as soon as he arrived in Peking.

The political corollary of his Buddhist internationalism was something called the Okuma Doctrine, an idea which was to permeate Japanese thinking on foreign affairs right up through World War II. This doctrine was not actually set out coherently until 1898, the year Teramoto left for China, but something of its nature must have been discussed since before the First Sino-Japanese War. It stated that Japan, as a country which combined the best of both East and West, should shoulder the responsibility for saving other Asian nations – particularly China, from which it had gained so much in the past – from the grasping West, while helping them to modernize their own traditional cultures. At its best this doctrine might have led to a sort of benign paternalism, and it was the basis for the aid extended to Chinese revolutionaries such as Sun Yat-sen. At its worst, however, it was no more than a justification for imperialist aggression and naked racial superiority, and it was unfortunately in this way that it would most commonly manifest itself over the next half-century.

Teramoto was twenty-seven in 1898, when he suddenly left for China. In contrast with both Nomi and Kawaguchi, he received

encouragement and help from home. His father contributed ¥400 to his studies abroad, and told him to do whatever he thought was best without worrying about the family. This is all the more remarkable considering that Teramoto, like Kawaguchi, was the eldest son.

He seems to have done his homework, and in August, in Peking, he went straight to the Yung-ko-hung, or Yellow Temple, where he began to study Mongolian and Chinese, Tibetan Buddhism and divination. The Yung-ko-hung was originally built for the visit of the fifth Dalai Lama in 1653, and over the years it had become the family temple of the ruling Manchus, who were followers of Tibetan Buddhism. The temple was staffed by Tibetan and Mongolian priests, and was a little island of the Central Asian faith here in Peking. It was presided over by a high Mongolian lama from Kumbum called the Achia Khutughtu (*khutughtu* is the Mongolian equivalent of the Tibetan *tulku*, the title that indicates an incarnate lama), and Teramoto was fortunate enough to be personally tutored by him in some subjects. This was an important friend for him to make. The Achia Khutughtu was not only a man of consequence in Peking, but as abbot of one of the main temples at Kumbum he was acknowledged as a spiritual leader by tribes from Litang to Kokonor. Their friendship was to last many years, but it was not always to be a happy one.

Teramoto's biggest problem in his quest to aid China was that he quickly discovered that he did not like the Chinese very much. Chinese food was too disgusting to eat. The dirt was appalling. In comparisons with the Japanese the Chinese always came out badly. They did not clean their houses at New Year the way the Japanese did, for example, because they did not understand the concept of 'dirtiness'. Worse still, they did not understand the tie between the Emperor and his subjects the way the Japanese did, and this led them to be so unprincipled that they were motivated only by profit, and were easily led by anyone who could help them to make money.

It is difficult to spend your life working for the benefit of a despised people, and Teramoto seems to have rather quickly shifted his loyalties to Mongolia and Tibet, for now we find him in a tremendous hurry, perhaps to escape from the unprincipled Chinese. In March 1899, after only seven months of his studies,

when his language skills could hardly have been adequate, he left for Tatsienlu. He had with him a confidential letter intended for the Dalai Lama which he had received from the main temple of his sect, the Higashi Honganji.

When the head of the Japanese Legation in Peking advised him to go and meet Nomi in Tatsienlu, it seemed like the perfect chance to realize his ambition of going to Tibet, and obviously he felt that the opportunity was too good to give up. But almost as soon as he was on his way he demonstrated that while he might be a formidable scholar and a skilful diplomat, as a traveller he left much to be desired. His troubles began before he got anywhere near Tatsienlu. From Chungking he was given a 'military escort' for the long walk to Chengdu: two soldiers armed with a single umbrella between them. The only indication that they were not beggars or bandits was a red tassel at the top of their conical hats. These guards were so much trouble that Teramoto was constantly trying to get rid of them, but as soon as he succeeded in divesting himself of one, his place would be taken along the way by another. Eventually he wound up with two thugs who bullied the local populace, and took tea and food – for them and himself – from teashops along the way without paying. Teramoto noted with dismay the lethargy with which the locals accepted all this, and his contempt for the Chinese was only increased. When he arrived in Chengdu and hired porters for the journey to Tatsienlu he paid them in advance, but they kept demanding opium money, and he later discovered that somewhere along the way they had burgled him. Altogether he presents us with the picture of a traveller who was simply not in command of his situation – and who showed no indication of being able to take command – long before the real difficulties of his journey began.

But at the same time he gave an inkling of where his real talents lay in his ability to get along with diplomats and officials. Japanese consular officers were universally fond of Teramoto, and always gave him elaborate farewell parties. Chinese officials also bent over backwards to at least appear helpful, which is why he was always getting lumbered with 'military escorts'.

The story of this first journey has already been told in Chapter 1, and after its failure Teramoto showed that he was both more cautious and wiser than Nomi. While the latter stayed behind to



pile failure upon failure, seemingly learning little from each one, Teramoto went home to Japan to lick his wounds and plan for the future. While he was there he saw the political situation in China deteriorate into the Boxer Rebellion, and the foreign legations in Peking come under siege. This effectively put an end to any plans for an early second attempt on Tibet, but he could hardly have dreamt of the advantage he was to turn this conflict into, for both himself and his country. Because of his knowledge of Chinese, he was drafted into the army as an interpreter and sent back to Peking. He seems to have been happy enough to go, and was even given the privilege of studying Tibetan religious texts in addition to his duties.

The Boxer Rebellion marked the second time Japanese troops had seen action on the Asian mainland. It was a good little war for them. Not only did the Japanese fight well and effectively, but their conduct was remembered by all as being exceptionally chivalrous – a striking contrast to how they would later be remembered everywhere from Nanking to the River Kwai. Teramoto played his part in this, particularly when he found his old temple, the Yung-ko-hung, occupied by Russian troops and a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church. The eight hundred monks had simply been turned out on to the streets. Since the temple was in the district controlled by the Japanese, Teramoto was able to have the problem taken up by the Allied Military Council; the Russians were subsequently removed, and the temple was given back to the monks. He also had thirty tons of rice distributed to the inmates, who by this time had been reduced to beggary.

Because of these efforts of Teramoto's, Japan came to be thought of by Buddhists from Mongolia to Tibet as a defender of the faith. The stories found their way to distant Lhasa and planted the germ of a feeling that 'Japan', whatever and wherever it was, might someday be a useful friend.

Teramoto was also involved in trying to get the Imperial Family back to Peking for negotiations after the fighting. Though his efforts were not entirely successful, they gave him an opportunity to begin making contacts with the wealthy and powerful, and even with royalty.

At the conclusion of the Boxer Rebellion, Teramoto returned to a favourite project. If he could not get to Tibet just yet, at

least he might be able to get some Tibetan and Mongolian lamas invited to Japan. In the summer of 1901 this trip came off as a party of eight, led by the Achia Khutughtu, embarked for Japan; the first such group ever to visit Japan. In Kyoto they were met by representatives of the Higashi Honganji, and in Tokyo they were not only greeted by leading political figures but granted an audience with the Emperor Meiji. Whether or not in the end this visit was a good idea for the future of Japanese–Tibetan relations is open to question, as we shall soon see.

All this did not mean that Teramoto had abandoned his own ambitions for Tibet. Now that the political situation had stabilized and he had escorted the lamas to Japan, he immediately set about making fresh plans, but before these had even got off the ground a cholera epidemic drove him back to Japan in July 1902. Again, one can only wonder about his dedication to travel. Cholera in Peking could have been regarded as an excuse to go the other way and get closer to Tibet, but he may well have felt that he had hurried too much once already.

When he returned to China at the end of the year, he went straight to Labrang, a large monastery in a part of Kansu occupied by Tangut Tibetans. Then – hearing that his former tutor, the Achia Khutughtu, had returned to Kumbum, where he was abbot of one of the more important temples – he went to join him there in February 1903. Though his object was to continue on to Tibet, he would in fact remain at Kumbum for the better part of the next two years, doing precisely what Nomi should have done when he was turned back near Kokonor: learning everything possible and awaiting his chance.

Kumbum is regarded by the Mongolians as second only to Lhasa in holiness. It is built on the birthplace of the great reformer Tsong Khapa (1357–1419), who founded the reformed Gelupa sect. This is the newest of Tibetan Buddhism's four main sects,<sup>1</sup> and has the largest following. Both the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama are Gelupa monks, and nearly all Buddhists in Mongolia belong to this sect. The monastery, at an altitude of 7,500 feet, was home at the time to more than three thousand monks. Like many Tibetan monasteries, it resembled a small town. There would have been ample opportunity for a student of things Tibetan to occupy himself in its library and among its learned lamas. This was just as

well, since caravans from here across the harsh high-altitude plains to Lhasa left no more than two or three times a year. Teramoto was well known to many at Kumbum, so he made no attempt to disguise his identity, and even gave Japanese lessons to some of the monks. Unfortunately, this was probably not the best time to be Japanese in this part of the world.

While he was there, the same events that were overtaking Kawaguchi in Japan now overtook him: the launch of the Younghusband Expedition, followed quickly by the outbreak of the Russo–Japanese War. With Tibet being invaded and occupied it was hardly the best time to be thinking of a journey there, but the Russo–Japanese War probably had an even more immediate effect on Teramoto’s ambitions. It seems that the Achia Khutughtu had not been entirely won over by his 1901 visit to Japan. Whether this was because Japan simply seemed too powerful to be trusted, or whether something specific had happened to engender distrust in the Lama, it is difficult to say. But for some reason, as the Russo–Japanese War approached and then broke out, Teramoto notes in his diary that the Khutughtu turned more and more pro-Russian, and more against his old friend (though curiously, Teramoto was later to tell Charles Bell in Chumbi that the Russians were unsuccessful in trying to win him over). Perhaps it was simply a case of ‘the devil you know’. Mongolians were well acquainted with the Russians and Russian rule, since the Buriats lived within Russian frontiers. Some – such as Dorjieff, who was even now helping the Dalai Lama plan his escape from Lhasa and the advancing British – were fiercely loyal to St Petersburg. Many of the monks at Kumbum echoed the Achia Khutughtu’s sentiments, and the longer Teramoto stayed at Kumbum, the more uncomfortable his stay became.

Teramoto was to call this two-year sojourn at Kumbum a complete waste of time, but the notes he made in his diary were probably coloured by his frustration and personal unhappiness. It is undoubtedly true that he learned a great deal of Mongolian and Tibetan while he was there – enough to convince most Tibetans that he was (in the words of Frederick O’Connor, who met him later in Gyantse, where he was British Trade Agent) ‘a Mongolian Lama of great learning and attainments’ (L/PS/7/80/1345; 9 July). His only break during this time came when, hearing that the Dalai Lama had fled from Lhasa, he went with some monks

from Kumbum in search of him. Even though this search was unsuccessful it was good practice for the trip he was about to take, and it was a far more seasoned traveller who set out from Kumbum for Lhasa than the one who had set out from Tatsienlu seven years earlier.

Finally, in 1905, in the rather odd month of February, Teramoto took his chance to join up with a caravan of seventy camels, forty horses and seven tents bound for Lhasa. It was led by a man who took this route regularly, transporting workers and artisans back and forth. Knowing the route so well, he probably had the marauding tribes along the way paid off, for Teramoto makes no mention of trouble during the trip.

This long trek at high altitude through the northern plains is one of the world's most gruelling caravan routes, and later Japanese travellers were to describe its rigours in great detail. Teramoto, however, says little of the difficulties, except that even after all his years in Asia the fleas in his robes eventually became so unbearable that he did something Kawaguchi would never have dreamed of doing: he boiled his robes to kill them. To Kawaguchi, the vow against killing was so sacred that once, when he was nearly dying of thirst, he took the trouble to strain the rather lively water he found rather than destroy any of the living creatures it contained, and he would have found this flea massacre indefensible for a Buddhist. On the plus side, Teramoto – who, years before, had found even Chinese cuisine unbearable – became very fond of the nomad food: simple meals of roasted barley flour, salted and buttered tea, dried meat, and perhaps noodles. He also discovered a surprising treatment for shortness of breath due to the altitude: tobacco. Though he had never smoked before, he tried it while crossing a high pass and found that it stabilized his heartbeat. Again, the abstemious Kawaguchi would have been appalled.

Finally, after an uneventful trip, he reached Lhasa on the nineteenth of May. He put his success down to the protection of Chenrisig, Bodhisattva of Compassion, and the prayers of his parents. But now he was to do something totally inexplicable. Ever since 1898 this journey had been his motivating ambition, and during the previous two years he had put up with all sorts of

humiliations at pro-Russian Kumbum in hopes of its realization. But when he finally did get to the Holy City, he left after only a month.

As so often, Teramoto's diary is silent on this extraordinary behaviour. There is always the possibility that he worried about his disguise being penetrated if he stayed too long, but according to as reliable a witness as O'Connor, there was little chance of this. The closest he comes to an explanation in his diary is that he was invited to join both Sera and Drepung, and since he could not stay at both, and did not wish to offend, he decided on neither.

Somehow this is less than convincing. More probable is that he simply did not like living in disguise, and there was simply no one in Lhasa important enough for him to feel worth bothering with. It was the centres of power that Teramoto longed to be near, and perhaps the explanation that he gave to Charles Bell – that the Dalai Lama was about to go to Peking, that the Achia Khutughtu was likely to be his interpreter, and that he wanted to be there to get in on the act – came closest to the truth. In fact he spent more time in Shigatse than he did in Lhasa, but while the Panchen Lama was the second-greatest lama in Tibet, he was a spiritual rather than a political figure, and there is no evidence that they met.

The Lhasa he saw must have felt very different from the one seen by Kawaguchi, which had then been inviolate for centuries. Now an entire British army had come and gone, two of Kawaguchi's closest friends had been involved in the negotiations, and those who were still imprisoned had been released. But in some ways Lhasa was more insular than ever. According to the terms of the treaty, contact between the Tibetans and any foreign government besides China was forbidden without British consent. This was specifically aimed at Dorjjeff-type missions from Russia, but of course Teramoto's presence could have been interpreted as just this sort of mission from the Japanese.

But at this point Lhasa was still in some confusion, for as with many half-concluded colonial wars, it was by no means clear who had really won. The British had fought their way to Lhasa with little real difficulty, found no evidence (in spite of an arms caravan Kawaguchi claimed to have observed) of Russian involvement, forced on the Tibetans a treaty which was almost immediately

watered down in Whitehall, and gone – leaving the bemused Tibetans to wonder what it had all been about.

A few days after his arrival in the capital, Teramoto continued a Japanese tradition by witnessing the arrival of a caravan of nineteen camels accompanied by six Buriats and two men he thought were European Russians. Of the nineteen camels, ten to twelve carried long wooden boxes that he thought could only contain rifles. He questioned both the blue-eyed caravan leaders (who replied that they were Mongolians, but could not say what part of Mongolia they came from) and servants at the inn where the party stayed. The latter told him that the boxes were much too heavy to contain the normal sort of goods from Mongolia.

When he visited the Potala on one of the days when pilgrims would go for the blessing of the Ganden Tri Rimpoché (in the Dalai Lama's absence), he was told by one of the attendants, who mistook him for a Mongolian, that the Dalai Lama had gone to Mongolia to seek Russian assistance. This, in fact, was probably true, for he had fled in the company of his Buriat adviser Dorjieff. And here, for the second time, we have an example of Japanese policy indirectly, but powerfully, affecting the future of Tibet. For just as the Japanese defeat of China lowered Chinese prestige, the poor showing of the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War convinced the Dalai Lama that they would make less than ideal allies. It was probably only this that made the Younghusband Expedition conclusive.

After a mere five weeks in Shigatse, Teramoto continued on towards India. On his way he stopped at Gyantse, and here he sought out the British Trade Agent, Captain Francis O'Connor. One of the conditions of Younghusband's treaty was that the British would be allowed to place Trade Agents at Gyantse, Chumbi and, for some inexplicable reason, Gartok (which was almost deserted except for a two-week annual market) in western Tibet. Originally the Gyantse Trade Agent was to have had the right to travel to Lhasa, but this provision had been removed in London – undoubtedly much to O'Connor's frustration, for he spoke excellent Tibetan and had been one of the interpreters on the Younghusband Expedition.

Even without the right to visit Lhasa, however, the Gyantse post was initially attractive. It was the closest to the capital, about halfway

between Lhasa and Shigatse, and on a trade route where all the gossip and rumours would be available. Gyantse was the third-largest town in Tibet, and also one of the most pleasant, with a fine monastery spreading along a hillside at one end, and a spectacular hilltop fort which O'Connor had watched being captured during the march on Lhasa at the other. At the time of Teramoto's visit, the drawbacks had probably not yet begun to manifest themselves. There was in fact little trade – Shigatse would have been a better choice – and even less to do, since the Chinese representative did his best to block contacts with the Tibetans. Later, in a request for a pay rise, O'Connor was to complain about everything from the climate and lack of feminine company to the wild and treacherous people.

Just why Teramoto sought out the Trade Agent is uncertain. Possibly he just wanted to use the telegraph which had been established by Younghusband's engineers, for he sent two telegrams to the head of the Japanese Legation in Peking, and received answers to both, leading O'Connor to believe that he must be in the Legation's employ. But it must also be remembered that Japan and Britain were allies at this point against Russia, and Teramoto may have been anxious to impart his information about the caravan of Russian rifles.

O'Connor's motives are clearer. Since there was so little trade to be agent of, and since he had worked in military intelligence before taking up this post, it was natural for him to regard gathering information as one of his main tasks. Though he was living tantalizingly close to Lhasa he was not, of course, allowed to go there, and since foreigners would naturally notice different things from Tibetan agents, any foreigner passing through should be mined to the hilt for information.

O'Connor's report on Teramoto is interesting because it is the first Western account we have of a Japanese traveller. On 3 July 1905, he says, a monk in Mongolian dress came to call on him with a note in English saying that he was a Japanese travelling in disguise. 'I found on questioning him that, although he can read and write English fairly well, he can hardly talk at all; but as he speaks a little Tibetan we could understand one another' (L/PS/7/180/1345; 3 July). They found it more convenient still to speak through Teramoto's Mongolian servant who spoke both Mongolian and

Tibetan, since Teramoto's Mongolian was quite fluent. O'Connor suggested that the Japanese might like to stay with him for a few days: 'if he was not afraid of arousing the suspicions of the Tibetans'. Teramoto replied that he would think about it, and told O'Connor about the Russians he had seen in Lhasa (O'Connor immediately despatched two agents to Lhasa to confirm this). The only other bit of news from the visitor that O'Connor thought worth passing on was that the Emperor of China had instructed the Dalai Lama to visit Peking before returning to Lhasa.

This piece of news shows just how difficult it was to obtain information in this part of the world. There was actually a little more to it than that, though it was not obvious at the time. The Dalai Lama, having fled to Outer Mongolia with Dorjieff, was staying at Urga (Ulan Bator), the Mongolian capital, as the guest of the Jebtsundamba Khutughtu. This high lama was the Mongolian equivalent of the Dalai Lama, and the latter had received so much adoration (and therefore such a large amount in donations) from the Mongolians that relations between the two were becoming strained. It was not likely that they would get along very well anyway, since the Tibetan lama strictly followed all his vows, while the Jebtsundamba Khutughtu had married, was a heavy smoker, and was very fond of a drink.

Still not sure if it was safe to return to his own capital, the Dalai Lama also realized that there were pressing reasons to go to Peking. Possibly the most important was that after he had fled from Younghusband the Chinese had stripped him of all temporal powers, and transferred them to the Panchen Lama. They had no authority to do this, and the decrees posted in Lhasa were torn down and ignored by irate Tibetans. Much later this action by the Chinese was to turn out a blessing in disguise.

But to return to Teramoto in Gyantse: the next day he returned to tell O'Connor that as he had practically completed his journey, he was now 'quite indifferent as to the opinions or suspicions of the Tibetans'. This rather surprising admission serves to indicate that he just never quite lived out his disguise in the way Kawaguchi did. O'Connor, displaying a little more caution, suggested that they continue to converse as they had been doing, and that they make no mention of his identity to the Tibetans. Everyone, it seems, was taken in, and continued to refer to him as 'the Mongolian Lama',



with the exception of a 'Lama/clerk' of O'Connor's who had been one of Kawaguchi's tutors in Darjeeling some years before, who noticed a similarity between the two men. It is a pity the clerk is not named, for he could well have been Lama Shabdung with whom Kawaguchi boarded in Darjeeling, and at whose house the women and children taught him so much.

Before Teramoto left, O'Connor, who had been behind releasing the prisoners held in Lhasa for assisting foreigners in the past, entrusted him with a photograph of two of Kawaguchi's friends on the day of their liberation, along with a note to confirm their release.<sup>2</sup> He also gave him a note of introduction for Charles Bell at Chumbi, and from here on Teramoto would be passed on to higher and higher British officials.

O'Connor may well have invited him to stay as much to keep an eye on him as for any other reason, and he seems to have kept his Japanese guest well protected from certain sights. During his visit, for example, one of O'Connor's servants was beaten by a mixed crowd of Tibetans, Chinese and Nepalese. The guilty parties were publicly whipped, the Nepalese, Tibetans and Chinese each by officials of their own nationality – apparently an important precedent, though there is no mention of this in Teramoto's diary. In fact, though he mentions 'an Englishman' in Gyantse (O'Connor was Irish), he never names him, and may not have been aware that he was dealing with one of the legendary figures of Tibetan diplomacy.

The Chumbi Valley, which Kawaguchi had needed all his ingenuity to get through in record time, was now occupied by British Indian troops, and if the checkpoints were still operating at all, Teramoto makes no mention of them. In the town of Chumbi, deep in the valley, he stayed as the guest of Charles Bell, the Assistant Political Agent – the most important Englishman in Tibet and the one who, in later years, was probably to have more influence in Tibetan affairs than any other. Later, when the Dalai Lama came to India in flight from the Chinese, Bell was assigned to look after him. His sympathy towards the Tibetans and their cause was to lead to a close friendship, and he was to become far closer to the Dalai Lama than any Westerner had ever been before. Bell's biography of him, *Portrait of a Dalai Lama* (first published 1946), is still a standard work.

This was still early in his eventful career, but his powers of gentle interrogation and astute observation are evident in the portrait he gives us of Teramoto. He is careful, for example, to mention that Teramoto had studied under the Achia Khutughtu, and he also noted that his father was in the service of Count Otani, whom he describes, rather misleadingly, as 'one of the two popes of Japan' (L/PS/7/180/1345; 20 July).<sup>3</sup> His visitor is described as 'a very intelligent person', since Bell wished it to be known that he thought there was good reason to believe his rather unlikely story about the Russians in Lhasa, and most of his report concerns this.

There are some interesting sidelights in this report about the relative abilities of the Dalai Lama and the Jebtsundamba Khutughtu. At this point Bell seemed to feel that the Jebtsundamba Khutughtu was the abler of the two, and had considerable influence over the Dalai Lama, which he was using in favour of Russia. Events were to prove this to be far from the truth. Not only was the Dalai Lama becoming disillusioned with the Russians, but the Jebtsundamba Khutughtu was a man of very little ability who even appeared drunk in public. An interesting opinion of Teramoto's, noted by Bell, was that the Russians wanted to replace the present emperor of China with Jebtsundamba Khutughtu, and to escort the Dalai Lama back to Lhasa with Russian soldiers who would then remain. This certainly would have been an interesting back-door victory for the Russians after the British had stolen a march on them with the Younghusband Expedition. Whether this was really Teramoto's opinion, or if he had simply been instructed to plant Russophobic thoughts in British heads, is an intriguing question.

The interest of the government of Bengal, however, was aroused, and Bell was asked for Teramoto's probable date of arrival in Darjeeling so that they could question him further. Any news of Russian plans would be something the viceroy, Lord Curzon, even now in his final days in office, would be only too anxious to hear. After all, it had been largely his paranoia about Russia that had led him to send Younghusband in the first place. This is undoubtedly why Teramoto was so favourably received in Sikkim and India. In Gangtok he met the Maharaj Kumar, and was then invited to Simla, where he met Lord Curzon himself. Then, after a tour of the Buddhist holy places of India, he returned to Japan in October.

Back home he continued to be treated as someone special. He reported personally to the Foreign Minister, and was asked to submit a report to the military. In November he was rewarded by an audience with the empress.

It would be difficult to travel through Tibet much faster than Teramoto had managed it, but from his point of view the trip must have been an unqualified success, in spite of this. He had met the two most important British officials in Tibet, and his scare stories about the Russians had been taken so seriously that he had even been received by the viceroy. Back in Japan he had been further fêted by high officials of his own government, and received the honour of an audience with the empress. How different all this was from the reception Kawaguchi had been given. These are just the sort of honours he would have loved, although he would never have brought himself to admit it. Teramoto was now becoming accustomed to hobnobbing with royalty and with the powerful. His next target would be the Dalai Lama himself.

Meanwhile, Teramoto was not to be the last Japanese O'Connor would be involved with in 1905, though the next meeting came about in a far more roundabout way. The Trade Agent in Gyantse, as we have seen, had little to do but collect intelligence. For a man of O'Connor's energy and talent this was disastrous, and it was not long before he was casting about for something to do. He had hardly settled in his post before he was off to Shigatse to meet the Panchen Lama.

More than a hundred years before, the then viceroy, Warren Hastings, had sent a Scottish envoy named George Bogle to Shigatse. The Dalai Lama was a baby at the time, and Lhasa officials would not allow him to proceed further anyway, but Bogle developed a close friendship with the third Panchen Lama, an outgoing man of unusual intelligence and ability. Building on this precedent O'Connor seems to have hoped to establish the same sort of relationship between himself and the present incumbent, the sixth Panchen Lama.<sup>4</sup> He, however, was a very different sort of person from the dynamic third. A retiring and deeply religious figure, he was not really suited to political manoeuvring, and was to be easily led by stronger figures throughout his life.

It must be remembered that the Chinese, though they had no authority to do so, had stripped the Dalai Lama of his temporal powers. O'Connor felt that the British should follow suit by switching their support to the Panchen Lama as political leader. Eventually he even came up with a plan to arm his supporters and encourage them to break away from Lhasa. It was an ill-conceived notion by someone who should have known better, since the majority of Tibetans regard the Panchen Lama as a spiritual rather than a political figure, and in the end it had fatal consequences for O'Connor's career. In the early stages of his plan he had invited the Panchen Lama to India to meet the Prince of Wales, who was there on a hunting trip.

It just so happened that this put the Panchen Lama and Kawaguchi in India at the same time, the Japanese traveller having just come from collecting his Sanskrit scriptures in Nepal. When he asked for an audience the Lama replied enthusiastically, and they met at Bodh Gaya in the presence of a Tibetan-speaking British official who must have been O'Connor. Undoubtedly nervous about the outcome of the meeting, and not really sure whether Kawaguchi had any government connections or not, O'Connor had wanted the Japanese simply to prostrate in respect and leave, but the Panchen Lama had other ideas and began to question his visitor about Buddhism in Japan. In the end they found a great deal to talk about, and continued to meet over several days.

Remembering the exchange of sutras that had enabled him to return to Nepal, Kawaguchi proposed a similar deal with the Panchen Lama, and the reply amounted to a virtual invitation to Shigatse. This was full of potential embarrassment for the British, since they now controlled who went in and out of Tibet, and were to block even eminent explorers like Sven Hedin. Now they had a foreigner who had been invited to Shigatse by the most prestigious lama left in Tibet. As it turned out, it would be many years before Kawaguchi was able to capitalize on this initiative.

Looking back, O'Connor must have regretted his overtures towards the Panchen Lama. The troublesome problem of Kawaguchi and his invitation to Shigatse was bad enough, but there were to be far more dire consequences stemming from the Panchen Lama's visit. In Calcutta he was received by the Prince of Wales as well as the new viceroy, Lord Minto, and Lhasa's suspicions were

duly aroused. The bad feeling that was to characterize relations between Lhasa and Shigatse for the next thirty years dated from this trip to India.

In April 1906, Teramoto returned to Peking. August found him back at Kumbum – his earlier unhappy experiences there do not seem not to have put him off – then he went to study at Labrang. The Dalai Lama was still on his travels, and was not finding it a simple matter to get home. Lhasa wanted him to return, but the Chinese emperor was also still badgering him to come to Peking. There were ever more pressing reasons for the latter detour. In addition to clarifying his status and the relationship between Tibet and China, he had been informed that the Chinese general Chao Erh-feng was now subduing many of the previously autonomous little kingdoms of Kham ruled from places like Tatsienlu and Batang.

When Teramoto heard that the Dalai Lama would be at Kumbum, he went there to await his arrival. The Dalai Lama, for his part, heard – possibly through one of his Buriat advisers – of a Japanese scholar who might have some influence with the British. Since he was now hoping for some sort of discussions with the British to ensure his safe return, an envoy from the country which had so roundly defeated the Russians might be ideal.

And here enters one 'Zerempil', supposedly a Buriat adviser to the Dalai Lama, who has intrigued scholars for generations because of a wildly fanciful 1924 account by a German scientist named Wilhelm Filchner called *Sturm über Asien*.<sup>5</sup> Filchner, who tramped all over Central Asia mapping out magnetic points, tells a very good yarn of plot and counterplot everywhere from Lhasa to Peking: too good a yarn, it has often been thought, to be true.

In fact, in 1928 the British naturalist and schoolmaster Frank Ludlow met Filchner on a trek in Skardu and questioned him directly about Zerempil. He admitted that the name was fictitious, and meant 'darling of the Tsar'. It seems that Filchner somehow got hold of some of Dorjjeff's papers and fictionalized them using the name Zerempil. 'In the main, he said, the acts ascribed to Zerempil were those of Dorjjeff.'<sup>6</sup>

It is a shame, in a way, that such a good story should prove

untrue. Filchner has his fictional character disastrously commanding Tibetan troops during the Younghusband Expedition, then raising the standard of revolt against the Chinese (with equally disastrous results) in monasteries all over Kham and Amdo. It was while he was taking a break from these more strenuous activities that he supposedly brought Teramoto and the Dalai Lama together. Teramoto, of course, mentions no such person, only a number of nameless Buriats who were always clamouring for the Dalai Lama's attention, and it is quite obvious that anyone working for Russian intelligence who introduced the Dalai Lama to a representative of the Japanese would be near to committing treason.<sup>7</sup>

Teramoto and the Dalai Lama did, however, meet informally in the library at Kumbum at the latter's instigation, and discussed his strained relations with China. After that, while they were both at Kumbum, Teramoto was often seen in the company of His Holiness. At the Dalai Lama's request he wrote for him a history of Japan and of Japanese Buddhism in Tibetan, and urged him to visit Japan and open diplomatic relations between the two countries. Apparently Teramoto's relations with the Achia Khutughtu had also improved, for it was he who brought about a reconciliation between him and the Dalai Lama, who had been upset at the lax discipline he had found at Kumbum.

From this time Teramoto was in some way in the service of the Dalai Lama, though the precise nature of that service remains unclear. Tada Tokan, a later Japanese traveller, felt that Teramoto was used mostly as an interpreter.

1908 was to be one of Teramoto's most active years. He began by returning to Japan in January after spending most of the previous year at Kumbum. In Tokyo he had meetings with military and government officials, presumably to try and arrange a visit to Japan by the Dalai Lama. He also reported to the Higashi Honganji, though he had recently been disappointed by their lack of support. General Fukushima, the great Siberian traveller who had given up on Tibet in Darjeeling, entrusted him with a pair of pistols as a somewhat surprising gift for His Holiness. The Higashi Honganji forwarded with him a rather more appropriate statue of Kannon-sama, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.<sup>8</sup> By May he was back in Peking, then immediately off to the mountain temple

complex of Wu Tai Shan in western China, where the Dalai Lama had taken up residence for five months on his way to Peking. This was a natural place to stop, since it is considered by Tibetans and Mongolians to be the holiest spot in China, and is often visited by Central Asian pilgrims. Sacred to Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, this 'Mountain of the Five Pinnacles' would be visited by pilgrim monks in expectation of the gift of eloquence which would allow them to proclaim the true doctrine. Here Teramoto met the Dalai Lama twice, presented the gifts he had brought from Japan, and received others in return. He then went back almost immediately to Japan, where he arranged a meeting between the Dalai Lama and Count Otani Kozui's brother, Otani Sonyu.

In 1903, Otani Kozui – whom we met briefly with Kawaguchi at Bodh Gaya – took over the abbotship of the Nishi Honganji, the rival sect to Teramoto's own Higashi Honganji. Since the time of the First Sino-Japanese War, the Nishi Honganji had been at the forefront of Buddhist missionary activities in China, and this was to continue right up to World War II. Kozui's brother Sonyu was in charge of these proselytizing activities, but one cannot help but wonder why the energetic and dynamic Kozui did not go to Wu Tai Shan himself. The most probable explanation is that he thought the Dalai Lama would soon be visiting Japan, and it would be a tremendous boost to Kozui's prestige (something he was always concerned with) were this incarnate bodhisattva to come to him rather than the other way round.

Though the meeting between Otani Sonyu and the Dalai Lama at Wu Tai Shan was informal, it was important for several reasons. First, it provided a precedent for the manner in which Otani would later try to handle relations between Japan and Tibet, sidestepping the British ban on Tibetan foreign relations with two priests in Lhasa who would behave as ambassadors from 1913 onwards. Just as important was that this first fairly high level contact between Japan and Tibet was carried out without consulting China, or making any reference to any sovereignty the Chinese might claim. This was four years before the Dalai Lama formally declared independence.

The meetings took place during August 1908, and owing to their informality the Dalai Lama was probably able to learn more about Japan than he would have learned in more solemn proceedings. There were few concrete results, beyond agreeing that the two

Buddhist countries should have better relations. They did decide, however, that they should exchange students, and this was to have important results later. General Fukushima also had an audience at Wu Tai Shan, though it is not clear whether he was received as a private individual or a government representative.

It is also quite probable that one reason there were no more concrete results is that this meeting was regarded as no more than a preliminary to a visit by the Dalai Lama to Japan, a project very close to Teramoto's heart. If the Dalai Lama had previously been disenchanted with the Russians over their poor showing in the Russo-Japanese War, the Anglo-Russian Convention of August 1907 was the final straw, and made him both more receptive to overtures from the Japanese and more inclined to talk with his old enemies the British. All Teramoto's feverish activity would seem to be leading to this, which would certainly be the jewel in the crown of his own diplomatic career. Arrangements were all but completed, with the Dalai Lama to be the guest of the Nishi Honganji, when he made his long-delayed visit to Peking.

In the end the Dalai Lama had a number of reasons to be unhappy with this visit, which lasted from 8 September to 21 December 1908. He had hoped to iron out some of the political differences between himself and the Chinese, to try to get Peking to control the activities of the murderous general Chao Erh-feng in Kham, and to receive his due spiritual homage from the emperor and empress dowager. The Manchu government, however, had other ideas. They meant to use the visit to force the Dalai Lama to kowtow to the Emperor, thus giving recognition to Chinese sovereignty. He was well aware of the reception that had been accorded his previous incarnation, the fifth Dalai Lama, who had been treated as a sovereign head of state, and he was willing to accept no less for himself and Tibet. But while a compromise was reached about the kowtowing, Tibet's leader was not even given the right to address the emperor directly. He was told instead that all business with the throne had to be conducted through the *Ambans* in Lhasa. Since the Tibetans regarded these officials as no more than ambassadors, this was hardly satisfactory.

During the Dalai Lama's time in Peking, when he stayed at the Yung-ko-hung, he did have the opportunity to meet a number of foreign ambassadors, including Sir John Jordan of Great Britain,



with whom he discussed making up their quarrel, and William Rockhill of the United States. Both thought they had seen the end of his temporal power, and this makes what was to follow over the next few years all the more remarkable.

There is some suspicion, though no actual proof, that the meeting with Jordan was arranged through Teramoto, and indeed the Japanese were far more involved during this visit than is generally recognized. Filchner, for what it is worth, has 'Zerempil' remark that the visit took place sooner than it would otherwise have done due to Teramoto's efforts (see Hyer, 1960, p. 65). According to what the Japanese Minister in Peking later told Tada Tokan, His Holiness even stayed at the Japanese Legation for about a week.

It was while the Dalai Lama was in Peking that plans for his proposed visit to Japan went badly wrong. First of all there was an event which no one could have foreseen: the death of the Emperor of China, followed almost immediately by the death of the Empress Dowager. Teramoto had to advise the Dalai Lama that it would be impolitic to go straight off to Japan without first holding a ceremony for them (probably the last ceremony to be performed in the long 'patron and priest' relationship between the Manchus and the Dalai Lamas). The delay was crucial, for during this time a new struggle developed between the diplomats of Britain and Russia. The British wanted the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet via India, while the Russians wanted him to go via the Trans-Siberian Railway. Both routes would have been feasible from Japan, and the Japanese, having recently restored friendly relations with Russia and still allied to Great Britain, got cold feet and withdrew their invitation.

This action went a long way towards undoing all the good work done by Teramoto, the Otani family, and both the Higashi Honganji and Nishi Honganji sects towards building relations with Tibet. The Dalai Lama, still smarting from his treatment by the Chinese, was unhappy not only at having his visit called off but with the whole attitude of the Japanese government, which he was just beginning to trust. Teramoto himself regarded it as a great opportunity lost, and it is notable that from this point the Higashi Honganji seems to drop out of any relationship with Tibet.

The funeral ceremonies for the Emperor and Empress Dowager brought a number of foreign visitors, among them O'Connor and

Dorjieff, both of whom Teramoto had an opportunity to meet.<sup>9</sup> He asked O'Connor for permission to travel to Tibet via India, but this permission does not seem to have been forthcoming. Though he probably had no official standing with the Japanese government, it is certainly true that he had more contact with Japanese officials than any other travellers to Tibet, and it would be only natural for the British to be suspicious.

The Dalai Lama had now been away from Tibet for more than four years. Diplomacy is slow enough at the best of times, but in lands where travel is so difficult the wheels move even more slowly. He had been attempting to get back to Lhasa since 1905. The proposed visit to Japan and the Imperial deaths had been only the latest in a long series of delays, and now it was finally time for him to be going home. Bitter towards the Chinese, disillusioned with the Russians and to some extent with the Japanese, he would continue to look abroad for ways to help bring his country into the twentieth century, but at the moment the British were really his best hope.

In spite of his disappointment with the Japanese, the Dalai Lama remained personally fond of Teramoto, and at this point he gave him a Tibetan name, Thubten Bzod-pa, and a travel permit for Tibet as well. And now Teramoto did one of the strangest things ever done by any Tibetan traveller from any country. With Tibet in his pocket, so to speak, he simply went home in 1909. Whether he was ill, bitter and disillusioned, or simply could not face another caravan journey across the high northern plains, he was never to do any serious travelling again, and was certainly not to go anywhere near Tibet.<sup>10</sup>

# Chapter Four

## World Travelling

### (With and Without Funds)

After our three travelling priests – Nomi, Kawaguchi and Teramoto – it is a positive relief to turn to Yajima Yasujiro. Not only was Yajima a layman, he never showed the slightest indication of any knowledge of – or even interest in – Buddhism. Moreover, unlike the one other layman to reach Lhasa so far, the obscure Narita, he had nothing to do with the Japanese government, and was about as independent a traveller as one could find.

He was not even particularly interested in Tibet when he turned up in Tatsienlu in 1910, with hair down to his shoulders, a handlebar moustache and a rucksack on his back that declared him to be ‘The Head of the World Travelling Society (Without Funds)’. He thought he was on his way to the United States.

Yajima was born in 1882, and his early life in the mountains of Gumma Prefecture, north of Tokyo, had been something of a disappointment to his family. Our other travellers all seemed to drop out of higher education: Yajima dropped out of junior high school. His family was less than pleased, and he spent an uncomfortable two years assisting in the family business of making frames for silk looms before enlisting in the army.

Judging from the way he spent his later life (and from the fact that during the two years he worked at the family business he would go on horseback to study English with vague plans of emigrating to the United States), it was travel and adventure he sought in the army. Since the Russo–Japanese War broke out not long after

his enlistment, he was not disappointed. As a member of a hard fighting unit called the Shiro Tasuki Tai, he survived some of the heaviest casualties of the war; though his own most heroic act seems to have been falling off a cliff and bruising his heel so badly that he had to be invalided back to Japan for a time, and he tells us that he never killed anyone. According to a later newspaper account, he began to study Russian and Chinese during the war.

After the war he was promoted from corporal to sergeant for 'distinguished service', and appointed an instructor at the Toyama Military College. His glimpse of foreign lands as a soldier had whetted his appetite for travel, but in those days a young man could not get a passport unless he had been exempted from military service, and Sergeant Yajima still had some years to serve. This probably explains the incident a few months later when a friend from his home town came to Tokyo to visit him at the Toyama Military College, and found him behind bars, seemingly barking mad. This turns out to have been a successful ploy to get himself not only discharged but exempted from further military service by feigning insanity.

In fact, by the standards of the time and place he *was* far from completely sane, and if the army bothered to follow his career over the next few years, it must have felt well rid of him. While today young people from the West or from Japan think nothing of taking off with a backpack and enough money for a one-way ticket to the nearest foreign port, it was quite different in 1907.

Yajima's army experience was not all that caused him to look abroad for inspiration. There was also a legendary uncle who had started a prospering tea business in the United States, and another relative who worked in Chicago. The dangers and hostility of foreign travel were well illustrated by the fate of his cousin Asajiro, who had gone to work for an export company in California but had returned due to illness and died at the early age of thirty-one. These Yajimas were considered wildly adventurous, but the family had seen nothing yet.

Soon after his discharge, Yajima joined an organization called the Nippon Rikkokai. This was a charitable Christian association, and since he never showed any more interest in Christianity than he did in Buddhism,<sup>1</sup> it might seem an odd group for him to join. But the Nippon Rikkokai had strong ties with immigrant groups in

the United States, and at this point America was still his principal objective.

The Nippon Rikkokai was founded in 1897 by a Japanese Christian evangelist named Shimanuki Heidayu, with the object of rearing and educating poor students on Christian principles. It grew quickly, and by the time Yajima joined it had over eight thousand members, though it was supporting only about sixty poor students. The main subjects taught seemed to be the Bible, English, and the propagation of Christianity. Yajima's intentions of using the society for his own ends became clear when he formed an informal 'Exploration Branch'.

This was at the time when low-paid immigrant Chinese workers on the railways in the United States were disappearing because of opposition from white workers. They were to some extent being replaced by Japanese, and a number of companies were making good profits exploiting these immigrant workers. The Nippon Rikkokai, on the other hand, assisted the immigrants with their problems. Yajima was mainly interested in meeting people with a knowledge of foreign places, and soon after creating his Exploration Branch of the Nippon Rikkokai he went back to studying English, this time at Nihon University.

But he was not just planning a simple trip to California. Shimanuki, the Nippon Rikkokai founder, had a theory that the hardships and suffering that came from travelling without money were good for personal development. Apparently this was so far no more than a theory, for though the Nippon Rikkokai had sent impoverished students to study in the United States, none had yet wandered off without any money to roam the world under its auspices. Yajima now decided to put the theory to the test, and he gathered around him thirty-odd like-minded stalwart young men to participate in his scheme for ten years of self-supporting world travel.

It is perhaps a measure of Yajima's leadership qualities and his ability to inspire loyalty that by the time he was ready to go there were only three left, including himself. On the eve of departure the other two made their excuses as well. A disappointed Yajima told a reporter from the *Yokohama Boeki Shimpō* ('Yokohama Foreign Trader') that his erstwhile companions had 'lost their nerve'.

He did have some rather grandiose plans. In covering his

departure, the *Yokohama Boeki Shimpō* reported:

When travelling in China he will be a literary man, in the interior of Africa he will investigate mines and agricultural products and the lives of the people, in north and south America he will wander about picking up manual work, and from the Bering Straits he will cross the north Pacific, go into Russia, and have a look at the industries of the northern seas. From there he will return home via northern Manchuria.

In spite of the rather drastic drop in the size of Yajima's expedition there were no hard feelings, and he got quite a sendoff from the Nippon Rikkokai. Some twenty members escorted him from Shimbashi Station in Tokyo to the pier in Yokohama, where yet more supporters showed up. The newspaper account described the pier as 'thronged', and in fact the British ambassador in Tokyo, on later receiving a query from a bemused Government of India, replied that Yajima was 'quite well known here'.

Proceeding no further than Shimbashi, possibly out of bashfulness, was a pretty sixteen-year-old named Yamaguchi Miyoko. Apparently there was some understanding between her and Yajima that they were 'engaged'. One of the members of the Nippon Rikkokai describes the scene lyrically:

Ah, that lovely young lady! She will be praying for his health, happiness, and safe return. Ah, fortunate Yajima! Although the future holds many trials and hardships, love is always there. Go, Yajima, overcome ten thousand hardships in your pursuit of success. (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry)

Like many Western explorers before him, Yajima was being more than a little demanding and unrealistic in his expectations. Sixteen in those days was considered quite a marriageable age, and if all went according to plan she would be an old maid of twenty-six when he returned.

Yajima's ship left Yokohama on 3 February 1909 bound for Shanghai, just a month after Teramoto had returned to Japan for good. From Shanghai Yajima worked his way slowly north to Peking as a travelling salesman of patent medicines. In Peking he landed a job

as a salesman for a large laundry. Though he quarrelled with the owner and quit, at least he was earning his own way as planned. In late July he left Peking for Sian and the Yellow River by railway, then by horse, foot and palanquin.

In Sian he had the chance encounter that would ultimately change his life when, for the first time, he met and talked with a Tibetan monk. The monk had been in Peking for some years, undoubtedly at the Yung-ko-hung, so they were able to communicate in the Peking dialect as he showed the Japanese traveller some Tibetan artifacts, and told him a bit about his country. Yajima's interest was immediately aroused. He wanted to know how long it would take to get from Szechwan to Lhasa, and began making notes on the Tibetan language. But the two soon parted company as Yajima continued on his travels, and early September found him in Chengdu. Somehow, along the way, he had attracted the attention of the Chinese press, and several articles about him, complete with photographs, were printed. Perhaps it was the sign on his back which at this point read, in Chinese characters, 'The World is my Home'.

In Chengdu he stayed first with a representative of the Nishi Honganji, and was then taken in by a Japanese artillery captain who was fond of putting up travellers. By this time his money was again running low, and he was only too happy to accept a job as physical education and *kendo* instructor to Japanese troops stationed there – hardly the sort of job calculated to allay later British fears about just what he was up to.

After two months of teaching, for some unknown reason, he left his job, and for the first time his plans began to falter badly. He even had to face the ignominy of writing home for money, and also for strings of coral beads from Tosa in southern Japan, which he had heard were the most valuable form of trade goods in Tibet.

Since meeting the monk in Sian, Yajima had been keeping one eye on Tibet, but now he got a letter from a friend introducing him to a Japanese agriculturist based in Chungking who had a branch office in Tatsienlu and was supposed to know a good deal about Tibet. The letter encouraged him, in typical Japanese hyperbole, to 'outdo Sven Hedin and Kawaguchi in discovering what no one else in the world knows about Tibet'. There was also a note that local Tibetans were well acquainted with Kawaguchi's story and believed

him to be wandering somewhere in the area around Tatsienlu (he was in fact in Benares).

Early in 1910 Yajima went to Chungking to meet this agriculturist, a Mr Kanda, and to get a passport from the Consulate there for his ongoing journey. The passport, giving some indication of his intentions, was valid for India, Afghanistan, Turkey, Europe and Russia, and for some unaccountable reason described him as a 'gun maker'.

Only a few months before, in December 1909, the Dalai Lama had finally returned to Tibet after his years of exile in Mongolia and China. His contact with the Chinese and his visit to Peking had made him more suspicious than ever of Chinese intentions, and more determined than ever to lead his country to full independence, while the Chinese were equally determined to force the Tibetans into a state of vassalage. In February two thousand Chinese troops marched into Lhasa to join those already there. The Dalai Lama, realizing that the Chinese would execute his ministers, then put him under palace arrest while using his seals in his name, had no choice but to flee south towards India. This time he had an even closer call than he had with the Younghusband Expedition, barely escaping with his life.

In March, when Yajima returned to Chengdu and began to study Tibetan, he was not fully aware of the details of this invasion. Nor did he know that a young Tibetan named Dazang Dadul, who had accompanied the Dalai Lama through his years of exile, had saved his master's life by fighting a brave delaying action at the Chaksam Ferry across the Tsangpo. This same man, a commoner by birth, was to rise to great heights, would be Yajima's future employer, and would be well known to every Japanese (and most other foreigners) to visit Tibet from now on.

In July, still largely unaware of events in Tibet, Yajima moved to Tatsienlu and stayed at the house of his Tibetan teacher. The Tatsienlu he found was much different from the town visited by Nomi and Teramoto more than ten years before. Then it had been a true border state politically as well as culturally. But since that time the murderous Chinese general Chao Erh-feng had subdued the king of Chala and other petty Tibetan monarchs of the region to bring the whole area under direct Chinese rule. His bloody campaigns, both here and in Szechwan, were to earn



him the nickname 'Chao the Butcher'. It was largely in protest at his activities that the Dalai Lama had agreed to go to Peking and meet the emperor, and the intransigence of the Chinese was a strong driving force in his decision to cut his ties with China once and for all.

At Tatsienlu Yajima met two other Japanese – one a painter, one a science teacher – on holiday from Chengdu, and they tried a short trial run in the direction of Tibet: Yajima going on for three days, the others stopping after two. After this he made a quick trip back to Chengdu, and wrote from there that he was planning to try to go to Tibet the following April. This letter also included the cryptic phrase 'to develop Tibet is Yasujiro's dream'. Just what he might have meant is anyone's guess, but he was to remain driven by a sense of mission and convinced that everything he did was for the benefit of Tibet and its people.

There was one difficulty facing him that his predecessors had not had to put up with. Because of the newspaper articles about him in the Chinese press, his face was already known as that of a Japanese trying to get to Tibet. But it was now that Yajima's slice of luck came along in the form of his friend, the monk he had met in Sian. He was in Tatsienlu forming a small caravan bound for Lhasa, and Yajima asked if he could go along disguised as a Mongolian. They left on 12 November 1910 (six months ahead of his original plan), stopped in Chamdo for a short time, and finally arrived in Lhasa four months later on 4 March 1911.

It had been a year since the Chinese invasion, and the Tibetans – who had initially been taken by such surprise that the Chinese had marched in virtually unopposed – were putting up sporadic but increasing resistance. It was perhaps seeing Tibet as an occupied country that gave Yajima the idea of using whatever military skills he had to help the Tibetans defend themselves in the future. He had heard stories all the way from Tatsienlu to Lhasa of monasteries burned and looted, of monks murdered and envoys summarily executed: a sorry tale that was to be repeated with even more ruthless efficiency half a century later.

In Lhasa, his friend introduced him to an acquaintance named Garpon Lobsang, an official government trader of the type who had befriended Kawaguchi, and Yajima stayed at his house, living as inconspicuously as possible. It is interesting that while he mentions

his fear of discovery by Chinese officials, he does not seem in the least worried about the Tibetans. Indeed, as the guest of a minor government official his presence must have been well known in some circles.

But the situation being what it was, he felt that it was safest not to linger in Lhasa at this point but to return when he could actually accomplish something. So after only a month he attached himself to a caravan that departed for India on 3 April. He wrote to his father that after eleven days on the road, in Phari, he had a long talk with an English 'gentleman' named Johnson. Since the only British in Phari were two military telegraphists looking after the lines that had been set up during the Younghusband Expedition, Johnson was undoubtedly one of these and probably a sergeant, as Yajima had been.<sup>2</sup> Here he felt secure enough to reveal his identity, and even had his photograph taken (this photo was to cause him problems later). Phari, at over fifteen thousand feet, is one of the highest and coldest towns in the world. Yajima suffered horribly from headaches at high altitude, and he must have welcomed the relative comfort of the British NCOs' billet there.

It would have been naive in the extreme of him to think that the British would have no interest in a lone Japanese traveller in this part of the world, and somewhere along the way he began to take the sort of precautions that simply led to more suspicion. He began, for example, to travel by night. His horse died on the ascent to the Jelap La, and with no way to carry provisions at the same time as avoiding population centres, he started living on wild fruit and nuts. In common with other travellers, he heard tigers in the forested foothills of Sikkim and Bengal. The sleeping out and the poor diet took their toll, and as he approached the town of Phedong, not far from Kalimpong, he felt himself coming down with a fever. Unable to take further precautions, he was arrested and roughly handled by an English policeman, then sent to Darjeeling suspected of spying. The state of the Indian prisoners with whom he was jailed increased his anti-colonial feelings and led to a distrust of the British in addition to the similar feelings he had already developed towards the Chinese. With the help of the Japanese consul in Calcutta, a Mr Hirata, he was released.

Before continuing on to Calcutta, Yajima was granted a brief audience with the Dalai Lama, who was living in Darjeeling while

the Chinese occupied Lhasa. But though he was now enduring his second period of exile, the Tibetan leader was having considerably more success making friends with the British than he had with the intransigent Chinese during his previous exile. He was developing a close friendship with Charles Bell, who had been assigned to look after him, and had met the viceroy, Lord Minto, who had been sympathetic to his cause but found his hands tied by treaty obligations to the Chinese.

In Calcutta, where he stayed for five months as the guest of Consul Hirata, Yajima immediately telegraphed the Nippon Rikkokai to inform them of his progress, and to hint that he would like some money to go back to Tibet for a better-planned trip. For now he was hooked. He had spent such a short time in Tibet only because of the Chinese occupation, but as soon as it was possible he was determined to go back and 'develop' the country. He also spent these five months writing up his notes on the trip. It must rank as one of the great disasters of travel literature that these notes later disappeared. If this account was like the little he wrote of his second trip, it would have been a lively one, full of misadventure and strange characters. What little is known has had to be pieced together from his rambling letters and later newspaper accounts.<sup>3</sup>

Conditions were still not anything like right for going back to Tibet, and besides, Yajima was penniless. In spite of his unsuccessful plea for money from the Nippon Rikkokai, he was still supposedly working his way around the world, and Consul Hirata was sympathetic enough (or perhaps his hospitality was wearing thin after five months) to arrange a job for him, apparently shovelling coal, aboard a British freighter. On it he called at Ceylon, Malta, Algiers, and an unnamed port in England, never stopping long enough to get a clear impression of anywhere. From England the freighter crossed the Atlantic for Boston and New York. Yajima was never quite to make it around the world, for after New York the ship turned round and called at Portugal, Mediterranean ports, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Moji and Kobe, finally docking at Yokohama at the end of March 1912, just in time for the cherry blossoms.

Yajima had been gone for three years rather than ten, and in fact he had really seen only China, Tibet, India, and life on an English freighter. The seven months at sea must have done wonders for his

colloquial English. But though he had been gone seven years less than planned, even this had proved too long for Miyoko, the girl he had left behind. She was now nineteen, and married.

One can only speculate on how much Miyoko's defection influenced Yajima's decision to rejoin his ship immediately, and the two days he spent in Japan do not really constitute a homecoming at all. He did take time to meet members of the Nippon Rikkokai, and was full of stories of Tibet. Shimanuki Nobuo, the son of the founder of the organization (who was fourteen years old at the time, and was assigned to accompany Yajima to the public bath and make sure he got all the coal dust out of his hair), was to remember these tales for the rest of his life.

Neither Japan nor Tibet had been standing still while Yajima was roaming the seven seas. Several important new characters had entered the scene, and before following Yajima on his second trip to Lhasa it would be a good idea to backtrack and digress a little to look at the early career of the most influential Japanese Buddhist of the time, and one of the most forceful and energetic men of early-twentieth-century Japan: Count Otani Kozui. The years between 1910 and 1920 were to be the most important in the history of relations between Tibet and Japan, and the inspiration came largely from Count Otani and his Nishi Honganji.

Otani Kozui never actually went to Tibet; he enjoyed the comfort of the grand tour far too much for that. Yet he was the prime moving force behind Japanese exploration of Central Asia in the early years of this century, and it was his representatives who made the most meaningful contacts with the Dalai Lama. As a nobleman, abbot of the giant Nishi Honganji (marginally the largest of Japan's three largest sects), and a relative of the emperor by marriage, he was in a position of both wealth and influence.

Both the Nishi and Higashi Honganji sects have been mentioned several times, and now is the moment to look at just how it came to be that sects with such similar names were rivals.<sup>4</sup> Both are subsects of the Jodo Shinshu (the 'True Pure Land Sect') school of Japanese Buddhism. Though they have their roots in China, the Pure Land sects, with their belief that one need only repeat the name of the Amida Buddha once with sincerity in one's lifetime

to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land (Amida's Western Paradise), are unique to Japanese Buddhism. With no messy beliefs about *karma* and rebirth, and no personal responsibility to lead a good or moral life, the appeal to the masses – and to the simply lazy – is obvious, and followers of the Pure Land sects vastly outnumber those of any others. But for centuries both the Nishi and Higashi Honganji have been far more political than religious organizations, and their actual beliefs are largely irrelevant in the context of their relations with Tibet and with one another.

Originally there was only one Honganji (the 'Temple of the Original Vow'), with its headquarters in Kyoto. Then in the late 1500s, when the two great warlords Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu were forging a nation out of warring principalities, there was a squabble over which of the sons of the abbot (by different mothers) would inherit the abbacy. The mother of the second son was later taken as a concubine by Hideyoshi, who then favoured her child. The dispute was settled by a new branch splitting off as the Higashi (East) Honganji under Hideyoshi's stepson, while the elder brother took over what was left of the original Honganji under the name of the Nishi (West) Honganji.

When Ieyasu and his family consolidated his rule, the shoguns found this arrangement convenient because the split weakened a large, wealthy and powerful political organization. In fact, even split they are still the two largest sects in Japan, just ahead of the Soto sect of Zen. So while the Nishi Honganji is technically the older of the two, there is no doctrinal difference between them; they both look back to the popular thirteenth-century saint Shinran for their identical beliefs, their headquarters are within a short distance of one another, the abbots are from different branches of the Otani family; and from the Meiji Restoration to 1945 both held the title of Count [*Hakushaku*].

It was during the Tokugawa period, when Japan isolated itself from the rest of the world under the military dictatorship of the shoguns, that both sects lost their vitality as religions, becoming more and more political institutions. An important aspect of the Tokugawa police state was that everyone had to be registered with a temple so that the government could keep track of them, and the co-operation of both Honganjis in this led to their being held in good esteem by the government, though the Nishi Honganji always

felt that their rivals enjoyed more favour. Resentful of this real or imagined slight, the Nishi Honganji became an early supporter of the Imperial Restoration that overthrew the shoguns in 1867.

But its support of the Imperial faction was not immediately to lead to smooth sailing. Coming from India by way of China, Buddhism was seen by extreme nationalists as a foreign intruder, and attempts – some violent – were made to do away with it in favour of the more purely Japanese Shinto faith. In order to survive the anti-Buddhist tendencies of the Restoration, the Nishi Honganji went so far as to demonstrate its loyalty to the emperor by getting involved in the fighting. Surprising as this may seem for a sect of a pacifist religion like Buddhism, a long tradition of warrior monks is shared by both Japan and Tibet. In 1867 the abbot raised the ante to new heights when he offered to donate a battleship to the emperor. In view of later developments it is also interesting to note that of the two governmental factions that evolved after the Restoration – one militant and expansionist, the other pro-constitution and anti-expansionist – the Nishi Honganji was always associated with the militant expansionists.

When efforts to contain or destroy Buddhism fizzled out, the government was led to a grudging tolerance. In 1894, when the First Sino-Japanese War broke out, the Nishi Honganji again demonstrated its loyalty with half a million yen's worth of war bonds. After that war, and in anticipation of the Russo-Japanese War, Nishi Honganji priests in Manchuria, ostensibly there to administer to the spiritual needs of Japanese residents, readily co-operated in espionage activities.

Otani Kozui, who was to become the most prominent Nishi Honganji figure of the twentieth century, was born in 1876, the son of the abbot, Count Otani Koson, by a concubine, continuing the tradition that had led to the original Honganji split. He was originally named Toshimaru. The family traced their ancestry all the way back to those who had accompanied the descending gods as retainers at the mythical dawn of Japanese history, and he was always to show an inordinate pride in what he considered the superiority of his ancestry. In his childhood he lacked for nothing, and though he attended Gakushuin (the Peers School, roughly equivalent to a Japanese Eton or Harrow) for a short time he was educated mostly by a succession

of tutors, who instilled in him a feeling that he was someone special.

When he was seven his father gave him a map of the world. Shocked by the size of Japan, he was determined to correct the imbalance, and this became a lifetime obsession. One of his childhood games was despatching his little friends to different parts of the world to conquer them for Japan, and in fact he was later to send out some of these very lifelong friends for real on archaeological or missionary expeditions when he succeeded to the abbacy.

At the age of nine he entered the priesthood and took the name Kozui. General Terauchi, later Governor General of Korea (to whom Kozui was to sell some of his finest antiquities from Central Asia when he found himself hard up), who knew the Otani family well, remarked that the three Otani brothers would all have made first-rate generals had they not been duty-bound to become priests.

In 1898, Kozui was married to a niece of the empress and elder sister of the future emperor. His bride, Kazuko, proved as strong a character as he was, accompanying him on all his trips, taking a leading role in the sect, and generally proving herself well ahead of her time for a Japanese lady. Two years later they both went to London to study. Kozui took with him a large retinue which must have included competent translators and interpreters, for he never thought English worth learning (and was always to oppose the teaching of English in Japanese schools), in spite of spending two years in England and being elected the first Japanese member of the Royal Geographical Society. While he was in England he heard of the exploits of the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin and his discoveries in Central Asia. It was Hedin who provided the most lasting influence he took from Europe.

Kozui may have been technically a Buddhist priest, but he was also a nobleman, and his family was very rich. It seemed to him that Central Asia should not be the preserve of Europeans, and that some of the wealth of his sect (he was never to distinguish between his personal wealth and that of the Nishi Honganji) could be put to good use by searching out some of the great monuments of early Buddhism to be found in Chinese Turkestan. In this he was determined to outdo Hedin.

From England he organized three small-scale expeditions that

were to approach Central Asia from three different directions: one from Russian Turkestan, one from China, and one from India, though only one is known to have taken place at this time. He even exposed himself to fleeting contact with this sort of expedition, travelling from London to the Caspian Sea, then on horseback to Kashgar and across the Pamirs to India. His menus for the trip, including such items as lobster and roast beef, indicate that he was hardly prepared to stint himself, and his baggage train must have been huge.

But while he enjoyed the excitement and novelty of being in foreign lands he much preferred to observe them in comfort, and he soon settled down to an investigation of the sources of Buddhism in India. It was while he was in Bodh Gaya, after leaving behind a stone tablet in Sarnath rather extravagantly claiming that 'Kozui of Japan' had discovered the site of the Buddha's first sermon, that Kawaguchi came along on his way to Nepal, looking for a way to assist his Tibetan friends.

It would be pleasant to think that in Otani Kozui we have come upon a cultivated young Japanese Buddhist prelate of wealth and influence, with a wide-ranging international outlook, who would help to bring Japan and Japanese Buddhists into closer friendly contact with other Buddhist peoples of Asia. Unfortunately, as we can tell from his later writings, this was far from the case, and when it suited him he was not even averse to twisting the meaning of Buddhist writings. Here is a sample of some of his views on how Japan stood in relation to the rest of the world:

Our people are the most superior race in the world . . . I have travelled around various countries, and as a result have discovered that several peoples have their own unique assets. However, I don't know of a single one which is superior in all respects as is our own race. If we are given time there is no doubt that we shall be the strongest power in the world. This is not my bluff.

The great superiority of our race has a real basis and is not accidental. The reason is righteousness of loyalty to the Emperor. This righteousness is not an imported article. It is the core of our divine race. . . . My own feelings of the righteousness of loyalty to the Emperor have never for an instant left my mind.<sup>5</sup>

Though these remarks come from a book written many years later,



Kozui makes it clear that he has always felt this way. It is hardly surprising, then, that – as we have seen at Bodh Gaya – he advised Kawaguchi to concentrate on the glory of Japan and forget about the fate of his Tibetan friends incarcerated in Lhasa.

Kozui seemed content to travel around until he came into his inheritance, and this is precisely what happened when his father died suddenly, leaving him the abbacy of the Nishi Honganji. Now, at the age of twenty-seven, he found himself the hereditary leader of a sect that had thirty thousand priests presiding over twenty-five thousand temples, millions of followers, and missionary activities begun by his father in China, Korea, Siberia, Singapore, Hawaii, and the west coast of the United States. Nothing could have suited him better, and he was not about to settle down to the life of either a simple priest or an idle aristocrat. One of his first acts was to invite his hero, Sven Hedin, to Kyoto to lecture on Central Asia to Nishi Honganji priests.

But any plans he might have had for sending out expeditions of his own were curtailed for the moment by the Russo–Japanese War, and it was this war that really brought Kozui into his own. That a war should be the making of a man who was supposed to be first and foremost a Buddhist priest may at first be surprising, but Kozui was certainly equal to the task of twisting concepts like compassion, humanitarianism and justice to his own ends:

Buddhism, in which I believe, is a religion of mercy, but Sakyamuni the Buddha teaches us in the Dainehan (Sutra of the Nirvana) that the maintenance of the just law lies not in the fulfilment of commandments, but in arms. To take up arms for justice is to give effect to mercy. We the Buddhists, therefore, must be united in fighting for the cause of justice, according to the teaching of Buddhism. (see Anderson, 1955, pp. 248–9)

Kozui could even make Buddhism sound like militant Islam. ‘It is with the sword that one protects the true teaching . . . one may have to cut off another’s life because of love. This is taking life out of pity.’ Those who did not understand this ‘great compassion’ he accused of being ‘distorted pacifists’.<sup>6</sup> He was clearly unmoved by the fact that killing ranks as the worst of the Buddha’s five cardinal sins. It should also be noted that to Kozui ‘justice’ always meant what was best for Japan, and that he was an enthusiastic supporter

of a movement called *Dai Ajia Shugi*, or 'Great Asianism'. This was similar to the Okuma Doctrine that had inspired Teramoto, but it went further in stating that Asia must be powerful and united, independent of the West, but most of all under Japan's leadership.

With such a view of what might justify war, Kozui had no moral qualms about supporting the Russo-Japanese War, the second step in Japan's growing military adventurism, which was ultimately to lead to the Second World War. He rationalized that the survival not only of Japan but of the Nishi Honganji itself depended on victory, and he drew an interesting parallel with the decline of Buddhism in India, which was given its *coup de grâce* by Muslim invaders. 'If at that time the Indian Buddhists had had the power to resist the Mohammedan invasion, the present ruin of Indian Buddhism would not have occurred.'<sup>7</sup>

This might have been good speechmaking, but it ignored a number of important facts. The Russians were not invading Japan: the war was fought by both countries on foreign soil, a colonial war for national pride and bits and pieces of Manchuria. And then the Russians were not militant Muslims bent on spreading their faith by the sword. There was a large minority of Mongolian Buddhists living quite happily under Russian rule, and some were in fact so loyal that men like Dorjief could be produced.

But the rationalization suited Kozui's purpose. After the First Sino-Japanese War, and long before he became abbot, he had already sent priests out on spying missions to Siberia, but in 1904 he went into full swing. On the day war was declared he set up an Emergency Bureau with headquarters in the main Kyoto temple and twenty-nine branch offices in temples all around Japan. A core of fifteen hundred hand-picked priests co-ordinated wartime activities. In so far as these activities included caring for wounded and dead soldiers and comforting the bereaved at home, they fitted in well enough with traditional Buddhist activities; but selling war bonds and propagandizing for national mobilization strike a strange note.

When the Ministry of War decided for the first time to allow chaplains to be assigned to the troops, Kozui immediately sent a hundred and thirty off to Manchuria under his brother Komyo, gaining for the Nishi Honganji a virtual monopoly of Buddhist

chaplains among the front-line forces. They were under orders not to content themselves with saying Masses for the dead and encouraging the wounded, but to do their best to increase to fighting fanaticism of the soldiers by persuading them that if they sacrificed their lives for the emperor they would be taken by Amida to be reborn in his Western Paradise.

Otani Kozui's war work was well publicized, and there was even talk of elevating him from Count to Prince. This idea was rejected because it would have upset the policy of keeping a balance of power between the Nishi and Higashi Honganji, but it was now fairly obvious that Kozui was using the sect as a springboard to power and glory, and the end of the war brought no let-up in his activities. He ordered his chaplains in Manchuria to stay put and establish Nishi Honganji temples there. In 1906 he and his wife travelled through Manchuria and China to supervise this missionary work, and on his return he decided to 'reform' Japanese Buddhism by making all other sects subservient to his own.

His first target was the Higashi Honganji, and he tried to bring that prize into the fold with a huge loan that it would never be able to pay back. The trick was exposed by the *Chugai Nippo*, the same Buddhist newspaper in which Nanjo Bunyu had written the story of Nomi's death. The paper wryly commented: 'If Kozui didn't play such tricks, he would be qualified as the best chief abbot in Japan.' In 1908 he embarked on a programme of All-Out Evangelism, patterned on similar Christian activities and to some extent on the Salvation Army. Here again he was working hand in glove with the government which was worried about lax morals following the Russo-Japanese War. In an eight-day drive to spread the virtues of thrift, diligence, loyalty and patriotism, seven hundred and fifty of his priests gave three thousand sermons a day to a daily audience of a hundred thousand people. Kozui always thought on a grand scale. This was the same year that he despatched his brother Sonyu to Wu Tai Shan to meet the thirteenth Dalai Lama.

It was also in 1908 that he sent out his second archaeological expedition, this time to the Tun-Huang caves under Tachibana Zuicho and Nomura Eizaburo. British and French expeditions had already visited the site, and many of the choicest finds had already been taken away, but they were still able to unearth valuable items ranging from old sutras and mummies to ancient coins. Following

the European precedent, they removed these items and sent them home.<sup>8</sup>

The movements of Tachibana and Nomura excited some curiosity among the British, and as Peter Hopkirk has chronicled in *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*, they were followed every step of the way by Muslim traders and others in the pay of the British. The Russians, naturally enough, overreacted and tried to convince the British that Tachibana was a naval officer, and Nomura an officer in the army. Though these accusations were pure fantasy, the report that Tachibana was beating Chinese subjects and making a general nuisance of himself had more substance to it, and was hardly calculated to allay suspicions. And then there was their small library of English naval and military books: odd reading for two monks who claimed not to know English.

If they were in fact spying, they had a lot to learn. Anxious to find out as much about them as he could, the British consul in Kashgar (a Captain Shuttleworth, temporarily in charge while the famous Macartney was on home leave) invited them to dinner. 'Tachibana was cheeky to me, and I had to sit on him severely,' was the Captain's comment (Hopkirk, 1980, p. 195). This was in sharp contrast to the good relations Teramoto enjoyed with Bell and O'Connor at about the same time. Shortly afterwards, Tachibana realized that he was out of money and went to Shuttleworth for a loan, which was gleefully refused. In the end the British concluded that the two men were 'links in the general system of intelligence which the Japanese Government has instituted' (ibid., p. 196).

The Japanese government denied all knowledge of them, as they would have in any case, but in fact they probably did know nothing. Any spying they were doing would have been for Otani Kozui, and if he found anything of interest that would help in his efforts to promote 'Great Asianism', he would simply pass it on to the government.

In 1910 Kozui made his third trip to India, a lavish expedition designed to impress the Indians. Hunting was one of his favourite amusements on this trip. This he did without even attempting to justify using Buddhist texts, so he was at some pains to hide his activities from his parishioners at home. It is probable that he was accompanied on this trip by Aoki Bunkyo, another of his followers whom he left behind to study and search for Buddhist relics. Just

what other thoughts may have been in his mind is indicated by one right-wing account, claiming that when he climbed the Himalayas, looking back on the Indian plain and forward to Tibet, he was overcome with thoughts of Akbar the Great (Kokuryukai [Black Dragon Society] history, 'Biographical Accounts of Pioneer Patriots of East Asia', quoted in Anderson, 1955, p. 189). After leaving India he continued on to the Middle East and Europe before returning to Japan.

But this trip was to have tragic consequences: his wife, Kazuko, contracted malaria in India. Refusing to let her illness slow her down, she continued to meet the rigorous schedules demanded of her, and in the end it all proved too much. She died almost as soon as they returned to Japan in 1911, and with her death the one real stabilizing and restraining force on Kozui was lost.

This may seem like a bit of a digression, but without an understanding of Otani Kozui and his motivations, it is all too easy to be led into a belief that Japanese interest in Tibet was largely religious. In Asia, of course, religion and politics often go hand in hand, nevertheless it should not be forgotten that it was Otani, with his vision of 'Great Asianism' and 'compassionate' slaughter in the name of Japanese interests, who sent his brother to meet His Holiness at Wu Tai Shan; and that it was also Otani who was behind the next two emissaries to Lhasa: Aoki Bunkyo and Tada Tokan.

Aoki was in Calcutta when he heard of the Dalai Lama's flight from the Chinese invasion of 1910 (at this point Yajima was still in Tatsienlu, ready to begin his first trip to Lhasa). Well aware of his master's interest in Tibet, he decided, on his own initiative, to try and meet the Tibetan leader, but before he had a chance to put his plans into effect he received a telegram from Otani, never one to miss a trick, instructing him to do just that.

Aoki found Darjeeling crowded with both Buddhist pilgrims and British curiosity seekers, but he managed to obtain permission from the Dalai Lama's interpreter and the British authorities for an audience, probably on the strength of being a representative of the Otanis. After the formal audience he was taken aside for a private talk, and urged His Holiness to do something about the student exchange programme he had discussed with Otani Sonyu

at Wu Tai Shan. He also mentioned that he himself would be very anxious to study in Tibet.

The Tibetan leader had more pressing concerns on his mind, as indeed he had had for the previous two years, and since nothing could be done right away, Aoki went on to London – probably to join Otani Kozui, then for a leisurely tour of Europe. But he had obviously left a forwarding address, for as he was about to return to Japan he received a letter from the Dalai Lama stating that he was now ready to send a student envoy to Japan, and to that end he would like Aoki to stop in Darjeeling.

Once he had arrived there, two months were spent in deciding who the student envoy should be. In the end the choice fell on no ordinary monk but on one of the Dalai Lama's favourites, Tsawa Tritrul, a high incarnate lama and abbot of Mey Tatsang, one of the three colleges of the Sera Monastery. He was originally from a noble Shigatse family<sup>9</sup> and held a *geshé* degree, meaning that he had already put in twenty years of hard study. The Dalai Lama, quite naturally, wanted Tsawa Tritrul to be sent as an envoy from his own government to that of Japan, but Aoki felt that this would cause trouble not only with China but with Russia and England as well, and wanted the exchange kept between the Dalai Lama and the Nishi Honganji. The Dalai Lama had not yet declared independence, and his country was under occupation, so he reluctantly agreed. Even so, Tsawa Tritrul and his two attendants embarked for Japan under a veil of secrecy. They wore Western clothes, and used Japanese names in Calcutta. In Singapore, when they changed ships, they did so as Mongolians.

Obviously the first and most important thing to do in Japan was to study the language, so Tsawa Tritrul and his two attendants first spent six months at the Nishi Honganji headquarters in Kyoto, immersed in Japanese. Tibetan lamas are often prodigious scholars, and judging from the way both Yajima and Aoki describe the natural conversations they had with him in Japanese, the lama must have made considerable progress. Aoki tried to find the time to study Tibetan with him as well.

At first, however, their studies got off to a rocky start when a young man from a family of hereditary Nishi Honganji priests from the northern province of Akita was assigned to assist them. The Tibetans began picking up his strong northern accent and

inflections – much to the annoyance of the aristocratic Kozui, who ordered the young priest to stop teaching and to concentrate on learning Tibetan instead. It had never struck the young man that his dialect was anything but the purest Japanese, and he seems to have been a little offended, particularly when Otani went so far as to order him to stop speaking Japanese altogether and use English instead. The Tibetans were given another teacher, but complained that his lessons were more difficult, and when it was time to go back to India they insisted that their original teacher, of whom they had grown quite fond, should accompany them.

This young man's name was Tada Tokan, and he seems to have been chosen at random, almost as an afterthought to teach the Tibetans, because his brother was one of Otani's elite students. That the choice in the end proved to be such a good one would seem to owe more to chance than to anything else, and no one at this point would have predicted the brilliant future that Tada had ahead of him as a scholar in Tibet.

After these initial six months, the Tibetans moved to a specially built house on the grounds of Nirakuso, Otani's villa at the top of Mount Rokko, overlooking Kobe. This must have been one of the most remarkable buildings of Meiji Japan. Completely designed by Kozui, it had rooms in Chinese, Indian and European styles, and used stone from China and materials from a sunken British ship. There was also a private museum of findings from his expeditions to India and Central Asia, a vast library of books in many languages, and extensive landscaped gardens. Just to top it all off, he had English maids and an English butler. At the foot of the mountain he built a printing press to publish his own works and those of his students. The printing press and the villa were connected by a private cable car system.

A look at one of his guests there gives us an insight into the sort of ambitions Kozui had in Central Asia. This was a Mongolian lama who was not only installed in a house, but furnished with a Japanese 'wife'. His task was to teach the Mongolian language – not only to Tachibana and Nomura, but to nine army officers who studied Mongolian there secretly for three years.

Tibetan monasteries are often institutions of great wealth, and corruption is certainly not unknown. But even the most unscrupulous of abbots are expected to live lives of outward austerity.

Their rooms may be cleaner than those of the average monk, their robes may be of finer material, and their tea of a better quality. But ostentation and sheer vulgarity on the scale of Nirakuso would have been unknown in Tibet and must have been a shock to Tsawa Tritrul, and quite possibly led him later to caution the Dalai Lama to keep a certain distance with the Japanese. His studies, however, were soon to be curtailed.

Events back in Tibet had moved with unpredictable swiftness. In October 1911, Sun Yat-sen's Republican revolution had overthrown the Manchu Empire in China. Many of the Chinese troops in Lhasa and other parts of Tibet had belonged to secret revolutionary societies. They now mutinied, and those who could made their way home or to Lhasa. The looting they did along the way turned the Tibetans even more implacably against Chinese of any political conviction.

Dazang Dadul, hero of the Chaksam Ferry, was given the title of Commander-in-Chief and despatched to Lhasa in charge of ousting the remaining Chinese. Entering Lhasa secretly and contacting loyal officials he conducted an urban guerrilla campaign which, if not entirely successful, soon made it safe for the Dalai Lama to at least consider returning. As one of the Dalai Lama's most trusted advisers, Tsawa Tritrul was now needed in Tibet.

On 23 January 1912, the three Tibetans – along with Aoki, Tada, and another Japanese named Fujitani Sei – left Japan on a British ship bound for Calcutta as a party of Japanese pilgrims. Fujitani was to remain behind in Calcutta as their contact, while the others went straight to Kalimpong. Apparently Aoki and Tada intended only to deliver the Tibetans safely, and then go back to Japan, but they received an unexpectedly warm welcome from the Dalai Lama, who was anxious to get a Japanese perspective on the Chinese Revolution. He then urged them to make the trip to Lhasa, as did Tsawa Tritrul, now elevated to the rank of *Nangma Khyenchen*, or Chamberlain. Both of these far-seeing men felt that Tibet was in need of people well versed in world conditions.

It was only at this point that Aoki began to study Tibetan seriously under Tsawa Tritrul. He also now began to act as an unofficial adviser to the Dalai Lama on Asian affairs, keeping up to date through English newspapers and Japanese reports, and reporting on what he learned. However, as the Dalai Lama's departure was



delayed, British officials began to notice the two Japanese. They went so far as to check up on them and learn their identities, but did not bother them – though it was made clear that they were not to enter Tibet.

Finally, the Dalai Lama set his departure date for 24 June 1912. He decided to take Tsawa Tritrul with him, and again asked the two Japanese to come along, though he must have been aware of British opposition. To this end he gave Aoki the Tibetan name of Thubten Tashi, and a passport written in Japanese and English. Tada was given the name Thubten Gyantshan<sup>10</sup>, and asked to follow when he was ready. It was at this point, just after the Dalai Lama's departure, that Yajima suddenly turned up on his second trip to Lhasa – undoubtedly much to Aoki's surprise and, perhaps, annoyance. He mentions him only briefly at this juncture, saying that he appeared out of the blue skilfully disguised as a native Tibetan, and that he spent his final night in Kalimpong at Aoki's house. Aoki seems to have mentioned to Yajima neither the presence of Japanese-speaking Tsawa Tritrul with the Dalai Lama nor that of Tada in Kalimpong.

Simple envy may have played a part. British opposition to his going to Lhasa had been so strong that all the Dalai Lama could do was ask him to wait behind until the opportunity to sneak in presented itself. So while he had official sanction from Tibet's ruler, and backing from the wealthy Nishi Honganji, Aoki was left kicking his heels in Kalimpong, while this long-haired independent traveller was setting off confidently on his own. Aoki probably did not rate Yajima's chances very highly, and in fact soon after he left ten people of different nationalities were arrested for attempting to enter Tibet illegally. Shortly after Yajima's departure, Kawaguchi – now living in Benares – passed through Kalimpong on his way to a visit in Sikkim.

To allay increasing suspicion, Aoki and Tada moved to a cottage in Ghoom, a village just south of Darjeeling along the narrow-gauge railway line where there is a small but well-known Tibetan temple. Here they spent their days studying the Tibetan language with an old monk (unfortunately, Aoki does not name him: it would be interesting to know if this was the same Serab Gyatso Kawaguchi studied with unsuccessfully fourteen years before). If anyone asked, they said that they had decided to give up the idea of travelling to

Tibet in favour of studying Tibetan and Buddhism at Ghoom. The British were friendly enough as long as they made no attempt to step out of line, and they were even invited to tiffin with the viceroy as a result of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

While they were there the end of an era was reached with the death of the Emperor Meiji on 30 July 1912.<sup>11</sup> The Dalai Lama learned the news by telegraph. He had admired what the emperor had stood for as the progressive leader of an independent Asian Buddhist nation, and he sent a message of condolence to Japan.

But now it is time to return to our other Japanese traveller who, after his heartbreak in Japan, had re-boarded his ship in Yokohama, then changed ships in Singapore for Calcutta, and finally turned up on Aoki's doorstep in Kalimpong.

# Chapter Five

## The Soldier of Fortune and the Diplomat

Once he had landed in Calcutta, Yajima got in touch with two Tibetans, Nyima Gyalpo Pangdatshang – like Garpon Lobsang a government trader – and Phuntsok Bapu, who acted as his interpreter. Unfortunately, since his previous notes disappeared, we do not know if this was their first meeting, if they were friends from Lhasa, or if he knew them from the last time he was in Calcutta. The Pangdatshang family was the richest and most powerful in eastern Tibet. Nyima Gyalpo had a shop in Lower Chitpore Road in Calcutta, and was well known to the British and along the route to Lhasa, but except that Bell tells us that Yajima was ‘an intimate associate’ of his, we know nothing of their relationship.

It is not until this point, as they left by train along with five others for Siliguri and Darjeeling, that the only detailed surviving account written by Yajima begins. It is by no means a polished account, and was probably written shortly after he arrived in Lhasa as first drafts for letters. Written in fountain pen, it consists of fifty-one pages of closely crammed writing in a small notebook, 20 centimetres by 16, with a dark red cover, and was not published until 1983.

As we have seen, Yajima was not a highly educated man, and writing seems not to have come easily to him. In addition, the Japanese language, with its built-in vagaries and obscurities, is filled with pitfalls even for educated native speakers, and its syllabary fails dismally at expressing Tibetan words and names. All of this sometimes makes the account extremely difficult to follow.

Nevertheless, since this is Yajima's only extant travel account, it is worth following his journey in some detail.

Tibet's internal situation had changed a great deal while Yajima had been shovelling coal. Following the overthrow of the Manchu government and the mutiny of so many Chinese soldiers in Tibet, it was now all but a foregone conclusion that the Chinese would soon be ejected from Lhasa, and the Dalai Lama was preparing his return. It is a measure of Nyima Gyalpo Pangdatshang's wealth that he had volunteered a bodyguard of thirty well-armed Khampas, and was going to Kalimpong in order to join the Dalai Lama's retinue.

Just why and how willingly Yajima's Tibetan friends were helping him is not clear, though his own dedication and his belief that he had valuable services to offer Tibet cannot be in doubt. Did he convince them, caught up as they were in the euphoria of the times, of his usefulness? Did they, perhaps, find him a harmless and amusing eccentric? Or did he simply force himself on them to the point where his company was an embarrassment? Whatever their attitude might have been, they were worried that the British might discover him at one of their checkpoints along the railway. Even so, they did little to disguise him except to give him the Tibetan name Dondo Norbu, and the plausible story – since the Khampa dialect was so different from Lhasa Tibetan – that he was another merchant from Kham. Oddly enough, Yajima seems not even to have been wearing Tibetan clothes at this point, and changed into them only on the way from Darjeeling to Kalimpong. As it turned out, the worst that happened was that Nyima Gyalpo was charged thirty rupees Customs duty for his trade goods.

Kalimpong in 1912 was a less significant place than it was shortly to become with Tibetan independence, but it was still the closest sizeable urban centre to Tibet in India, and thus a trading centre of importance. Its position here on the India/Tibet frontier was analogous to that of Tatsienlu on the Szechwan frontier, though here it was wool coming out of Tibet and exchanged for Indian cotton and manufactured goods, rather than tea going in, which created the wealth. Every traveller going from India to Tibet passed through this hilltop market and resort town where the Tibetans, Bhutanese, Nepalis, and Sikkimese came to trade, and the British who could not afford the cooler and more prestigious Darjeeling

came to escape the heat of the plains. It was already well known as a centre for spying, and in unsettled times like these the British could be expected to be on their guard. This is why Yajima was particularly worried about the guard post at the entrance to the town, which – much to his surprise – he found unmanned.

But if he thought that this made him safe here, where he had been detained a year before, he was soon brought back to reality by hearing merchants point him out as ‘the Japanese from last year’, and he did his best to lose himself in the crowd as he crossed the famous bazaar, where much of Tibet’s export trade was conducted, to the house that Nyima Gyalpo Pangdatshang kept. He found it too busy for his peace of mind, so Phuntsok Bapu arranged for him to stay at the house of a Nepali Christian. His host quickly discovered his nationality, but did not tell the British, who do not seem to have become aware of him until after his departure.

Yajima notes that there were many more Tibetans and Chinese in Kalimpong than in the previous year, and that there was an undercurrent of violence indicative of the situation in Tibet itself. The Dalai Lama was camped a few miles up the road at Phedong, the village where Yajima had been arrested the year before. Only two days after Yajima arrived in Kalimpong, on 24 June 1912, the retinue departed on their return journey to Lhasa.

Now some doubts on the part of Yajima’s friends began to manifest themselves, indicating that they were beginning to regard him as a nuisance. The next morning Nyima Gyalpo’s caravan left without even informing him, and when he asked if there was any message, his interpreter replied only that as all the packhorses had been taken by the Dalai Lama’s retinue, Yajima should wait a few days and try to find another caravan. Two days later Phuntsok Bapu came in the late afternoon and announced that he was returning to Calcutta, suggesting that Yajima should go with him and study Tibetan there while awaiting a more favourable opportunity to go to Lhasa. He was quite polite and seemed to want to let him down gently, but the message was none the less clear. Yajima now came out with one of those typical pronouncements that we so often get from the Japanese, but it is surprising coming from such a nonconformist. ‘A Japanese man will die rather than fail in his purpose. I mean to succeed in my adventure. A monkey came and helped me in a dream.’<sup>1</sup>

Phuntsok Bapu replied that since he was bound to be sent back at one of the checkpoints along the way, he might as well simply save himself the trouble and go back with him now. But Yajima was not about to be moved, and Phuntsok, seeing this, considerately gave him the details of the British checkpoints he needed to avoid along the way. The last one would be at Phari, where his photograph had been taken before, and after that he should be safe. They seem to have parted friends.

With all his Tibetan friends now gone, Yajima went and presented himself to Aoki Bunkyo, the other Japanese he had heard was in Kalimpong. They had not met before, and judging from the way Aoki was later to greet Yajima in Lhasa, he does not seem to have been overjoyed at meeting such a renegade. But whatever he may have thought of Yajima, Aoki treated him hospitably, giving him twenty rupees and an umbrella as a going-away gift, and put him up for his final night in Kalimpong.

Yajima travelled light. All he mentions having had with him were two wooden Tibetan bowls, his passport, a razor and a knife, a Japanese-made nail-cutter, eight strings of coral beads (which he felt were more valuable than money), medicine for stomach problems and malaria, a rosary, a Tibetan amulet box (or *gao*), the umbrella that Aoki had given him, some silk handkerchiefs, a pair of dark glasses, and the Japanese flag he was never without. His funds consisted of seventy-two rupees in silver and a hundred rupees in paper money secreted in the amulet box.

There was a checkpoint at the edge of Kalimpong, so Yajima decided it would be safest to leave after dark, setting out on what would turn out to be a bizarre journey to Lhasa at 7.30 p.m. on 28 June 1912. Normally this route from Kalimpong – through Sikkim and across the Jelap La to the Chumbi Valley, then up to Phari, Gyantse and Lhasa – is the easiest and most direct way into Tibet, and is usually accomplished without incident. In this case, however, Yajima's personality, his poor physical condition and sheer incompetence managed to combine with the presence of the Dalai Lama's procession to make the trip a memorable one.

As soon as the sun set, a dense fog settled in, protecting him from prying eyes. After he had passed through Phedong, site of the second checkpoint, it lifted, and Yajima could not help but feel that fortune was shining on his venture. His biggest problem came

from the dogs that constantly pursued him, and his only defence was his umbrella. From Phedong he had to descend to the Teesta River before crossing into Sikkim and climbing again to Gangtok. During this descent the sun rose, and it was only when he noticed how hungry he was that he realized he had forgotten to bring any food. He collapsed from exhaustion beside a stream, and slept away the day. When he awoke he smoked a cigar, and in fact he seemed to live on tobacco for much of the journey.

Another night of walking brought him to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, before dawn. He was now following the trail of the Dalai Lama's procession, and all along the way there were bamboo gates with the word 'Welcome' written in English. These arches were also, for some reason, decorated with the flag of the Chinese Republic, which can hardly have pleased His Holiness.

For someone travelling in disguise and hoping to avoid detection, Yajima did some odd things. Since he had passed this way openly as a Japanese the year before, he knew the eating houses and inns along the road, and he always went first to the ones where he had stayed or eaten before, avoiding them – as he did in Gangtok – only when he thought they were too crowded. It was too early to get the full meal that he wanted after not eating for thirty-six hours, so he bought some Tibetan bread, which he chewed as he continued through the pre-dawn streets of Gangtok in the direction of the Jelap La. He was getting very tired, and says that his step changed 'from that of a happy horse to that of a sick cow' (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry).

His intention had been to travel at night, but he could not find a secure place to sleep for the day. When, at mid-morning, he reached a small town and stopped for a rest at a teashop run by a Chinese with a Tibetan wife, he was too exhausted even to eat; he just smoked another cigar and fell asleep in a corner. The landlord woke him in the early evening, but he was worn out, stiff, hungry, and had a headache: hardly surprising after two days of walking on a diet of cigars. He forwent further travel that night in favour of several bowls of noodles, thirty eggs (twice he mentions eating this extraordinary number of eggs), and a night's sleep. He had not yet been discovered and turned back, but in no other way was it an auspicious start.

In the morning he asked around a caravan camped in the town

to see if he could hire a horse, but as none was to be had, he set off again on foot, this time having the sense to take two days' supply of food with him. The trail now went uphill, so he still found it tough going, but along the way he was able to hire a horse, and two days later he reached Gnatong, the last town in Sikkim before the Jelap La, a pass of over fourteen thousand feet, into Tibet. He got off to a bad start here when the house where he had spent the night the previous year refused him entry.

Another Chinese/Tibetan couple eventually put him up, but no sooner had he entered the house when two Chinese there said something that indicated that they realized he was a disguised Japanese, then ran off. After several bowls of noodles and the inevitable cigar, he was just lying down to go to sleep when a Nepali inspector, four uniformed policemen, and a Tibetan interpreter came in and began to question him.

Either the interpreter took to him and decided to help him out, or he was just a Lhasa snob impatient with provincial accents, for he explained Yajima's bad Tibetan by saying that all Khampas talked that way. They left, but half an hour later five more policemen and the chief returned with a copy of his photograph taken in Phari the year before. He had, of course, been arrested later, and Charles Bell had sent in a report of his entire trip, so he was well known. Obviously the British thought he was worth keeping an eye on. It seems remarkable that even with this photo they were unable to recognize him. Yajima himself explains it like this:

They kept comparing me to the photo, but I was wearing different clothes and had shaved off my moustache. Moreover my head hurt badly. Since Kalimpong I had not eaten properly, my cheeks were hollow because I was tired and suffering from lack of sleep, the contours of my face had changed and my eyes were sunken so that I looked nothing like I had the year before. (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry)

All this after only four days of travel through settled parts of India and Sikkim. How on earth did he expect to get across the empty plains and high passes to Lhasa?

The police came back in the evening, and again compared him with the photograph. When they left he was told that they would return at eight the following morning, and that he should stay put.



His next hurdle was the Jelap La, so the order from the police was almost welcome. Added to his general fatigue, it gave him the excuse he needed to help him decide not to face the climb at night.

When 8 a.m. came, and then 9 a.m., with no sign of the police, Yajima felt justified in sneaking away in the company of a pepper merchant he met at the inn. Originally from eastern Tibet, this man was now living in Pimbithang on the other side of the pass. Paradoxically after his difficulties in the lowlands, the cold on the 14,390-foot pass seemed to give Yajima new strength, and he had no problem getting across. Once on the descent they passed a checkpoint manned by Tibetan soldiers. Since it was raining, Yajima was able to hide behind his umbrella. The unfortunate pepper merchant, however, was taken aside for questioning and had all his pepper confiscated, while Yajima got by with the shouted excuse that he was a servant of Nyima Gyalpo Pangdatshang, on his way from Calcutta to Lhasa. A little further on they came upon the bones of his horse, which had died going the opposite way the previous year, and he covered the skeleton with stones.

After going by several groups of well-dressed people waiting in the rain for the Dalai Lama (whom Yajima had somehow overtaken without noticing), they passed through Yatung and arrived in Pimbithang. When he had last passed through this village of about a hundred houses it had been full of Chinese troops and officials, but now there were only five or six left, and it was obvious now why there were so many more Chinese in Kalimpong. In Kawaguchi's time, Pimbithang had held the third of the infamous checkpoints, but it presented no hindrance now.

Yajima stayed here at the pepper merchant's home for four days, resting and repairing his footwear. Though he was now technically inside Tibet he was still deep in the wooded Chumbi Valley, which was not much different from the country he had been passing through on the other side of the border, and he still had three more British checkpoints to pass. His host told him that he was familiar with all the back trails that avoided checkpoints, soldiers and officials, and could guide him to Shigatse in five days. Deciding to accept the offer, Yajima prepared five days' worth of food, and went to sleep full of excitement.

The trail they took in the morning led them through a dense

forest and above the timber line. When they emerged from the trees, a dense fog set in, but when it lifted Yajima was greeted with a scene as beautiful as any he had seen, with bright wild flowers of many colours setting off the surrounding snow peaks. There was no one else on this obscure trail, and during the night they saw a huge wild yak near their camp, a sure sign that they were a long way from civilization. The morning dawned sunny after a damp and uncomfortable night, so they decided to catch up on their sleep and make a late start.

They had not gone far when the pepper merchant suddenly stopped and announced that he was not going to Shigatse after all. Disgusted at this betrayal, Yajima began to take most of the food for himself; then he heard a wild yell and looked up to see his companion threatening him with a large rock. This was the beginning of one of the most extraordinary robberies in the annals of Tibetan exploration.

The pepper merchant-turned-robber told him to take off all his clothes and show him his money and other belongings. His friend then put Yajima's clothes on over his own, pocketed the seventy silver rupees, eight strings of coral beads and silk handkerchief, announced that he was returning home, and told the naked and shivering Yajima to be grateful he had been left with his life. Now was the time for Yajima to show the true Japanese spirit. 'I thought of calling upon my skill at *jujitsu*, frightening him by using my hands as deadly weapons. But he was over six feet tall, and if I should lose, that would end my chances of accomplishing my purpose' (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry).

But even without the threat of violence, the pepper merchant seems to have had second thoughts about what he was doing to his *karma*, and returned the clothes and twenty rupees. He was obviously not a very experienced thief, and was not really sure how to go about robbery, but he was looking for a way to make up his losses incurred when the border guards confiscated his pepper. Poor Yajima, however, was no sooner dressed than he was told to disrobe again, and they went through this little act five times as the pepper merchant struggled to decide between greed and compassion.

This seemed to tire him out and now he decided, of all things, to take a nap. Yajima was worried that it was getting late, and he

certainly did not want to be out after dark with such an oddball. Not knowing the trail, he had no choice but to wait for the man to wake up, though he did consider killing him in his sleep:

Several times I held a large rock over his head to smash it in. Four times I prepared to slit his throat with a razor as he slept. But though I was a veteran of the Russo-Japanese War, I had never actually killed anyone. While I was still wavering, he woke up. (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry)

They shared a cigarette, and Yajima could think of nothing to do but return to Pimbithang with the man who had robbed him. This certainly seems an odd decision, but it is difficult to think what else he could have done, since he was now totally lost. He had to promise not to say anything about what had happened when they got back. On the way down he was again ordered out of his clothes, and then, just to show he meant business, the pepper merchant picked up a tree branch and beat him half-heartedly. Then he again relented and put a wet robe around him.

Though it was now completely dark, Yajima could tell by the sound of the river that they must be nearing Pimbithang. The thief told him to wait while he answered a call of nature. After promising, Yajima ran off and, by following the sound of the river, reached the bottom of the valley. But though he found his way back to Pimbithang, no one would give him lodgings, so he had to go back to the one house where he was known: that of the pepper merchant.

He found his erstwhile companion drying his clothes by the fire and joking with his family. Yajima simply walked in and announced that as he had not been able to find the trail to Shigatse, and had got soaking wet, he would stay here the next day to dry his clothes. He was told in return that the next day soldiers from Phari would be coming, and all houses would be searched; so he could dry his clothes through the night if he wished, but he would have to leave in the morning. Finally, he was so exhausted that he put his damp clothes back on (it is by no means clear just whose clothes he was wearing by this time) and lay down to sleep. Just to make him a little more uncomfortable, the pepper merchant made a show of sharpening his cooking knife, but Yajima was so exhausted by the eventful day that he drifted off quickly and slept till morning. When

he awoke he pinched himself just to make sure he was still alive, then again started to dry his clothes. While he was thus employed, the Dalai Lama's retinue passed by.

The road would now be full of officials, and he was stuck with the choice between forcing himself on the hospitality of a man who had robbed him and beaten him up, and the possibility of being caught and sent back to Calcutta. Deciding that being sent back would be less unpleasant than being murdered, he set off. Though he never tells us, it seems that in the end he lost his seventy-two silver rupees and his strings of coral, but was allowed to keep his paper money.

It is a long climb out of the narrow and wooded Chumbi Valley to Phari. On the way he met a Tibetan acquaintance who worked for the British and recognized him. He had accompanied His Holiness as far as Phari, and was now on his way back to Chumbi. This man seemed to think it in no way out of the ordinary that Yajima should be there. At Phari he would be back on the plains, and in the first town along this route that was truly Tibetan in character. But the final checkpoint was here and so, in all probability, was his friend Sergeant Johnson, so Yajima was anxious to avoid going through the town itself.

Now that he was out of the valley and up on the plains, the trail would have been impossible to follow in the dark, except that it had been newly repaired for the triumphal return of the Dalai Lama, and was lined on both sides with white stones. Though it was a dark and moonless night, by stopping and lighting a match every now and then (hardly the best way of avoiding detection) Yajima was able to follow the markers. When he heard mule bells and voices he thought he must be approaching the attendants of the Dalai Lama, so he decided to leave the road and go around, guiding himself by the dim lights of Phari. At one point he stopped for a nap, but it was a foolish thing to do outside at this altitude, and he was lucky that the intense cold kept him awake. It never really gets warm around Phari, not even in July.

At about 1 a.m. he calculated that he had passed Phari, and was quite pleased with himself to think that he had negotiated the final checkpoint. Exhausted, he again stopped for a rest, using a rock for a pillow, but soon he was awakened by the sound of yaks. He thought of joining the party, but since he was travelling alone in the middle of the night, and had a strange accent, the caravan

men were suspicious. Remembering what had happened with the pepper merchant, he decided it would be safest to leave them. When it got light he could see that he was not as far beyond Phari as he had thought and, wanting to keep well ahead of the procession, he lengthened his stride.

When a group of cavalymen came his way, he again left the road and followed the banks of a large lake in the middle of what he describes as a small desert dotted with little groups of wild asses. Rejoining the road at a village at the foot of the mountains, he found the local people all busily preparing to welcome the Dalai Lama. It appeared that the troop in charge of setting up his camp went a day or two ahead, chose the ground, and marked out the places for the tents with white stones.

Tired and hungry, Yajima decided to stop for the day, even though it was early, but everywhere he asked had already been commandeered for officials of the retinue, though at least the refusals were friendly and sympathetic. Beyond the village he saw three farmhouses where there were young calves, so he went to them in hopes of some fresh milk. Having gained nothing by humility, he now tried bluster, boldly declaring that he was Nyima Gyalpo Pangdatshang himself. The merchant's name, though obviously not his face, was well known. He obtained a night's lodging and bought tea, meat, butter and *tsampa*. He drank so much milk that he even amazed himself.

In spite of the danger of getting too close to the procession, he wanted to witness the arrival of the Dalai Lama, but His Holiness was always getting delayed along the way to say prayers and receive homage, and did not show up that day. In compensation, he got his first secure night's sleep for some time.

Yajima's geography was no better than Kawaguchi's. He had crossed the Tang La without noting it (at only about a thousand feet higher than Phari, it is indeed hardly noticeable as a pass). It is more surprising that an old soldier should pass the plains of Guru and Tuna without comment, for they were both important during the Younghusband Expedition: Tuna was the uncomfortable winter quarters for the Expedition, while at Guru the most brutal battle of the campaign took place.

At the next village it was the same story: no room at the inn. But after he had bought some *chang* and shared it with a man he met

along the road, the convivial mood produced lodgings. The next night, at Samada, he was less fortunate, and it looked as if he would have to sleep out in the cold. This whole area seldom goes below fourteen thousand feet and sleeping out, even in summer, can have serious consequences for the uninitiated, so when he saw a caravan try to set up camp next to the campsite chosen for the Dalai Lama, he thought he would try to beg shelter. Because of his reluctance to speak up, however, he was mistaken for a thief, dragged into the tent, and questioned by a merchant monk who took a fancy to his umbrella and demanded it as a gift. Then the monk went through his wallet, found his passport and, seeing the Chinese characters on it, accused him of being Chinese.

When the whole caravan began to accuse him loudly of being Chinese, the villagers were awakened and Tibetan soldiers came along. Everyone started shouting at everyone else, and Yajima found himself at the centre of a major row. They took his travel pass, letters and knife, then entered into a long discussion about where he was coming from, where he was going, his name, age, and whether he had parents. Yajima got fed up with all this, and at his most overbearingly Japanese he declared loudly: 'I'm not Chinese. Tibetan, or Nepali. I'm not Indian either, and it is for *your* sakes that I am going to Lhasa!'

He was finally taken to the house of the village headman (where he took the opportunity to fill up on the headman's tea). There he was told that his friend Nyima Gyalpo was due to arrive the next day, and that meanwhile his papers would be sent for perusal by the Dalai Lama's officials.

The telegraph line ran right through Samada, and he was worried that it might be used to report him, but after all, the government of Tibet was right here, and as the area was not under any sort of British administration they had no pressing reason to let the British know. Yajima was placed under a loose form of arrest until it could be decided what to do with him, and he was free to wander around. From the roof of the headman's house he watched the Dalai Lama's procession go by. It began with a troop of cavalry, then came a monk in ceremonial dress escorted by a guard front and back, followed by alternating mule corps and cavalry. A cavalry corps with a red, yellow and white flag (the Tibetan national flag had not yet been designed) preceded the Dalai Lama's yellow

palanquin, escorted by infantrymen. It took about three hours for the entire procession to pass by.

Assuming that he was supposed to follow the rearguard, Yajima left without waiting for instructions. He was stopped almost immediately, but all turned out well, as he was given an escort who carried his belongings as far as that night's camp at Kangma. He was perhaps fortunate to be under detention, for this at least meant that he would have shelter. Kangma was still at nearly fourteen thousand feet.

The sun was setting as they arrived. This was the first time Yajima had seen the camp fully set up, and he describes it as being like a town, with the Dalai Lama's ornately brocaded tent in the centre surrounded by the tents of his high officials a little further away. Servants, cooks, guards, traders, mule and yak corps made up about five hundred tents altogether. Lights twinkled, and voices could be heard both inside and outside the tents. The sounds of donkeys braying and yaks roaring mingled with the sound of the mule bells and the chanting of the monks.

He was taken to the tent of an important monk official named Ragashar, head of a volunteer bodyguard of two hundred soldier monks from the three great monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Ganden. Here he found Nyima Gyalpo Pangdatshang who was, of course, leading his own armed escort of Khampas. His passport, letters and knife were returned, making him feel that he now had official approval. He also felt that the Prime Minister, Paljor Dorje Shatra, must have been informed, since his son, Shesur, came for a long talk which was conducted in a combination of broken English, Hindustani and Tibetan in an effort to find a common language.

Shatra was one of the most prominent figures of early-twentieth-century Tibet. He had spent much of his early life in exile, and as a result he was one of the more outward-looking members of the Tibetan aristocracy. Kawaguchi described him as 'an unscrupulous man . . . resourceful in intrigues . . . (Kawaguchi, 1979, p. 503)', whereas Bell thought he had 'a large and generous mind' (Bell, 1987, p. 233). He must have passed on some of his international outlook to his son Shesur, who was not only anxious to speak with this Japanese traveller, but later became one of Bell's closest Tibetan friends.

Yajima, asked to look over the arms of the bodyguards and comment on which were the most useful, was surprised to find

that the weapon belonging to Ragashar was made at the Tokyo Gun Factory. Just as he was looking this over, one of the servants came and told him that there was a lama who spoke Japanese, and he should go and have a talk with him.

The Japanese traveller could hardly have been more surprised. Aoki's negotiations for the Nishi Honganji and Tsawa Tritrul's trip to Japan had all taken place during the previous year, while he had been stoking coal; and for some reason, as we have seen, Aoki in Kalimpong did not think it worth mentioning that the Tibetans who had just returned from Japan would be with the Dalai Lama's retinue. Since the lama Yajima describes, but does not name, was a high official with access to the Dalai Lama, he was undoubtedly Tsawa Tritrul, not one of his attendants. It was a relief to Yajima to be able to explain himself in his own language, and Tsawa Tritrul told him he would inform the Dalai Lama of what he had said. Meanwhile Nyima Gyalpo and Ragashar warned him to keep himself secret and just say he was from Darjeeling while they decided what should be done. They mollified him by telling him that there would be a horse for him to ride the next day. Unknown to Yajima, however, the British Trade Agent in Gyantse, Basil Gould, had ridden south to meet the entourage, since they were taking a short cut, missing out Gyantse. On being informed of the presence of a Japanese in the procession, he insisted on his being removed from the country, and the Tibetan officials had seemingly complied.

In the morning Yajima was up early and ready to go. It is odd that all his years of travelling in China and Tibet had not accustomed him to delays and setbacks, but every time something went wrong (and something *always* goes wrong in such situations) he became irritable and impatient. While he waited, the tents were all taken down and loaded on to the backs of mules and yaks, and everyone left. While this was going on, the local people and nomads from all around came to pay their respects to the Dalai Lama. The wealthy and the monks approached His Holiness directly, and received either a one-handed or a two-handed blessing. The others prostrated themselves several metres away. When the ceremony was concluded, the Dalai Lama's tent was the last to be taken down. Yajima marvelled that as soon as he had left, the lively campsite immediately reverted to lonely nomad country, and the voices of



the monks that had reverberated the night before were replaced by those of yaks and sheep.

Still Yajima remained, waiting for his horse, but since Nyima Gyalpo and Ragashar were with him, he could hardly have thought he was going to be left behind. Eventually, in a move reminiscent of Kawaguchi, he simply lost patience and went off on his own at about 9.30 a.m. Just how he again worked his way in front of the Dalai Lama's procession is unclear, but later in the day he described watching His Holiness pass from hiding. With the main procession far ahead, he thought that the Dalai Lama and his small group of bodyguards looked rather forlorn. Though he tried to follow the rearguard, he found he could not keep up, and it was well after dark when he reached the camp.

On finding Shesur's tent, he asked to speak with him, only to be roughly dragged off by a soldier. He was sure he was now going to be killed, but when he mentioned Nyima Gyalpo Pangdatshang's name he was instead thrown unceremoniously into the trader's cook tent. The servants, in turn, took him to his friend, and when two other officials came for a visit, they invited him to sleep in their tent. One of them was in charge of Lhasa's holiest temple, the Jokhang, and that night Yajima had the unaccustomed luxury of a bedstead and a carpet to sleep on.

Deciding that striking off on his own again had little to recommend it, he behaved himself the next day. But when he went to Nyima Gyalpo's tent to get his things, he found that the tent had already been struck and his belongings left behind. He was at least able to bribe his elderly mounted escort to let him ride his horse. Though the area appeared to be sparsely inhabited, they went through miles of people lining the road to see their spiritual and temporal leader. This was probably nearly the entire population of Gyantse.

Travelling by horseback, Yajima was able to arrive early, in mid-afternoon, at the next camp by the village of Ralung at the foot of the Karo La. His host from the night before immediately summoned him and told him he thought it would be a good idea if he went back to Calcutta. The Tibetan officials seemed bemused by the whole situation. They probably had no real objection to a man who seemed harmless and could advise them about modern arms, but after all, they had told a British official that they would abide

by the terms of their treaty and get rid of him (Bell was to wire the viceroy that chief ministers accepted Yajima's presence 'without demur').

What they made of his reply, or how it came out in his bad Tibetan, is impossible to say:

Though you have high government ranks, you have the mentality of children, and do not understand what my duty is. I have gone through countless dangers and difficulties to come this far to help and protect you and Tibet. How do you think I can face my countrymen if I turn back to India after coming more than halfway?

From Calcutta, Nyima Gyalpo Pangdatshang presented a letter from me to the Dalai Lama. Since I have received no answer, I assume that means His Holiness has accepted my offer. Since the situation was critical and needed immediate action, I came in haste. How dare you tell me to go back to Calcutta! It is your duty to assist me along the way. (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry)

Officials in most countries would probably have had him shot, or at least locked away as an undesirable lunatic, after such an outburst. Here he was, virtually a beggar, too physically weak to keep up with even the leisurely pace of the procession, but claiming that he had somehow come to save Tibet. However, he was treated considerately and put up at what he describes as an 'inn', while the procession halted for several days for a Buddhist festival at the local monastery.

He was even offered servants, a horse, and travel money if he would return quietly to Calcutta, but he was never threatened with coercion. It would appear that the Tibetan officials were willing to comply with a British request if they could do so without using force, but did not want to feel that they were being told what to do. The British had been good to them during the Dalai Lama's exile, but independence was now in the air. This reasonable offer again caused Yajima to lose his temper and scream: 'You are nothing but children. No matter what you do I will go to Lhasa and fulfil my duty!'

After a two-day rest he was again told he would have a horse. He waited at the inn for two hours, then went outside to find that everyone had gone except the Dalai Lama and his bodyguard, and

even they seemed on the point of departure. His own guard had also disappeared, and he began to suspect that he had been left behind in hopes that he would simply disappear. This, of course, was the last thing he was about to do, and he immediately set off on foot. The trail was in good repair, but narrow, and at the point where the Dalai Lama passed him (riding a horse instead of in his palanquin), there was a sheer wall on one side and a drop on the other. He stood humbly by the cliff and removed his hat, as a Tibetan would, then observed that the Dalai Lama and his officials all dismounted and walked the final thousand metres to the pass.

In spite of his condition of uncertainty, Yajima now seems more observant than he had been for some time. He was impressed with the deep glacier on the north side of the Karo La, and the sudden drop in temperature it causes. He also noted the remains of the trenches from the two highest-altitude battles ever fought, when the British had taken this pass twice from the Tibetans on their march to Lhasa. This is such an inhospitable place – at over sixteen thousand feet – that after taking it the first time they had not thought it worth occupying, and the outgunned but determined Tibetans had simply moved back in.

Yajima reached the campsite around noon, and since he was tired of dealing with officials he decided not to stop but to continue on to the town of Nagartse on the banks of the Yamdruk Tso, the Turquoise Lake, where he had a friend. The country was now much different from the plains he had traversed to the south, and with high mountains on the left, and the beautiful lake bounded by more snowcapped peaks to his right, it should have been nearly impossible to get lost. Somehow, however, he managed it, but when he met a man on the road and claimed to be a servant of Nyima Gyalpo Pangdatshang, he was taken in and treated hospitably. In fact that night he apparently drank so much *chang* that he was ready to stop early the next day. Around noon he began asking for lodgings in a village along the lake, but he was turned away everywhere. A kilometre further on he came upon a rest house for Chinese officials, but the old Tibetan couple in charge of it were afraid to let him stay, though they did sell him some Tibetan bread.

As he was leaving he noticed a small room just inside the gate, and seeing that he was unwatched, he sneaked in. Finding plenty

of straw there, he made himself a comfortable bed and was just drifting off to sleep when he heard the old lady on the roof commenting that the man 'who isn't Chinese, isn't Tibetan, and isn't Nepali' must be a remarkably fast walker, since he was out of sight already. Laughing to himself, he fell asleep for fifteen hours, and left the next morning before it was light.

There was now only one more pass, the Khamba La, between him and the Tsang-po Valley. When he reached the summit and looked down on the scene below, he felt that he was back to civilization. The willows and the barley, he wrote, 'competed to see which could be the greener. Sparrows enjoyed themselves dancing over and between the mountains, mules and yaks raced through the mountain fields. Boys and girls sang as they herded their cattle. It was the perfect Tibetan summer scene' (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry).

But Yajima himself was in poor shape despite his fifteen-hour sleep. His headaches were worse than ever, and the descent had left him with aching legs. His money was nearly gone, and so was his *tsampa*. All in all, when he was arrested after crossing the river in a yak-skin coracle (the light skin of his legs when he rolled up his trousers made the ferry-man suspect that he was Chinese), he regarded it as fortunate. But even here luck was with him. The village headman misunderstood his story about Nyima Gyalpo Pangdatshang, and thought he was talking about a provincial governor with a similar name. Suddenly nothing was too good for him. He was given a room and fed; and he was able to obtain the supplies he needed for the easy three-day walk to Lhasa. As in Sikkim, he claims to have eaten thirty eggs at a sitting. And on that note his diary ends. All we know is that he did make it to Lhasa on 23 July with his headaches, egg-bloated stomach, burning determination, and empty purse.

Aoki was still with Tada at Ghoom, and he remained there until the eighth of September, when a guide was sent by Tibetan representatives in Kalimpong. Along with the guide he departed that same night, leaving Tada behind for a further year of language study. While Aoki was to prove himself a scholar and diplomat of note, there was never anything in him to suggest the traveller, and

he had far more in common with Teramoto than with Kawaguchi or Yajima. Outside of getting to Lhasa and back again he never made any memorable journeys, and his sole accomplishment as a traveller was to have avoided detection by the British.

It was now the end of the monsoon – probably the most uncomfortable time to be on the move in the Himalayan foothills, but for that very reason a good time to avoid detection. Still, they took precautions, for there were reported to be a number of Chinese spies attempting to sneak into Tibet at this time, and Aoki's greatest worry was being mistaken for one of these. His Tibetan was still far from perfect, so he used the by now traditional Japanese disguise of a Mongolian monk. Rather than take the direct route through Sikkim and the Chumbi Valley, his guide took him through the Ilam region of eastern Nepal. His guide also had the foresight to bring along items for petty trade, which lent credence to their pilgrimage story; and Aoki, like Kawaguchi before him, was called upon both to perform Buddhist ceremonies and to play doctor. Again like Kawaguchi, he relied on that marvellous cure-all *hotan*, though happily without the distressing results experienced by his predecessor. His physical limitations and the trouble he experienced with altitude were to slow them down considerably, but with the passport he carried from the Dalai Lama at least he could look forward to his problems ending once he was safely inside Tibet. But at first, after crossing the border on 23 September, even this passport caused him a little trouble since it seemed too good to be believable.

But once Aoki had convinced everyone that his passport was genuine, he was home free. The often-abused *ula* system of free transport and lodgings for officials ensured him a carefree journey, and he was welcomed along the way by local officials. On the second of October he reached Shigatse, and stayed with the family of Tsawa Tritrul.

His relationship with this family put him in an interesting position, for its head was a high official to the Panchen Lama. An unfortunate rivalry – which, as we saw earlier, had its roots in O'Connor's attempts to build up a special relationship with the Panchen Lama and was to plague Tibetan politics through much of the twentieth century – had now grown up between Shigatse and Lhasa. While the Dalai Lama had been away in

Mongolia and China, Shigatse officials tried to strengthen their own lama's position, and during the Chinese occupation they openly collaborated. The majority of the Tibetans, and particularly those in Lhasa, had never accepted the elevation of the reluctant Panchen Lama to a political role he had never aspired to anyway. In the most notorious incident the Panchen Lama had paraded with the *Amban* during the Butter Lamp Festival in place of the Dalai Lama. He was rewarded by having old socks filled with mud dropped on his head.

In fact the Panchen Lama had come from Shigatse to meet the Dalai Lama during his return to Lhasa – an incident that Yajima, with his own preoccupations, somehow missed. Though this action restored their personal relations (and Tibetans are always at pains to point out that there was no personal rancour between the pious Panchen Lama and the more politically minded Dalai Lama), officials from both sides would continue to cause problems.

Tsawa Tritrul's family had a foot in both camps. The father and one of the sons were in the service of the Panchen Lama, one daughter was married to an official of the Dalai Lama, and of course Tsawa Tritrul himself was one of the Dalai Lama's most trusted aides. Aoki was fortunate in being associated with one of the few families able to bridge the widening gap between the two incarnations. As we shall see in the next chapter, Kawaguchi's close association with the Panchen Lama was to lead a to cool reception on his return to Lhasa.

A few days later, on 8 October, a letter from Tsawa Tritrul, who was now in Lhasa trying to negotiate with the Chinese, directed Aoki to Chokhor Yangtse, not far from Nagartse on the Yamdruk Tso, where the Dalai Lama now had his headquarters while he waited for the Chinese to leave or be driven out of Lhasa. Aoki travelled there in style, dressed as a gentleman and accompanied by a servant. Tsawa Tritrul had arrived there from Lhasa two days before, and the two sat up long into the night of Aoki's arrival, discussing in Japanese the agreement he had negotiated in the capital.

There was a new spirit in the Tibetan camp. Shortly before, the Dalai Lama had received a telegram from Chinese President Yuan Shi-kai, apologizing for any inconvenience caused by the Chinese invasion and restoring him to the ranks of which he had

been stripped at the time of the Younghusband Expedition. One wonders if the Chinese really expected the Tibetan leader to fall for this sort of blackmail after all he had been through. In his reply he made it clear that he sought no rank or honours from the Chinese, and that he was assuming both spiritual and temporal power over Tibet. The Chinese now had only one function in his country, and that was to leave.

The next day, the sixteenth, Aoki was summoned to an audience with the Dalai Lama. Though he had Tsawa Tritrul as interpreter, he was able to understand all the questions put to him, but he did not have enough confidence in his honorific Tibetan to be able to reply. When Aoki expressed the hope that his presence in Tibet would strengthen relations between the Dalai Lama and the Nishi Honganji, the former replied that he hoped 'relations between Japan and Tibet would not stop with merely a relationship between Honganji and the Tibetan government, but would be extended to include the various sects of Japan and the Imperial Japanese Government' (Aoki, 1987; trans. Berry).

Aoki lost no time in establishing himself with the most powerful men in the land. In Lhasa, several high-ranking collaborators had been executed, and the resulting death of the head of the influential Tsarong family, who had served in the puppet government under the Chinese, was indirectly to influence the futures of both Aoki and Yajima.

His demise left the aristocratic Tsarongs without a lay male to serve the government. By Tibetan custom, in such a case the estate might be claimed by relatives, or the government might give it to a monastery. In this case, despite the alleged treachery of its head, no blame was attached to the family as a whole. To avoid the dissolution of the family Tsawa Tritrul put forth the suggestion that Dazang Dadul – the same young man who had gone into exile with the Dalai Lama in 1904, held the Chinese at bay at the Chaksam Ferry, and was now Commander-in-Chief – should marry the widow and take the Tsarong name. He was still only twenty-five years old. This proposal was accepted, and in years to come Tsarong was to become well known as the most forward-looking man in Tibet, the friend and host of most foreigners to visit Lhasa. He was to show a particular interest in Japan.

The newly ennobled Tsarong came to see Aoki the day after the

audience. They had met earlier, in India, when he had still been a commoner. Tsarong gave Aoki a complete set of Tibetan clothes, telling him that as long as he was in Tibet he should dress like a Tibetan, and said he looked forward to them working together.

Though Aoki wanted to go ahead and see the fighting in Lhasa, the Dalai Lama forbade it, not wanting to take any chances with a foreign representative, but he did have other things for him to do. One of the Tibetan leader's dreams was to establish at least some basic industrialization. This would be virtually impossible in a land where the only fuel was dried yak dung; hoping to discover coal, he asked Aoki and Tsarong to explore the area and see if they could find any coal deposits. Since neither man was a mining engineer it would have been surprising had they succeeded, but Aoki was also asked to order coal samples from Japan.<sup>2</sup>

Having been chased out of the country twice in six years by two different powers, the Tibetan leader had developed an understandable interest in strengthening his defences, and, remembering how decisively the Japanese had defeated both China and Russia, he asked Aoki to send home for some Japanese military manuals. Though he was by no means certain if the Japanese military would reply favourably, Aoki did so, and they arrived in Lhasa five months later. Much of Aoki's work in Tibet involved translating these Japanese military treatises.

One project in which Aoki was involved has had lasting results. Apparently the Dalai Lama mentioned to him that he was thinking of introducing something Tibet had never had before: a national flag. It was a natural enough idea, since he had just told the Chinese he was taking over temporal power. According to Aoki's account, he and Tsarong put together a number of Buddhist and Tibetan symbols, including an alternating red and blue sun-ray pattern which Aoki claims to have borrowed from the Japanese battle flag. But the pattern is also a potent symbol to the Tibetans: the six red rays represent the six original peoples of Tibet, and the alternating red and blue are based on the colours of two protective deities. Aoki also says that the symmetrical snow mountain in the bottom of the flag was patterned after Fuji, though Fuji is truncated and this is peaked. At any rate, the snow lions and other Buddhist symbols are purely Tibetan, and had been used on Tibetan battle flags for centuries; and the whole effect, surrounded by the yellow



border of the Dalai Lama's Gelupa sect, is quite stunning. If Aoki's account is to be believed, he and Tsarong simply put all these symbols together without any serious thought, and painted them on a placard. The pattern caught the Dalai Lama's eye, and he liked the overall effect so much that he approved the design as the new flag.

Eventually, as the Chinese began leaving and the capital was pacified, Tsarong was again sent ahead to make sure everything was safe for the Dalai Lama's return. This was in September, and further complications would delay that return until January.

Meanwhile, Yajima had been in Lhasa since July. He arrived at a time of near total confusion in the capital, with the remnant of the Chinese forces still battling with the Tibetans, who were trying to oust them. Back in September of the previous year, the Chinese forces which had not mutinied and gone home had reneged on a promise to evacuate the capital, possibly on the orders of the president of the new republic, Yuan Shi-kai. Instead they had attacked the Sera monastery, where Kawaguchi had lived, though they were later forced to withdraw to the city. Since Chinese forces had evacuated other parts of the country, with the exception of the extreme east bordering on China, Lhasa was their last stand, and the fighting was fierce and destructive. One important monastery – Tangyeling, in the centre of Lhasa – had sided with the Chinese troops, giving them a fortified position and supplies.

Streets formed the front lines; each side dug tunnels under the other's positions, and set off explosives in them. Yajima, the only foreigner to have witnessed any of the fighting, says that by the time he arrived two thirds of Lhasa's small streets had been destroyed, and the town looked so different that it was difficult to find his way around. He did, however, manage to find the house of Garpon Lobsang with whom he had stayed before. The merchant was amazed to see him again, especially at such a time. Lhasa had never been known for its cleanliness, but now the streets were so dangerous that they were totally neglected. At midsummer it can get quite hot, and the whole town stank. Piles of excrement were everywhere. Stray bullets killed young and old, and Lhasa's ubiquitous wild dogs fought over their corpses.

Yajima was by no means impressed with Tibetan military leadership. 'When the officers came to inspect the siege they would scream with joy and fire their matchlocks off in all directions, but as soon as they left the troops became immobile. At night the Tibetan officers would go home to sleep' (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry). Another reason the Tibetans were faring so poorly was that they were using matchlocks against a Chinese army with modern equipment.

One day Yajima and Garpon Lobsang went to have a look at the front lines. As they walked along, the Tibetan soldier behind Yajima was hit by a bullet and killed instantly. This narrow escape strengthened his belief that he was in Tibet on some sort of divine mission.

Back in India, meanwhile, the British had no idea what he was about. A telegram from Charles Bell dated 3 August states that Yajima is at Samding, and that the Chief Ministers acquiesced to his presence, when in fact they did not know what had become of him either.

A fresh cease-fire was declared on 8 August at the request of the Chinese, and Tsawa Tritrul was sent as an envoy to negotiate a settlement. A Nepali diplomat acted as arbitrator between the two sides. The Tibetans were remarkably generous, considering all the Chinese had put them through. At first they were even willing to allow the *Amban* to stay as a kind of ambassador. The Chinese commander Chung-yin and all his troops were ordered out of the country within fifteen days, but the cost of their transport would be paid by the Tibetan side. It was apparently disagreement among the Chinese that led to the *Amban* leaving as well. A letter from Yuan Shih-kai in Peking appointed Chung-yin in his place, and ordered him to hold out. Yajima describes the departure of the first contingent:

Beginning on 13 August more than twelve hundred people led by the *Amban*, on mules, horses, and yaks, were escorted from Lhasa. Everyone was surprised to see how much they took with them. It was typical of the Chinese to think more of their possessions than of their lives. (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry)

Chung-yin, hoping to give substance to his new title of *Amban*, was not about to obey the treaty, and stayed on in Lhasa hoping

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for reinforcements from Peking. On 23 September he reopened hostilities, and Yajima was witness to an example of the brutality latent in the Tibetans as they retaliated:

The heads, legs, and arms of five Chinese killed were displayed in the streets. Crowds gathered and shouted 'Pigs, thieves!' as they threw stones at the gruesome remains. Several days later they became food for the wild dogs. (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry)

In spite of the depleted state of the Chinese forces the Tibetans were still not faring very well, largely owing to their indiscipline and antiquated weapons. At 2 a.m. on the tenth of November the Chinese launched what seemed like a major attack. It was so fierce that for a time it was feared that all of Lhasa would fall, but in reality it was just a large-scale last-ditch raid for food by the starving Chinese forces.

After the failure of the attack on 10 November, the Chinese forces began to surrender bit by bit. Chung-yin, the last vestige of Chinese power and prestige in Lhasa was escorted out of Lhasa on 15 and 16 December. Yajima wryly comments: 'As in any country a number of wealthy merchants in Lhasa made a killing off the fighting.'

Now that the last of the Chinese were gone, life in Lhasa quickly returned to normal. Repairs to damaged houses were carried out so quickly that Yajima was amazed, and he felt that it would not be long before the city was its old self again. A post office was established at the end of December, largely so that the Dalai Lama, still by the Yamdruk Tso, could communicate with his officials in Lhasa. But by linking up with the British-run post office in Gyantse, this new system made communications with the outside world much easier. Also at the end of December a police force was established, with two hundred and fifty soldiers becoming police officers. At each crossroads, and at the entrances to the town, more than a dozen officers were stationed. As in any occupation, the Chinese had spawned collaborators. Peking's intentions were clear, and officials in Lhasa wanted to take no chances on vestigial pro-Chinese elements causing trouble when the Dalai Lama returned.

On New Year's Day 1913, Yajima unpacked the Japanese flag that

he had carried with him on all his travels and flew it over the house of his host. This was the first time the Japanese flag had been seen in the city of Lhasa, and it caused quite a stir:

People gathered to see it, wondering what it was. My host was so proud of it that he forgot to eat, as he was kept busy explaining. It was just like a big crowd in front of a temple. The townspeople had never seen such a thing as a national flag before and they thought it was a reward from the government to the merchant for his efforts in the recent battle. (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry)

Around sunset two 'drunken officials' came and reprimanded the merchant for flying the flag without permission. Yajima was taken to a higher official, and told that there would be a conference about the flag the next day. This official wanted to keep the precious flag for the night, but 'I had kept that flag with me through thick and thin throughout my travels, and was not about to let it go. If they really needed it, I said, they could come and get it tomorrow.' The flag went back and forth several times, and the final decision was that Yajima could raise it inside the house, but not on the roof. Disgusted by the whole affair, Yajima seems not to have considered that a newly independent nation which had just ousted a hated enemy might be a little sensitive over just whose flags were being flown in its capital.

The Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa on 20 January 1913. News of his impending arrival had spread far and wide, and Lhasa's population nearly trebled to sixty thousand as people walked for up to a month to see his triumphal entry. Yajima mentions one man in particular who interested him in the procession: a former Chinese colonel named Hsieh Kuo-liang who, along with three other officers, had defected to the Tibetan side. He was said to have received some training from the Japanese military in China, and to be able to speak some Japanese. When he had switched sides, he had taken with him more than thirty thousand yuan of official money which he donated to the Tibetan cause. He had then gone to Sera and lived as a monk until the Chinese laid siege to the monastery, then he donned his old uniform and went among the Chinese spreading false rumours.

The day before the Dalai Lama's return, as Yajima was walking

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through Lhasa, he saw a young man in a shop dressed as a Mongolian monk:

From behind I thought he looked like Aoki Bunkyo, whom I had last seen in Kalimpong, so I entered the shop and made certain it was him. As I was about to speak he seemed to turn purposely away from me. 'You silly monk,' I thought, a little offended, but I pretended to notice nothing, and waited outside for him to finish his shopping. (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry)

It was an odd sort of reunion, and though they later went to Yajima's residence and had a long talk (which confirmed for Yajima the rumours he had heard about Japan having a new emperor), one is left with the impression that Aoki was not happy about sharing Tibet with his countryman. In fact, though they were later to work together on several projects for the Dalai Lama, Aoki devotes no more than a sentence or two to Yajima in his book of over three hundred pages, and about the same amount of space to Tada and Kawaguchi, who were also in Lhasa while he was there. It is a pity that he did not tell us more about his countrymen, since for the next few years, until Sir Charles Bell's visit in 1920, the Japanese would have a monopoly on foreign presence in Lhasa.

# Chapter Six

## The Years of Promise

As 1913, the second year of the new Taisho Era by the Japanese calendar, opened, there were two Japanese living in Lhasa, and both were destined to play a part in the immediate future of the development of the nation. Yajima, however, found himself unemployed for the moment. All his hopes for saving and 'developing' Tibet were simply not noticed amidst so much other activity. In order to support himself he was forced to turn to petty trade, and opened a shop. No record survives to tell us just what he was trading in, or where his shop was located. Aoki was already busy, beginning his formal studies and working for the Dalai Lama. The military manuals he had sent to Japan for soon arrived, and he was hard at work translating them.

Meanwhile, beyond Tibet's borders, events were taking place that would define how Tibet and neighbouring countries looked at one another over the next thirty or forty years. For differing reasons the Tibetans, the Chinese and the British were all anxious to clarify Tibet's international situation. The Tibetans wanted to be recognized as a fully independent nation within what they considered their traditional borders, which stretched all the way to Kokonor and Kumbum in the northeast and Tatsienlu in the east. The Chinese wanted Tibet recognized as an integral part of China, while the British were hoping to separate Tibet and China as far as possible so that they could exert their own influence. Despite Chinese reluctance, a conference was called in Simla, the summer capital of British India, in October 1913. Much to the annoyance of the Chinese, the Tibetan delegate Paljor Dorje

Shatra (the father of Yajima's friend Shesur) was accorded the title of Plenipotentiary, giving him a status equal to the Chinese representative.

The treaty resulting from the Simla Conference not only defined Tibet internationally until its independent status was removed by force in 1950, but gave rise to one of the more vexed questions of international diplomacy, a question which has never been fully resolved: the difference between sovereignty and suzerainty. This came up largely because the Tibetan and Chinese positions were so far apart that the viceroy, Sir Henry McMahon, who acted as the British plenipotentiary, was struggling to find some sort of common ground. According to Hugh Richardson: 'The problem was to insure the reality of Tibetan autonomy but still leave the Chinese with a position of sufficient dignity' (Richardson, 1984, p. 109). So in order to save Chinese face, the Tibetans reluctantly agreed, at British urging, to recognize that China was 'suzerain' but not 'sovereign' in Tibet. Just what this means has been the subject of endless wrangles since. Again according to Richardson:

A precise definition of 'suzerainty', and of its counterpart 'autonomy', is impossible because the words have to be interpreted in accordance with the circumstances of each particular case; but authorities on International Law hold that suzerainty is by no means the same as sovereignty, and that an autonomous state under the suzerainty of another is not precluded from having an international personality. (ibid., p. 103)

It is worth summarizing the conclusions of the treaty that emerged from the conference, even though (or perhaps because) the Chinese refused to sign. Because there was such a difference in the borders claimed by Tibet and China, the borders of Tibet were drawn in such a way as to create two regions, which were called Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet. Outer Tibet contained Lhasa and the other important population centres of central Tibet; while Inner Tibet was made up of the vast regions of Amdo and Kham, where the population was Tibetan but the Lhasa government had not actually ruled for centuries. Britain and China would recognize that Tibet was under Chinese suzerainty,

but also had to recognize the autonomy of Outer Tibet and agree not to interfere in its internal affairs. China would not be allowed to station troops or officials in Outer Tibet, with the exception of an *Amban* with a three-hundred-man escort. The treaty was eventually signed in July 1914 by the Tibetans and the British, but rejected by the Chinese (after it had been initialled by their representative) who, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, still claimed that Tibet was an integral part of China.

Back in Lhasa, Yajima was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with shopkeeping, and to fill in his time he asked for permission to make a street map of the city. Accompanied by Tibetan guards, he spent a month making a detailed map of everything within a six-kilometre radius of central Lhasa. The map was then presented to the Dalai Lama. Apparently no one had ever made a map of this type before, and the Dalai Lama was said to have been so pleased with it that he kept it.

The map drew the attention of both the Dalai Lama and Tsarong to this Japanese living quietly in their midst. Tsarong, who was quickly rising to become the most powerful man in the country, approached Yajima and asked him if he could design and supervise the building of a new barracks for a thousand soldiers<sup>1</sup> to replace buildings destroyed in the fighting with the Chinese. Though he had no experience with architecture or building work, this was just the sort of opportunity he had been waiting for. He drew up plans from memory of Japanese-style barracks and submitted them to the Dalai Lama, who was so impressed that he gave Yajima the job of building the barracks in the grounds of the Norbu Lingka, the summer palace several miles to the west of Lhasa. In order to be nearer his work, he was allowed to live in the grounds.

Yajima's work on the barracks was so satisfactory that he was soon given another, more significant job. The Dalai Lama felt that one of the most important tasks facing the new Tibet was the strengthening of the armed forces, since none of his plans or reforms could be put into effect unless the security and integrity of the country could be guaranteed. In order to decide



which military system best suited the Tibetans, he decided to have three different groups trained in Russian, British and Japanese methods. Later a competition would be held to decide between them.

A Buriat Mongol was in charge of the Russian section, which trained at the former site of the Tangyeling Monastery, now razed to the ground after siding with the Chinese. A Tibetan who had been trained in India was put in charge of the British section at the site of the former Chinese barracks. Yajima, of course, trained the Japanese section at the Norbu Lingka. Since the Tibetan language was short on modern military terms, Russian, English and Japanese were employed respectively for commands by each section, which must have led to some confusion when they were later amalgamated.

Yajima drilled his troops for a total of three years. His unit had several advantages over the other two. For one thing it was the largest, and the only one trained by a qualified military instructor, for Yajima, of course, had been an instructor both at the Toyama Military College in Tokyo and for a time in Chungking. The Russian-trained troops, he claimed, did little but marching drill, while the unit trained in British methods was only of company size. Yajima's infantry training went so well that he was even asked to organize and train a cavalry unit. Unwilling to admit that anything was beyond him, he took up the challenge.

Yajima is still remembered fondly by the Tibetans for his services to the state. During his busiest period, at the peak of his success he married a Tibetan lady, the daughter of a trader named Tsonqpon Wanchuk ('tsonqpon' is a title meaning 'trader'), though Yajima's inconsistent and inaccurate transliteration of Tibetan names and places into Japanese makes the family difficult to identify. He gives his bride's name as 'Nobura', which probably stands for 'Norbu-la', the 'la' being an honorific added to names of Tibetan men and women. Photographs show that she was an exceptionally attractive woman, and the Dalai Lama gave special permission for her to live at the Norbu Lingka, where women were not normally allowed to reside.

Despite Yajima's success in training the troops, he was doomed to disappointment when the review was held in 1916 and it was

decided to adopt the British system. According to Yajima, his troops were by far the best, and were recognized as such by the Dalai Lama. 'We won a complete victory,' he states categorically. Why, then, was the British system declared the victor? Yajima, of course, felt that this was the result of behind-the-scenes manoeuvring and favouritism. He may well have been correct, since Charles Bell put it like this:

A Russian Buriat and a Japanese had for some time been training Tibetan detachments according to their own methods. The Tibetan Government had engaged these at the time when the attitude of the British Government was doubtful, if not unfriendly. Now that the friendliness had been restored, they stopped the Russian and Japanese drill and adopted British methods throughout their army. The three systems were subjected to a formal inspection, at which it was decided that the British system was the best. (Bell, 1924, pp. 163–4)

Or it may simply have been a matter of logistics. Britain was right next door in India, while Japan was very far away, and it was proving increasingly difficult – for reasons we shall soon look into – to interest the Japanese government in Tibet's military needs. Yet there remains something inconclusive about the British victory, for long after Yajima left Tibet he was still making attempts to get Japanese military advisers to Lhasa – attempts that were successfully blocked by the British in China.

There is one interesting footnote to all this military activity. Hostilities between Tibet and China were by no means at an end, particularly in the east. In fact, the Chinese even attacked eastern Tibet during the Simla Conference. But no longer were the Tibetans facing the full might of the Chinese nation. The Republican Revolution rapidly began to fall apart, and after the fall of Yuan Shih-kai in 1916, the age of the warlords began. In 1917 heavy fighting broke out between Tibetan troops commanded by the Kalon Lama and forces under the governor of Szechwan, but this time the Tibetans were so successful that they not only recaptured Chamdo but threatened Tatsienlu. The British consul, Eric Teichman, was called in to negotiate a peace settlement between the two sides, and he observed of the new Tibetan army:

Autonomous Tibet . . . had reorganized and strengthened her frontier army. By the year 1917 the Tibetan Commander-in-Chief, the Kalon Lama, who had faced the Chinese four years previously with untrained and ill-equipped levies, had at his disposal several regiments of comparatively efficient troops, who were as superior to the worn-out Chinese frontier forces as Chao Erh-feng's men had been to the tribesmen and lamas of Kham ten years before. (Teichman, 1922, pp.51)

These were certainly troops either trained by Yajima or trained in competition to his own men, and either way Yajima can claim much of the credit for this success.

But meanwhile, back in 1913, a third Japanese had arrived: Tada Tokan, who was last seen in Ghoom studying Tibetan with Aoki. After Aoki had successfully avoided British officials, Tada was watched more closely than ever. Finally, he put them off-guard by faking a telegram from Japan saying that his mother was dying, so he would have to go home. The official assigned to him even commiserated, saying what a shame it was that someone who spoke Tibetan so well would not have a chance to go to Tibet.

Tada stayed only a single night in Calcutta with Japanese friends before changing into Nepalese clothes and taking a third-class train north. He had decided on a route through Bhutan, since he thought he would encounter the fewest British there. After spending a night on the Bhutanese border with a Tibetan monk he knew from Calcutta who was living there secretly with a woman ('we each had a secret'), he was amazed, on crossing the border, to see his photograph displayed there. The photo had been taken on the occasion of his and Aoki's tiffin with the viceroy.

The trip through Bhutan was even more difficult than he had expected, and it even bore some similarities to the way Kawaguchi had travelled through Tibet. Like Kawaguchi, Tada was able to enjoy the hospitality of a local family for a time after assisting them with a religious ceremony, in this case a funeral. He summarizes the trip in an odd little volume called *The Thirteenth Dalai Lama* (1965), which he wrote himself in English, as follows.

I was harassed by extreme heat, unbearable humidity, wild beasts, poisonous snakes, and was persecuted by the suspicious natives. In order to beguile the natives, I was forced to walk barefoot. From the eastern frontier of Mt. Chomo Lari, I trod on across the Himalayan range, although there was no road to speak of. (p. 89)

Once he was actually in Tibet, his situation improved little. Either his passport from the Dalai Lama was regarded as counterfeit, or the villages through which he passed were too poor to offer any assistance. In the end it took him thirty-five days from entering Bhutan to reach Lhasa, and shortly afterwards he had an audience with the Dalai Lama at the Norbu Lingka.

His Holiness wanted Tada to begin studying at one of the great monasteries. Feeling that twenty-one was a little young to renounce the world, Tada asked if he could live as a layman and study with a tutor. For this he was admonished in no uncertain terms by the Dalai Lama, and told that since he had come all this way, he should experience proper Tibetan-style study. If he felt he was not up to it, he should simply return to Japan.

Having put Tada in his place, His Holiness summoned the abbots of Drepung, Sera and Ganden, to see which one would take him. At first all three objected to what they regarded as a sully of the purity of their faith, saying it would be 'like putting a drop of blood into a cup of pure white milk'. The Dalai Lama, however, having made up his mind, was never one to be bullied. He said that having established to his own satisfaction that Japan was a Buddhist country, he could see no objection to accepting a Japanese into one of the monasteries. In the end it was decided by a throw of the dice that Tada would enter Sera, and he was duly installed in the Hamdong Khamtsen of Je Tatsang, the largest of Sera's three colleges.

Je Tatsang is the same college with which Kawaguchi was associated. Each college, or *tatsang*, has a number of dormitories, or *khamtsan*, attached to it. Hamdong Khamtsan (where Mongolian monks stayed, and where Tada was put because he too was from the 'east') has a particularly fine location, just on the other side of the debating garden from Je Tatsang. The debating garden was one of Kawaguchi's favourite spots in all of Tibet, and it was

here that he heard the mysterious voice telling him to leave the country.

The life of a scholar monk in a Tibetan monastery is by no means an easy one. Tada's sight suffered from the long hours of study in bad light, heating and privacy were practically non-existent, and he seems usually to have been hungry, though he was given special privileges and allowed to occupy the entire top floor of a detached building rather than the small, cramped room that would have been normal for a young monk. He was in fact treated like a minor incarnation, but there were disadvantages to this, since extra expenses were entailed and his income was always limited.

Though Aoki barely mentions him (which is a little odd, since they were both representatives of the Nishi Honganji) both Kawaguchi and Yajima mention feeding him when he came to Lhasa. So emaciated did he appear that Kawaguchi even broke his strict vegetarian principles and made sure that Tada had plenty of meat to build him up. Yajima claims that Tada was envious of his own luxurious lifestyle at the Norbu Lingka, but this seems unlikely, or Tada would not have been able to stick out his ten years of study.<sup>2</sup>

It was probably not until after Aoki's departure that he had much to do with politics, and Tada emphasizes that his relationship with the Dalai Lama was essentially that of master and disciple. During his second year in Lhasa he was allowed to attend religious lectures by the Dalai Lama, though a mere two years of study by no means qualified him for this honour. But His Holiness felt that he was someone important who would spread Buddhist doctrines on his return to his own country, so he was worthy of special treatment.

It was Aoki who was most in the thick of things with the Dalai Lama. Now that he was back in Lhasa for good, having seen so much of China and India, His Holiness could not wait to come to grips with his country's problems in an effort to forge a modern nation. His efforts to strengthen the army have already been mentioned. Aoki had little to do with this, though he did spend much of his time translating the military manuals that had come from Japan, and he must have had at least some contact with Yajima in connection with this work.

Just as important in the long run was reforming the education system. In fact there was no real system at the time, except in the

monasteries. At one time this had been sufficient for the country's needs, producing large numbers of literate men and lesser numbers of literate women in convents, as well as a few people of great learning. But the system had grown corrupt and outdated over the years. Often the knowledge obtained in a monastery was so narrow and blinkered that a scholar who had spent many years learning the sacred texts was unable to compose a readable sentence, or even write his name. Short of entering a monastery or convent, there was virtually no opportunity for education for those outside the nobility. Though a few nobles were beginning to send their children to study in Darjeeling, there was nothing else to prepare students for the twentieth-century world.

Aoki was asked to send to Japan for textbooks, and books on education in general. These were eventually obtained through Fujitani in Calcutta, and the Dalai Lama ordered Aoki to draw up a plan for a system of elementary schools. At this point, however, the extreme conservatism of the monks created a stone wall of opposition, and nothing really seems to have been done. Aoki felt that an additional reason for the failure of the project was that it was impossible to get hold of foreign teachers anyway, because World War I occupied the attentions of Europe, and relations with China continued to be strained. This, however, seems a little unrealistic of him, and considering the opposition of the monks, it is difficult to imagine foreign teachers in Tibet at that time.

The whole story of Tibetan attempts at modern secular education in the twentieth century is a dismal one, even though countries were literally queueing up to assist them. The well-known trip of the four boys who went to England and studied at Rugby School is a case in point. It was largely financed by the government of India, which feared that Russia and Japan were prepared to pay for students to visit their own respective countries, so wanted to head them off by getting in on the act first. Their fate was all too indicative of the intentions of the conservative Establishment. There was little for them to do on their return, and they had no real effect on the development of their country. A British school set up in Gyantse in the 1920s under Frank Ludlow operated for only three years before its closure was forced by well-intentioned but misguided monks who feared for the integrity of their Buddhist heritage.

Aoki was also the Dalai Lama's principal adviser on foreign affairs. About once a week he would be called either to the Norbu Lingka or to the Potala to give His Holiness what amounted to a news bulletin which he summarized from Japanese press despatches and English newspapers. The Dalai Lama himself subscribed to two Calcutta journals, the *Statesman* and the *Englishman*. Just how competent Aoki's English was it is difficult to say. Certainly in terms of speaking ability it could not compare with his Tibetan, and later Charles Bell was to find Tibetan the easiest language in which to communicate with him.

Aoki had been sent to Lhasa primarily to study, and despite all his political activities he did put a great deal of effort into this, though as a scholar he lagged far behind Kawaguchi and Tada. As with Tada, the Dalai Lama personally supervised his studies, but in other ways their lives and modes of study were completely different. Though Aoki spent a short time at Drepung, the largest of the three great monasteries near Lhasa (and in fact, at the time, the largest monastery in the world, with a population of between seven thousand and ten thousand) he soon moved to Lhasa, and lived in luxurious quarters in the home of the noble Phunkhang family. This family had been elevated to the nobility, as was the custom, when they had produced a Dalai Lama (the head of the family was the nephew of the eleventh), and was now one of the richest and most prominent in Lhasa. In his way of life Aoki fitted into the flamboyant style of the Nishi Honganji under the leadership of Otani Kozui far more than did Tada. While the latter continued to study in poverty by the light of butter lamps, often having to borrow to supplement his meagre stipends while waiting for money to arrive from home, Aoki was given a generous allowance and had access to Lhasa's most prestigious tutors.

His most important task was to master the Tibetan language, and he spent six hours a day – two with his tutor and four in individual study – working on all aspects of Tibetan, from colloquial pronunciation to the formal language of official documents. After the first year he was able to move on to more advanced studies under Tsawa Tritrul. The latter was such a high official that it would have been unseemly for him to go to Aoki's residence, so Aoki went for his lessons either to the Potala or to the Norbu Lingka.

Obviously his was a busy schedule: he rose at seven and did

not go to bed until eleven; most of the hours in between were taken up with either his studies or his official duties. But he must somehow have found time for his recreational activities. He was the first amateur photographer to live in Lhasa, and one of the reasons for the strained relations between him and Tada was his rumoured liaison with a widow on the Barkhor, the circular market and pilgrim street going around the Jokhang.

The year 1914 also saw the return to Tibet of that grand old man of Tibetan exploration, Kawaguchi Ekai. It might be remembered that back in 1905, when Kawaguchi first met the Panchen Lama in Bodh Gaya, he received an invitation to visit Shigatse so that they could exchange Japanese and Tibetan scriptures. Kawaguchi had lived ever since in Benares studying Sanskrit, sometimes in conditions of some poverty, until he was rescued by some visiting Japanese who were so shocked by his living conditions that they took up a collection in Japan for him. To his credit he tried to turn this down, saying that he was quite content with his lot, but he had eventually been prevailed upon to accept, and in recent years he had been spending his summers in Darjeeling, where he renewed his acquaintance with Surat Chandra Das. The aging Das was about to publish the Tibetan Grammar on which he had been working for many years, and he asked Kawaguchi to correct the proofs for him, since the print was too small for his eyes.

It has already been noted that in 1912, just after Yajima left for Tibet, Kawaguchi passed through Kalimpong on his way to Sikkim, and since he was now spending his summers in Darjeeling, it was inevitable that he would seek an audience with the exiled Dalai Lama. He is so vague about whether or not he actually met His Holiness at this time that some doubts must certainly remain. The English version of his book, *Three Years in Tibet*, had been published in 1909 in Madras, and it is probable that all his extreme opinions on and abuse of the Tibetan religion had been conveyed to the Dalai Lama – quite possibly by Bell, who notes Kawaguchi's hostility to Tibetan Buddhism in *Portrait of a Dalai Lama* (1946/1987). Tada states that the Dalai Lama refused to see him in Lhasa in 1914, and his earlier meeting with the Panchen Lama (who was at the time, at the instigation of the Chinese, usurping some of the Dalai Lama's functions) could have done him no good either. Kawaguchi was probably hoping, in Darjeeling, for the same sort of invitation to



Lhasa that Tada and Aoki had; if so, he must have been bitterly disappointed. Events beyond his control had blocked the return to Tibet he had been hoping to make since 1905, and by now he must have been getting frustrated.

But there was still his invitation to Shigatse. Once the Chinese were out of Tibet and the Dalai Lama was re-established in Lhasa, Kawaguchi sent a Tibetan friend to Shigatse to see if the old invitation from the Panchen Lama still stood, and was told, to his delight, that he was more than welcome. Since scripture trading had been the basis for this invitation, he sent off immediately for a complete set of Japanese scriptures to take to the Lama in Shigatse. Finally, in December 1913, he set off from Calcutta by train, disguised as a prosperous Tibetan monk. As with the three Japanese already in Lhasa, his problem this time would be not with the Tibetans but with the British, and his main task was to make it successfully past the border.

In fact Kawaguchi's whole trip this time was to be a picnic compared with his earlier epic jaunt. He had two Tibetan servants with him to do all the cooking and other work of the camp, and despite the obvious discomfort of a midwinter crossing of high passes, the journey through northern India and Sikkim was more or less uneventful. Yet he was now forty-eight years old, and getting a little past this sort of thing.

He remained a supremely lucky traveller. Twice, as they approached the 16,900-foot Kangra La, they were caught out in blizzards, and his servants asked him to use his powers as a priest to dispel the storm. Twice he went into meditation and twice the storms abated, much to his own surprise. They were so high up that even the Tibetans were suffering from altitude sickness. Kawaguchi was still putting his faith in *hotan*, and luckily it seemed to work better on his Tibetan friends than it ever had on him. In the end it took them only a month to make the entire journey from Calcutta to Shigatse. The only disappointment was that because of the heavy snows they had to leave the Japanese scriptures behind in Gangtok to be forwarded later.

When he arrived in Tashi Lhumpo Kawaguchi was installed in one of the smaller dormitories, which he found clean and comfortable (his account of this second trip is marked by an absence of the complaints about everything, from Tibetan living

conditions to Tibetan scholarship, that so marred *Three Years in Tibet*). Here he immediately fell into the same sort of relationship with the Panchen Lama as that enjoyed by Aoki with the Dalai Lama. One of his main activities was translating newspaper and magazine articles for his host.

He had a good deal more to keep him busy as well. his old reputation as the 'Doctor of Sera' had survived, and he soon found himself busy with patients. In payment for his services he would accept nothing but old manuscripts. When he had been in Japan in 1903 and 1904, a group of botanists to whom he had lectured had given him a complete set of plant-collecting tools along with a crash course on how to use them, and now he spent a lot of time wandering the hills around Shigatse in search of specimens. Several of his discoveries were named after him, but in general so little was done with his collection that in 1980 much of it still remained uncatalogued.

The Japanese scriptures for the Panchen Lama – along with some painted screens, vases, and children's picture books – had meanwhile been having a very heavy trip of it. Snow had held up everything yet again, and they were now stuck somewhere in northern Sikkim. It was not until April that everything arrived, and Kawaguchi was able to present his gift to his patron. In return the Panchen Lama intended to give him a complete set of the Narthang edition of the Tibetan scriptures. Narthang was a hilltop monastery between Shigatse and Sakya, entirely devoted to printing, which Kawaguchi had visited on his previous trip. There was, however, a shortage of paper at the time because of a huge new statue of Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, which was being constructed at Tashi Lhumpo. The gilt statue was to be stuffed with fifty complete copies of the scriptures, a total of over fifteen thousand volumes. Before the question could be resolved, word came that the way was clear for him to proceed to Lhasa.

Just how he obtained permission for this trip has not been recorded. The war of attrition between officials of Lhasa and Shigatse was at its height, so he was extremely lucky to be allowed to go on. It is possible that the Dalai Lama was anxious not to offend any of his new Japanese friends by turning back one of their countrymen.

This stage of the journey differed even more markedly from

Kawaguchi's previous trip, and he travelled in the style of a government official, given five horses, a mule, servants, and a passport allowing him to commandeer good lodgings, water and firewood. The trip from Shigatse to Lhasa took only eleven days this time, in contrast to more than three months the previous time, and though he collected plenty of plant specimens (sending his unfortunate servant on the more difficult rock climbs and tree climbs) he does not seem to have stopped to look up any of his old friends along the way. In Lhasa he stayed in comfort at the mansion of the aristocratic Serchung family, with whom he had apparently become acquainted during his previous trip, all at the expense of the Tibetan government.

Kawaguchi's greatest worry over the years had been for the friends who had helped him out and been imprisoned for their efforts. He found, to his relief, that while they had undergone some unpleasant experiences, all were now safe and well, and in typical Tibetan fashion put down their sufferings to deeds committed in past lives. He also learned for the first time that the petition he had asked the Prime Minister of Nepal to forward had in fact arrived, and had even been of some help in getting his friends released.

One of the mysteries of this visit to Lhasa remains Kawaguchi's audience with the Dalai Lama. He is quite definite that he had an audience on 29 September 1914 (before that the Dalai Lama had been in retreat, and had been seeing no one), while Tada is just as definite in telling us: 'At that time when I was studying in Lhasa [Kawaguchi] could not have an audience with the Dalai Lama. I only know that he submitted the purpose of his entering Tibet in writing.' Tada also states that though he asked the Dalai Lama about previously meeting Kawaguchi, he could get no positive answer. 'Therefore it is not very clear whether Kawaguchi met the Dalai Lama during his first visit to Tibet' (Tada, 1965, pp. 89-90). A later Western traveller, William Montgomery McGovern, who sneaked into Lhasa briefly in 1924 and stayed at the Tsarong house, says that Kawaguchi was not well thought of by the Dalai Lama on account of his extreme views on Tibetan Buddhism (McGovern, 1924, p. 426).

Kawaguchi himself could have cleared this up for us by telling us in detail about the audience, but he tells us only that he presented

His Holiness with gifts including a silk scroll, a chest, and a wooden inlaid box. In return he asked that some old manuscripts be collected and given to Tokyo Imperial University as a sign of friendship between Japan and Tibet.

Kawaguchi stayed in Lhasa for five months, and since he had seen the capital shortly before the Dalai Lama had left on his first exile, and now just after his final return, he was able to make some interesting observations – noting, for example, that in spite of the euphoria over independence, there was a price to pay. The tea trade with China, one of the economic staples, had been virtually cut off. And then the traditional tribute from Mongolia – which, with Dorjjeff's help, had declared independence from China at around the same time as Tibet – was not getting through, since it had to pass over Chinese territory.

But at the same time he found Lhasa a cleaner and more pleasant place, with the streets regularly swept and regulations against indiscriminate urinating and defecating enforced. Most surprising and welcome to him: he found little containers of paper in the toilets of some members of the aristocracy, a fashion they had picked up after following the Dalai Lama into exile in India. Polyandry was also going out of style among the aristocracy and being replaced to some extent by polygamy. Licensed prostitution was another innovation, and had led to an increase in venereal disease. One of the most pleasant changes he found was the introduction of white face powder from Calcutta among the women of noble families. Always one with an eye for the ladies, Kawaguchi was pleased to see women washing their faces and trying to look as fair-skinned as possible rather than going around with their faces blackened, as had been the fashion on his previous visit.

One ambition of Kawaguchi's was to find some ancient Sanskrit manuscripts surviving in Tibet; following up a rumour, he went to the Reting monastery, about sixty miles north of Lhasa. Since he came to the monastery – which he ranked along with Kailash and the Potala as one of the three most beautiful spots in Tibet – with the Dalai Lama's permission, the buildings were thrown open to his inspection. His search, however, was fruitless, and the abbot told him that the manuscripts he was seeking had probably been lost in a fire four hundred and fifty years before.

While he was in Lhasa, Kawaguchi met all three other Japanese

there. He and Aoki seem to have seen one another quite frequently, since they both lived in Lhasa at the homes of nobles, though Aoki's rumoured relations with a Lhasa widow certainly could not have raised him in the estimation of a man who had nearly been killed defending his vow of celibacy. It also seems that Kawaguchi entrusted some sutras to Aoki for sending back to Japan, and that a misunderstanding arose over their ownership, with Aoki claiming them for the Nishi Honganji. In later years, when they had both returned to Japan, their relationship was to be soured by a long and unseemly legal battle over possession of these manuscripts. Kawaguchi fed the anaemic Tada (who seems to have looked up the other Japanese for a good meal whenever he came into Lhasa from Sera) on several occasions, but seems to have seen little of Yajima, though he did bring him a letter from his family, who had not heard from him for years.

There is only one occasion when all four are known to have been together: at New Year 1915. Kawaguchi had always made a big thing of this most important of Japanese holidays, and had performed secret ceremonies during all his years of disguise. This would be his final New Year in Tibet, and was certainly the only one he spent in the company of his countrymen.

It is difficult to imagine it having been a very jolly party. Neither Kawaguchi or Tada would touch alcohol, and Aoki would have been on his best behaviour in front of them. If any *chang* had been provided it would all have gone to Yajima, who was probably showing off the ornate white officer's uniform he had designed himself. Despite Kawaguchi's status as a trailblazer, it must have rankled with him that the three younger men were all welcomed at either the Potala or the Norbu Lingka, and that Tibet's spiritual and temporal leader actively sought their advice; while if he was seeing the Dalai Lama at all, it was only with the greatest difficulty. But still, they were all Japanese, and it was important to affirm this on the greatest of national days.

They probably parted with mutual relief. Kawaguchi would have been weary of tales from the others about their meetings with His Holiness; Yajima would have been anxious to get back to his soldiers, and perhaps looking forward to a meeting with his future bride; Aoki might well have had a tryst planned with his mistress. Only Tada would have been sorry to leave all the food, but even he

was probably happy enough to return to the long hours immersed in his books.

Three days after the party, Kawaguchi claims to have had a final audience with the Dalai Lama, who presented him with the manuscripts he requested for Tokyo Imperial University, while apologizing for their quality and suggesting that he might find something better in Gyantse. He left Lhasa on 19 January 1915, a year to the day after arriving in Shigatse, stopping off in Gyantse on the way and being rewarded with some unusual finds. On arriving back in Shigatse on 1 February, he received his manuscripts from the Panchen Lama.

Before leaving for India, Kawaguchi made one more attempt to discover some original Sanskrit scriptures. This time he was rewarded by finding thirty-nine volumes at a small monastery called Zhalu, southeast of Shigatse, and he makes the extraordinary claim that he was presented with several of the originals. When he left Shigatse on the eighteenth of April he decided on a roundabout route, for he had heard that the British were on the lookout for him and had offered a reward of five hundred rupees for his capture. Arriving safely in Darjeeling after an uneventful trip, he again stayed with Chandra Das.

Just as on the previous occasion he had left Tibet, he was again laid low by illness: this time it was a case of haemorrhoids severe enough to require surgery, and he must now have begun to feel his age. The one bright point was that he was judged ill enough not to have to answer a summons from Charles Bell to go to Gangtok and explain himself. Then, at some point during his illness, the British either decided to forgive and forget, or received enough information from Kawaguchi via Das that they were able to be generous, for the governor of Bengal, up in Darjeeling for the hot weather, gave a banquet in Kawaguchi's honour.

And now Kawaguchi fades from the scene of active travel, as did Teramoto before him. On 8 August 1915 he boarded a ship in Calcutta, bound for Kobe. He was never to return to India or Tibet, though he was to make a number of trips to China, the last one at the age of sixty-eight. On each of these trips he would renew his acquaintance with the Panchen Lama, for in 1923 the misunderstanding between Lhasa and Shigatse was to reach its crisis, and the Panchen Lama fled to China in protest against Tashi

Lhumpo's estates being taxed to support Tibet's new army. He was to die in exile, the result of continuing bad advice from his own officials and from the Chinese.

An odd little footnote to Kawaguchi's final return to Japan is provided by the presence of Chandra Das. Though he had only just recovered from a serious illness, Das seems to have accepted his old friend's invitation to visit Japan, where he apparently died in January 1917.

For a brief period of five months there had been four Japanese in Lhasa, and it had looked as if the momentum was swinging towards there being some serious Japanese presence in Tibet. Kawaguchi had been the last to arrive and the first to leave, and alone among them had no official connection with the Tibetan government.

Now, however, Aoki began to experience some difficulties that were at first difficult to explain. Working through Fujitani Sei in Calcutta, he was having more and more trouble obtaining textbooks and other requests from Japan. And then there was the matter of a second attempt to send Tibetans to Japan to study. Tsawa Tritrul's trip had been a complete success, and did not run its course only because his counsel was needed at home at the time of the Chinese Revolution. Now that the situation was settled it was the obvious time to send more students, but attempts to interest the relevant Japanese authorities failed and so nothing was ever done, even though (as we saw above) the idea that more Tibetans might go to Japan to study was taken so seriously by the British that they financed the four young Tibetan men who went to Rugby.

What was going wrong? It appears that what was being felt in distant Lhasa were the effects of one of the more notorious scandals of the time in Japan, and one of the greatest disgraces ever involving the Buddhist Church. At its root was the mess Otani Kozui had made of his personal finances, but since to many he personified the Nishi Honganji, the smear carried over to the sect as a whole.

By 1913, Otani found himself in deep financial trouble. In spite of inheriting such a wealthy sect, he was managing to live well beyond his means. The ostentatious luxury of his villa, Nirakuso, is only one example. He was constantly travelling around the world,

and of course only the best was good enough. In addition there were the archaeological expeditions he financed, as well as overseas missions such as those of Aoki and Tada. As a businessman and stock market speculator he was a complete failure, yet he had the same sort of weakness for these activities that some have for gambling. He had bought land, schools, and even factories overseas, and had embarked on several ambitious building projects. Publicly he was accused of incurring a debt of more than five million yen (two and a half million dollars at the exchange rate of the day). In a desperate attempt to right the balance he sold off the art treasures belonging to the temple (which he claimed by right of inheritance), but could not raise nearly enough.

In desperation he resorted to shady dealing. If he had confined these activities to within the sect he probably would not have found himself in very deep trouble, but he made his big mistake when he tried to swindle the Imperial Family, selling them land and a villa belonging to the temple at more than twenty times the market value. Since he was related to the Imperial Family by marriage, he thought he knew just whom to bribe to get the results he wanted. But it was through these bribes that the story somehow leaked and became public, and now he was shown little mercy. During his career he had got away with much by playing on his prestige and using the sheer force of his personality, but an attempt to swindle the emperor himself was going too far. Now, at the age of only thirty-eight, he was forced to resign his post as abbot of the Nishi Honganji and lost his title of Count [*Hakushaku*] as well. The title went to his brother Sonyu (the one who had met the Dalai Lama at Wu Tai Shan), but so great was the official indignation that though Kozui alone was guilty, neither of his brothers was considered fit for the abbacy, which went instead to a nephew only three years old. An outsider only remotely connected with the temple became acting abbot until the boy came of age.

Though the incident was largely hushed up in the press (the excuse given for Kozui's sudden departure being that he had gone insane), it was a terrible shock for the Nishi Honganji and its followers. Kozui himself could not face the shame of remaining in Japan. He gathered a few friends and disciples at Nirakuso to say goodbye, then left the country for good on 1 November 1914, declaring: 'I shall never go back to Japan . . . I can breathe freely



wherever I go and that is enough. I may go back as a corpse, but I never expect to see Kyoto again alive' (Anderson, 1955, p. 207). Not long afterwards, Nirakuso mysteriously burned to the ground.

Otani was in fact to keep his resolve until he returned as an old and disillusioned man after World War II. Though he was able to live nowhere near as flamboyantly as before, by threatening to sell off temple lands (which his father had had the foresight to put in the family name) he was able to demand a large stipend from the Nishi Honganji; enough to live in what the average person would consider fine style in Manchuria, Shanghai, Java and other places in Asia. Through it all he somehow retained a strong personal following.<sup>3</sup>

It is doubtful if the details of the scandal were known to Aoki and Tada in far-off Lhasa, but the effects were soon to manifest themselves. While His Holiness would have liked more direct relations with the government of Japan, he was also trying to strike a balance between England, China and Russia, and direct contact with the Japanese government might have offended all of them. For this reason both sides found it temporarily expedient to route this relationship through Otani Kozui, since he was not only the leader of Japan's largest sect, but had close government connections. In retrospect, this was probably a mistake. Tibet was only slowly learning of the complexities of modern diplomacy, and in this case they leaned too far in the direction of traditional relationships, and staked too much on the favour of a single individual.

Kozui's intentions, of course, may have been less than benign. In 1912 we get an indication of what he might have had in mind when, immediately after the Chinese Revolution, he opened negotiations with the new government of the Chinese Republic to use Sinkiang for purposes of colonization and development. Sun Yat-sen was too astute to fall for that. In Lhasa the Dalai Lama had Tsawa Tritrul to advise him on how he should treat the Japanese, and it is probable that he advised caution in dealing with the Nishi Honganji.

The point, however, is that with the fall of Kozui there was no one left to act as intermediary between the Japanese who were acting as ambassadors in Lhasa and the Japanese government. This is probably why ideas for projects such as sending students to Japan suddenly began to fall on deaf ears, or possibly on no ears at all. It also meant that there was no more money or

inspiration for sending out either new people or replacements for Aoki and Tada.

They were not withdrawn immediately. There was no reason for that, since they were both on Tibetan government stipends, though in Tada's case his only barely kept him going. But no longer would the finances be available for a range of activities from Central Asian archaeological expeditions to sending ambassadors like Aoki and Tada to Tibet.<sup>4</sup>

This in effect left Aoki and Tada isolated, no longer really representing anyone. Aoki felt it more keenly than Tada. His studies of the Tibetan language and Tibetan Buddhism may have been important, but they were not the most important part of the work he did. It was he who lived in Lhasa, had weekly contact with the Dalai Lama, and forwarded all requests for textbooks and other materials to Japan.

Early in 1916, Aoki was given his final assignment by the Dalai Lama. The Tibetans had been attempting to get machine guns from the British. The continuing Chinese aggression in Kham had alarmed them (indeed, the Chinese had attacked districts of Kham even during the Simla Conference) and they felt that they would be unable to resist a Chinese advance in the valleys without artillery and machine guns. One of Tada's rare political suggestions was adopted when it was decided to raise the money for the guns by means of a *one-tanka* (about a quarter of a yen) poll tax levied on all men and women who were not monks or nuns. To this poll tax was added an animal tax, and the whole affair degenerated into farce as officials tried to line their own pockets and farmers attempted to prove that their animals belonged to the local monastery.

Somehow, though, the money was raised, and now the problem became to find someone to sell them the guns. The British, preoccupied with World War I, were unable to comply. This seems particularly short-sighted on their part. Surely they would not have missed the relatively few machine guns and relatively small amounts of ammunition required by the Tibetans, while they would have made a great deal of difference to the Tibetans, who quite clearly wanted them for defence against a proven aggressor.<sup>5</sup>

Finding themselves blocked by the British, the Tibetans decided to try and obtain the weapons they needed from Japan, and Aoki

was considered the ideal envoy. With him he took the following letter from the Tibetan Kalons (Cabinet members) to the Emperor of Japan:

To the feet of the great Emperor Dah Nyi Hong, who steers the wheel of fortune and power.

This is humbly submitted by the Kalons of Tibet.

For defending our own territory we are in urgent need of some machine guns which we intend to procure from there (Japan), and for this purpose we are sending a delegate. We request permission to purchase freely some useful machine guns, for the free passage of which through British territories we are applying to the British Government. Tibet is held sacred as being the seat of the religion of Buddha, which is our mutual religion. Kindly take this into consideration for which we shall be thankful.

Sent with a silk scarf and an image of Buddha wrapped in cloth on [28 January 1916]. (L/P&S/11/104)

The presumption that fellow Buddhists would altruistically help to defend one another is an interesting and certainly, in dealings with Japan, a deluded one. Aoki was now, for all practical purposes, a potential arms dealer. Yet it must be remembered that the machine guns were for the purposes of defence in a specific situation, and were largely to be used as a deterrent. This puts Aoki in a far less compromising position as a Buddhist priest than his superior Kozui, who would quite happily have gone around Asia putting Japan's enemies to the sword in the name of compassion.

Aoki's departure from Tibet was a leisurely one, possibly because by this time the troops of the reorganized Tibetan army were pushing back the provincial forces of Szechwan, so that the situation was now less urgent. In Gyantse he stayed for a time with the eldest son of the Phunkhang family, the same family with whom he had stayed in Lhasa. Their family mansion in Gyantse was the house which had been used by Younghusband as his headquarters in 1904.

Here Aoki also met David MacDonald, and they had a long talk. This was apparently the first meeting between a Japanese and this near legendary figure. MacDonald's father was Scottish and his mother was Sikkimese, and he must have been a very remarkable man indeed to have overcome the contemporary stigma against

Eurasians. He had accompanied the Younghusband Expedition as an interpreter, and spoke any number of regional languages and dialects. It was probably only his mixed parentage and his own marriage to a woman of mixed Nepali and Scottish blood that kept him from rising as high in the service as Bell, and for twenty years or more he was the most important figure representing the British in Tibetan affairs.

Aoki was also able to cash in on his acquaintance with Tsawa Tritrul by making a trip to Shigatse and having two audiences with the Panchen Lama. While he was there he translated a mysterious secret document from English concerning an unnamed country which wanted to come to an agreement with the Panchen Lama for the 'development and exploitation' of Tibet. Asked if it would be possible to establish relations with Japan, Aoki says he replied that this was a 'hopeless dream', as indeed it would have been for the Panchen Lama acting separately from Lhasa. As soon as Aoki returned to Gyantse, MacDonald wanted to know everything that had gone on between him and the Panchen Lama, but Aoki does not tell us if he informed him of the document he translated. It is difficult to believe that everything that had taken place in Shigatse was not reported straight back to the Dalai Lama in Lhasa.

In early March Aoki was in Gangtok conferring with Charles Bell – who, as Political Officer in Sikkim, was now in charge of British relations with Tibet – at his headquarters there. They spoke in Tibetan, since Bell found Aoki unable to express himself in English. The atmosphere seems to have been like that between opposing cricket teams having a post match drink together, and this was actually the first time the British heard the full story of how Aoki had slipped by them to go to Tibet. In his report Bell writes, referring back to a 1912 letter:

It will be remembered that he was staying at the Ghum Monastery on the outskirts of Darjeeling to learn Tibetan. I had informed the then Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, who has a special agent at Ghum, about this. Aoki, however, gave the latter the slip, and entered Nepal via Sukia-pokri with two companions, all being disguised as Tibetan mendicant priests. (L/P&S/11/104)

It is also interesting to note just how little the British seemed to

know about what was going on in Lhasa, and rare travellers like Aoki were still a major source of information. Bell was to learn a number of interesting facts from him. Of the continuing conflict in eastern Tibet: 'Six months ago Lhasa was in a state of considerable perturbation on account of the protracted hostilities with China, but at present there is no display of anxiety.' Though Chinese officials and military personnel had been forced to leave Tibet in 1913, traders and other Chinese who had always lived peacefully in Lhasa were allowed to remain, and from Aoki Bell learned that some of them were spreading rumours to the detriment of the British. 'Rumours that the British are being defeated in the war are continually spread by the Chinese in Tibet, especially the Chinese Mohammedans on account of their sympathy with Turkey' (L/P&S/11/104). There was in particular a Chinese in Shigatse trying to influence the Panchen Lama against the British. It was also from Aoki that Bell learned that Tsarong Shapé was now the most powerful man in Tibet. Shatra, it seems, had fallen out of favour because of a misunderstanding with the Dalai Lama over the way Tibet had been split into Inner and Outer Tibet at the Simla Conference, and was feigning illness to explain his absence from public life.

Aoki was quite open about being sent to confer with the Japanese consul in Calcutta over the purchase of machine guns, but he was certainly holding something of his Lhasa activities back, since Bell thought that 'he took less part in the internal politics of Tibet than is usual with Tibetan travellers' (L/P&S/11/104). An interesting footnote is that in Calcutta Aoki planned to stay with the Japanese trading firm of Bessho & Co. rather than somewhere with more spiritual connotations like the Mahabodhi Society – as if any more confirmation were needed of the precise nature of Nishi Honganji involvement with Tibet.

In the end the machine-gun deal fell through because the British would not allow arms and ammunition from a third country to be imported through India. Later, from retirement, Bell was to write bitterly: 'Again and again the Tibetan Government have tried to induce the Government of India to allow them to import arms and ammunition through India, but the latter never gave permission. It professes friendship but does very little to help' (Bell, 1946/1987, p. 393). There is some speculation that Bell's

disappointment with his government in this affair might have led to his early retirement. Hugh Richardson was also to note later: 'It must have been a disappointing time for the Dalai Lama who had pinned considerable hopes on his new friends' (Richardson, 1984, p. 119).

As we noted above, however, the sting had gone out of the Chinese forces in eastern Tibet, and the Tibetans, with their newly trained army, were able to drive them all the way back to Tatsienlu. It was at this point that Eric Teichman was called in to actually negotiate a Tibetan withdrawal, and observed how much improved the Tibetan troops were over a few years before.

Otani was in Simla when Aoki arrived in Calcutta, and he asked him to stay on in India in order to study Sanskrit rather than return to Japan. Otani's requests no longer had the force of orders behind them, and were now obeyed only as a personal favour. Nevertheless, though he found Calcutta oppressive, Aoki returned to Darjeeling, where he could both study Sanskrit and keep up his Tibetan contacts. After a year there, in May 1917, he returned to Japan. Like Kawaguchi and Teramoto before him, he was never to return to Tibet.

It was probably only now that Tada Tokan replaced Aoki as what he describes as a 'private foreign adviser' to the Dalai Lama. Tada's only real desire was to remain an obscure student, and he was worried that meeting the Dalai Lama too frequently might compromise his position with the other monks at Hamdong Khamtsan. After all, Kawaguchi's status at Sera had changed drastically after his first audience back in 1900. The Dalai Lama, however, was anxious to have his weekly news report, and he used an interesting device to bring Tada to Lhasa every week. A well-wisher in London had sent him a stock of tinned food, but because of the danger of poisoning it was an established custom that the Dalai Lama never ate food from outside. So he made a gift of it to Tada, but allowed him to take away only one tin at a time. Quite apart from the fact that poor Tada was always on the brink of starvation, it would have been an insult not to show up for his weekly tin, so his regular visits were assured.

In December 1916 the Dalai Lama went into a three-year meditation.<sup>6</sup> During that time he meditated from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and again from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., and refused to see any

pilgrim or official except on the most urgent of business. Though he continued to transact state affairs, he did everything himself in isolation, and did not use even a secretary or clerk. This must have meant that he was feeling fairly secure about the situation with China, but this period of meditation was to have unfortunate repercussions for Yajima.

Though many in Lhasa appreciated his efforts, a minority objected to his presence because they were jealous, anti-foreign, or worried about the effect his continued presence might have on the British. According to Tada they chose this time, while the Dalai Lama was in seclusion and could not attend to every detail, to pounce, using a request from the British that Yajima be deported as their main weapon. Not wishing to cause the Dalai Lama any difficulties, Yajima decided to go quietly with his wife and child in 1918.

According to what Yajima told MacDonald when he passed through Yatung, he had been unemployed anyway since the decision to adopt British military methods, and had found it necessary to fall back on his shop. He also told MacDonald that his only reason for going to Tibet was his sheer love of travel and adventure, and that he was looking forward to going back to Japan, where he expected to be idolized as a hero. He still owned his shop and was certain of returning to Lhasa in a year or two, when he would either continue or wind up his business.

Now there was only one Japanese left in Lhasa. The momentum of 1914 had vanished, and all the promise of recent years had come to nothing. Kawaguchi had come and gone – more interested, as always, in ancient manuscripts than in anything else, and with one foot in the wrong political camp as well. Yajima had always been working strictly on his own, but had Aoki and Tada been more successful in fostering a relationship between the two governments of Tibet and Japan, he might well have spearheaded a movement of military co-operation between the two countries. That Aoki and Tada failed was, of course, beyond their control, and was a result of Otani Kozui's disgrace.

At any rate, Tada was less involved with Otani's ambitions and closer personally to the Dalai Lama, who conferred some rare favours on him. For example, he gave his Japanese disciple a *thanka* painting of Tsong Khapa he had done himself, and

framed it with gilt brocade that had been a gift from the Tsar of Russia.

Long before Tada departed a new era began, with overtures from both the Chinese and the British. In 1919 the Chinese sent their first diplomatic mission since 1910 in order to try to negate the Simla Treaty. Its failure led to the Chinese claiming that the mission represented only Kansu Province, but the British were worried enough to recall Charles Bell from retirement. Over the years Bell had visited Tibet annually, going as far as Gyantse, and had received frequent invitations from both the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama to visit Lhasa or Shigatse, but the government of India had always forced him to turn them down. Now he was finally to be allowed to go, and there is something symbolic about the British arriving just as the Japanese presence was coming to an end.

But of course, while Bell's euphoria – as shown by the quote in the 'Introduction' – is understandable, his accomplishments fade compared with those of Aoki, Yajima, Tada, and even Kawaguchi. This is not to disparage Bell's abilities as a diplomat, but to put the activity of the Japanese in perspective. In the end the difference was that Bell was higher placed with his own people, so that his influence was to have a far more lasting effect.

Bell and Tada did meet while they were both in Lhasa. The scholar monk's eyes had become worse and worse, and the mission doctor, Colonel R.S. Kennedy – an Irishman who was fluent in Tibetan and an old friend of Bell – was able to bring him some relief from his chronic eye strain.

When Tada finally left in 1923, he had been in Lhasa for ten years – by far the longest stay by a Japanese, but also the quietest. He made several brief pilgrimages: to Ganden, north to Reting, and east to the historic Yarlung Valley. While these would have been day trips to Kawaguchi, Tada regarded them as major expeditions, and was always happier with his books than when travelling around. Like Kawaguchi he had an obsession with collecting Tibetan scriptures and, with the help of Tsarong, had amassed so many that eighty horses were needed to transport them. At first scholars opposed his taking them out of the country, but after the Dalai Lama explained that they were only for the use of serious students of Buddhism, these same people contributed some more.



Tada had hoped to be able to use the old *ula* system whereby transport was commandeered free of charge by officials, and when he could find no reference to this on his passport, he asked Tsarong to find out why. The reply, 'The Dalai Lama took pains to tell me of the hardship of the common people', is indicative of His Holiness's personality, and of what he was trying to accomplish in an independent Tibet. It had apparently never occurred to Tada that the system was a burden on the population, but when he was informed of this he decided to pay for his horses and yaks.

As a mark of special favour, Tada tells us that he spent his last night in Lhasa in the Dalai Lama's room. On his way to India he stopped off in Shigatse and met the Panchen Lama for the first time, and they had a long discussion on Japanese Buddhism. This could not have been long before the Panchen Lama left for exile in China.

And now, for the first time in over a decade, there were no Japanese in the Holy City. None of them, in fact, was ever to return, and with the exception of one agent, who seems to have matched Narita for incompetence, there would be no others until 1945.

When they left Tibet, neither Aoki nor Yajima (or even the aging Kawaguchi, for that matter) thought they were leaving for good. Yajima in particular was always full of schemes for going back, as he had informed MacDonald on his way out. In 1921 there was a rather mysterious incident when a small shipment of Japanese arms was apparently received in Lhasa via Mongolia. Bell mentions that 'a machine gun, a few rifles, and some bombs have been brought across the Northern Plains to Lhasa'. An account unearthed by the American scholar Paul Hyer indicates that there was considerably more: four field artillery pieces, eight machine guns, fifteen hundred rifles, a thousand shells, a hundred thousand bullets, and one thousand grenades. Whether this was simply Japanese hardware that found its way to Tibet via merchants and middlemen, or whether Yajima had a hand in it, has never been established, but it is certain that over the next few years he was in contact with Lhasa, and that he hoped to send some of his countrymen there.

News of this leaked out when Tsarong, for some reason, possibly to try to intimidate the British into channelling more assistance

Tibet's way, informed Major F.M. Bailey, now the Political Officer in Sikkim, that Yajima had written to tell him that he was gathering eleven Japanese artisans together to send to Lhasa. This occasioned a number of notes and telegrams to be sent back and forth between Simla, Gangtok, Tokyo and Peking, as the British tried frantically to cope with the tense structures of three or four languages in order to determine whether the eleven Japanese had actually left Japan or not. A British consul in an obscure town in northern Yunnan wired that two Japanese had passed nearby on their way to Tibet, but they were never heard of again.

Apparently, at the time when Yajima left Tibet in 1918, he had agreed with Tsarong, now the most powerful man in the country after the Dalai Lama, that he would attempt to send experts to teach the Tibetans how to make gunpowder and window glass. This has a certain ring of truth about it. Gunpowder manufacture fits in well enough with Yajima's other military activities, and Tsarong's house was later to become well-known as the only house in Lhasa with glass windows, something he had apparently become interested in during his sojourn in India.

In Japan, the British Embassy in Tokyo located Yajima in Maebashi, and sent a Japanese agent to investigate. Yajima must have smelled a rat, for he gave the man the most garbled account of his life imaginable, saying he was born about twenty years earlier than he had been, omitting any mention of his military service, and claiming to have lived with Aoki on his first journey to Lhasa (long before Aoki had gone near Tibet). Another of his fanciful claims is that there were a number of Japanese in Lhasa at the time he left, but he knew them so slightly that he could not recall their names, how many there were, or what they were doing ('the tone of his answer showed clearly that he was prevaricating', remarked the Japanese informant). Most interestingly, he omits any mention of the Nippon Rikkokai, and claims instead that all along he was in the pay of a prominent ultra-nationalist named Toyama Mitsuru, who was instrumental in the Japanese annexation of Korea. No other account of Yajima mentions Toyama, nor did Yajima himself mention him in an interview with Japanese journalists at about the same time.

It is hard to resist the feeling that he was having a little fun with the man, who describes Yajima's attitude as 'of a very suspicious

and secretive disposition, not at all communicative', and thought it unwise to question him too closely. He was also, wisely, 'doubtful of the entire truth of the statements made to him by Mr. Yajima' (L/P&S/10/1014/3971). The closest he seems to have touched on the truth was in saying that he was hoping to return soon to Tibet because he had promised an important family that he would take back experts to teach them how to make gunpowder and window glass.

In addition to simply being obtuse, Yajima may not have been in the best mental and emotional condition, for his wife had recently died, and the end of their marriage had been both pathetic and tragic. Their new life in Japan had got off to a good start. His wife would go on horseback every day to kindergarten, along with their son Ishinobu, in order to learn Japanese. One of her dreams had been to qualify as a teacher and start a school in her homeland. But the climate of Japan – and perhaps the social climate as well, in a country where foreigners are never really accepted – proved too much for her. The unaccustomed diet gave her stomach ulcers, and her mental health seemed to suffer as well. So great was her homesickness that she was sometimes found at the police station crying and asking to be sent back to Tibet. She died on 15 March 1923, and was cremated the following day.

On the eighteenth, journalists visited Yajima and he told them the story of his travels. With them he stuck more or less to the facts, though he did streamline them, and there was no mention of the ultra-nationalist Toyama. Yajima was certainly no romantic when it came to his marriage, and anyone hoping for a classical love story must come away disappointed. 'I thought to study the country properly I should marry one of them, so I asked the noble family I was living with and they gave me Norbu-la to marry.' He continues to refer to her as a member of the nobility, though the name of her father clearly indicates that he was a merchant. The journalist refers to him rather dramatically as 'the Dalai Lama's favourite son-in-law' (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry). Where this remarkable rumour began is difficult to say, but even Bailey, in one of his letters, mentions that 'Yajima is the man who is said to have married the daughter of the Dalai Lama' (L/P&S/10/1014/3971).

While he was reminiscing with the journalists, Yajima indicated that the Tibetan government had asked him to hurry back to Tibet,

a probable reference to the eleven experts. Ishinobu presented an obstacle, and his father thought he might leave him behind, since he felt that an expedition would be needed to take a child to the harsh environment of Tibet (forgetting, it seems, that the boy had been born there). He wished, however, to bring him up and educate him to continue his own work of trying to foster relations between the two countries.<sup>7</sup>

And then the Japanese simply seemed to lose interest. One reason given for this is that during the 1920s, until the worldwide Depression brought it to an abrupt end, Japan had a brief and rather happy flirtation with democracy, and during that time the militarists and expansionists had seemingly been eclipsed. If the result was to stifle any interest there had been in Tibet and helping that Buddhist land to keep its independence, this gives us a rather depressing picture of the way the Japanese viewed the rest of the world, and would indicate that the Japanese as a nation are incapable of looking abroad except with imperialist intentions.

Kawaguchi Ekai returned home a recognized eccentric. Continually in conflict with the Buddhist establishment, he again renounced his priesthood, as he had done several times in the past, though he continued to live by his strict vows and to wear the robes of a priest. Instead of living in a temple he bought a house for his brother and his family, and lived with them. He could not have been an easy man to live with. In the mornings the family stuck to Kawaguchi's vegetarian diet, but if they wanted to have meat or fish in the evenings they had to do the cooking outside, lest the old man be offended by the smell.

The courses in Tibetan he gave at two universities were well attended, and occasionally young men would come along and ask to be taken on as disciples. They seldom lasted long. The old man's dietary rules were so strict that most of them succumbed to malnutrition. His biggest project was a Japanese-Tibetan dictionary, but after he had worked on it for many years the manuscript disappeared under mysterious circumstances, and has never been found.

Kawaguchi made three trips to China: in 1925, 1929 and 1933. On each of these trips he saw the Panchen Lama, who was living out his sad and lonely exile. On the first trip, with his usual political insensitivity, he even invited the Panchen Lama to Japan. Already

the subject of so many political intrigues between Tibet and China, the Lama was unwilling to get involved with yet another country.

As the clouds of war gathered in the 1930s, it was inevitable that the militarists would ask for Kawaguchi's help in setting up an undercover operation. To his credit he was able to use his age and status to turn them down point blank, for in spite of his earlier attempts at amateur espionage, he had no patience with the militarists and their ways. It must have been distressing to him to see what his country was driving itself to, and the course of the war could have given him no cause for satisfaction. Since he died in 1945, he never had to adjust to the radical changes of postwar Japan.

When Aoki returned to Japan he attempted to interest officials in relations with Tibet, but without success. This must have been frustrating not only to Aoki, but to Tsarong in Lhasa, who, as we have seen, was in communication with Yajima as well. Tsarong was so enthusiastic about Japan at this time that Bell believed he had actually been there, though no evidence of such a visit has come to light.

Like Kawaguchi, Aoki taught Tibetan and Tibetan studies, in his case at Tokyo Imperial University, and their academic rivalry may have been one cause of their conflict over certain manuscripts. Fighting a long legal battle over their possession seems an unfortunate way for two of Japan's leading scholars on Tibet to spend their time, and they were never on good terms after their return to Japan. Aoki probably remained under the influence of the exiled Otani Kozui, and he certainly shared his former patron's imperialist outlook, for when he was asked to set up a Tibetan Operation during the Second World War, he replied enthusiastically.

Tada Tokan lived as quietly in Japan as he had in Lhasa, though he continued to correspond with the Dalai Lama until his death in 1933, and with other friends until the 1950s, when Chinese invasion made this impossible. When he decided to break his vows and marry, he returned his monk's robes and a copy of his vows to the Dalai Lama. His Holiness replied with a fine Tibetan lady's dress and apron for his bride, and told him to continue to practise Buddhism while living at home. He taught at Tohoku, Tokyo and Keio Universities, and like Aoki

he served the militarists, though he seems to have done so rather less willingly.

In spite of later learning excellent English and even teaching for a time in the United States during the 1950s, Tada Tokan remains one of the more obscure Japanese visitors to Lhasa. This is probably because he was first and foremost a scholar rather than a traveller or an adventurer, and he had very little to say about his travels or his life in Lhasa. When he finally produced a book, which was ghost written for him, it was a slim volume giving fine descriptions of things like a typical day at Sera but telling us very little about the man himself.<sup>8</sup> Nor was he any more forthcoming to his students. For example, when asked how he had entered Tibet, his standard reply was: 'I walked upon the earth.'

Though we have jumped ahead here to look very briefly at the later careers of our four travellers, contact between Japan and Tibet virtually ceased from 1923, when Tada left, and 1945, when the next travellers turned up in Lhasa. There were many reasons for this: Otani's continued disgrace and residence abroad, the liberal political mood of the 1920s in Japan, the death of the Dalai Lama in 1933, and finally the war in Asia which erupted in 1937.

Oddly enough, the Japanese rise to power was foretold in a prophecy originating from a Tibetan saint in the Chumbi Valley as early as 1922. The sage calls the Japanese the Lower Horpas, and says that the time has come for them to rise to a position of great power. Though he was a few years ahead of his time, his prophecy was certainly to come true, and while Japanese militarism was to bring great suffering to the people of China and many other peoples of Asia, it was to benefit Tibet, which remained neutral in the great conflict, by relieving Chinese pressure on them. Certain far-sighted planners among the Japanese realized that the spiritual influence wielded by Lhasa throughout Mongolia and as far afield as Manchuria would make Tibet a useful ally, but Tibet was just too distant to arouse much interest among the Japanese, who had their hands full conquering and holding more accessible lands, though maps of Tibet were found in Japanese outposts

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in Burma. When we see the form Japanese imperialism was to take all over Asia, with Inner Mongolia providing a model for what might have happened in Tibet, the latter country can only be counted fortunate not to have had any closer contact with Japan.

# Chapter Seven

## The Scene Shifts to Mongolia

On 31 May 1950 a ship from Calcutta landed at Kobe docks, and two passengers disembarked. They were a study in contrast, though both were Japanese, and anyone who spoke to them would have noticed that for some reason both spoke their native tongue haltingly. One was exceptionally tall, and clad in an Indian *dhoti* and sandals. His step was unsure, as if he had difficulty in seeing where he was going, though he carried himself proudly and even arrogantly. The other was short, and dressed in an inexpensive shirt and trousers. Though they were barely on speaking terms, they stopped at a small bar in front of Kobe Station for a farewell drink before parting – one for his home in Kyushu to the southwest, the other for the northern mountains of Akita.

Within a month they had both received orders from the Japanese Repatriation Bureau to report to Tokyo. The Americans, who were now in charge, were interested in talking to them. China had been 'lost', Korea was on the brink of war, and there were rumours that these two men might know something about remote areas of the country the United States now claimed as its chief enemy.

The tall Northerner, whose name was Nishikawa Kazumi, came to Tokyo still dressed in his *dhoti*. Indeed, it was the only garment he possessed. Still not entirely satisfied nearly five years on that his country had really lost the war, he went first to the Japanese Foreign Ministry, offering whatever information he had to them. The reception he got from the Ministry – 'where the air of defeat hung heavy' (Nishikawa, 1968; trans. Berry), and where they looked down their noses at his Indian clothes – finally convinced



him that Japan had been well and truly defeated.

Kimura Hisao turned up from his Kyushu home a few weeks later. He had come down with malaria on his return home, and had been bedridden for a time. It was discovered that for some reason he spoke remarkably good English. The two men were put up in a dormitory at the former Japanese Military Academy at Ichigaya, along with fifty or sixty former Japanese army officers and soldiers. Nishikawa and Kimura treated one another with stiff formality.

Every day they reported to the Nihon Yusen Building in front of Tokyo Station, where they were questioned all day long for the better part of a year. What began to emerge were not only two of the most remarkable tales of the war, but two of the greatest stories of twentieth-century overland travel.

When Kimura and Nishikawa told their stories to remarkably indifferent American officers and interpreters in 1950, it effectively brought to a close a saga that had begun in 1937 with the Japanese occupation of Inner Mongolia, but had its roots in the older Japanese presence in Manchuria.

By 1931 the Japanese experiment with parliamentary democracy was discredited by corruption and failure to deal with the economic hardship brought on by the worldwide Depression. The 1930s were to be punctuated by a series of coups and attempted coups, mostly by young army officers, ultra right-wing idealists who believed that they alone had a monopoly on such ill-defined Confucian virtues as 'purity' and 'righteousness', and that they knew the Will of the Emperor better than he did himself. Though these coups regularly failed, liberal Prime Ministers were assassinated with equal regularity, and the government gradually slipped under military control. The only actual coup that enjoyed any real success took place not in Japan, but in Manchuria.

There had been a Japanese presence in Manchuria since the Russo-Japanese War, and many, particularly the young officers, felt that the only way to end the rural poverty that existed in Japan was to take full control of the huge but sparsely populated Manchuria, and open it to Japanese immigration and industry. In 1931 a handful of these young army idealists, on the cooked-up pretext that a train had been derailed by anti-Japanese Manchurian

activists, had simply taken over the province and more or less presented it to an unwilling Tokyo as a puppet state.

The so-called 'Manchurian Incident' was not only significant as a step in the process that eventually led to World War II, but was to have an important bearing on our story, since for the first time it brought the Japanese into contact with the Mongolians in large numbers. This contact with the Manchurian Mongolians, and the conflict along the border with socialist Outer Mongolia, was eventually to rekindle the dormant Japanese interest in Tibet. In addition, the 'restoration' of the last Manchu Emperor, Pu-yi, was to win the approval of some of the more conservative of the Tibetan Buddhists, who, even if they disliked the Chinese, looked back with nostalgia to the days when the Manchu Emperors had been generous patrons of the Tibetan Church.

Meanwhile, in 1933, Kawaguchi made his final trip to the Chinese mainland, and at the Inner Mongolian monastery of Pailingmiao, or Baatu Haalga, he again met his old friend the Panchen Lama, who had now been in exile for ten years, since his dispute with Lhasa had come to a head in 1923. The Panchen Lama was here visiting the Inner Mongolian leader, Prince Teh Wang, with whom the Japanese were to become deeply involved later on.

Kawaguchi took with him a student named Hashimoto, and they apparently still clung to the hope that the Panchen Lama might help them to arrange a trip to Tibet. Quite apart from Kawaguchi's age (he was now fifty-six), this seems a naive assumption, since the Panchen Lama himself had been unable to return home for ten years, and the more closely he became involved with the Chinese, the less likely that return was to become. In the end, Hashimoto remained behind in Mongolia to study, while Kawaguchi returned to Japan.

In the same year, the thirteenth Dalai Lama died, an event of great significance for Tibet. He had been the strongest Tibetan leader for nearly three hundred years, and it had taken all his strength to keep Tibet independent. His successor, of course, was yet to be born, much less identified, and from now until 1950 various factions would be jockeying for power in Lhasa, weakening the country as they did so, and laying it open to a foreign takeover. The thirteenth Dalai Lama's reforms would be

largely forgotten, and the new army he had created would to a large extent disintegrate.

In a remarkable passage in his 'Political Testament' the Dalai Lama largely predicted what the future of Tibet would turn out to be, basing his prophecy on what had happened in Outer Mongolia under Russian-inspired socialist rule.

They do not allow search to be made for the new incarnation of the Grand Lama of Urga (the Jebtsundamba Khutughtu). They have seized and taken away all the sacred objects from the monasteries. They have made monks to work as soldiers. They have broken religion so that not even the name of it remains. (quoted in Bell, 1946/1987, p. 430)

Early in their occupation of Manchuria, the Japanese had proved popular among the Mongolians there for several reasons. Most important was the way they had halted the Chinese policy of immigration into Mongolian areas. This destruction of traditional grazing lands for the sake of farming that was marginal at best would also be an issue in neighbouring Inner Mongolia. The Japanese were, of course, also fervent anti-Communists, and their efforts at toppling the socialist regime in Outer Mongolia struck a chord with the monks and, of course, with Outer Mongolian refugees. They secretly sent arms into that country, and frequently clashed with Mongolian and Russian troops along the border. And then, by skilfully presenting themselves as a 'Buddhist' nation, the Japanese were able cynically to manipulate the religious feelings of the Mongolians.

All this could not help but lead to a reaction in Outer Mongolia. The army was beefed up, and the discovery of Japanese arms in some monasteries gave the government the excuse it needed to come down harshly on the Church. So while the Japanese seemed to hold out hopes to Mongolians who wished to unite their people, their only real interest was in extending Japanese power, and in the end they brought a good deal of suffering to the Mongolian nation.

For our story, it was a lesser-known event than the occupation of Manchuria that was more significant. This was the 1937 move into Inner Mongolia. The Inner Mongolians, discontented for years over the way the Chinese were encroaching on and destroying

their traditional lands, had been attempting to gain some sort of political autonomy from the Chinese. Most of the Mongolian princes – living lives of luxury in Peking, and often even unable to speak Mongolian – were too corrupt or stupid to be effective leaders, but one of them, Prince Teh, at home on the steppes and dedicated to the cause, managed to forge an effective political movement. In 1935, frustrated by Chinese duplicity, he turned to the Japanese to help him gain the autonomy the Chinese refused to grant.

The Mongolians now found themselves one of those unfortunate peoples who have no real friends. The Chinese were interested only in squeezing them, and while the Russians would have been only too willing to help, Inner Mongolia was already full of refugees from their policies in Outer Mongolia. 'We shall have to rely on the Japanese to help us against the Chinese,' Prince Teh is reported to have said. 'They are far from desirable, but the reds are impossible.' In the beginning the partnership with Japan was not even particularly effective, as in 1936 the Kuomintang General Fu Tso-yi soundly defeated Prince Teh's forces backed by the Japanese. This was one of the few occasions when Kuomintang forces ever defeated *anyone*, and the Chinese looked upon it as a victory over the Japanese.

Then, in 1937, came the beginning of what the Japanese, with their genius for euphemism and for skirting the point, were always to refer to as the 'Shina Jihen', or China Incident. It was, in fact, nothing less than a brutal full-scale invasion of China.<sup>1</sup>

This was to lead to a certain amount of vaguely pro-Japanese feeling in distant Lhasa. There were two reasons for this. First was the simple fact that any enemy of China could only be regarded as a friend of Tibet. But an important coincidence was to play a role as well. At that very moment the Chinese, who had thoroughly insinuated themselves into the Panchen Lama's camp in an effort to re-establish themselves in Tibet, were attempting to send the Panchen Lama home under a substantial Chinese escort. Though Lhasa maintained that it had no objection to the Lama's return, they were not about to allow Chinese troops back on Tibetan soil, and events looked headed for a showdown. The expedition had only just got under way, however, when the outbreak of all-out war forced them to turn back. The Tibetans could be forgiven

for thinking that the Japanese had been the instrument of some sort of divine intervention.

At the same time as they advanced into China proper, the Japanese moved into Inner Mongolia in strength. They accomplished this with rather less brutality, and without large-scale massacres, because – at least initially – they had the approval of local Mongolians. This approval was not to last long, for instead of helping the Mongols to unite, they simply set up one more separate Mongol entity with its capital at Kalgan, and Prince Teh nominally at its head. The unfortunate prince soon found his worst suspicions of the Japanese borne out as he became little more than a figurehead, with all the important positions in his government held by Japanese.

At home in Japan, much was made in the press of the heroic assistance the Japanese were giving to the freedom-loving Mongolians. This publicity attracted the attention of a number of idealistic young men who volunteered to go to Inner Mongolia as members of an organization called the *Zenrin Kyokai*, or the 'Good Neighbour Association'. They went for the most part in the sincere belief that they were helping a beleaguered people stand on their own feet and fight against Chinese aggression. In a sense the Japanese played their cards in Mongolia very skilfully, and they used some of these young volunteers to help set up schools and hospitals, while others went to the grasslands as health officers or to assist the nomads in improving their herds.

All this was done under the direction of a larger organization called the Ko Ah In. This is such a difficult term to translate that it has been rendered as variously as the 'Asia Development Board', the 'Uplift Asia Board', the 'Greater East Asia Ministry', and the 'China Affairs Board', and is an excellent example of the oft-cited 'vagueness' of the Japanese language. The first two are fairly literal translations, but the latter two capture better the spirit of what the organization did. In practice the Ko Ah In was a kind of private Foreign Ministry run by the military to circumvent civilian intervention in its affairs.

Under the Ko Ah In, a number of schools called the Ko Ah Gijuku were set up. These catered mostly for local Chinese, Muslims and Mongolians, but at the main branch in Huhehota the Japanese volunteers were trained in languages and area studies.

But the Japanese were also anxious to play on any goodwill they could get from the Buddhist connection. During his ten years at Sera, Tada had been helpful to a number of Inner Mongolia monks, and some of these who now came into contact with Japanese officials let it be known that they would rather deal with a Japanese named Thubtan Gyantsan. It took some time to figure out who they were talking about, but he was eventually searched out, and more or less coerced into co-operating with the military.

There were grander plans as well. As the Dalai Lama had noted in his 'Political Testament', it was now forbidden in Outer Mongolia to search for the incarnation of the Jebtsundamba Khutughtu, the highest of Mongolian lamas. In order to increase their popularity among the Mongolians, the Japanese conceived a plan to reinstitute this search under the direction of refugee lamas from Outer Mongolia. They realized, however, that in religious matters the Mongolians deferred to Tibet, and that to get official sanction for the project the approval of Lhasa would have to be sought. This is one reason why it was decided to send a mission to the Holy City in 1939.

The Japanese had made contact with one of the late Panchen Lama's chief advisers who was now preparing to return to Tibet. His name was Ngachen Rimpoché, though Japanese sources always refer to him by his Mongolian name and title, the Anchin Khutughtu. A bit of an opportunist who saw a chance to insinuate himself with a rising power, he agreed to try to get official sanction for the search for the Jebtsundamba Khutughtu, and also to take two Japanese with him if they could be disguised as Mongolians. For this task two young men named Nomoto Jinzo and Yoshitomi Yoshitsugu were chosen. Though neither had shown any previous interest in Tibet, the choice seems to have fallen on them because they had done well in their Mongolian studies.<sup>2</sup>

Nomoto had been in Mongolia for three years, living in a Mongolian home to perfect his language skills and knowledge of local customs, and doing research for Military Intelligence. He was surprised when he was told that he was to go to Tibet with Ngachen Rimpoché, since he knew of Japanese monks studying in Mongolian monasteries whom he thought would be better qualified.

Compared to earlier Japanese travellers, Nomoto and Yoshitomi were given every advantage, and as members of a larger mission

they were shielded from too close contact with local people. It is surprising, therefore, that not since Narita had there been such a comprehensively unsuccessful trip. This may have had much to do with the choice of the two men. Japanese travellers had enjoyed such a high rate of success largely because they wanted so badly to get to Lhasa. There was literally nothing short of death that could have stopped men like Kawaguchi, Teramoto or Yajima, just as death did stop Nomi. Nomoto and Yoshitomi, on the other hand, went only because they were ordered to. Not even the much-vaunted *yamato damashi*, or Japanese Spirit, it seemed, could make up for lack of inner motivation.

Before he left, Nomoto had time to return to Japan. He conferred with people there in Military Intelligence, but was not given any specific assignment. It seemed that they were interested only in having a 'sleeper' on the spot and learning some general information about the current situation, since there had been no direct contact with Tibet since Tada had left in 1923. This, in fact, was typical of a pattern we will see over the next few years. While he was in Japan, Nomoto also looked up Tada, who advised him on how to behave, and even read Kawaguchi's book. Back in China, Otani Kozui got wind of the project and went out of his way to meet the two young men and arrange their passage through his business interests.

They departed by ship in February 1939, and Yoshitomi made it precisely as far as Calcutta. Before the ship even docked he had come down with some sort of stomach complaint, and the closer they approached Calcutta, the sicker he became. He went back on the next ship, and we hear no more of him.

By the end of May Nomoto was in Shigatse, and soon he had the opportunity to go to Lhasa. The Ngachen Rimpoché returned from China with a caravan load of offerings which he wanted to convert to cash, and Shigatse was too small a place to sell it all. By a coincidence, his niece was married to the head of the Phunkhang family with whom Aoki stayed in Lhasa, so Nomoto stayed there as well, and was lucky enough to be in Lhasa for the enthronement of the new Dalai Lama.

Nomoto spent only a month in Lhasa while the goods were sold. During that time he made friends with one of the young men of the household, who wanted him to stay in Lhasa and exchange Chinese

for Tibetan lessons. It is just the sort of chance that most travellers would have jumped at, but Nomoto had so little confidence in his disguise that he declined and returned to Shigatse. In fact he seemed to spend much of his time and effort in Tibet avoiding detection.

He may have had good reason for this, for he himself began to hear rumours that Ngachen Rimpoché had brought a Japanese with him. When the Chinese representative who had come for the enthronement of the Dalai Lama sent a delegate to Shigatse, it was thought best to get Nomoto out of the way, and he was sent to a village about eighty kilometres west of Shigatse, where Ngachen Rimpoché had a temple and an official residence. He stayed at the village for six months; one of his tasks was helping to teach the village children to read and write. Then one day he got a message that a monk from Tashi Lhumpo who knew him was coming. Since he was supposed to have gone back to Mongolia, he again had to sneak away, this time back to Shigatse.

By now there were rumours at Tashi Lhumpo that he might be a Chinese disguised as a Mongolian, and when Ngachen Rimpoché's chief secretary left for India on his way to Peking, Nomoto went with him. He even contrived nearly to get caught at the Indian border, since he had changed out of his Tibetan clothes because of the heat.

Somehow he had managed to take over two hundred photographs while he had been in Tibet. Not willing to compromise himself by going personally to the Japanese Consulate in Calcutta, he had a friend take the negatives there. They were never seen or heard of again.

Back in Japan in December 1940, he got a cold reception from the military – whether because he had disappointed them or because they had their minds on other things is not clear. He wrote up his report from memory, since he had burned the only notes he had taken when the British became suspicious about him in Sikkim. He never wrote anything else about Tibet. Soon he was back in his old job in eastern Mongolia and Manchuria, as if Tibet had never happened. Possibly because his mission was so ill-defined he does not seem to have added to Japanese awareness about Tibet, and certainly did nothing to further relations between the two countries.

The Jebtsundamba Khutughtu project, entrusted to Ngachen



Rimpoché, had fared no better, since associates of the now deceased Panchen Lama were no more welcome now in Lhasa than they had been when Kawaguchi had last visited. Though the Japanese would later mount another search for the Jebtsundamba Khutughtu under the direction of a far more respected lama from Outer Mongolia, the Dilowa Khutughtu, it would be no more successful.

This was to be the last attempt the Japanese made to place an agent in Lhasa, though two later wound up there by mistake. One reason is that Japanese ambitions in Outer Mongolia suffered a serious, virtually terminal, setback when they launched a major attack on the Outer Mongolian border at a place called Nomonkhan (also called Khalkhin-gol after the river there). In three months of fighting they suffered their greatest land defeat to date, losing fifty-five thousand men (in spite of an attempt to poison the Khalkhin-gol). Following this rout, the Japanese decided to concentrate on consolidating their position in Inner Mongolia rather than make any more attempts at expansion.

It is probably difficult for us today to imagine what it was to be a young man growing up in the Japan of the 1930s, a place and time where patriotism was so pervasive that dissent simply did not exist. Such disagreements as there were with government policy concerned methods of achieving aggressive imperialist aims. The aims themselves were never questioned, and all the coup attempts came from the far right. Intelligent and idealistic young men thrilled to the news that the 'Shina Jihen' had begun, believing wholeheartedly that now Japan's civilizing mission would be able to forge ahead unhindered.

In 1940, Japanese propaganda for home consumption about benevolent Japanese activities in the Inner Mongolian struggle attracted the attention of one of these romantic young men, a seventeen-year-old in Kyushu named Kimura Hisao. He applied for the Good Neighbour Association, and was accepted along with six others. There seems to have been some difficulty in finding young men willing to go to such a place with no prospect for either monetary profit or military glory, and this second group of six volunteers was an exceptionally small one.

When Kimura first arrived in Kalgan, along the railway and the Great Wall, he found it a dusty and windswept place, almost a parody of a real city, and he was at first surprised to see how fond of it many of the local Japanese seemed to be. In fact, as he was to discover, it was a fascinating city in many ways, even though it was not really Mongolia at all. Along with other cities along the railway, such as Suiyan (Huhehota in Mongolian) and Pautou, Kalgan was a trading centre. More and more, however, the traditional traders were being replaced by the army-controlled Great Mongolian Trading Company, which bought the products of the nomads: primarily meat, wool and hides. Rather than trading in the traditional way they often paid in cash, a fairly worthless item to a nomadic herder on the grasslands that added a further destabilizing element to the nomad economy.

The real Mongolia was on the grasslands, up the escarpment visible from the city and to the north. On the grasslands the nomads wandered from pasture to pasture as they always had, though the territory in which they were free to roam was defined by the borders of their 'banner'. This was an innovation introduced in Manchu times to try to stem the boundless energy of the Mongols by confining them and allowing them less freedom. Each banner contained every kind of land necessary for successful herding: winter and summer pasture for sheep, cattle, camels and horses, as well as water sources.

What made Kalgan so interesting was the mix of people there. The bulk of the population were Chinese Muslims who had traded with the nomads for centuries. The nomads themselves camped outside the town, and made only shy forays into the unfamiliar environment. Other strangers were Chinese from the south, often starving peasants being cynically manipulated on to Mongol land by large landowners happy to destroy the land for short-term profit. To this was added a sizeable new Japanese community, both military and civilian.

The Japanese civilians were divided between government workers, traders, and a significant number who worked in the pleasure business, for Kalgan was one of those frontier towns where men earned their money and spent it as quickly as they could on women and drink. Chinese houses operated as they always had, offering opium as well as women, but to them were added houses stocked

with Korean girls, most of whom had been kidnapped and brought as virtual slaves. The Japanese houses were more respectable, and reserved mostly for officers and high-ranking civilians. Here a hard-working and thrifty girl could buy her way out of a house in a few years.

Yet Kalgan was not a desirable posting. Most Japanese, military or civilian, were interested in making a fortune out of a posting on the mainland, and Mongolia was poor, so it had to be squeezed very hard. Many people were sent here as punishment, and in particular there were a number of veterans of the notorious *ni-ni-roku jiken* (the '2.26 Incident', named after the date: 26 February 1936). This was probably the most elaborate and best-known of the coup attempts of the 1930s. The young officers at its core rationalized their night of mayhem and murder with the excuse that the men in power were old, corrupt and timid, and were not correctly applying the Imperial Will. Though a number of the leaders faced execution bravely after the Emperor himself decided that he knew his Will better than they did, the killings of 26 February were carried out in an extraordinarily cowardly manner, with septuagenarians murdered in their beds, shot or repeatedly stabbed, often in front of their families.

Kimura spent but a short time on his initial visit to Kalgan, then he was sent along with his classmates for a year of training in area studies and the Mongolian language at the Ko Ah Gijuku in Huhehota. This was an even dustier city than Kalgan, and had enjoyed rather more glory in its past than in its present. As the fabled 'Blue City', it had been the capital of the Mongols in 1578 when their leader, Altan Khan, was visited by a Tibetan religious leader on whom he first conferred the Mongolian title 'Dalai Lama'.

The Ko Ah Gijuku – which it might be better not to attempt to translate (though 'Uplift Asia Academy' is a possibility), given the problems with Ko Ah In – has already been mentioned. Though it was in most ways an unremarkable institution, it was enlightened enough in its language teaching to realize that languages are best learned among the people by whom they are spoken, and the second year of the course consisted of (to use Kimura's word) 'dropping' the students in remote monasteries out in the grasslands, far from other Japanese speakers and the temptations

of the cities.

Perhaps it was because of this combination of academic and practical make-or-break training, and the fact that it attracted nonconformists in the first place, that the Ko Ah Gijuku produced in Kimura and Nishikawa (who arrived on the scene a year later) the two men who were undoubtedly to become Japan's greatest overland travellers. Only Kawaguchi compares with them, and even he spent only about half the amount of time on his remarkable travels as they did. Kimura and Nishikawa each spent eight years in disguise in a number of foreign countries, and each crossed the Himalayas something like seven times.

Kimura took well to his training. At the monastery he was completely on his own, and soon found that he loved not only the carefree ways of the Mongolian nomads, but the language as well. His year at Huhehota had equipped him for little linguistically, but with the help of the children – boy monks and nomad children visiting the monastery – he was speaking nearly like a native by the end of his year there. The rest of his training, which was to have lasted a further six months, was cut short because his countrymen had attacked Pearl Harbor, Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, and Japan suddenly found itself cut off from its traditional sources of such essentials as meat and wool. It was time for him to go out to an 'experimental ranch', and begin the task of improving local herds through the introduction of Australian studs.

Nishikawa came via a different route. In spite of entering the Ko Ah Gijuku a year behind Kimura, he was quite a bit older, twenty-seven or twenty-eight, a tall gangling man who suffered from near-sightedness and had already been on the continent for some time, working on the South Manchuria Railway. His writings leave no room for doubt about his political stance.

Because the South Manchuria Railway Company was vital to our national policy, it was the sort of place where brave and patriotic young men wanted to work. But I was in the back lines and found it a mundane existence, no different from that of any salary man. I couldn't bear living such a safe and peaceful life in such exciting times. Perhaps I was feeling rebellious. . . . Anyway, I decided on a big turnabout by trying for the Ko Ah Gijuku.<sup>3</sup>

He never explains why his 'bravery and patriotism' did not lead him

into the military. It could well have been his weak eyes, though judging from events that were soon to follow, he was far too undisciplined to have survived long as a Japanese soldier. But for the present, like Kimura, he went through his year at the school and the year in a monastery, and managed to get within three days of graduation despite 'breaking my share of the rules'.

He was fascinated by some of the things he learned at the Ko Ah Gijuku, and of course he swallowed the Japanese line wholeheartedly, not even giving it a critical glance when his book was finally published in 1968. It is true that though much of the 'area studies' taught there could be dismissed as propaganda, there was some fairly sound history and geography as well, and Nishikawa's summary of what he learned probably gives us a good idea of the mix of fact and fiction that was taught at the Ko Ah Gijuku.

After the outbreak of the Shina Jihen, Japan went to war with the Chinese – that is to say with the Han Chinese; but as I learned at the Ko Ah Gijuku, war with the Han is no more than a tradition in this part of China or Mongolia. For several thousand years the northwestern tribes had been pressuring and making war on the peoples of central China.

In a great arc to the north and west are the homelands of non-Han peoples: the Manchurian Mongols who formed the Ching Dynasty; the Mongolians descended from those of Ghengis Khan in Mongolia and Ninghsia, Mongolians and Muslims in Kansu and Sinkiang, Mongolians and Tibetans in Chinghai, and Tibetans in Sikang.<sup>4</sup> The Muslims, of Turkish extraction, the Mongolians and Tibetans, are all of the same Uru-Altai stock as the Japanese. In other words, they are our brothers. As I learned at the Ko Ah Gijuku, one should not be fooled by seeing China as a single colour on the map.

Whoever controls Northwest China controls all of China. Whoever controls Sinkiang Province, controls Asia. This is the basis of the policy of surrounding China with the northwest tribes. The key to understanding the Sino-Japanese War is in the fact that the Mongolians and the Tibetans together surround the Chinese.

To Nishikawa the ultimate adventure, and the ultimate service to his nation, would be to volunteer for service in the remote

but strategically vital 'northwest'. But unlike Kimura, he did not graduate and was never given an assignment in the grasslands, and just why is the first point on which the two men disagree. Nishikawa gave the following extremely vague account of the events that led to his expulsion.

We students all regarded the school as a sacred training ground, but some of the teachers thought of it only as a way to make money. It made our blood boil with indignation to see the purity of our cause thus sullied, and one night, maddened with drink, we decided to kill the most offensive traitor. An innocent Chinese servant who happened to be in the way became the unintended victim of our rage.

It is a pity he does not tell us more about the 'traitor'. Was he doing some pimping on the side? Some illicit trade speculation? Was he simply collecting his salary for less than wholehearted devotion to his teaching, or did he perhaps have a less than wholly orthodox political view? Whatever the case, it must have been a thoroughly botched attack, and Nishikawa concludes that his violence was 'meaningless'.<sup>5</sup> As the eldest of those involved, he had to take the blame, and along with one other student named Nakano Fumio he was ordered out of Mongolia and put on a train bound for Peking at the end of September 1942, three days before graduation. On the platform his eyes filled with tears for the first, but by no means the last, time in his story.

Kimura tells the story differently, though at the time he was deep in the grasslands trying to convince Mongolian nomads to breed sheep that they considered mutants. According to him the incident was much less spectacular, and was well known among the other volunteers. In this version a group of students were having a full-moon party, and since Nishikawa was the only one over twenty-one, only he had a ration card enabling him to draw *saké* from the stores. Finding the warehouse locked, the students broke in, and when the theft was discovered Nishikawa, as the eldest, was disciplined as an example.

This is a very minor difference of opinion compared to some of the differences the two men were to have later, for though fate was to lead them on similar but separate journeys to Tibet, two men more different both physically and temperamentally could hardly

be imagined. Kimura was not only exceptionally short but lacked the sort of superhuman physical strength and endurance possessed by Nishikawa, who was over six feet tall and seemed never to tire. He could sleep in the most appalling conditions, and Kimura once describes him lying on his back in a downpour, fast asleep with his mouth wide open and the rain pouring in.

Of the two, Kimura was by far the more human and open-minded, and was eventually disillusioned by his doubts about the morality of what his country had been up to in Asia. But Nishikawa is a more difficult personality to pin down. Unlike Kimura, he never exhibits the slightest doubts about the Japanese militarism he so enthusiastically followed during the war, and remains unrepentant to this day. Yet he was a complete nonconformist, getting in trouble during training, disobeying any orders that did not suit him, and flouting the law to sneak into places his superiors felt he had no place to be. It is difficult for us to understand or warm to a man who, while he mixes with Central Asians as an equal and defends their ways to us, all along regards his own culture and country (to which he has no desire to return) as innately superior. Just as off-putting is his very Japanese habit of bursting into tears every time things go either very well or very badly. If he is to be believed, he probably spread more tears across Central Asia than any traveller since Kawaguchi. What cannot be denied, however, is that as a Central Asian traveller he has few equals.

But this is to get ahead of ourselves. We left Nishikawa and his companion Nakano on the platform of Huhehota Station, being handed their tickets to Peking:

visions of Mongolian friends on the grasslands, comrades, teachers, the graduation ceremony of the day after tomorrow, the faces of my elderly parents all blended in my mind and faded to be replaced by hot tears.

However, they were not to reach Peking. Neither was willing to give in to his superiors and leave Mongolia, so they got off after a couple of stations, had a few drinks, and decided they would sneak into the northwest on their own for the sake of the Fatherland whether it wanted them to or not.

As a first step they caught a train west, opposite to the direction in which they had been ordered to go – to Pautou, from where they

hoped to go to a large monastery they knew in the hills to the north of the city. They were now renegades among their own people, but they had numerous friends among the Mongolians and the Chinese, and at Pautou they stayed with Chinese friends of Nishikawa's from his days on the railroad. It was only a twenty-kilometre walk from a branch-line railway to the monastery, which he describes in an idyllic mountain setting. The two Japanese were granted permission to stay: 'We both rejoiced. Here beckoned a peaceful existence of tending to the monastery's daily affairs, eating millet gruel and pickled vegetables morning and evening.' This seems a rather strange conclusion for someone disobeying orders in order to serve his country in the front lines, and in fact Nishikawa is never entirely clear on what they hoped to accomplish at the monastery.

But the peace of the monastery was deceptive. After they had been there about two months, as they were eating their evening gruel with two other monks ('our four heads together in the dim light'), they heard the sounds of shots outside and discovered that they were surrounded by 'bandits'. The two Japanese distinguished themselves by fleeing to the roof – one forgetting his fur-lined robe in his panic, the other his boots – where Nishikawa was unable to hold his water from sheer fright. After lying on his side and urinating carefully so as to make as little noise as possible, he watched the midwinter raid, shivering, from the roof. Oddly, he describes the officers as wearing the uniform of the 8th Route Army. For all the horrors they were to perpetrate on Mongolian – and particularly Tibetan – Buddhists later, it was not the policy of the Communists at this time to alienate local peoples. On the other hand, it was not unknown at the time for the Kuomintang to try to discredit their Communist allies in the United Front by carrying out raids dressed in their uniforms.

As a result of the raid, two monks were kidnapped and a large ransom of 200,000 yuan was demanded. The abbot seemed to think that it was all somehow the fault of his Japanese guests, and to atone they wrote to the Japanese Military Intelligence Officers in Pautou requesting help. This, of course, meant that they had to give away their whereabouts. Within a day or two a mixed force of Japanese and Mongolians caught up with the bandits and rescued the two monks, but Nishikawa and Nakano were forced to report to Pautou. There, they were again ordered out of Mongolia, and again 'with



tears streaming from our eyes' they set out for Peking. On the way they passed a Japanese military cemetery and Nishikawa felt his determination rekindle. 'No true Japanese could help but feel his resolution harden at the sight.' They were down, but not out.

One thing Nishikawa never seems to have considered was going back to Japan. In Peking he and his friend looked up some former classmates and stayed with them, until their hosts received a telegram from the Ko Ah Gijuku saying that the two renegades were a bad influence and they should have nothing more to do with them.

Nishikawa and Nakano were now nearly in despair. Peking is hardly the best place to be in winter with no work and nowhere to stay. But unknown to them, they had friends in Kalgan working on their behalf. It was not long before these Kalgan classmates wired them to return. Apparently they had pleaded their case with Mr Nakazawa, head of the Good Neighbour Association, and he had agreed to see them.

When the two men arrived back in Kalgan, Nakazawa extracted a promise from them to give up drink and not to strike any more local people, then said he would try to persuade the headmaster of the Ko Ah Gijuku to reinstate them. The upshot was that they were asked to sign a pledge confirming what they had already promised, then the headmaster showed Nishikawa a letter from his father, a conservative farmer from the mountains of northern Japan. It was to the effect that he had been formally disowned by his family for his disgraceful conduct in this time of national emergency, and that only ritual suicide could atone. Having his father tell him, in all seriousness, that he no longer existed in his eyes, and that he should put an end to himself, would, one would expect, detract from the satisfaction of reinstatement at the Ko Ah Gijuku. Nishikawa, however, often confounds us, and he tells us that his heart 'filled with gratitude' when he read this letter.

While Nishikawa was being expelled and reinstated, Kimura was quietly going about his work in a place called 'The Plain of Hell'. When the Good Neighbour Association had asked local banner officials for land for their experimental farm, they had replied by giving them this unpromising waterless stretch on the border of the

banners of East and West Sunit. But the Japanese could be full of surprises, and they managed to dig successful wells in the sandy soil, shoring up the sides with large mats of woven willow branches bent into cylinders. These wells were such a novelty that they attracted nomads for miles around.

Outside of the wells there was little more to Kimura's 'experimental ranch' than three round Mongolian felt tents and six impoverished families who worked for him managing the horses, cattle, camels and sheep. They had fallen on hard times, and once their flocks and herds had become too small for them to pay any tax the banner officials put them forward as workers for the Japanese.

Kimura and his one Japanese companion were given the job of trying to improve the sheep of the local nomads by using Australian studs. The trouble was that while these sheep were bigger and stronger, and while they yielded far more meat and wool for the Great Mongolian Trading Company to supply the army with, they did not have the typical fat tail of the Mongolian sheep. This fat tail is the animal's most prized part, and any sheep without one was regarded as a worthless mutant. Lest they infect the herds, the studs that Kimura supplied the nomads with were immediately killed and eaten, and all his efforts quickly ended up in the stew pot.

The longer he stayed, the more frustrated he became. In fact, he was becoming a very confused young man, for he could not help but notice – and disapprove of – the effect his countrymen were having on the Mongolians, with whom he increasingly identified. Yet he still felt himself to be a loyal subject of the Emperor, and somehow wanted to 'serve his country'. The answer fell into his lap on one of his periodic visits to Kalgan.

While he was living on the ranch he had developed a fascination for the distant Mongol Torgut tribes of the northwest, and the lama of a small monastery in his area had fed his imagination by predicting that one day he would go to the 'holy land of the west'. In Kalgan, Mr Nakazawa (who not long after would intercede for Nishikawa) took him to lunch to map out their strategy for keeping him in the Good Neighbour Association as Kimura approached twenty-one, the age when he would be liable for conscription. There, by chance, they met Tsugiki Hajime, a veteran of the 2.26 Incident.

Though he had been sent to Inner Mongolia as punishment

for his overpatriotic zeal, Tsugiki had prospered and was now an important man. As head of the 'Investigation Section' of the Japanese 'Embassy' (in keeping with the fiction that Inner Mongolia was an independent entity), he was probably the ranking Japanese spymaster in Mongolia. This meeting occurred not long after Pearl Harbor and the Japanese advance through Southeast Asia, so Tsugiki was a very busy man. The advance had been so unexpectedly rapid that intelligence activities were now well behind the times. As part of the effort to catch up, centres were being set up both to study local customs and to recruit native agents. The Japanese were now looking to expand westward from their base in Inner Mongolia. There was a Buddhist centre functioning in Pautou, and it was at this time that Aoki was called in to set up a Tibetan Operation in Burma, the nearest Japanese forces were to Tibet.

Tsugiki was most interested in learning something of a rumoured supply route that began at a port north of Moscow, continued across the Kazakh Soviet Republic, and crossed the very part of western Mongolia that Kimura most wanted to visit on its way to Chiang Kai-shek's base in Chungking. It was only Chiang's desperate situation that led to such a possibility even being considered, for the Japanese had now cut the Burma Road, and the Tibetans, insisting on remaining strictly neutral (and with no love at all for the Chinese), refused to allow supplies to pass through their territory. This rumoured supply route was so remote that it was even out of range of Japanese aircraft, and Tsugiki wondered aloud how he could get information on it. Kimura felt that he had the answer, and he spent the rest of his holiday in Kalgan drafting a detailed plan for going west himself, which he submitted before going back to the farm. Later he learned that his plan had been reviewed in Tokyo and dismissed with contempt because of his age, and also because he was still liable for conscription.

In summer 1942 he was summoned to Huhehota for a physical examination, an aptitude test, and an interview with a recruiting officer. In the latter he was fortunate. A dedicated professional soldier, the recruiting officer was shocked at the dissolute lives he found many young Japanese men living in Mongolia. As we have seen, a remarkable number of them were employed in the pleasure business, and even most of the young government

workers and traders lived largely for drink and debauchery. One can imagine how a professional soldier longed to get them into his clutches. Kimura's Spartan life in the grasslands, on the other hand, impressed the recruiting officer, who decided he was doing more useful work for his country than he would do as a soldier. When Kimura received his draft notice it gave the name of an army unit followed by a note that informed him there was 'no need to report for duty'.

This, he assumed, meant he would be free to put his plan into effect. Though it would be another year until he actually left, he began making preparations as soon as he got back to his farm. As a companion for the journey he thought of a Mongolian friend named Danzan who had taken his mother on a pilgrimage to Lhasa, and so knew the way as far as Kokonor. The problem was that not long before, Kimura himself had helped to arrange Danzan's marriage to a plump shepherdess on the farm named Tseren-tso, and the couple were now settling down nicely. In the end, she gave permission for her husband to go: on the condition that she go along as well. That decided, the three of them would spend their evenings sitting around and planning their little journey. Kimura, it was decided, would go disguised as a Mongolian monk, Tseren-tso's younger brother.

Immediately they could see that their big problem would be Tseren-tso who, with her earthy nomad ways, was a hopeless actress. There was a certain sophistication about her husband, who had been a monk for many years, had studied in some of the great monasteries of Mongolia and Tibet, was well travelled, and a master at camel trading. But there was no deviousness about his wife. They tried to practise their roles together, but Tseren-tso could not shake such habits as using honorific terms towards Kimura. She had got used to him as her employer, and nothing could convince her to talk to him as she would to a little brother. The Mongolian taboo on any mention of sex between brother and sister was an even bigger problem, for there was nothing Tseren-tso enjoyed more than a good lewd joke. 'But he's not really my brother,' became her favourite riposte when she was admonished for slipping out of her role.

Finally, in September 1943, Kimura was summoned to Kalgan, given a year's leave and ¥10,000, and put retroactively on the

Embassy pay-roll. He knew better than to mention that a year would not be nearly enough time. Once he had actually left, he would be out of anyone's control, and would be able to take just as long as he wanted. He sent a message to the farm for Danzan and Tseren-tso to come to Kalgan, and let Danzan bargain over camels while he kept an eye on his wife, who was visiting a city for the first time.

With money to spend, and already speaking near-perfect Mongolian, Kimura probably left the best-prepared of any of the Japanese travellers, though of course there could be no luxuries, and no hint of such modern intrusions as maps, compasses and cameras. They could be in great danger if they were caught crossing from Japanese into Chinese-held territory, and their only defence would be to pose as simple pilgrims. Their basic equipment included a travelling tent, two brass water bottles, a leather bellows, an axe, a Mongolian kettle, matches and flint, needles and thread, two cooking pots, some silver bowls, three felt rugs, a fur-lined sleeping bag for Kimura (the happy couple would simply slip out of their robes and wrap up in them at night), cotton and textiles for trade, prayer beads for presents, and plenty of flour and brick tea. Firearms and opium were two items to be avoided, for anyone caught in possession of either at the border was summarily shot. Modern medicines, however, were an important item, and they were disguised by being ground to a powder, then dyed with soot and the juices of barks and grasses.

Finally Kimura shaved his head, donned a monk's robe, and changed his name to Dawa Sangpo. His professed destination was Drepung, the largest monastery in the world, just outside Lhasa, and since that is very nearly where he wound up, it is important to remember that at this point he was not really planning to go anywhere near there.

Kimura was not, in fact, the only agent to be involved in this project, though he learned of this only later. In a perfect example of the kind of corruption prevalent among Japanese officials in Inner Mongolia at the time, embassy staff began recruiting native agents to place along the trail, ostensibly to 'assist' Kimura. The officials would then draw funds for their training and upkeep, and pocket most of the money. So ill-equipped were these unfortunate agents that at least one was captured and tortured by Japanese intelligence officers before admitting that he was 'waiting for Kimura'. In the

end, it was the Embassy itself that lost out, and the near-total failure of Kimura's mission from an intelligence-gathering point of view is probably due largely to the lack of any workable way for him to send information back. His instructions were extremely vague. He was to take no chances, send back reports by way of agents planted along the way, and once in Sinkiang to lie low collecting information on defences, where strategic airfields might be built, and how much livestock a given area might support in preparation for the day when the Emperor's Army would arrive.

Their final departure was made in October 1943 – just as, on Guadalcanal, Japanese forces were beginning to suffer their first major defeat at the hands of the Americans. In spite of the defeat inflicted on combined Japanese and Inner Mongolian forces in 1936 by General Fu Tso-yi, and the débâcle three years later at Nomonkhan, since the attack on Pearl Harbor the Emperor's Army had been victorious on all fronts. Word had not reached Inner Mongolia of events on Guadalcanal, and even if it had, it would have been regarded as nothing more than a minor setback. The Japanese were in Asia to stay, and it seemed to Kimura that he had all the time in the world.

Nishikawa's preparations for his journey to the northwest had continued in a far more haphazard manner than Kimura's. He never explains just what he did during the winter after his reinstatement, but he seems to have remained in Kalgan until spring, then travelled to a large monastery, which he names as 'Tokumin', within sight of the Outer Mongolian border in hopes of finding companions, pilgrims headed for Kumbum with whom he could begin his planned journey west, though as yet he had no sanction for such a journey. There were also a number of Japanese here whom he describes as 'Military Intelligence Youths sent out to live with the Mongolians and keep watch on this quiet northern frontier of the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere'. In addition there were three young men from the Good Neighbour Association, and Nishikawa stayed with a health officer named Sugiyama.

Also staying at Tokumin were three pilgrim monks from an area between Lanchow and Sining called Sanchuan. In the sixteenth century their ancestors had been among the Mongolian forces that

invaded the region under Altan Khan, then married local women and settled down. They had evolved into a tribe of semi-nomads who lived by a combination of agriculture and herding. Having completed their pilgrimage to Wu Tai Shan, the three monks had been living at Tokumin for two years, and were now preparing to return home in October. This sort of time frame was not at all unusual for pilgrims, and such a disregard for time was something that both Nishikawa and Kimura would have to learn.

Nishikawa asked if he could join them for their journey and was accepted into their company, though he says they knew he was Japanese. During the summer, just as Kimura had done, he wrote up his plan for sneaking to the northwest, asking for a modest ¥3,000 to complete his preparations, and took this plan to Kalgan to show to Nakazawa. He had four months to gain approval before the monks from Sanchuan were planning to leave.

Nishikawa describes himself as waiting in Kalgan in a stew for the reply, bored, anxious, and with no one to confide in. Presumably all his classmates with whom he could have talked were on assignments in the grasslands by this time (Nakano Fumio, with whom he had shared his adventures after being expelled, disappears completely from his writing at this point). And now his alcohol problem surfaced again:

In my weak-willed way I thought that perhaps a drink might calm me down, and breaking my pledge not to touch alcohol, I started drinking every day. Soon I was dependent on the pawn shop and a month after arriving in Kalgan I was out on the streets like a wild dog.

But drunkenness is followed by the morning after, and at such times I had to face myself at my worst. I had thought myself strong, but I was weak and ugly, pawning everything I owned until I was down to a single pair of trousers, a shirt and Chinese shoes, and I was in a panic as my supply of drink was cut off. Who could help me?

I was ashamed at the thought of having to borrow money from Mr Nakazawa.

Assuming that there is something more here than the typical Japanese love of hyperbole, this is, to say the least, odd behaviour from someone hoping to go on a mission calling for mental as well

as physical fitness. He had, after all, been expelled from Mongolia not long before for intemperate behaviour, and had pledged to stop drinking as a condition of his return. If he was indeed wandering about the streets of Kalgan as a drunken beggar word would certainly have got around the Japanese community there.

Even writing about this period many years later, Nishikawa seems to lose touch with logic and reason. At one moment he writes of how his problem cannot be solved by money, and resolves to go on his journey with no money at all. Then when he goes to tell Nakazawa of this resolve, he breaks into a flood of tears when he is told that the money cannot be raised. The only thing Nakazawa could suggest was to go and see Tsugiki at the Embassy, so he went there and then in his ragged Chinese clothes. To Nishikawa, Tsugiki – who had participated in the 2.26 Incident, and so had assisted, at least indirectly, in the murder of elderly men in their beds and in front of their families – looked like a hero from ancient Japanese legend. He professed amazement that anyone would take up a challenge of the sort Nishikawa was proposing on a mere ¥3,000. Nishikawa assured him that if necessary he would do without any money at all. This fortitude apparently impressed Tsugiki, who told him that he would get him an answer within a week. The inevitable tears again welled up in Nishikawa's eyes.

Nishikawa now makes the rather extraordinary claim that when the reply came, it was directly from General Tojo himself: 'Go secretly into the northwest, infiltrate the tribespeople there and lie in wait.' For vagueness these orders matched Kimura's, or even Nomoto's, but along with them came twice the amount of money he had asked for.

Kimura, again, tells a different story. It was his understanding that Nishikawa had no official assignment, that he had failed even to be properly reinstated at the Ko Ah Gijuku, had hung around several monasteries, then taken off on his own. In spite of the fact that these stories are so divergent, either story is plausible, and it is even intriguing to think that Tsugiki might have thought up the assignment simply to get rid of a persistent drunkard and troublemaker.

Whatever the truth of the matter, Nishikawa now returned to Tokumin to join his friends from Sanchuan. In Kimura's case his companions had decided to go with him out of personal loyalty.



He had arranged funeral rites for Danzan's mother, and paid for Danzan and Tseren-tso's wedding feast. Nishikawa felt that the Sanchuan monks took him along simply because they had no love for their Chinese overlords, and hoped that the Japanese would provide a liberating influence. This was a common enough feeling in those days. It would be some months, however, before Nishikawa could bring himself fully to trust his companions.

With his ¥6,000 Nishikawa bought two camels, twenty bricks of tea, and opium for trade. Though the latter was dangerous, it was light and profitable, and he never reflects on the morality of smuggling it or encouraging its use. He also bought new clothes, and pitched in with the others to buy the meat of seven sheep, flour and parched millet, as well as a little butter, garlic and red pepper.

Altogether there would be five in the party. The leader was a monk in his mid-fifties named Ozul, who had done a good deal of travelling in his life, and was familiar with the topography and conditions in Inner Mongolia, Ninghsia, Kansu, Chinghai and Tibet. Nishikawa describes him as a good man to have leading such a party, since he was known for 'courage, discretion, nerve, and trustworthiness'. With him he had a nine-year-old boy whom he had bought from a Chinese village and treated like a younger brother. This boy, whom he had given the Mongolian name of Bato, was as yet unfamiliar with Mongol ways, and this would be his first journey. The company was rounded out by a one-eyed monk named Yeshe who was to cause them no end of troubles with his quick temper, and a quiet monk of about Nishikawa's own age named Tashi.

Their departure was set for 2 a.m. on 23 October 1943. This was at more or less the same time as Kimura left, but each of the two men seemed only vaguely aware of the existence of the other, and of their missions. There was certainly no co-ordination between them, and no plan to meet.

For some reason that Nishikawa does not explain, their departure was kept secret even from the other monks at the Tokumin Monastery. This was probably because they were headed for a border crossing into Chinese-held territory. On the one hand the monastery might have refused to let them go; on the other, anti-Japanese monks might have given them away, believing they

were agents. Mongolian and Tibetan monasteries have always been politicized, and now, in these violent times, this was more true than ever.

Nishikawa spent the night before leaving playing *hana-fuda*, a popular Japanese card game, with Sugiyama and the Military Intelligence agents to take his mind off his doubts that his friends might slip away without him. He went back through a blizzard to Sugiyama's room for a nap at about eleven, but he was too nervous to sleep. When, after midnight, Yeshe came in covered with snow to tell him to get ready and meet them at the western edge of the monastery, he was ashamed of his doubts. Sugiyama went out in the blizzard with him and they found the Sanchuanese and the seven camels, with poor little Bato tied to one. It was ideal weather for a secret departure, and for covering tracks.

Nishikawa was never to see Inner Mongolia again. When he eventually returned unwillingly to a defeated Japan, it would be to a country that had been occupied for five years – a country he could neither recognize nor ever come to terms with.

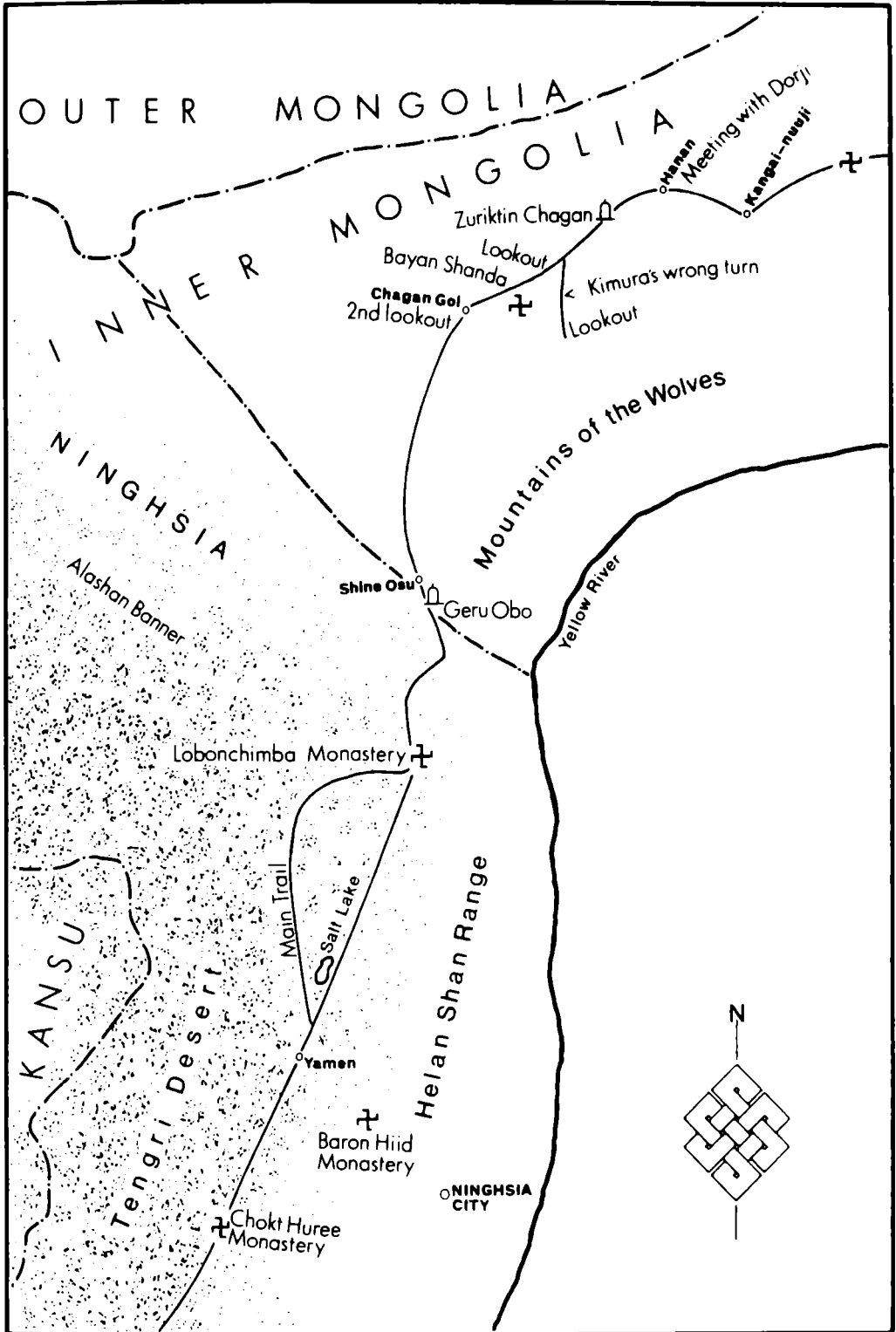
# Chapter Eight

## Into the Ruined Land

It was not very far to the first – and among the most serious – stumbling block of the journey for both Japanese travellers: the border between Inner Mongolia and Ninghsia. This border was a creation of the war. To the Mongolians what the Chinese called Ninghsia was the Alashan Banner, a low-lying desert area of Inner Mongolia. But the Mountains of the Wolves that divided the desert from the higher grasslands now separated Chinese-controlled Ninghsia and Japanese-controlled Inner Mongolia, causing danger and difficulty to the inhabitants of the area as well as the pilgrims and traders who had always traversed the region freely.

Both men used the trip by camel to the border as a kind of shakedown, to get used to travelling in this way. Nishikawa found the first few days awkward, as he bustled around not knowing how to help setting up the camp or even how to gather dung that would burn properly. Kimura was being trained by Danzan in the 'Khalkha System' of travelling which involved getting up at about 3 a.m., long before dawn, and travelling until the wind came up at about ten in the morning. Both men had difficulties being accepted as just another member of the caravan and being allowed to share in the work, but in Kimura's case they were soon joined by three pilgrim monks who did not know who he was, so that he was more quickly thrust into his role.

The first night they made camp, Nishikawa insisted that from then on he would be called Lobsang Sangpo, a Tibetan name which he translated as 'beautiful spirit' (which has a much better ring to it in Japanese than it does in English): 'It flashed in my



Map 1 From Inner Mongolia to Ninghsia

soul like a revelation from heaven: I would use my name both for self-discipline and as a weapon.'

It was Nishikawa who reached the border area first, while Kimura was held up at West Sunit awaiting Tsugiki with his final instructions and his supply of Chinese silver. On the way they had been accosted by drunken Mongolian members of the Security Forces working for the Japanese, the first real test of his disguise, and he was pleased that they were taken in. They were also warned of some Manchurian Mongolians employed by Japanese Military Intelligence as bandits to harass enemy territory on the far side of the border.

Some time in early November they arrived at a village and caravan halt called Hanan. This was the last spot in Inner Mongolia under full Japanese control. To the south were Chinese forces commanded by Fu Tso-yi; to the west Muslim forces under Ma Hung-kuei; and to the north Outer Mongolian forces. They all hated the Japanese, and from now on they would be in a no-man's-land patrolled by all of them. A day or two before Nishikawa's party had been given an inauspicious sign in the squawk of a crow, and he was now so immersed in the atmosphere of the tent that it made him all the more uneasy.

The weather did not co-operate as they began the most dangerous stretch of their journey towards the Mountains of the Wolves and the border:

The sky darkened and a blizzard crept up on us. The snow got deeper and deeper. Our breath condensed and formed icicles on our moustaches. Even our eyelashes froze, and it became difficult to open our eyes. If we stopped our wet boots froze and hurt our feet. If we touched anything metal, our skin would stick to it and peel off. Our urine froze as it struck the ground. When it came to defecating, even tough buttocks felt like they were being pierced by icy needles, and the hairs of the anus froze. It took a lot of determination to carry out the painful task. The famous cold of the Damda Kung banner was showing us what it was made of.

It was so cold and windy that they could not set up camp that night, and had to continue on exhausted. The next day Yeshe and Ozul argued over whether to begin night marches. Nishikawa was in

favour of the safer – if slower – alternative, but Ozul's experience won the day, and they decided on one more daylight march. That day they met two emaciated Mongolians with an exhausted camel coming the other way, and one turned out to be an old friend from the monastery returning from a pilgrimage to Kumbum. He was pleased to meet them, since it meant that his ordeal was over, and advised them to go no further by day. As soon as they found a sheltered place they set up camp, and got into a long discussion about what to do with their opium, since anyone caught with it by either the Chinese or the Japanese was shot with no questions asked. In the end they prayed for safety and hid the opium in the dung bags, despite the danger of forgetting about it and burning it up. Then they took their travel permits issued by the Japanese and everything written in Chinese or Japanese – even wrapping paper or newspaper cuttings – along with anything else that could cast suspicion on them if they were captured, and burned them all up.

That night it snowed and they lost their way in the dark, and eventually their situation became so hopeless that they had no choice but to camp. Without even making tea, they all wrapped up and went wordlessly to sleep. The next thing Nishikawa knew it was morning, and he was awakened by Ozul shouting that they were within sight of a monastery called Bayan Shanda, where the enemy's border headquarters were. Their only hope was to break camp and get out of sight before the garrison was astir. Quickly finding a hiding place in a gorge where the camels could not even be allowed to graze, they were all too nervous to sleep and killed time with fortune-telling, all the predictions agreeing that they would make it through safely.

And then, much to their consternation, a Chinese on a camel came right to their camp. He turned out to be a pedlar based at Bayan Shanda who went from encampment to encampment and, seeing theirs, had stopped to see if they had anything to trade. Finally he left without suspecting them, and in fact he seemed indifferent to politics as long as there was money to be made. Yeshe followed him to make sure he was not reporting to the monastery, and came back with the news that there was a Mongolian tent in the next valley. Soon afterwards they were visited by an old hag and a young girl. It was disconcerting to find themselves with so many visitors when they thought they were hiding. The old lady said she

wanted to buy some tea from them, and gave Nishikawa a shock when she took out her money, for it was Chinese money, unlawful in Japanese-controlled areas. That, he felt, meant that even though they had still not quite broken through the border, they could now be considered in enemy territory.

But the old lady presented a real problem. Her son, she informed them, worked for the Chinese at Bayan Shanda, but was perfectly willing to act as their guide. It was a delicate moment. If they did not hire him, he might inform on them. He might even do so if they did. Ozul decided to refuse. After the old lady had left Nishikawa offered to pay for the guide, but Ozul was adamant that such people were untrustworthy, and that they were no safer in accepting than in refusing. Deciding that the son would not have time to get to Bayan Shanda to inform on them before sunset, they made all their preparations and were ready to go as soon as it was dark, for the Chinese were known never to venture out after nightfall. That night it was clear, and they set out under a full moon. When they passed a major trail patrolled by the Chinese military: 'The thrill of standing on the line of enemy patrol was unbearable. My heart beat like a firebell being repeatedly rung.' Before dawn they had reached a *geru obo*, or tent-shaped *obo* or cairn,<sup>1</sup> near the Chinese observation post of Shine Osu, and here they set up camp.

When night finally came they entered the mountains and were very near safety when disaster struck. Yeshe's camel came to a halt and refused to move, and the quick-tempered monk began to use the whip on him. As a result the camel screeched loudly and bolted, shedding its load in the process. Eventually they recaptured the recalcitrant camel and got its load back on, but it was a noisy business and none of them could believe that they had not been heard.

Their troubles were not over, for next they reached a frozen stream which the camels refused to cross for fear of slipping. In order to get them across they had to dig sand from the frozen ground under the snow, and spread it on the ice: 'The suffering involved in digging that river bed was such that even now when I dig the ground with my hands that dreadful memory is sure to come back to me.'

But in spite of all their problems there were no Chinese soldiers or patrols, and morning found them at the base of the mountains and on the edge of the Ninghsia Desert or, as the Mongolians call

it, the Alashan Banner. In crossing the border into Chinese-held territory, Nishikawa had taken his first step, and could now truly be said to be on his way.

The first night they camped they went to a well for water, but were warned away by a Mongolian Muslim. Four or five days later they skirted the desert city of Yamen, said to be full of spies and very dangerous, then climbed into the Helan Shan Mountains to the east of the town. Their destination was a large monastery called Baron Hiid in the mountains, where they hoped to be granted admittance for an extended stay.

Kimura's border crossing, about a month later, was just as eventful, and punctuated by incidents so similar that the two men could be telling the same story.

Kimura was a more careful and less haphazard traveller than Nishikawa. Before arriving in Hanan on 15 December, he stopped at the last Japanese outpost at the Kangai-nuuji Gorge, where he conferred with the last of his countrymen he would meet for a long time. But they could tell him less than the local Mongolians, and at Hanan he met an old friend named Dorji, an elderly monk he had known on the farm who had been sent ahead to check out the border situation for him. Hanan was an important caravan stop, and though he realized that some members of the caravan that had just arrived from the west would probably be in the pay of the Japanese, he also realized that such men were often double or triple agents, and did not make himself known to them. Instead he found what seemed to him the perfect guide.

Like Nishikawa, Kimura was finding divination an essential part of life here on the plains. An old man came and asked if he could cure his son, whose body had broken out in boils. Since his fortune-telling practices were not quite perfected, Danzan came to his rescue, asking the man to wait outside while he guided the young Dawa Sangpo through the ceremony. Whenever Kimura found himself in a situation like this, along with his advice (in this case to worship the God of Water) he included some of the powdered medicine they were carrying disguised with soot, so his success rate was quite high.

The old man, it turned out, was not part of a caravan but a native



of the area who knew every trail and secret path, having wandered them with his herds all his life. He agreed to guide them past the border guards for twenty silver coins, with ten paid in advance. Dorji gave Kimura a farewell dinner and asked him to look out for an irresponsible follower named Erenchin who had accepted an assignment from the Japanese and disappeared with the funds.

That night they sneaked away through thigh-deep snow under cover of darkness so as not to attract the attention of the caravan, but the next day, as with Nishikawa's party, the land was so uninhabited that it was quicker and just as safe to travel by daylight. A day's journey, a rest in the afternoon, and travel through the following night brought them to a point where the old man said that Chinese patrols would begin to outnumber Japanese. Though there were two guard posts to pass along the way, the Chinese were notoriously lax, and never posted guards at night.

Then, guide or no guide, they got lost, at what seems to be exactly the same point as Nishikawa, and found themselves heading due south instead of west. It was too dark to retrace their steps, and finally, exhausted and nervous, they just unpacked their camels and lay down in the snow to await dawn. Here follows one of those little details that is often omitted in the annals of exploration, as everyone was in such a state that they began to suffer from nervous diarrhoea, and between Tseren-tso, Danzan, the three monks who had joined them, and the old man, there was a steady parade. 'I felt atrocious myself, and wanted to join them,' commented Kimura, 'but was certain that any show of weakness on my part would shatter the resolve of my two companions. So I lay, utterly miserable, trying to control my stomach cramps and pretending to sleep' (Kimura, 1990, p. 39).

In the morning they discovered that they were within sight of Bayan Shanda, and had to beat a hasty retreat. At least their guide found them a better place to camp for the day than Nishikawa's party had found, and they could allow their camels to graze. Sneaking out to discover where they had missed their turn, they found that the landmarks had been obliterated by a recent landslide. To restore the old man's honour Kimura let him keep nine of the ten silver pieces he had paid him in advance, and that night they went on without him. During the night they managed to stick to the trail and passed the two outposts. One was by the

roadside and they could see a guard asleep by the fire. Though the temperature was lower than minus thirty degrees centigrade, Kimura found himself bathed in sweat.

Afraid of overshooting their mark, they camped blindly, and woke up to find that they had reached the *geru obo*. Almost next to it, and guarding the escarpment, was the outpost of Shine Osu, and since there was nowhere to hide, they just went bravely by in the early-morning light. One of the camels lost a saddlebag just in front of the outpost. They calmly made it squat and refastened the load, as the outpost remained resolutely silent. Then suddenly they found themselves looking down through a series of canyons at the Ninghsia Desert.

After a detour to a monastery in the hills to give thanks, they camped for three days on the edge of the desert, where they could find some decent grazing. One of these three days was New Year's Day, 1944. Kimura made what he later came to regard as 'an absurd little nationalistic gesture'. In the tradition of Kawaguchi, but in keeping with the militarism of the times, he climbed the nearest hill, faced east, and softly sang *Kimigayo*, the Japanese National Anthem.

In order to avoid the Customs post the party cut across the desert instead of following the main caravan trail, and – exactly as with Nishikawa – they were warned off a well by Mongolian Muslims on their first day travelling south. The thing that is so remarkable about the stories of the two men is just how similar their tales are whenever they are apart. It was only much later, when they get together, that they begin to differ.

After skirting Yamen, it was only a few days until they were within sight of the dunes of the Tengri Desert, and at a monastery at its edge called Chokt Huree they camped to prepare to cross these famous dunes. On the way they had overtaken Nishikawa, who had settled in at the Baron Hiid monastery in the Helan Shan southeast of Yamen.

While they were camped at Chokt Huree they were visited by three bullying and aggressive monks. The most belligerent one seemed oddly familiar to Kimura, and he finally recognized him as Erenchin, the wayward disciple his friend Dorji was so worried about. He made himself known by offering him snuff from a bottle given to him by Dorji.

Later Erenchin returned with a bottle of Ninghsia spirits and apologized for his behaviour. He was homesick and depressed, but since he had totally failed in his rather simple assignment of collecting newspapers issued in Ninghsia and Lanchow, he was afraid of what the Japanese would do to him if he went home empty-handed. Kimura decided to take a chance on him and send back whatever information he had gathered about the deployment of troops on the border, along with a face-saving statement on his failure. This letter, along with a map of the border area, was the only communication Kimura ever sent back to his superiors and, as he put it, 'In a sense this letter ended my brief and hardly glorious career as a spy'. It is worth quoting to compare with the two letters Nishikawa sent back.

20 January, 1944

Dear Mr Nakazawa

I am writing from Chokt Huree Monastery, about 200 *ri* [80 miles] south of Yamen. Erenchin, one of Dorji's subordinates, has unexpectedly visited me, and we have just celebrated our chance encounter. He has on several occasions attempted to enter Ninghsia and Lanchow, but has failed because he cannot get an identification card from the Ninghsia government. Since he is at a loose end and doesn't know what to do, I have asked him to return with this note.

On passing through the Banner of Alashan, I have been impressed with the possibility of reopening trade with north-west China. If Ma Hung-kuei could be won over, large-scale trade is entirely possible. Even smuggling, I believe, would be worthwhile. I am sending information on the deployment of the Muslim Army and Central Army along the border (sketch maps attached). I expect to enter Chinghai Mongolia by way of Kumbum Monastery, and then go on to Sinkiang. If I fail to enter Sinkiang I intend to go to Lhasa and return by way of India or Burma.

The three of us are in high spirits and on the best of terms. Though I have not heard any news of Nishikawa, I believe he is safe and probably headed for Kumbum. I hope you will further avail yourself of Erenchin's services.

Since Ninghsia was a crossroads of trade routes, it had developed

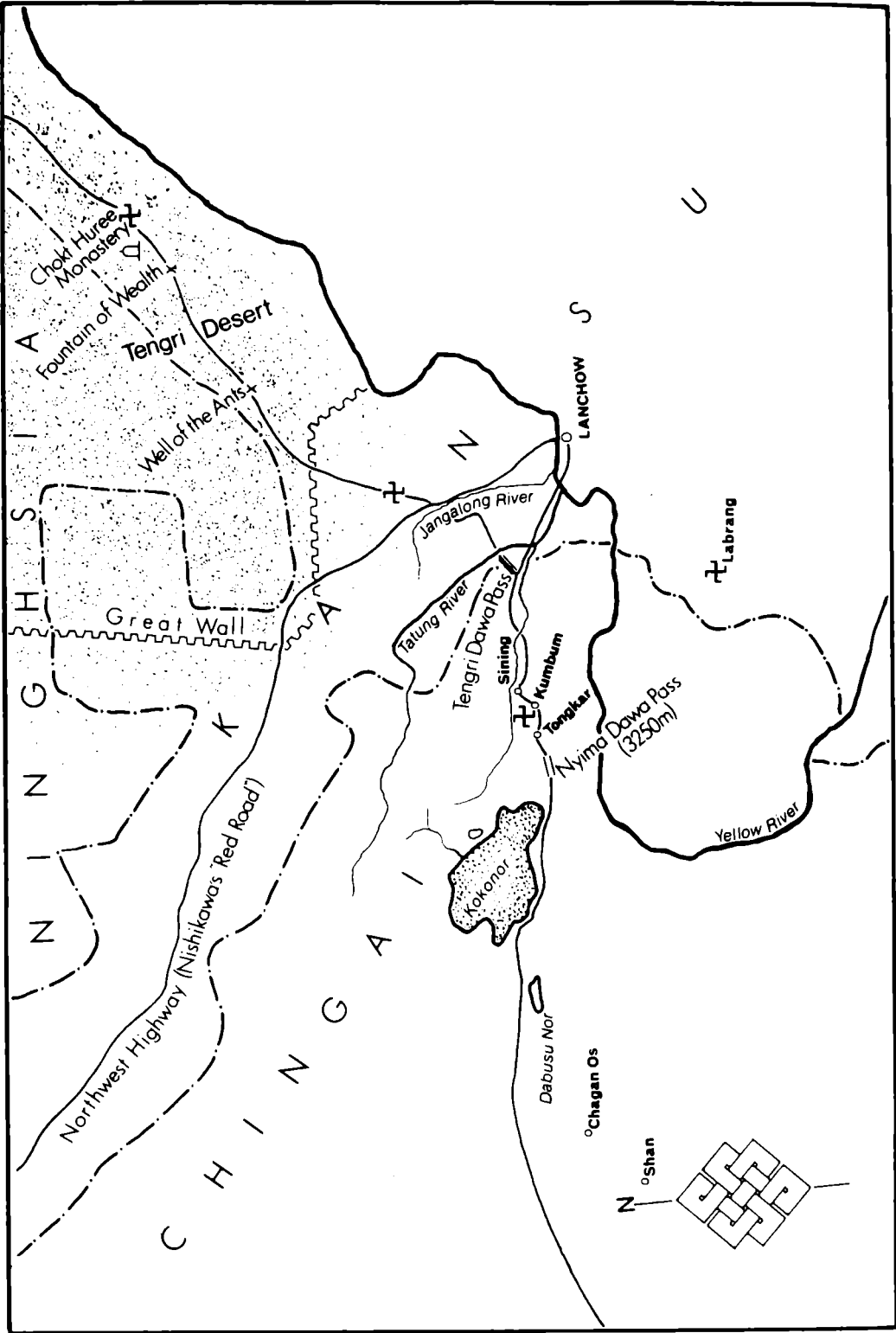
a tradition of exploiting and cheating travellers. The monks at Chokt Huree ran a kind of protection racket, stealing travellers' camels and then bringing them back for a fee, and Kimura and his companions were only too happy to leave a place where this sort of thing was so rife, preferring to take their chances with the Tengri Desert.

A glance at the map shows that there is no way around the Tengri Desert, which is bounded on the south by the Yellow River. Though its name means the 'Desert as Vast and Endless as the Heavens', it is only twelve miles wide at this point. What made it difficult were the treacherous, shifting sands of the dunes. These dunes were so tall and steep that anyone who fell into a trough would find no way out. The sand would just collapse on anyone trying to climb up. Frequent sandstorms, which descend without warning, complicated matters. For these reasons, crossing the Tengri Desert on foot was said to be equal in merit to reciting all hundred and eight volumes of the *Kangyur*, the Tibetan collection of the teachings of the Buddha.

Only a few days before the party had been in temperatures of minus thirty degrees Celsius, but out here on the sand the sun was so hot that Kimura pulled both arms out of his fur-lined robe, and by the end of the day he was well sunburned.

Their passage went without incident, and they reached The Well of the Ants, which marked the end of the crossing, at around 3 p.m., luckily deciding to camp behind a hill to the south of the well. Hearing a commotion, they went to the top of the hill and saw more than a hundred Mongolians, some on camels and some on foot, being herded back across the Tengri Desert by Chinese cavalymen. The next day they met an Inner Mongolian monk who was part of this group, and under guard himself, who told them surreptitiously that they were part of a group of about two hundred pilgrims accompanying a lama named Tokan Gegen back to his monastery in Chinghai.

This lama was well known to the Japanese. He had spent the last few years in Inner Mongolia and Manchuria, and was even rumoured to have gone to Japan, so the Chinese were – only naturally – suspicious. Kimura knew him, having once interpreted for him in Kalgan. The lama and his entire retinue of pilgrims had been arrested and taken to Lanchow. One of the 'pilgrims' was



Map 2 From Ningshia to Chingai

discovered to be a Japanese in disguise and was taken out and shot. The captive monk told them he was not about to give up his pilgrimage easily, and hoped to sneak away from his captors. Finally he slipped them a letter for his lama at Kumbum.

If this news was hardly reassuring, the ragged Ordos Mongolians they next encountered, coming from a bandit-infested mountainous spur of Kansu, were no more so. But they passed through without incident and entered the large, semi-independent border province of Chinghai, a land of many races and peoples.<sup>2</sup> It was ruled by the Muslim warlord family named Ma, which had an army of more than a hundred thousand and was so powerful that Chiang Kai-shek was frightened to arm them properly. Kimura felt that Chiang had as much to fear from the example of good and stable government as from the army, at least in this part of Chinghai. Later he would find a very different situation.

It was February when they reached the fortified capital of Sining, and this marked the first time Kimura had been inside a city for months. They were not allowed to camp but were forced to stay at an inn which he describes as cramped, dirty and vermin-ridden, where they were charged exorbitant prices for both accommodation and fodder. Since it would not have been a good idea to let on that they were from Japanese-occupied lands, they signed in as 'Danzan and a party of five from Baron Hiid Monastery, Alashan Banner'.

Ma Pu-fang, the governor, though hardly known for his open-mindedness and compassion, was extremely pragmatic. He had a large Buddhist population to govern, and often found himself in possession of holy figures who could be used to advantage. Five years before it had been the infant Dalai Lama, born not far south of Kumbum. It had cost the Tibetan government three hundred thousand Chinese dollars to be able to take the boy to Lhasa. Now he also had one of the three candidates for the vacant position of Panchen Lama, presently at Kumbum. In the case of the Lama Tokan Gegen, he had decided to placate the Buddhists by arranging for his release from Lanchow. The first Kimura heard of this was on the streets of Sining.

All the Mongolians and Tibetans in Sining were going to worship the Lama, and though he was worried that he might be recognized, it would have looked suspicious had Dawa Sangpo avoided this. As

it was, during the public audience a very strange thing happened. After receiving a one-handed blessing, he listened to the Lama's address to the pilgrims. Seeming to turn to Kimura, he proclaimed: 'This land is very unsettled compared to Inner Mongolia. To the west the Kazakhs persecute our people and we are powerless to stop them. Therefore I advise you to leave for your native land as soon as you have finished whatever you came to do: otherwise leave for Tibet. In that holy land there is peace.' This was the first Kimura had heard of the devastation caused by the Kazakhs, Muslim tribesmen who were wreaking havoc in the lands he had to cross. He would later feel that the words about Tibet were a prophecy uttered for his benefit.

The next day, with relief, they left the city for Kumbum. Except for the presence of Tokan Gegen, there had been nothing to attract the pilgrims to Sining, but Kumbum was indeed very different, and here they would part company with the three monks, who had reached the end of their pilgrimage. They do not seem to have been very personable, and they parted without regret, but Kimura and his friends were soon to join up with more interesting companions.

There had not been a Japanese at Kumbum since Teramoto, and that had been in Imperial times. But though the political situation had changed, probably little else had inside this community that was larger than any settlement in the Inner Mongolian grasslands. At the time the chief novelty was the presence of the boy who would eventually become the seventh Panchen Lama.<sup>3</sup> He was just about to be initiated into monkhood, and there were large crowds at the monastery. Danzan told Kimura to be on the lookout for any Tsaidam Mongolians in the crowd. The Tsaidam Basin to the west, a vast area populated mostly by Mongolians, would be their next destination on the way to Sinkiang, and it was there that caravans assembled both for Sinkiang and for Lhasa. Like the Alashan Mongolians of Ninghsia, the Tsaidam Mongolians had a reputation for deviousness, so the most sensible thing would be to become friendly with some of them and travel in their company.

They were quite distinctive-looking. The men wore fur-lined robes that were longer than normal, but tucked up to knee length to form a huge pouch into which they might put almost anything: bowls, books of sutras – even babies, or dogs. They always kept their

right arms and shoulders out of their robes, bare, except in the very coldest of weather, and the women bared their right breasts as well. The unmarried girls braided their hair into a hundred and eight strands, while the married ones made just two large braids and tucked them into embroidered black pouches, and they wore small conical hats with red tassels hanging from them. Tseren-tso added naughtily that while the men wore lambskin trousers underneath their robes, the women wore no underwear and had a reputation for trapping Inner Mongolian pilgrim monks into marriage.

Armed with that description, it was not long until they found a group of three, two men and a woman with her hair in the two braids that indicated she was married. They asked them to their quarters for tea, and discussed the possibility of travelling with them to their homeland. They were friendly, and all three were to be important to Kimura. The leader was named Gombo Zaisun, and the fact that '*zaisun*' was a title of honour given to rich men, though he appeared to be anything but, was an indication of what lay ahead, as was the ugly scar on the neck of the girl, Za-huhun, or 'Little Maiden'. The third member of the party, a short and quiet man named Tenzin, may have been far more important to Kimura than he ever realized.

It was from Gombo Zaisun that they heard details of the troubles ahead caused by the Kazakhs. These Muslim nomads of mixed Mongolian and Turki descent seemed to have inherited all the ferocity of the old Mongol hordes – a ferocity which had been softened in the Mongolians themselves by centuries of following the pacific creed of Buddhism and sending many of their sons into the monasteries. After the Kazakhs had disturbed Chaing Kai-shek's supply routes in the west, a large army had been sent to move them on, and though they were chased away from the road, they moved into Tsaidam. At first they settled peacefully, but after familiarizing themselves with the terrain they rose in an orgy of robbery and pillage, devastating the western banners and flooding the eastern part of Tsaidam with refugees. This civil war, Kimura learned to his consternation, was blocking the caravan routes to Sinkiang, and brought back to him Lama Tokan Gegen's words about Tibet.

During the ten days Kimura spent at Kumbum he attended a public audience with the young Panchen Lama and did the

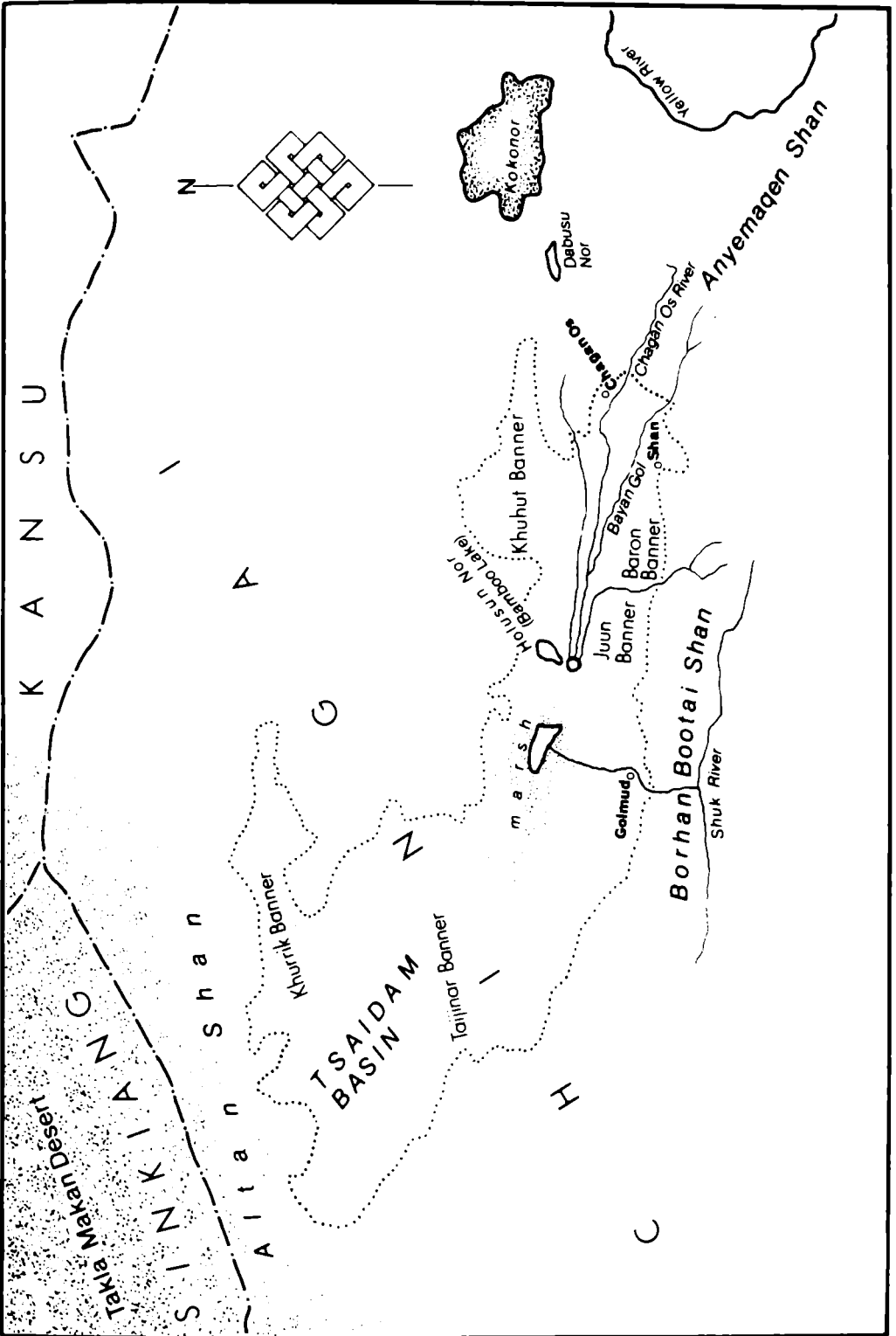


pilgrim circuit, but made no attempt to enter into the life of the monastery. He was keeping his eye firmly on his objective, but he was also fascinated by the people he met along the way, and some of their customs. One of the first things he noticed was the odd speech of the Tsaidam Mongolians. Any words related to sex, even very obliquely, were strictly taboo in daily conversation. As Kimura comments: 'judging from the number of words forbidden, they seemed to have little else on their minds' (Kimura, 1990, p. 68). Some of the proscribed words concerned entering, getting soaking wet, piercing, standing erect, having a rendezvous, sharpening, digging or climbing. None of this affected their behaviour, however, and he was shocked to discover that Za-huhun and Gombo Zaisun were not married, since she behaved to him in every respect like a good and dutiful wife.

She was in fact a wife, but not Gombo Zaisun's, though at his bidding she told them her story one windy night as they camped on the shores of the vast inland sea known as the Kokonor. Her husband was an Inner Mongolian doctor monk who had nursed her back to health after a vicious Kazakh raid on a monastery during a festival. After chasing all the worshippers inside the monastery, the Kazakhs had set fire to it and then picked off the Mongolians as they fled the smoke and flames. Za-huhun had been so badly wounded that she had been left for dead.

On the final night, as they approached the pass that would lead them to Tsaidam, they were visited by a Kazakh, and the others felt that the visit was only to find out if they had anything worth stealing. This was a particularly dangerous pass, since the approach was too long to be traversed in a single day, and after this visit they decided to sneak across at night, actually going within twenty yards of the Kazakh camp.

At the time the Tsaidam Basin was one of the most remote and little-known areas of Central Asia. In addition to the Mongolians, there were a few Tangu Tibetans living there. Until just a few years before it had been an extremely wealthy nomadic area, but the devastation caused by the Kazakhs in the west had reduced even the princes of the western banners to poverty, and experienced travellers were shocked at the change that had come over the area. Scars like Za-huhun's were common, and everywhere there was a kind of pathological fear of the Kazakhs. Of the five Tsaidam



Map 3 The Tsaidam Basin

Banners only two, Baron and Khuhut, were relatively unaffected by the Kazakh incursions, though the influx of impoverished refugees was causing a land shortage even there. The banners of Khurrik and Taijinar were in total disarray, while Juun had fared little better; though a punitive force from Sining had driven the Kazakhs back, and inhabitants of Juun, like Za-huhun, were now cautiously returning.

Kimura and his friends looked forward to resting for a time while they planned their next move in the face of the difficulties blocking the way to Sinkiang. It was still early 1944, and they hoped to be on a caravan either west or south by the beginning of the summer. In the event, they were to make a rather longer stay than they had planned.

While Kimura had passed by Nishikawa and was covering more territory, the latter had settled down into the most intense immersion into monastery life ever experienced by any Central Asian traveller since Kawaguchi and Tada. The difference was that these two men had been scholars. Kawaguchi, albeit in disguise, had been summoned by the Dalai Lama, while Tada was respected as one of his confidants; Nishikawa lived as a poor and obscure monk who had to make his own way in whatever manner he could.

When they had first arrived at Baron Hiid, a monastery of over two hundred buildings with more than a thousand monks set in an idyllic valley, the situation had not seemed promising. There had been changes in the formerly free-and-easy ways of the monastery since the outbreak of the war between Japan and China, and the year before, on the orders of the Chinese, a security system had been set up among the Mongolians. Orders were that a sharp surveillance was to be kept for anyone coming from the east, particularly from Japanese-occupied territory. Any such newcomers were to be reported to the Chinese garrison at Yamen. In addition, no one from the outside would be allowed to live in the banner without a guarantor. Their one advantage was that Ozul had lived and studied here before, and his former teacher had advanced in the monastery hierarchy to become the Demchi Lama, or finance minister of the monastery, a position of great importance.

The news of the danger was upsetting not only to Nishikawa but

to his companions as well, and all were glad they had decided not to try to go into Yamen. Their intention was to sell their opium in Alashan and return home with bulging pockets, but now this looked quite dangerous, and they were not even sure they would be able to stay in the monastery. They camped for a night outside it, and Yeshe went ahead to negotiate – successfully, as it turned out. The Alashan Mongolians had no intention of co-operating with the Chinese any more than they absolutely had to, and though it was obvious from their camels that Nishikawa's party had come from Inner Mongolia, no one was about to turn them in. The Demchi Lama agreed not only to act as their guarantor, but to provide them with a room as well.

The Demchi Lama's cloister was surrounded by a white wall. The Lama lived in one wing; the one on the left was used by three of his disciples; and Nishikawa's party was given a two-room wing on the right. The Lama, a splendid old man with a white moustache, told them they could stay as long as they liked, and for the first time in many days they slept out of the wind sheltered by four walls.

Only a day or two after their arrival there was a heavy snowstorm, and the communal snow-clearing operation gave Nishikawa a good idea of the comradeship existing among the pilgrim monks from so many different places. It was important to clear the snow from the flat roofs of the buildings, since these were made of a mixture of straw and cow dung laid over tree trunks, and would melt along with the snow. All the pilgrims were ordered to report to the assembly hall with their shovels and brooms. It is during this work party that Nishikawa first mentions the good-natured homosexual banter that often took place in monasteries when a 'well-dressed, plump, fair-skinned monk' passed by: 'Since there are no women in the monasteries, many monks revert to other means of satisfaction, and in their leisure time gossip not about women, but about boys.'

Mongolian New Year came and went, with Nishikawa taking his full part in the celebrations. Their biggest problem now was all their opium. There was a rumour that someone had informed on an Inner Mongolian monk with a small amount of opium, and all his possessions had been confiscated by the Chinese. A more serious rumour had it that six months before two Inner Mongolian monks had been executed for trying to smuggle opium. To make matters worse, as spring came on the opium they had

hidden under the floorboards of their room began to emit such a strong smell that they had to leave all the windows open and burn strong incense whenever they had visitors. At this time Nishikawa was more worried about having his opium discovered than having his identity revealed.

But before this could be resolved, there was a new worry as smallpox struck the monastery. Smallpox was the disease most feared by Mongolians. With no proper medical facilities, the best they could do was call a large prayer meeting, and this simply spread the disease further. Of their company, only little Bato was affected, and in spite of ceremonies for him the nine-year-old boy succumbed. His foster father nursed him like his own son, and was terribly upset by the boy's death.<sup>4</sup>

Baron Hiid followed the Mongolian custom of laying bodies out to be consumed by wild beasts, and here the task was carried out by two drunken Chinese. Nishikawa treats us to a fine bit of black comedy in his description of them:

Two days later in the afternoon the two body handlers came carrying a wide board. They smelled of cheap liquor, had bloodshot eyes, and walked with the gait of opium addicts. They were notorious for complaining about the offerings they received, or the amount of liquor offered them before they set out. We were warned by the Demchi Lama that sometimes they would leave the bodies in front of the gate for two or three days just to annoy people.

Nishikawa, as the most distant 'relative', was delegated to follow the body to the place where the dead were disposed of, in a valley to the south of the monastery, to make sure that everything was done properly. Two days later he had an even more gruesome task as he returned with Ozul to make sure that the body had been fully consumed. As a dog, four or five vultures, and a number of crows made short work of another corpse, they saw to their satisfaction that all that remained of little Bato was a skeleton. The belief was that if any flesh was left after two or three days, the deceased had lived such a bad life that even the animals detested him.

Once they had established themselves at Baron Hiid, Nishikawa and his friends began making tentative visits to Yamen. Though the border itself was garrisoned by Fu Tso-yi's Kuomintang troops, the

governor of Ninghsia was a member of the Ma family, Ma Hung-kuei, and it was his troops that occupied the desert town, though the Muslims enjoyed nothing like the autonomy here that they did in Chinghai. Nishikawa was unable to resist the temptation to visit the Chinese library to have a look at the newspapers, though this seems a particularly dangerous thing for him to have done. He read with pain of the Japanese defeats at Midway and Guadalcanal, but putting it all down to Chinese propaganda, he resolutely believed nothing of this.

As spring came they were finally able to sell not only their opium but their camels as well, and suddenly Nishikawa found himself in possession of more than two hundred thousand yuan. There were so many notes, from a number of different banks, that they filled a whole large carrying cloth, and it was the first time in his life he had possessed so much money. Now each member of the party went about reinvesting their profits. Ozul and Yeshe ordered fine Yamen carpets which they would offer to their local monastery when they returned. Tashi was the most ambitious, investing in carpets, gold from Chinghai, and furs. He planned to smuggle all this back to Inner Mongolia, then come back with yet more opium. Nishikawa kept his money hidden, thinking that such a fortune would ease his way into Kansu and Chinghai.

But this proved to be a serious miscalculation. At first he planned to change his notes into silver, at the rate of about 120 yuan per silver coin. But because circulation of these silver coins was illegal, he was advised to keep the lighter notes. A month later he discovered that they had halved in value. Thinking that this could only mean that Chiang was being defeated, he was pleased at the same time as he was worried about seeing his money slip away. By July it cost five hundred yuan for a silver coin, and rumour from Sining had it that paper aeroplanes made of ten- or twenty-five-yuan notes were hung from the eaves of shops, while walls and ceilings were papered with the colourful notes. He now rushed around trying to buy silver, but could find no one foolish enough to part with it. Unwilling to abandon all hope, he kept his bundle of money, though 'I might as well now use it for toilet paper . . . I did not know whether to be happy or sad. The Chiang government was on the brink of collapse, but I was also impoverished.'

His sudden poverty led him to a fit of philosophy:

After my ill-gotten gains had departed, I was unable to buy anything, but I received something precious in return which became my greatest souvenir from the continent. When I set foot in Japan after eight years of wandering I found people were manipulated by money, that money was more important than humanity, and that this view was even shared by high government officials who should have known better. . . . When you see how fat Japan has become with ill-gotten gains, one cannot help but look lovingly at the so-called underdeveloped continental regions like Mongolia and Chinghai. There one still finds spiritual cultures.

In April Tashi departed for Inner Mongolia on his smuggling expedition. Nishikawa asked him to take a letter and map of all that he had discovered along the way to his contact at Pailingmiao, and also a letter to everyone at the Ko Ah Gijuku in which he uses the most flowery language possible to crow loudly of his achievements:

12 April 1944

To everyone at the Ko Ah Gijuku

From the snowy plains of the Damda Kung Banner to the dangerous border crossing down to the desert took one month, then I arrived at Yamen in the southwest. If I continue west it will take me to Kansu, Chinghai, Sinkiang, and the matchless land of Tibet, a paradise for us of the Ko Ah Gijuku. Only your mind and body are necessary, so come! Live here! To the northwest! Come! Live here! Like the Mongolians advanced in ancient times, so we will advance now. I have made it here and await your arrival.

My greetings to the principal and teachers.

This is the sort of language that sounds very good read aloud in stirring martial tones, but has little basis in reality, and one can only speculate on the reaction of his fellow graduates in the difficult but more orthodox jobs that he was belittling by implication.

At the end of April his other friends, Ozul and Yeshe, departed for Sanchuan, inviting him to come along. Yeshe, in spite of his one eye and quick temper (not to mention living in a monastery), had managed to form a liaison with a young lady, and there was

a tearful scene as he left, the girl promising to wait for him, and he promising to come back for her. They tried to persuade Nishikawa to come along, but he had his mission to think of, and was concerned that the longer his friends stayed with him the more danger they would be in.

But now, on his own, lonely and assailed by self-doubts, he also had to earn his living. Though he did have a hundred and fifty silver coins (and in April his paper money was still worth something) he needed whatever funds he had for the trip ahead. Nor could he spend anything in the monastery without creating suspicion, so he had to pretend to be poorer than he actually was. He also needed to fade into the monastery scene, and lacking the confidence to attend ceremonies and prayer meetings like a proper monk, his only choice was to work for a living in one of the lowest occupations reserved for the monks with no brains.

His first job was gathering firewood. The forest was two kilometres away, and the wood was carried on his back with two leather straps. At first he found it a painful and tiring experience, but gradually came to enjoy the exercise, fresh air and companionship. Nishikawa describes the various ways he earned his living like this:

As a pilgrim hanger-on, there were many days when I did odd jobs for my landlord, the Demchi Lama; preparing meals, shopping, heating the *kang* [a raised, heated sleeping platform], preparing his snuff, massaging his shoulders, and generally being used just like a novice boy. Monks were supposed to recite the sutras and perform religious practices as well as do odd jobs, but since I knew nothing of the sutras, I did only odd jobs. I got out of the sutras by saying that I was too busy working. I had no experience with cooking, snuff preparation, or any of the other work, but I could not admit that I knew nothing of these jobs, so I was always in a sweat and failing at one thing after another. I was constantly being yelled at for being able to do nothing with either my head or my hands. . . .

The only way he could get by was by playing the buffoon. With no women around, all the monks were able to cook and sew, but in common with all Japanese men, 'I had never so much as boiled a grain of rice since I had been born.' Typical were his meat



dumplings. The fillings had the ingredients all wrong, but it did not matter much since they fell apart anyway.

However, he was rewarded in the evening when, after massaging the Demchi Lama's shoulders, he was offered a teacup full of Ninghsia white spirit. The Lama's secret vice was drinking, and he always kept several jars of this white lightning in his room. This indulgence could have been very dangerous for someone with Nishikawa's drinking problem, but he survived – and enjoyed – the experience: 'Because of this white spirit I put a lot of devotion into massaging his shoulders.'

Nishikawa is probably the only traveller to Central Asia to earn his way partially by making snuff, and he gives a long description and recipe. It was made with a combination of two parts tobacco to three parts ash, which might be wood ash or the ash of cypress leaves, with perhaps some flavourings like camphor or dried tangerine skin added. His experiments turned out a mixture that was praised by the Demchi Lama and, encouraged by this praise, he became an expert snuff maker.

In spite of his early failures he gained a reputation as a hard worker, and found his services in demand for various menial tasks. With plenty of work his worries about how to feed himself disappeared, just as his money became worth less and less every day.

At one point Nishikawa, along with all the other pilgrim monks at Baron Hiid, was almost expelled, because about twenty of Tokan Gegen's followers (the same ones Kimura had seen being herded back across the Tengri Desert) had escaped from their captors and taken refuge there. Ma Hung-kuei asked for them to be handed over, but the abbot refused, and since his following was so strong Ma did not insist. When voices were raised in the monastery itself, saying that it was the pilgrim monks who were causing all the problems, the abbot offered to leave, saying that he himself was a pilgrim from Tibet. This ingenious answer referred to the Tibetan founder of the monastery several centuries before, of whom he was an incarnation. It made perfect sense to the monks, and the outcry against the pilgrims ceased.

At the beginning of May the abbot was taken ill, and although the entire monastery prostrated for his recovery, he died at the end of the month. After his death Ma Hung-kuei felt free to be

more energetic in subjecting Mongolian territory. There were anti-Japanese and anti-Communist lectures at the monastery, and there was a recruitment campaign for monks to join the Kuomintang, but according to Nishikawa the end result was only to make the monks wish the Japanese would come and drive away the Chinese. Demands were repeated for the handover of the twenty followers of Tokan Gegen, who by this time had disappeared.

By accident Nishikawa learned that an acquaintance was proud to be friends with a Japanese Military Intelligence officer he had met on a pilgrimage to Inner Mongolia, and he described the Japanese enthusiastically: 'I like the Japanese. They are far nicer and more clever than the Chinese. You're Inner Mongolian, don't you have even one Japanese friend?' Nishikawa answered that he had not one. 'That's what I thought. A thickhead like you, with no knowledge even of the scriptures, could never be friends with the Japanese.' Nishikawa concealed his secret joy at the success of his disguise.

Now he started a new career as a kitchen monk, along with other monks who were strong but poor scholars. He liked the sense of camaraderie about the kitchen monks, who came from everywhere between Manchuria and Chinghai, and soon he looked like all the others: his red monk's robes shining black with grime, sweat and oil, and his arms and face just as black, except when they were coated with flour. He enjoyed the warmth of winter in the kitchen, the anonymity and the rough fraternity, and when he was offered a job as a clerk because of his unusual ability to read Mongolian (only Tibetan, the ecclesiastical language, was studied in the monasteries) he turned it down flat, since it would have made it impossible for him to leave.

Pleasant as life was here, it was not without its trials. In the summer he came down with a serious fever, and was cured by a Chinese doctor who bled him between the eyes and from under the fingernails. But a more serious trial yet awaited him, though it is not clear why this should have presented a problem at all.

About half a day north of Yamen lived a wealthy and attractive widow in her early thirties named Shara. She managed the Demchi Lama's herd, and as a result she often visited the monastery. On one such trip she caught sight of Lobsang Sangpo, and invited him to come back with her to read the sutras. He tried to decline on

the excuse that he knew nothing of the sutras, but she told him he could always work instead.

When he arrived at her desert settlement, it became obvious that she had no work for him to do, and soon there were rumours among the servants about his relations with her, or with her daughter, who turned out to be the girl Yeshe had left behind. Nishikawa was scandalized by these rumours, and as soon as he could he made his excuses to get back to the monastery. Proving himself probably the biggest prude since Kawaguchi, he comments wryly: 'I had not come all the way to Alashan to become a widow's paramour. In order not to be ruined by a woman I was going to have to leave the house, and decided to return to the monastery.'

In fact, though he was not a real monk, Nishikawa could be scathing about the mores of the others. At Baron Hiid, he tells us, the rules concerning women, drink and tobacco were regularly broken. At sunset, women could be seen disappearing into the monks' rooms, and sneaking away in the early morning. He and the others had had a difficult time sleeping while Yeshe was conducting his affair (he had even jokingly tried to persuade the girl to climb into Nishikawa's bed).

He is particularly caustic over the popularity of boys in their mid-teens. Monks would treat these boys just like women, inviting them for fine meals or giving them new clothes. Young, handsome, plump, fair-skinned monks were like popular *geisha* and would be called one night to the room of one monk, the next to that of another. Though he was thoroughly distraught when propositioned himself by a couple of Baron Hiid monks, his friends made light of it. 'Don't get angry, Lobsang. Just go and they will treat you really well.' Scornful as he can be, he also points out that it was mostly at the smaller and poorer monasteries that the rules were broken. Many monks kept strictly to their vows, and the best of the monasteries made quite sure that they did so.

As autumn approached, so did the travelling season in this part of the world. The animals were now strong and fat, and the camels, who disliked travelling in summer, were ready to move. When a monk named Nyima undertook to transport a load of soda, an important ingredient in making Tibetan tea, to Sining for some Sanchuan monks and offered Nishikawa a job as a caravan man, he jumped at the chance. He had no preparations to make. His

belongings consisted of one set of fur-lined Mongolian clothes, one pair of trousers and a shirt, Mongolian boots, a felt blanket, a cooking pot, and a ladle. He also had his now worthless money wrapped in a large carrying cloth, and a hundred and fifty silver coins. The latter were valuable, but their circulation was also strictly forbidden, so he would have to carry them secretly.

Their first stop was Yamen, where they loaded their camels with the huge, rock-like lumps of soda. Each lump was too heavy to be lifted by one man, and the soda cut into the hands. In mid-September, after ten months at Baron Hiid, they made their departure. Nishikawa and Nyima, as well as two brothers, were each in charge of eight or nine camels. The owners of the cargo, two Sanchuan monks named Danzan and Dato, who were friends of his previous companions, rode camels and supervised. On their first stop they picked up more companions: Danperi, a disciple of the Demchi Lama, along with his mother and sister; and a mistress of Nyima's who was to cause no end of trouble on the journey, along with her son. That night some of the soda disappeared.

There was to be conflict between the caravan men and the owners the entire way. When bits of the load fell off, Nyima would say that since the poor camels were overladen it would not hurt to leave a little behind, while Danzan and Dato were always on the lookout for thievery. Nishikawa had to be careful not to take sides in this running battle. Nyima was his friend and he was sharing a tent with him, but the Sanchuan monks knew who he was.

The work of a camel driver was by no means easy. At the end of a march he had to unload his camels and take them to good grazing, then collect dung for fuel while returning to the tent. Then there would always be ropes and camel saddles to be repaired. At dusk the camels had to be herded back to the tents, and each camel tied to its load, which meant that the proper load for each camel had to be found. Mongolians were able to recognize camels as easily as they could recognize human faces, but for Nishikawa this was impossible. As when he had been learning about the work in the monastery, he managed by playing the fool, and was constantly being scolded.

Just before they reached the Tengri Desert, a fresh dispute broke out between management and labour. In the morning, when they were about to leave, Dato, one of the owners, remained behind,

and later caught up carrying four large lumps of soda. It seems that Nyima and his lady friend had stolen them during the night and buried them a little way from the camp. The owners had watched them sneak off, but rather than provoke violence they had simply retrieved them the next day. This was easy because of a belief in Alashan that if a woman urinates over buried stolen goods they will not be found, and they will also somehow lose their quality of being stolen. This superstition did not take into account that urination left a clear mark for any searcher.

That night a big dispute broke out, with Nyima threatening to go back. But since he had been paid only half his wages in advance, he decided to stay, though relations in the caravan were now thoroughly soured.

They made the crossing of the massive Tengri dunes on foot, for the merit. Like Kimura, Nishikawa remarked that it was uncommonly hot, though in a few days they would be crossing a frozen river. In the middle of the desert they met a caravan coming the other way which told them that not only were Customs regulations getting stricter, but so much soda had been imported into Chinghai that the price had fallen drastically. Nyima could not hide his glee at his employers' misfortune.

After crossing the desert they entered Kansu and began to climb through a particularly desolate landscape noted for bandits. That night they were visited by two Ordos Mongolian pilgrims who had been robbed of everything they had, just as Kimura had a day or two further on, the previous year.

As they continued, Nishikawa's companions pointed out the hills where Gorin Gompa, the monastery of Tokan Gegen, was located. They told him that a Japanese Military Intelligence Officer who had been arrested by the Chinese had escaped to the monastery, but had been rearrested by the Chinese and taken to Lanchow. This sounds like a different version of the same story Kimura had heard of the Japanese being shot.

Suddenly they came upon a motorable road with trucks on it, shocking the poor camels. This, Nishikawa tells us, was the remnant of the old Silk Road connecting Europe, Central Asia and East Asia. It had fallen into disuse after the opening of the sea lanes, but had been reactivated since the beginning of the hostilities with Japan, and was now known as the 'Red Road'.

The Tatung River, which they had thought might have been a difficult barrier, was just frozen enough for them to be able to walk across it, and this was followed by the Tengri Dawa Pass into Chinghai. At the first large town they came to, Ledu, there was a strict Customs search. The only money Nishikawa had was his hundred and fifty silver coins, and here he used a travellers' trick still in use to fool the overfastidious Customs officials.

The bag in which he had packed his few belongings was so dirty that the officials would not touch it, and ordered him to unpack it himself. Inside were not only his grimy clothes (he had, of course, been working as a kitchen monk) but noodles, butter and tea. He describes it himself as looking as if a million bugs might be breeding inside. Taking his shirt off the top, he shook the malodorous dust out in the soldier's face. It was all that was needed, and he was ordered to repack his bag as the soldier went off coughing.

Like Kimura, Nishikawa was impressed by how well this part of Chinghai was governed, and particularly by the prosperity of the farmers and the reforestation projects.

Nishikawa's caravan spent no more time in the fascinating city of Sining than they absolutely had to. Like Kimura, he was bothered by the dirt and the lice of the inn where they were forced to stay. It seemed that the filthy Chinese inns outdid caravan conditions for discomfort. As they had heard along the way, the price of soda had dropped, and they arrived with rather less of it than they had departed with, so that the quarrel between the Sanchuan monks and Nyima and Danperi resumed. In the end they sold the soda for its original price and broke even, then departed for Kumbum after four days.

When they arrived at Kumbum they first went to the temple for Alashan monks named Juju, since the dormitories, as in all large monasteries, were divided by birthplace. Their most pressing duty was to worship at the shrine of Tsong Khapa before eating or drinking anything, then they had to report to the disciplinary officer. Since the war with Japan had started Ma Pu-fang had insisted that any monks coming to Kumbum be registered and their presence reported to him in Sining. But even so, they were happy to be in this centre of Buddhist learning. Indeed, Nyima and his lady friend spent most of the

night celebrating, and Nishikawa, in the same room, got but little sleep.

The candidate for Panchen Lama was still there, and Nishikawa went to an audience along with Mongolians from everywhere. This was a good place to pick up gossip, and he was disturbed to hear opinions of the Japanese which showed no great enthusiasm for this 'interfering lot'.

Several days later he got a shock when, out walking with Nyima's lady friend and her son, he saw a vaguely familiar-looking monk who kept staring at him. Eventually he recalled him as a pilgrim monk whom he had met during his training, and with whom he had shared some *yōkan*, a Japanese sweet. At the time, however, Nishikawa had spoken little Mongolian and was openly Japanese. Now he was dressed as a Mongolian monk and walking with an Alashan woman and her child, and the man seems never to have made the connection.

The woman, meanwhile, was causing problems whenever Nyima was not around. Outside of being a prude, Nishikawa was anxious to avoid problems with his companions and resolutely refused her advances. But though he was not interested, when he mentioned her behaviour to Danzan he offered to look after her needs. Possibly he was just trying to take revenge for the stolen soda. In what sounds like a very strange action, Nishikawa took her to Danzan's room, and she did not return that night. When she came back the next morning, and the situation turned ugly, Nishikawa regretted his pimping and felt sorry for Nyima. At any rate we feel that we are not being given all the details of this incident, and one wonders if perhaps there was a threat from Danzan to reveal his identity.

In mid-October Nyima and Danperi departed with a load of butter for the return trip to Baron Hiid (though Nishikawa does not say if the woman went with them), and 'I was once again left alone to make my own way behind enemy lines'. He was worried that he might stand out more by himself here, where the authorities were far stricter than at Baron Hiid. He still had no confidence in his chanting and scripture reading, and there was not as much work available. Also, since this was a far larger, more important and prosperous monastery than Baron Hiid, there was a greater chance of him running into old acquaintances.

Though he had no work, he found that it was best to continue as a normal pilgrim, doing the rounds of the temples, and the circuit around the monastery. There could be no better place for collecting information and grass-roots opinions:

When I was tired I would sit in a place sheltered from the wind with a good view of the mountains. Other pilgrims and monks would come and sit by me, and as we would take snuff, conversation would bloom.

From these pilgrims he heard rumours that the Japanese were getting thrashed by the Americans, and everyone sympathized with the Japanese because their country was so small. On the other hand, those Mongolians who worked for the Japanese were despised. A man called 'Erenchin', whose nickname was 'thief', came up in this connection, and he may well have been the same sneaky character who had taken the message back for Kimura.

At the end of October 1944, Danzan agreed to take a report back to Pailingmiao. He had often made trading journeys between Alashan and Inner Mongolia, and knew the whole area well. Some time later, in early December, Nishikawa received a visit from Dato, and with him he had a letter from Yamen, sent openly through the post. It was written in Chinese, and contained the worst possible news:

I dropped the letter that you entrusted to me as I was crossing the Tatung River. I am very sorry, but could you please write another one quickly and post it to me? I will remain here at Baron Hiid until the letter arrives.

The letter he had lost had been written in Japanese, and informing him by post was the worst thing Danzan could have done. Letters were regularly opened and censored, and to top it off, Danzan, who could not write Chinese, had employed a bazaar letter-writer to write his missive for him. Dato suggested that Nishikawa send another letter by post, but this was clearly out of the question. In the end the lost letter (it had been sewn into Danzan's hat, which had been blown off as he crossed the river) seems never to have been retrieved.

Though Nishikawa was normally careful about the details of his disguise, at about this time he did something so incredibly careless



as to defy the imagination. One day in Luser, a small Chinese trading post about a mile from Kumbum, he went to a back alley to relieve himself, and for some reason forgot that Mongolians always squat for this operation. A passing Muslim soldier was disgusted by this public display, and arrested him on the spot. In a panic he played the fool and handed him a worthless hundred-yuan note. Finally the soldier went off cursing him, apparently unaware of the Mongolian custom that would have condemned him as a foreigner.

With all his friends gone, Nishikawa had expected his second Mongolian New Year to be a lonely affair, but he was pleasantly surprised to find that he had many callers and was invited to the rooms of many others, so the season passed in happy conviviality.

On the seventh day of the New Year he received a surprise visit from Ozul and Yeshe, who had been to their home in Sanchuan and were not at all pleased by what they had found. Houses and monasteries had both been ruined by five years of high taxes, prices had risen, and the money they had saved over the years from their trading ventures had to be used to bail out their families.

After New Year and the Butter Lamp Festival, Nishikawa was making his pilgrim rounds one day when he literally ran into a former teacher from his training days. Recognizing him right away in spite of his disguise, the man used his real name, greeting him loudly and enquiring after his health. Nishikawa cautioned him, and they went off to a Chinese restaurant in Luser to continue their conversation. The man was with three companions who also knew Nishikawa, and though he promised they would all come and see him, the others stoutly refused. Finally curiosity overcame them, and they all met on the pilgrim circuit and had a brief conversation. The Mongolians did not seem at all happy about being seen with him, and got away as quickly as they could, cautioning him not to speak to them if they should meet again by chance. When they left, though they refused to take any written message, they did take a verbal one, and years later Nishikawa was to learn that it had been faithfully delivered.

Towards the end of January Dato came to tell him that Tashi, whom he had last seen in Yamen setting off on a smuggling

expedition, had returned and was staying in a nearby village. When they met, Nishikawa learned that Tashi and his companion had had a harrowing trip back to Inner Mongolia, since they had joined up with a Tibetan tobacco trader who was also working for the Japanese. Though Tashi had carefully hidden Nishikawa's message in the soles of his boots, the Tibetan was found to have a paper written in Japanese, and they thought they would all be shot. In the end they managed to bribe their way out, but as a result it was thought too risky to bring anything but a verbal message back.

Delivering Nishikawa's letter had made Tashi and his friend celebrities among the Japanese. They were feasted by a Japanese big shot in Peking, and they brought Nishikawa news of many of his friends. But one bit of news shocked him. By now he had read so much in the Chinese papers at Yamen, and heard so many rumours, that only by the most resolute and determined self-deception could he convince himself that the Japanese were not losing the war. Tashi brought him more news of the Japanese withdrawal from the border area, and the collapse of paper money on the Japanese side as well.

Along with this news was the order to abandon his mission and return. 'I did not want to hear anything like that!' was Nishikawa's reaction.

The Mongolians said it was their duty to take him back, but he refused. It might have been this refusal to obey a direct order that led Kimura to believe that Nishikawa was acting on his own, and really had no mission. At any rate, Tashi and his companion agreed to tell the Japanese at Pailingmiao of this meeting, and to try to meet him in Lhasa the following autumn.

One can only hope that the Japanese suitably rewarded such devotion in the face of danger, for Tashi again crossed the lines, and delivered his message and a letter. Nishikawa himself was highly impressed with the loyalty and devotion shown by his Mongolian friends. While allowing that part of their motivation might have been monetary, he also stressed that once they had agreed to do something, nothing would stop them.

In his letter he summarized his trip, then went on in a similar vein to the previous one:

Since I left Inner Mongolia two years have quickly passed. There is nothing to fear when you have determination in a good cause. Come and live here in the new paradise of the northwest. Come and live in this small corner of Greater East Asia. All that is needed is your will and your body.

Now, for the first time, Nishikawa seriously began to consider continuing on to Tibet. Just when he made this decision is not entirely clear, for as we have seen, in the beginning he intended going only to the 'northwest'. In typical fashion, he now decided that he was there, though logically he should have looked towards Sinkiang. The fact that he did not indicates not only that he took rumours of Japanese setbacks more seriously than he likes to admit, but that he was very much his own man. He rationalized that he had long held the dream of single-handedly linking together all the peoples – from Mongolia through Tibet to Burma – who surrounded China, and that by this time he expected the Emperor's Army to be well advanced into India. Probably just as important was his personal resolve to learn Tibetan, and to read the Tibetan scriptures.

At any rate, he began to consider which of the three roads he should take from Kumbum. The most commonly used took Tsaidam as its jumping-off point and continued through high uninhabited regions to Nagchuka, then on to Lhasa, a journey of about three or four months. A shorter route had been constructed by the Muslim army via Jyekundo, but it was washed out and unusable. The problem with both these routes was that conditions had not improved at all since Nomi's day. They forced the traveller to proceed for a total of three months through land where supplies were unavailable, so that food for the entire journey needed to be carried, and riding animals were considered necessary for crossing rivers. In addition it was impossible to go alone, because of the danger of bandits.

At first it appeared that the third approach – to go as a beggar pilgrim back through Labrang in Kansu and south through Dege and Chamdo – would prove the most practical. Because this route was largely inhabited, one could make one's way through it begging from the local population, but it was a long and tortuous road. At the end of January, he tells us, pilgrim monks dressed in fur

robes, fur hats and Mongolian boots, with their possessions in a pack frame on their backs and a long staff in their hands, could be seen prostrating in front of the temple of Tsonq Khapa, then doing a circuit of the pilgrim route before beginning the long journey to Lhasa by way of Labrang. Thinking that this would be the only way he would be able to afford to go, Nishikawa began preparing to join a group of Alashan and Ordos Mongolians about to set off by the eastern route: 'Difficulties and the possibility of death paled into insignificance compared to my longing for adventure in unknown lands and my curiosity about the people I would find there.'

He was warned on no account to take anything valuable. Though he could sacrifice his worthless paper money, he still had a hundred and fifty silver coins. A normal practice was to entrust valuables to a member of a caravan taking the other route. Feeling that this plan was too uncertain, Nishikawa thought he would secrete them somehow on his person, but was told that since a Mongolian pilgrim had been discovered with gold bars in his walking stick several years before, Mongolians had got a reputation among the bandits for looking poor but being rich, and they were thoroughly searched. When he consulted his friends from Sanchuan over what to do, they were horrified that he was even considering this eastern route and persuaded him to give up the idea.

In February Dato told him of two Tibetans who lived in the small town of Shan in the Tsaidam Basin who were on their way home and looking for a caravan man. Shan was right on the caravan trail to Tibet, not far from where Kimura had arrived a year earlier, and Nishikawa felt that if he got there he would have a good chance of joining up with the spring caravan and continuing. Though he had been in contact with so many different kinds of people, this would be his first experience with Tibetans, and the first thing he noticed about them was their huge dog. He was to get better acquainted with this monster.

Impressed that he wanted to make a pilgrimage to their country, the Tibetans hired him to look after the camels, apologizing that they could not pay him much, but indicating that they would do their best to help him continue with his pilgrimage. They were transporting mining tools and foodstuffs for the Chinese goldminers south of Tsaidam. As they set off, in early February 1945, Sonam, one of the two Tibetans, handed him a Russian-made

rifle and cartridge belt, saying: 'We may meet robbers along the way. If we do, shoot them with this.'

The two Tibetans on their riding mules looked ready for anything. Each carried a sword about sixty centimetres long at his waist, a large silver amulet box under his left arm, and a pistol under his right arm, in addition to the rifle slung across his back. They wore hats of wolf fur. Nishikawa describes himself as looking like a Chinghai *samurai* wearing sheepskin Mongolian robes tucked up short Tangut style, with a sheepskin hat and newly made boots, a rifle slung across his back, a cartridge belt hung from his shoulder, and mounted on a brown mule. When they left there were five men and forty camels.

When they camped that first night near a Chinese village, Sangay, the dog, showed what he was made of by trying to eat a Chinese child, and very nearly succeeding. Apparently the end of the day, when he knew he was about to be chained up, was always a bad time for him, and he was at his most ferocious. That evening when Nishikawa came back from looking after the camels he was greeted by Sangay sinking his teeth into his leg. Luckily, the fur of his trousers was so thick that the dog did not break the skin.

'He's not very smart,' apologized Sonam.

Nishikawa found Tibetan customs quite different from Mongolian, and was laughed at good-naturedly for the size of his bowl. He also wondered how the Tibetans managed to subsist on nothing but tea, *tsampa*, and a little dried meat, but it was a diet he would soon become accustomed to.

The next day, on the road to Tongkar, there was a strange incident when they met two young Chinese-looking men with a yak and Sonam began to abuse them, calling them cannibals and saying they would be beheaded when they reached Sining. When they had passed, Nishikawa was told by one of the other Tibetans that this was his first sight of Kazakhs.

Tongkar, where Nomi had been robbed and forced to turn back nearly fifty years before, had declined since those days. It had been largely destroyed at the time of the Muslim takeover, and had never been restored. The shops were low and mean, there were many broken-down houses, and the streets were the colour of earth. But the depressed appearance of the town masked the lively trade that went on here, as well as its wealth, for this was the base from

which Chinese merchants sent agents out to the nomadic territory to the west.

Even after all his travels, Nishikawa balked at taking water from the river here. It was yellow and dirty, and full of urinating yaks. But the Tibetans became impatient with him and admonished him that 'Running water is never dirty'. After that a voice in his head told him: 'You are Japanese, after all. A real Mongolian would have drawn that water without a moment's hesitation.'

Three days past Tongkar they crossed the Nyima Dawa Pass and saw Kokonor before them. Along the shores of the lake the grass was abundant, and there were many nomadic encampments – not Mongolians this time but Tangut Tibetans, a people Nishikawa would get to know well over the next few months. Inhabiting a wide area from Kansu across the wild northern plains of Tibet, these people subsist not only on herding, but on a good deal of thievery as well. They were the bane of the caravans when they were not acting as guides.

That evening, as they sat drinking their tea, two evil-looking Tanguts came along – ostensibly to bargain for butter, but in fact, according to Sonam, to scout them out as likely prospects for robbery. Sonam then told a story of the year before when the caravan he was with had been the object of a late-night raid. Awakened by the dogs, Sonam had fired in a probable direction, but there had been no reaction. In the morning it was discovered that one raider had been wounded and carried off by his companions, all without a sound. 'Their audacity was impressive,' he concluded. There were stories of them taking luggage from inside tents, and even stealing rifles from men as they slept. Though they were formidable adversaries, they were not malicious like the Kazakhs and, if possible, avoided harming their victims beyond relieving them of their goods.

After several days along the shores of the lake, they crossed another pass and again saw Mongolian tents. Nearby was a salt lake that was said to supply all the salt needed in Chinghai and Kansu. After the Boxer Rebellion a Belgian company had begun exploiting this salt, but the Ma family had taken it back from them after they seized power. Here they learned that somewhere on the approach to the next pass a robbery had taken place the day before. This was the approach that took two days, where Kimura and his party had

had to sneak by in the dark the previous year. The Tibetans kept watch all night, and woke Nishikawa shortly after midnight. Before dawn they silently passed the camp of three Kazakhs roasting and eating a sheep, and somehow escaped notice. It could have been the same band that had been there the year before.

Having crossed this pass they were in Tsaidam, and one of the first things they saw was an old ragged tent with a few goats and a single horse grazing nearby. Nishikawa was informed that the inhabitant of this tent was the king of the Taijinar Banner, the largest and once the wealthiest of the Tsaidam Basin. The Kazakhs had reduced him to this.

And so Nishikawa entered the ruined land of Tsaidam, just as Kimura had a year before, and ahead of him was an interesting surprise.

# Chapter Nine

## Flight to Lhasa

At the garrison town of Chagan Os there was a Muslim checkpoint, but Tibetans living in Shan were exempt from Customs, so Nishikawa was not given a second glance. A little further on they reached the small unprepossessing town of Shan; a large but run-down Tibetan office, a Chinese office under construction, one or two large merchant houses, and about a hundred broken-down hovels as well as temporary huts and shelters inhabited by refugees from Taijinar. Shan and the surrounding lands were administered by the Panchen Lama's Tashi Lhumpo monastery, and there were Tibetan soldiers stationed here, lending credence to a Tibetan claim over this entire area, though the real power lay with Ma Pu-fang.

This dual power was reflected in the only two impressive buildings in Shan. The two-storey Tibetan-style building in the centre was the office from which the Tibetan officials from Tashi Lhumpo administered the estates of the Panchen Lama. This administration had fallen on hard times – because of the rise of Muslim power, or the minority of the Panchen Lama, or his exile from Tibet, or perhaps all three. Nishikawa is scathing about what administration there was, saying that there was no school or clinic, and all the Tibetan officials did was to tax the local Mongolians. The Tibetan soldiers, on the other hand, were well-behaved and did not bully the local Mongolians as the Muslims did.

On the eastern side of the town the Chinese office was being built with refugee labour. Ma Pu-fang was trying to set up a base here for the control of southern Chinghai Mongolia. The Muslims treated



the Tibetans more or less as equals, but Nishikawa felt that they were only waiting until they could throw them out with impunity.

As the caravan entered the town, the Tibetans were all greeted respectfully by the Mongolians. Among them was an old man sunning himself on a wall and wearing Inner Mongolian clothes. Something about Nishikawa's dress must have given him away as an Inner Mongolian, for the old man singled him out, introduced himself as being from Outer Mongolia, and invited him to visit at any time. This strange old man was to have a remarkable piece of news for Nishikawa.

Nishikawa was taken to one of the larger houses, belonging to the Tibetan traders who employed Sonam and the others. Here he was introduced to the *nyerpa*, or treasurer. He was the power of the house, and everyone was afraid of him. All day long he sat on a raised platform behind a low table, conducting business. He did not even move to eat, and at night simply lay down in the same place. But he seems to have been a kindly man at heart, and took Nishikawa on as a servant until spring, when the Lhasa caravan would depart. That night Nishikawa tasted *chang* for the first time, and when the *nyerpa* saw how much he liked it he made sure he could always drink his fill.

After a few days, when Nishikawa had settled down to his new life, he decided to visit the old man who had greeted him the day they arrived. He lived in a small house, with grass growing out of the roof, which looked as if it was falling over. Inside, the mud walls and ceiling were coated with soot, giving the room a dark and eerie feeling, though everything, from clothes to cooking utensils, was arranged neatly and kept spotless. Sitting Nishikawa down and offering him *tsampa* and dried meat, the old man began to tell him how, when he was young, he left his home and went to Peking and Wu Tai Shan, then to Kumbum. To finance his pilgrimage to Lhasa he had begun working as a camel herder for the Tibetan office in Shan, and had been here, with the occasional pilgrimage to Lhasa, ever since. After his homeland had gone Communist, he had lost any desire to return there. The point of his tale was to encourage Nishikawa to find reliable companions for his own trip to Lhasa, and he mentioned three monks from the Sunit Banner of Inner Mongolia who had all been arrested the year before because one of them had been spying for the Japanese.

The next morning, just before Nishikawa awoke, he saw Kimura in a dream. Three monks, the old man had said, from the Sunit Banner. The numbers and location were right, but Kimura was with a monk and a woman. As soon as he was finished with his work for the day, Nishikawa went back to the old man's house with half a brick of fine tea to get more details.

Leading the old man to talk about the monks from Sunit, he discovered that one could only be Kimura. Along with his companions – indeed a man and a woman – he had been detained under the supervision of the governor of the Khuhut Banner since the previous March. Even now they were only a short distance away, in Chagan Os. An even stranger thing was that Dawa Sangpo himself had come to Shan with a young man of Khuhut to look for a lost camel, and had spent the night under the old man's roof.

In the light of what was to happen later, Nishikawa's reaction is interesting. After speculating that his dream of the night before might have been caused by some sort of extrasensory perception, he continues:

Having sneaked behind enemy lines where we never knew what tomorrow might bring, two Japanese were living almost within spitting distance of one another. Moreover, my friend was in enemy hands, and the impulse to go right away and check that he was all right was almost irresistible. However, there was a need for discretion. There was not only the danger to myself, but the chance that I might cause danger to him, so I restrained myself and decided to learn what I could of him from a distance.

What he says he learned was that Kimura had been betrayed by one of the Chinghai Mongolians who had travelled with him from Kumbum, whom he names as Sanji. The only one with a name remotely like this was Tenzin. This Sanji suspected that the party was in fact quite wealthy and, hoping to make some money out of them, he told the Governor of Khuhut, Babu Noyen, his suspicions.

Babu Noyen was a powerful local figure who collaborated with the Muslims and was feared and kept at a distance by the other Mongolians. While he kept Kimura and his friends under detention, he and Tenzin fleeced their valuables away from them. Meanwhile no definite proof linking them to the Japanese had

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come to light, and now there was no more left to fleece, so he was about to grant them permission to go to Lhasa. Nishikawa concluded that if Kimura was no longer in danger and was about to leave for Lhasa they could meet along the trail, so there was no reason to search him out just yet.

Such, at least, is Nishikawa's story. Kimura tells it rather differently.

Dawa Sangpo and his companions had arrived a year before, and had first set up camp with Gombo Zaisun in a rocky gorge to the north of the Bayan Gol. The gorge was crowded with refugees from the Banner of Juun, though some were now beginning to move tentatively back to their homeland. Here they heard yet more stories of the incredible brutality of this almost unknown war. A man who had survived the raid in which Za-huhun had been wounded told of seeing living men having the skin peeled off their faces, their arms and legs cut off, or their bellies split open, all so that their attackers could enjoy their death agonies. But he was also to discover that in spite of the Mongolians' fear of the Kazakhs, there was remarkably little bitterness because of their Buddhist belief that they had brought this fate upon themselves with the sins of their past lives.

Early in their stay Kimura was to learn, in the most direct manner possible, how the Tsaidam girls attempted to trap Inner Mongolian monks into marriage. A frequent visitor to their tent was a plump, full-breasted young lady with a 'disturbing air of ripe sexuality'. It was enough to make him regret his monk's disguise, for even though few monks seemed to take their vows seriously, he had to be on particularly good behaviour since he wanted to avoid loose talk and suspicion.

But all these considerations were forgotten one day when the girl came to ask him to take her pulse and to examine her for some imaginary ailment, for Kimura and Danzan had continued their amateur doctoring. To make his task easier she wriggled out of her robe, and Kimura was just beginning to enjoy the examination when Tseren-tso and Danzan suddenly returned. This episode was followed by a good dressing down from his 'sister', who was suddenly protective, and a strong warning from Danzan about

all the Inner Mongolian monks who had been captured here and would never return to their homes, or even continue on to Lhasa.

The situation was relieved when they moved with Gombo Zaisun down into the Basin. He had decided to take up the Sining government's offer of land to anyone who would farm it. This was a terrible comedown for a nomad, but since his herds had been devastated by the Kazakhs he really had no choice. He asked Danzan if he could borrow their camels for ploughing. Danzan did not want to agree, for this was regarded by nomads as a particularly bad way to treat camels, but in the end they decided that the most important thing was keeping up good relations with local people.

Now they settled near Chagan Os, 'a dismal, barrack-like administrative centre', where their medical practice not only gave them something to do but acquainted them with their neighbours. The disguised Western medicines, and a policy of never treating anything that was beyond them, meant that no one ever died on their hands, and they had a high success rate with colds, headaches, simple fevers, and stomach aches. Danzan became known as the *ihu amchi*, or great physician; while Kimura was called the *baga amchi* or little physician. There were few temples in Tsaidam and the services of Inner Mongolian monks were always in demand, so Danzan also began to practise more and more as a monk. Kimura went along as his assistant to beat a small drum and pick up whatever he could of the sutras.

In April 1944, as the advance guard of the caravan for Lhasa began to arrive, they were faced with some hard decisions. Kimura still regarded it as his primary duty to go to Sinkiang, but with the way blocked by Kazakhs, this seemed less and less practical, and there was also the fear that if they missed the Lhasa caravan while trying to find a way to Sinkiang, they would be stuck here for another year.

Then one day the problem was abruptly taken out of their hands when a Muslim soldier came and told them that all pilgrims going to Lhasa had to report to Chagan Os for identification papers. There was no way they could refuse, and when they got to the barracks they were astounded to be confronted by an officer in Muslim uniform who spoke fluent Mongolian. This, they later learned, was one of Babu Noyen's sons who had studied at the military academy in Chungking and joined Ma Pu-fang's forces

to be close to home. It is from this point that Kimura's own story begins to differ from the one Nishikawa told about him.

They were asked for their birthplaces and years of birth, and stuck to claiming that they were from Baron Hiid. But the big question concerned their connection with the lama Tokan Gegen. It seems that the Sining authorities had been informed from Lanchow that as the pilgrims following Tokan Gegen were being herded back the way they had come, three men and a woman had broken away, wounding some of their escort in the process. The officers had orders to look out for suspects, and send them back to Sining.

There is no mention in Kimura's account that he was ever suspected of being a Japanese spy, and if he was betrayed by Tenzin he was certainly never aware of it. On the other hand, it was certainly true that over the next fifteen months of detention they were systematically plundered, though they were also given opportunities to earn much of it back. This might initially have been Danzan's fault, for while Kimura was held as security, Danzan went to Babu Noyen, as the most powerful man in the region, and presented him with a fine silver bowl and silver coins. 'He became more interested still when he heard of our seven camels,' admitted Danzan. Though Kimura was not entirely pleased at this, he had to agree with Danzan that their most important objective was to keep from being sent back to Sining under arrest.

And so they went to the camp of Babu Noyen, a small dark man with a shaved head 'and sleepy eyes that masked the mind of a considerable schemer'. This camp was in the mountains half a day from Chagan Os, by a rivulet in a pleasant valley near a forest of pines and cedars. It was a delightful spot, and they lived more or less as members of the household, but the underlying fact was that they were prisoners.

Babu Noyen is described by Kimura as 'a subtle and likable thief'. He kept Dawa Sangpo and Danzan in work performing rituals and chanting, the latter causing Kimura some anxious moments. He was asked to chant the Dolma Sutra, the Sutra of the Goddess of Mercy, a hundred thousand times, an exercise that would take six months. It was bad enough that he was to start just before the caravan's departure for Lhasa, and would therefore inevitably miss it. What was even worse was that Kimura did not even know this

sutra, which even women and children could recite. Claiming that he had to wait for an auspicious day and have a time of meditation in the mountains to prepare himself spiritually, he had Danzan write the sutra down in Mongolian phonetics, then went off by himself and practised for all he was worth:

When the day for the opening ceremony arrived, I was invited to the family *ger* [the typical round felt Mongolian tent]. Babu Noyen offered me tea and a seat in the centre, then presented me with a *khata* [ceremonial scarf], lit the sacred lights, and bowed three times before me on his knees as if I were a sacred lama. Each of his family members followed suit. Forcing myself to be calm, I began chanting in my most solemn tones. If I got through the first ten-minute rendition successfully, then I would be fine: all I would have to do was to keep repeating it for the next six months. . . .

They knew that something was wrong, otherwise he would not have been asked to perform this chant just before the departure of the caravan. When their best camel, which was grazing with Babu Noyen's herd, went missing, this confirmed Kimura in his belief that 'we were being held as much for Babu Noyen's enrichment as on orders of the Sining Government'.

On the other hand, their host lent them a comfortable *ger*, and Tseren-tso was given work as a milkmaid. So they were in comfort and reasonably well paid, and during the summer Tseren-tso proudly announced that she was pregnant.

By the end of the summer they were largely cleared of suspicion, and though they had long missed the annual caravan, Babu Noyen promised to see them on to the next year's. From this point on they were regarded less as detainees and more as neighbours. Kimura's biggest worry after completing his Dolma Sutra was that Babu Noyen now wanted to sponsor a complete recitation of the *Kangyur*. Since it had been all he could do to memorize the relatively simple Dolma Sutra, he had to find some way out of this, and his friend Gombo Zaisun came to his rescue. He was passing through doing a little petty trade, and invited them down to his farm in hopes that they would treat his sister, who was ill. Kimura went with him while Danzan stayed behind for the *Kangyur*. Their first stop was Shan, where they visited the

old man from Outer Mongolia, who was a friend of Gombo Zaisun.

Kimura found him a pleasant old man, proud of having been to Lhasa eleven times, who kept his small mud house neat and clean. Just as he was drifting off to sleep, however, he heard a rustling by his bedside, and looked around to see the old man 'with a wicked gleam in his eye reflected from the altar lights'. He was not left in suspense about the old man's intentions for long. 'Which way do you like it, young fellow, from the front or the back?' he was asked, and told that if he was a monk he would know what to do.

Though the old man was Mongolian, and the Mongolians preferred their boys front-side up, he had spent long enough in Tibet to have experienced the Tibetan preference for back-side up, and was considerably giving Dawa Sangpo his choice. He was having neither, however, even though he knew that it was merely thigh pressure rather than penetration that was on the old man's mind. But the more he resisted, the more his host persisted in trying to pin him down and pull up his robe. Eventually he had to throw his assailant against the wall, and went out to sleep among the camels. Gombo Zaisun was surprised the next morning to see what a grumpy mood his elderly friend was in, and Kimura was feeling guilty about the way he had manhandled him. Since this was the man who told Nishikawa of Kimura's detention, this unhappy experience could well have coloured his tale.

Kimura, realizing that the chanting of the *Kangyur* would go on for some time, persuaded Gombo Zaisun to show him around the parts of Juun that were being resettled. When he returned to their camp, it was time to prepare for winter. They had hired out their camels for caravan work to Sining, and had made sixty silver coins, so in fact they were not doing badly. As they slaughtered animals and dried meat, Kimura reflected that it had now been a year since he had set out – all the time he had originally been given to accomplish his mission. He had been far more isolated than Nishikawa, and there had been no news from the outside world for him to discount.

In December Tseren-tso went into labour, and Kimura had the unusual experience of a Mongolian birth:

Two pieces of rope were tied to the wall of our *ger*, making two loops for the prospective mother to pass her hands through: she would then assume a half-squatting posture, arms fully extended, her back to the wall. This position is supposed to bring pressure to enable the child to emerge more easily. Beneath the squatting woman a soft carpet of dried horse and sheep dung was laid out. A porcelain bowl was placed nearby. It would be smashed and its jagged edge used to cut the umbilical cord. (Kimura, 1990, p. 91)

As almost anywhere else in the world, the men were ordered out for the actual birth, so Kimura and Danzan sat in the snow hugging their knees until they heard the cry of the newborn infant.

The baby was fine, but the mother suffered complications, as the placenta refused to come out. By ten the next morning she was delirious. When someone remembered an old refugee from Juun named Taiji Lama who had once rescued a woman in a similar condition, Kimura went out through the snow to get him. He found a man dirty even by Mongolian standards, who seemed senile as well. Since Kimura had not brought a horse, Taiji Lama insisted on being carried back, then nagged and pestered him the whole way. When they arrived, however, the dirty old monk proved to be a true professional, cutting his nails and washing his hands and arms before proceeding, then ordering all the men out of the tent. In ten minutes it was all over, and the patient was safe. In gratitude they gave him the hind quarter of a yak and one of Kimura's most prized possessions, the snuff bottle Dorji had given him.

They were all fond of the fat little baby who added a new focus to their family group, but only three weeks after his birth he was dead. Tseren-tso was encouraged to believe it had been a sudden fever, though Kimura thought she had probably rolled over on the child in her sleep and smothered him. In the bleakest day he remembered in all his travels, he and Danzan took the tiny body out to be exposed. Babies were not even offered prayers. Tseren-tso was inconsolable, and even an extensive ceremony to cast evil from their tent did her no good. Gloom prevailed, and this was not helped by a man they treated for a stomach ailment who had visited Inner Mongolia and launched into a long tirade on



the Japanese, summing them up as a 'sneaky, accursed, and greedy people'.

On the plus side, it appeared that this year they would make it on to the Lhasa caravan when the long gloomy winter finally ended. In March 1945, when the caravan began to assemble, Babu Noyen's son gave them permission to join it. Babu Noyen himself seems to have grown fond of them, and no more of their camels disappeared. Through their priestly duties and hiring out their camels, they had broken even during their stay, so Nishikawa's view of a rather pathetic and helpless Kimura being systematically unburdened of anything of value would appear to be untrue. It was a theme that was later to repeat itself.

Preparations for the journey helped to take Tseren-tso's mind off her sorrow, and Kimura took an opportunity to study traditional medicine from a learned Inner Mongolian doctor monk on his way home from Lhasa. The doctor was quite skilful with his herbal cures, and since their own disguised medicines were running low, he thought it wise to learn whatever he could. But when the doctor himself became critically ill and it fell to Kimura to look after him, the disease proved contagious. His young disciple came down with aching joints, chills and a high fever for two weeks, and then lost consciousness. This was the first serious illness of his journey and it could not have come at a worse time, for if they missed the caravan they would be stuck in Tsaidam for yet another year.

Danzan and Tseren-tso were no more anxious to miss the caravan than Kimura was, and when the time came to join the main body they tied him to a camel for the short journey. When he regained consciousness he found himself in a grassy plain surrounded by tents and animals. During the time he had been delirious he had often raved, but remarkably he had kept it in Mongolian. It would be some time before he was completely well. For much of the journey ahead his hearing would be badly impaired, he would be weak and his balance would be poor. But at least he was up and about and on the mend, and fussing over him had taken Tseren-tso's mind off her own grief.

One day, while they were bargaining over sheep to take with them on the trip, they heard an Inner Mongolian pilgrim com-

plaining about the price of everything in his homeland, and from him Kimura heard the first rumours of Japanese reverses. Prices, it seemed, had shot up in Inner Mongolia during the previous six months, and the Japanese had pulled back all the way from Kangai-nuuji to Pailingmiao. Kimura tried to convince himself that his impaired hearing was causing him to misunderstand. A year and a half before, at the time of their departure, the Japanese had been victorious on all fronts.

On 18 May 1945, their caravan of over a thousand people and two hundred tents departed. At its core were Muslim merchants from Sining on official business: purchasing arms from Lhasa, or even from India for Ma Pu-fang's undersupplied army. There was also a large trading contingent from Kumbum, and many small groups of pilgrims and pilgrim merchants who joined the larger caravan for the protection it gave. Most important of all for the Buddhists in the caravan was the presence of Takster Rimpoché, abbot of an important monastery in Kumbum and elder brother of the Dalai Lama. His presence helped to remind Kimura that the four-year-old Dalai Lama himself had taken this same road only a few years before.

Liquor, soy sauce, vinegar, raisins and silver were some of the goods being transported by mule, yak and camel, but most important were the horses and riding mules bred in Tsaidam and transported under their own power. At this time Kimura's party consisted of their six camels, an old horse that Danzan had bought, the three of them, an old dog that had joined them, and their supplies. None of them had thought to purchase trade goods, and in fact they had little enough capital anyway.

The first day of the journey proved a particularly difficult one, since they had to cross a pass of over fifteen thousand feet on the Borhan Bootai, 'The Mountain Guarded by the Enlightened One'. In Kimura's weakened state this was a sore trial, and from the top of the pass the road to Lhasa looked anything but encouraging as range after range stretched out before them. On the very first night out the caravan had its first visit from bandits, who silently spirited away a few horses.

But in fact the journey did become easier, and soon they slipped into the routine of the caravan:

About 2 a.m. we would be awakened by the shouts of the yak drivers, followed by the clanging of the big yak bells. The yaks set the pace of the caravan. Though slow, they are strong and dependable and are the most important of the pack animals. We always tried to be on the trail within an hour of the passing yaks, which meant that there was seldom time for a fire and hot breakfast. . . . Even though it was summer by then we were so high up that the tent crackled with frost when we rolled it up. Later in the day if it was sunny it might get hot, and often we experienced four seasons in a single day. But it was still very cold when just after sunrise we began to hear the cheerful chiming of mule bells, and hundreds of mules decorated with bright headdresses would begin to trot past us. Mules could carry only relatively light loads, yet they formed by far the fastest contingent of the caravan; although they were the last to start out they were always the first to arrive around noon at the camping spot which the scouts had gone ahead to pick out. We on the camels would be overtaking the yaks all morning and would be the next to arrive. (Kimura, 1990, pp. 106–7)

The rhythm of their journey was broken by sighting the body of a dead runaway goldminer by the trail, and the death of a young yak driver on 'The Pass of Mountain Sickness', where hydrogen sulphide seeping from the mountainside added to the problems of high altitude. But Kimura, as he convalesced, was hardly conscious of their progress until they were blocked by one of the major obstacles of their trip, the Dri Chu or 'River of Lost Souls'. It was believed that this river claimed new victims annually because the souls of those of previous years invited new ones to join them.

Here Kimura did a very foolish thing. Worried about the rate at which their provisions were dwindling, he decided they should try to cross on their own and do forced marches to Lhasa. Their camels, it turned out, were despised beasts once they were south of Tsaidam, and this had the advantage of making them safe from bandits. Letting the caravan pass on, he tried to swim the swirling current of the river, and found himself

swept off his feet and nearly drowned. At this altitude he had no breath for swimming, and his legs cramped. Their worried dog jumped in after him to no avail, and when he was luckily swept to the shore he received a thorough dressing down from Tseren-tso.

Meekly catching up with the rest of the caravan at a spot where the river was wider but shallower, they still found themselves blocked by the high waters from melting snows. A Mongolian yak driver was drowned trying to retrieve his yaks, which had strayed to an island, and a young Tangut guide almost suffered the same fate trying to find a way across. He was saved only by clinging to his horse's tail, and emerged laughing from the river.

Ever more worried at the state of their food supply, Kimura again decided to try to find a way across himself. Noticing that the water was lowest in the morning, before the sun melted the snow upriver, he made it across three channels to islands on horseback, but was forced to turn back at the final channel. Returning for a taller camel, he made it to the final island again, only to find that the river had risen in the interval. Rather than admit defeat he spent the rest of the day and the night on the island (hoping that no sudden storm would cause the river to flood), finished crossing in the early morning, and smugly made breakfast on the far side.

Now the rest of the caravan rushed to follow him:

It was quite a sight: more than a thousand people and several thousand fully laden beasts hurrying noisily across the river, the men – tough, swarthy soldier monks, muleteers and yakmen – their eyes wide with fear and apprehension since they were unable to swim, clutching their prayer beads and chanting. (Kimura, 1990, p. 110)

Later in the day they sighted a black yak-hair tent inhabited by Tibetan officials who collected some tolls from the merchants. They were finally in political, as well as ethnic and geographical, Tibet.

They continued with the main caravan as far as Nagchuka, the first major town in northern Tibet, though it could hardly be called a town by the standards of most of the world. There

was a community of about five hundred monks, and the district chiefs lived in a run-down *dzong* (fortress or castle), but besides that there were only about thirty scattered houses and a number of tents. A few shops sold meat and other supplies, and there was the luxury of eating houses selling cooked food. Quite extensive haggling now began between the caravan leaders and the officials over the taxes to be paid, and after a week it became obvious that unless the party went off on their own, their food supplies would not see them to Lhasa. They threw themselves on the mercy of the officials, only to be told that as long as they were not merchants they could have a travel permit as soon as they applied.

Feeling foolish over the time they had wasted, they began immediately and soon descended to the first cultivated land they had seen since the Tsaidam. On 30 August 1945, four and a half months after leaving Tsaidam, they descended into a lush valley not far from the Reting Gompa, sixty miles north of Lhasa. This was the home of the ex-Regent, Reting Rimpoché, who had been forced to resign by the State Oracle at the time when Danzan had been in Lhasa, after a scandalous administration that had been both corrupt and pro-Chinese.

That afternoon they made camp, and were discussing visiting the monastery the next day when servant monks appeared and began setting up beautiful white festive tents with dark blue appliqué designs and fringes of red, yellow and blue cloth hanging from the roof. The carpets and furnishings going inside were palatial, and Kimura was astonished at how clean the monks looked, with their spotless robes and freshly shaven heads. Reting Rimpoché, it seemed, was coming for a picnic, and would be happy to receive them in audience.

Kimura was fascinated by this once powerful, and still important, figure. While he himself was now dark and weather-beaten, the Rimpoché looked to him more like a Japanese, he was so fair skinned. He was friendly, and after giving them a blessing he asked them to sit and chat. Jokingly he suggested that Kimura join his monastery and become his disciple, but 'I noticed that many of his attendants were handsome young boys and declined as politely as I could.' It occurred to them that this might be a convenient time to get rid of their camels, which were an

increasing burden. Here in the valley they could recover from the journey and the Rimpoché could resell them to Mongolians returning home the next year, while in Lhasa they would be next to worthless. Presenting their oldest camel as a gift, they exchanged the others for a low price plus transport to Lhasa.

So the last part of their journey was easy. All they had to do was ride the yaks supplied, while a servant of the monastery did all the work for them. Yet Kimura was increasingly uneasy as they approached the Holy City, for now that they were in a more inhabited area they were hearing rumours from travellers about an end to the distant war. But no one was particularly interested in anything but how it would affect trade, and he was able to get no idea of what the result of the war had been.

Arrivals in Lhasa usually have a note of triumph to them. Kimura's was low-key in the extreme. Their servant from Reting simply left them in the courtyard of a house in the Wobaling district inhabited mostly by Chinese Muslims. Not knowing who the master of the house was, and feeling a bit foolish, they simply did the most natural thing for a group of Mongolians and made tea, then started to cook their meat and noodles. Suddenly the master of the house appeared in a black Chinese gown and a white Muslim cap, and demanded that they be off his property by sundown. They finished their meal, took what they could with them and, promising to be back for the rest, went to explore the Holy City.

The commerce and crowds of the Barkhor were overwhelming after months in the wilds. Kimura was amused by the country people and nomads, looking at everything in wide-eyed amazement, until he realized that he looked just like them. Most striking among the goods for sale were the quantities of American, British and Japanese military equipment.

Lhasa is the centre of the Central Asian Buddhist world, and it was not really surprising that they soon came upon an acquaintance of Danzan who took them to a three-storey house belonging to Drepung (and kept leering unpleasantly at Kimura). And now the young man was faced with a problem he had never considered two years before, when he had set out. He had always let it be known

that his destination was Drepung, even when he was really headed for Sinkiang. But if he were to enter Drepung, he would have to go to the dormitory for monks from the East Sunit Banner, since such things were very strictly regulated. If he did that there would be people who either knew him or would ask him embarrassing questions, so that now his next move presented a real difficulty.

After a night when his first experience of Lhasa bedbugs kept him awake, Kimura was strolling the Barkhor again the next day when he spied an old friend from Inner Mongolia named Baarin Jimba, selling harnesses, saddles and sheepskins. It had taken him a while to remember him, because the last time they had met Baarin Jimba had been a monk going to Labrang with a young incarnate lama. But now his hair had grown out and he was wearing the *chuba* (robe) of a layman.

So natural was it to meet old friends in Lhasa that when Kimura went and sat down next to him, Baarin Jimba greeted him almost as if he had been expecting him. After explaining that the young lama had died during their pilgrimage he let on that he had left the priesthood out of a weakness for the ladies, and that as far as ladies were concerned Lhasa was the finest city he had even visited, with more *joros* than the Tsaidam Basin (a *joro* being a Tsaidam-reared riding horse noted for its comfortable gait). So that they could be more private, Kimura invited him to the house where they were staying, for he knew Danzan and Tseren-tso as well, from before they were married. Since he was aware of Kimura's true identity, Baarin Jimba was an ideal person to ask about the war.

Like the others, all he knew was that the war was over. Everyone knew that, because the Chinese in Lhasa had attempted to hold a lamplight victory parade, but were stoned off the streets by the Tibetans, who had remained neutral during the war but still had no love for the Chinese. There were two sets of rumours. One, current among the Chinese, was that Japan had suffered total defeat; and the other was that the conflict had ended in stalemate.

Baarin Jimba came up with the idea that they should simply go to the Chinese agency known as the Tibetan-Mongolian Affairs Commission and ask. He was planning to return to Inner Mongolia,

so he had a perfectly reasonable excuse. There, a pompous official told them proudly that Japan was now under Chinese occupation, and Baarin Jimba bundled Kimura out before he could give himself away in his anger. Not satisfied, they next tried the British Mission at Deki Lingka. There they were informed by a Sikkimese clerk that just the day before, on 2 September, they had received official word of Japan's unconditional surrender. No one seemed to know just what had brought about such a sudden end to the war, but there were rumours of weapons capable of destroying entire cities with a single explosion.

Unable to take it all in, Kimura walked back to Lhasa in a daze. Surely the Emperor's Army would never allow foreign troops to tread the sacred soil of Japan! He could think of only one thing to do. India was only three weeks away. Though this really was walking into the lion's den, at least he could be sure of getting reliable information there. If the worst were true, surely Burma would still be occupied by Japanese forces, and he would be able to join up with them there.

Meanwhile, what had happened to Nishikawa? He had used as his excuse for not going to see Kimura in Tsaidam that he looked forward to meeting him in the caravan to Lhasa, but Kimura had come all the way to Lhasa without hearing from him. There was normally only one caravan a year, so where had he gone?

He had certainly never taken his eyes from his object, and anything that could be thought of as a distraction was rejected out of hand. The old man from Outer Mongolia apparently never made any advances toward Nishikawa of the kind he did toward Kimura, but he did do a side business in arranging assignations of a more conventional nature. Nishikawa was trying to learn some Tangut to help him on his journey, and one day the old man invited him to his house, telling him he had a 'good teacher' for him. Curious, he found a Tangut girl of exceptional beauty kneeling by the fire. The old man announced loudly that he had business elsewhere. Apparently Nishikawa really thought this was to be a language lesson:



I could not think of anything else to do but to begin making tea. The girl was quiet and did not move. I was trying to learn the Tangut language, and really wanted to talk, but I found myself tongue-tied alone with a young girl. She said nothing either, so without looking at her I lit the fire. Then suddenly, in desperation, I began to ask her questions like 'Where do you live? Do you have any brothers and sisters? How old are you?'

She answered each question very clearly without hesitation, but I didn't really know how to talk to a young girl, and outside of answering the questions she said nothing but only stared at the fire. Then she said, 'I'm being called.' She got up and walked out.

Perhaps I am weak, but I felt relieved when she went. But as I wondered what I could talk about when she returned, the old man came in without her. 'What are you playing at?' he said, standing. 'How can you be such a boring young man?'

'You shouldn't joke about such things,' I answered. 'After all, I'm a monk.'

'A monk? No monks in Chinghai Mongolia keep their vows,' he went on bad-humouredly.

Nishikawa, of course, was not even an ordained monk, but he guarded his chastity with a dedication that Kawaguchi would have been proud of.

As spring came, it was time to begin making his preparations. He claims to have been encouraged by the news that Kimura and his party had been released from detention, though they had in fact been free since the previous autumn. 'My heart danced at the thought that soon we would meet again on the road.'

Meanwhile he went about his usual policy of being tougher and living rougher than anyone else, including the locals. Normally three animals were considered necessary for one person to make the journey to Lhasa: two to carry food and possessions, and one for riding. The riding animals were most necessary at river crossings. 'As long as I had the two legs my parents gave me, a riding animal would be just a luxury,' he comments typically, reasoning that he could swim the big rivers.

He had worked for the Tibetans for six months, and the *nyerpa*

rewarded him well by buying him a yak, arranging a good price (twenty silver pieces) for another, and also supplying him with food. Since he was still hoarding something like a hundred and fifty silver pieces, it sometimes looks suspiciously like sheer pride and obstinacy that makes Nishikawa travel in more poverty than he needs to.

The old man made one last attempt to arrange what he obviously felt was another necessity. 'Lobsang,' he said, 'there is a Mongolian girl who is in love with you. It would be a virtuous deed to allow her to accompany you on your pilgrimage' – and Nishikawa was presented with a young woman from Taijinar in her early twenties. Though he was looking for a companion to help him load and unload his yaks, and a young Mongolian lady could be expected to be at least as strong as he was, he rejected this arrangement out of hand for 'financial reasons'. Instead he decided to join up with a small caravan of about a hundred and fifty yaks belonging to a Tangut merchant from Kansu nicknamed the Labrang Amchit. He had once lived in Tsaidam on alms [*amchit*] in return for religious services, and had used his savings to begin trading with Lhasa. He had now amassed a considerable fortune, as well as experience, and was waiting a day's journey to the south in the Borhan Bootai. From there he would join up with the main caravan once they were under way. There were several Mongolians with him, and they sent a message to indicate that they had no objections to another companion.

With his companions decided, it was time to make the acquaintance of his yaks. 'Happy as a child with his first bicycle', he tried to mount one of the shaggy beasts, fresh from its mountain pasture, only to be roughly thrown on to his backside, much to the amusement of his Tibetan friends. He tried again, with the same result. Determined not to be defeated, he next tried the other one, but fared no better, though he was assured that a few days of carrying heavy luggage would curb their spirit.

On 13 July, he set out<sup>1</sup>. The old man from Outer Mongolia gave Nishikawa a farewell feast, and asked him to buy him a Lhasa copper pot. The *nyerpa* made sure he had plenty of *chang* to drink the night before:

As dawn broke there was not a cloud in the sky. It was as if the weather cleared for my departure. With my long fur robe tucked up short, my leather boots laced up, my Mongolian sword and snuff bottle hanging from my waist, *gao* around my neck and holding my rosary, seen off by the Tibetans of the house and the old man of Khalkha, I tapped my yaks laden with my food and possessions on the backside and took my first steps towards the sacred land of Tibet.

It was less than a day's journey to the Labrang Amchit's camp, but his yaks were to make it an eventful one, since the trail went so close to their former pastures that they kept trying to escape. The more he tried to control them, the more violent they became, and as they ran wild he was in danger of losing all his luggage. When he finally succeeded in capturing them he thought he had won, but now they simply sat down and refused to move. He was afraid that if he pulled their nose rings too hard, the rings would tear through their noses. Eventually the pain forced them to move, and it was with relief that he came upon the camp.

The camp was situated on one of those peculiarly Tibetan passes that look more like a plain than a pass, and Nishikawa was surprised by its size. There were three Mongolian tents, a large Tibetan yak-hair tent, and hundreds of animals: yaks, mules, horses and sheep. Asking a group of Tanguts at one tent if he had the right caravan, he found that he was expected, and he was directed to the tent of the Mongolians. But first they wanted to know why he had only two yaks, since there were so many rivers to cross on the way. 'I'm not afraid of rivers,' he answered brashly, bringing scornful laughter on himself, and unforeseen consequences later.

The two Mongolians, Yeshe from Manchuria and Tenzin Gyamtso from Inner Mongolia, greeted him warmly. Yeshe was about fifty, a scholar who had studied for more than ten years at Kumbum, and he was the owner of the tent. He was taking dried persimmons, dates, and Kumbum boots to sell in Lhasa. Tenzin Gyamtso was working his passage as servant, responsible for all the animals and loads. He had been promised a yak and ten silver coins at the end.

After tea with his new friends, Nishikawa called on the leader of the caravan, the Labrang Amchit. Outside the large tent, surrounded by piled trade goods, the Tanguts he had met before

derided him as 'the monk who is not afraid of rivers', and directed him inside. There he found a whole arsenal of rifles and pistols, two Tanguts sitting drinking tea on wolf skins, and the merchant monk, who made him welcome and told him to come to him if he had any difficulties. From beginnings little less humble than Nishikawa's he was now master of a caravan of two hundred yaks, a hundred horses and mules, and over two hundred sheep. His trade goods included horses and mules, white spirits, vinegar, dried persimmons, dried dates, pistols and Chinese coins. The rest of the caravan consisted of two Tangut incarnate lamas and their disciples, and a prosperous old man with his young wife.

Three days later news came that the main caravan, the one Kimura was with, had departed. The Labrang Amchit's plan was to travel by a separate trail for the first part of the journey so that his animals would have the grazing to themselves, and to join the main caravan later. They made their departure on 19 July.

The day before they were to leave, Nishikawa's yaks took it into their heads to disappear. In despair he descended back into the valley he had approached from, and searched all afternoon. Unable to find them, he was convinced that he would have to give up his quest for Lhasa until the following year, and all his pent-up emotions came forth in a flood of tears, probably more understandable at this point than at any other in his journey. It was not the end of his tears that day, for when he had given up and was returning in defeat, he finally sighted the yaks, and the floodgates reopened.

When he returned he found that their party had been increased by a young Chinghai Mongolian named Baltan with his three yaks. Baltan had led an active life, had been to Lhasa two years before, and had also participated in the punitive force sent out against the Kazakhs. Nishikawa and Baltan were to share many adventures together.

The first march was more reminiscent of a comic opera than of a well-organized caravan. The far side of the pass descended steeply, and the yaks, after weeks of good grazing, were full of energy. Running recklessly down the hill, they began shedding their loads as they bumped into shrubs and rocks. Rocks came tumbling from above on to the leaders. People ran in all directions shouting for help, and in the confusion Nishikawa lost his two animals again.

Working his way back up the hill, he found them descending with some others, but one was looking very smug with no load, and it absolutely refused to go back with him to look for it. Eventually he found the lost load, but had to carry it himself to the valley where the caravan was reassembling. Already, on the first day of this trip, he was suffering more trial and hardship than on the entire journey from Inner Mongolia. The Labrang Amchit lost four barrels of spirits and six of vinegar.

When they finally camped that night, the Mongolians established their routine. Since each had his own supplies, each made his tea and dinner separately – Yeshe and Tenzin Gyamtso inside the tent, Nishikawa and Baltan sharing a fire outside. Then one watched the yaks while two others went to gather fuel. Yeshe always got to stay behind and guard the goods.

The next day they crossed their first major pass beyond the Borhan Bootai, and Nishikawa gloried in his relative immunity to altitude sickness, while all the Mongolians suffered greatly: ‘When I saw how miserable they were, it made me feel quite heroic.’ That night they camped where hydrogen sulphide was seeping out of the ground, and though it made everyone ill, it was too much trouble to move once they had made camp.

During their journey the next day they came upon a lake with fifty or sixty tents and thousands of animals along its shore. The travellers turned out to be Tangut nomads more or less on their way to Lhasa, but as interested in the grazing along the way as in the destination, and in no hurry at all. They had been in this spot for a month because the grazing was so good, and asked if they could join the Labrang Amchit’s caravan. There were advantages in having them along. Obviously a crowd of well-armed Tanguts was the best thing to have with you in a land where the chief danger came from Tangut bandits. They also carried their own meat supplies on the hoof, regularly supplemented through hunting, and they could be expected to share their game. On the other hand, since they had no worries about their food running out, they did not care how long they stopped for. In fact they were not so much travelling as simply living the life of nomads with a general drift in the direction of Lhasa. There was a taste of this leisurely way of travel the next day when, though they had promised to be ready to leave, they asked for two more days.

They were not quite in the wilderness yet, and that afternoon they were visited by Muslim soldiers looking for goods to tax. Nishikawa and Baltan sneaked away to hide, though in fact there was no danger, for in cases like this the Labrang Amchit's experience stood him in good stead. He simply gave a banquet for the soldiers with plenty of meat and liquor to put them in a good mood, and no one was taxed. Months later, when they arrived in Lhasa, Nishikawa was amazed to be charged an 'entertainment fee' by the Labrang Amchit for his share of keeping officials at bay.

Eventually it was decided that twelve of the Tangut families would join them while the other forty-odd stuck to their more leisurely pace. Now their caravan had swelled to more than eighty people with more than six hundred yaks, two hundred and some horses and mules, and over five hundred sheep. It was still considerably smaller than the main caravan with its thousand people, but it did amount to a formidable group.

From goldminers along the way they learned that they were now a full week behind the main caravan. On hearing this, the Labrang Amchit abandoned the idea of catching up. Nishikawa professes to bitter disappointment that he would not, after all, have a chance to meet Kimura along the trail. His disappointment was mitigated by the fresh meat brought in that night by the Tanguts. The hunters also brought news of an inviting campsite with excellent grazing where the animals could be rested, and the Labrang Amchit agreed on the detour. This, however, was the worst of news for Nishikawa, since it involved crossing wet marshy land, and without a riding animal he wound up with soaking-wet boots. When they arrived Nishikawa mistakenly drew water from a stagnant pond, and almost poisoned his entire party.

The next morning he awoke covered with snow and looked about to find that it was still falling. This summer snow destroyed the grazing, since the animals seemed not to have enough sense to search under it for grass, but it was excellent for the hunting, so the people feasted while the animals starved. That night the animals had their revenge, as the yaks of the entire caravan stampeded after the approach of a pack of wolves. Since they were all tied together, they dragged the whole camp down with their ropes. It was only by good fortune that no one in the tents was trampled to death. They were up most of the night collecting the animals

and driving their stakes back into the frozen earth, as the snow continued to fall.

The detour, which had been to rest the animals and give them good grazing, had turned into a fiasco because of the unexpected summer snow, so that on the fourth day they retreated. The marshes were even worse in the snow, and Nishikawa's legs became 'as numb as two pieces of wood'. At this point his pride took over, and he was determined to show no pain: 'The Tanguts and Mongolians riding their horses and yaks watched this beggar monk in mute amazement.'

Several days later they passed heaps of felt, clothing, household goods, and even human bones scattered about. This was all that was left of a large band of Kazakhs which had been overtaken here by the united punitive force. Baltan had been a member of that force, and Nishikawa was surprised to learn that in exacting revenge the Mongolians could be every bit as brutal as the Kazakhs. Baltan told him how they approached stealthily, and when they attacked neither women nor children were spared, though the bravery and self-sacrifice of the defenders was admired by all. A single rider would fight a rearguard action to the death and, using his dead horse for cover, was able to hold off a large force while his companions made their escape. When he was eventually killed he would be found riddled with so many bullets that no one believed that he could have lived and continued to fight for so long.

At about this time, the Tangut hunting parties began bringing in scrawny, tailless yaks which had been abandoned by the main caravan when they had become too weak to carry loads or to keep up. Because of the Buddhist stricture against killing, they were abandoned rather than put out of their misery, and Kimura, with the main caravan, notes how cruel this in fact was. Their tails were cut off because they were light and could be sold in India. One of Kimura's camels had been abandoned in this way, and he had been powerless to stop it.

The monotony of life on the trail was broken by only a few incidents. One morning the party of Mongolians overslept the 2 a.m. start and awoke to find themselves alone, and in danger of becoming lost on the high plains in the dark. Another time a herd of hundreds of wild yaks thundered by their camp, pursued by Golok hunters. Since the Goloks were the only bandits more feared

than the Tanguts, this caused considerable consternation, but it turned out to be too small a party actually to do them any harm. At one river the sheep refused to cross, and Nishikawa was treated to the sight of burly Tanguts throwing them into the current one after another until one got the idea and started to cross, happily followed by all the others.

They reached the Dri Chu, the greatest obstacle of the march and the river Kimura had led the main caravan across, at a winter crossing point just below the confluence with a smaller river. But it was now summer and the water was far too high, so they planned to camp there that night and search a day or two upstream for a ford. Now, however, a group of a hundred or so yaks decided to make their lives miserable by swimming to the far bank when no one was looking. None of those belonging to the Mongolians had crossed, but still the caravan could not move until they returned. The next day the Labrang Amchit himself, along with one retainer, decided to try to reach the far bank and drive them back. Yeshe got seasick just watching, and retreated to the tent. Just before the deepest and swiftest part of the river, the Labrang Amchit saw that he could not make it and turned back, but his retainer was swept away, and saved himself only by grasping the horse's mane.

And now Nishikawa's boastful words when he first joined the caravan came back to haunt him, as a delegation came to ask him if he could swim. This threw him into a quandary. Few Mongolians know how to swim, and such an ability would normally cast suspicion on him. Yet 'it was hard to resist such an opportunity to prove my courage'. Remembering his railway days in Pautou, and Chinese swimming after turtles in the Yellow River, he came up with the story that his family was from that area, and had been so poor that he used to catch turtles with the Chinese. This is a particularly interesting story in the light of a later disagreement between him and Kimura.

The caravan could not leave until the yaks were retrieved, so it was as much for himself as for anyone else that he undertook this swim in a river of melting snow. Yeshe, with an almost pathological fear of water, was dead set against it, saying that since all the yaks belonged to the Tanguts, they should look after their own, but Nishikawa was anxious to prove himself a hero. The others still believed him that he was Mongolian, in spite of his unusual ability



to swim, but then he almost gave the game away by standing on his pride and refusing any reward.

The preparations were elaborate. The party of the incarnate lamas built an incense burner on a hill and purified the river with its smoke. Sheep were killed and a feast was prepared. Inside the Labrang Amchit's tent the twenty monks among the Tanguts sat in a row with Nishikawa in front of them while the whole camp tried to look in. Obviously knowing nothing about the mechanics of swimming, the Labrang Amchit urged him to eat his fill before he departed, though Nishikawa wisely did no more than put the soup to his lips, then went to get ready while the sun was still high. He told Yeshe to burn a lamp for him at the Jokhang if he died, and Yeshe in turn urged him to make no more than a token effort. Embarrassed to strip off completely in front of so many women, he retained a skimpy loincloth, and after asking that a rope be kept ready in case he needed it, he stepped into the swirling current.

The swim was even more difficult than he could have imagined. His body went cold and numb, and waves kept slapping him from the side, causing him to swallow water. He came very near to giving up:

At the instant when I thought I was finished, my mother's face appeared before me. When I thought about it later I realized it was probably true that more men died on the battlefield screaming 'Mother!' than 'Long live the Emperor!'

Yet he did manage to crawl to the far bank, though in a scene reminiscent of Kawaguchi's lonelier vigils, he had no idea what to do next:

As soon as I stepped on to the shore I began to tremble all over and my teeth would not stop chattering. On top of that, I suddenly became aware of how empty my stomach was. I thought I was going to die. For some time I curled up like a cat, hiding my face, but the trembling would not stop.

He finally managed to shout to the opposite bank for some food and something to wear, and a yak was duly despatched to join its fellows. On its back was Nishikawa's fur robe and a mixture of meat, tea, butter and *tsampa*. After eating he felt better, but he could not get the yaks to move. The grass was thick and succulent here,

and now a new problem presented itself when he saw that some of the yaks had crossed the second river, though at least this one was shallow enough to wade. Eventually, by throwing stones, he persuaded one yak to swim back, and the others followed.

As the last one went in he attached his robe to its back, but when he tried to enter the river again the freezing water nearly caused him to lose heart. Even so, he was able to swim to within five metres of the shore before he felt his strength ebbing away and called for the rope he had asked them to keep ready. They had forgotten. But as Nishikawa drifted helplessly along on the current, with the entire caravan running on the shore and uselessly shouting encouragement, his foot struck the bottom and he found that by luck he had drifted into shallow water. That night a feast was given in his honour, and from then on he no longer wanted for anything in the caravan.

On reflection it is perhaps a little odd that in the winter of 1945 there were two caravans to Lhasa, that each of them contained a single Japanese, and that in each case it was the Japanese who helped them out of difficulties at the Dri Chu. With no independent witnesses, and no reason to doubt either man's word, there is no choice but to accept their tales at face value.

Nishikawa was rewarded with twenty-five silver coins and two sheep. Many in the caravan grumbled that this was too little, 'but more important than money to me was that I had shown them my sincerity'. And later, in Lhasa, he was to find that the story was well known, and was to work to his advantage. He even claims that the rumours spread back to Inner Mongolia, where his Japanese friends recognized him from his description.

They finally crossed the Dri Chu a day upstream, where a funeral cairn had been built for the yak driver who had perished in Kimura's caravan. Nishikawa rode a yak that was lent to him, and the water was so deep that the yaks had to swim. After this experience he concluded that it would have been easier, albeit less spectacular, had he made his previous crossing by yak. There were eight separate channels to cross at this point, and though the Mongolians closed their eyes and prayed the whole way, everyone reached the far bank safely, though over forty sheep were lost.

Two days later they came upon the first Tibetan soldiers. From them they learned that the main caravan had come this way

twenty days earlier, but was making a prolonged stay at Nagchuka. Nishikawa had no way of knowing, of course, that one small group had left this and was proceeding to Lhasa on its own.

A long gradual climb brought them across the Tang La, where Nishikawa again seemed to enjoy the spectacle of everyone in the caravan except himself suffering from altitude sickness. They were now once more in inhabited land, but the inhabitants were Goloks, and soon horses began to disappear. 'The Tanguts, who were no slouches at thieving themselves, were mortified at being victims of the skill of the Goloks, who could appear and disappear like the wind even in broad daylight.'

Goloks, just as the Tanguts had way back at Kokonor, kept coming to see if the caravan had anything to trade, and for the same reasons. At one camp they lost thirty yaks, even though they had posted guards. One group who came to ask if the incarnate lamas had anything to trade somehow made off with a whole yak load of barley. Most remarkably, it was under the care of these very thieves that the caravans would leave their yaks to recover from the journey, while they hired animals belonging to the Goloks for the rest of the trip. On the return trip they would pick up their rested animals. Apparently the Goloks never stole animals left in their care. There was, however, a disturbing rumour that this year a fever had broken out among yaks in the area, and every day they feared that there would be signs of it among their animals.

A day or two later they reached Nagchuka. Small and poor a town as it was, Nishikawa was thrilled to see supplies for sale, and the tents that functioned as eating houses, so that for once he did not have to worry about his supplies going down. Here, for the first time, he saw Tibetan money in circulation.

The officials kept them waiting at Nagchuka for eight days before examining them for their passports. Yeshe had a number of trinkets like watches, crystal eyeglasses (which the Tibetans believed prevented eye strain), cheap sunglasses, and fountain pens, which excited a great deal of curiosity among the officials. But now Nishikawa's silver coins, which had survived the entire trip and all the inspections sewn into a spare pair of boots at the bottom of his bag of filthy belongings, were discovered. There was some good-natured ribbing about appearing poor while really being rich, but nothing was confiscated, and he realized with a pleasant shock

that in Tibet the circulation of these silver coins was no longer forbidden.

Still they were kept waiting for their papers until the Labrang Amchit and Yeshe sold a fine horse and a gold pocket watch to the officials for half price. The party of the incarnate lamas sold their yaks at Nagchuka and continued with pack frames on their backs, while the Tanguts violated everyone's Buddhist principles by selling their tailless yaks to Golok butchers.

They were no sooner under way than disease broke out among the yaks, and Nishikawa's showed early symptoms as well. Worrying as this was, now something even worse happened from Nishikawa's point of view. The second day out of Nagchuka the Labrang Amchit met a Chinese acquaintance who had been with the main caravan and was now on his way to back to check out the yaks he had left with the Goloks. As Nishikawa passed them he heard the words 'China' and 'Japan', but for fear of being too obvious he could not stop and eavesdrop. When they made camp, everyone was talking about what the Chinese had said: that peace had been concluded between Japan and China, and the war was over. Cotton and other goods were now coming through in their former quantities from Peking and Tientsin to the northwest, so the military in Sining had radioed to the Muslim merchants in the caravan not to buy cotton in Lhasa.

There was no word on who had won or why peace had been concluded. No one cared about anything but the effect the end of the war would have on trade:

I was suddenly struck with the thought that if there really was peace between Japan and China, then my work was finished. What should I do next? On the one hand I was downhearted, but on the other hand I thought that I could walk about as a Japanese without hiding and without fear, and this thought gave me courage. I wanted to know what had happened, and particularly what kind of peace had been concluded. What had happened in the war against America and England? When I thought back to the final order I had been given to withdraw I was again assailed by doubts and a dark cloud descended on my spirit. I could see that days of worry stretched out ahead of me.

As they approached Lhasa, Nishikawa fell in with a Chinese

merchant who liked the looks of his yaks, not noticing that one had the early signs of illness. When he offered ten silver coins, Nishikawa decided to bargain and got him up to fifteen, congratulating himself that since he had paid twenty for one and got the other one free, the entire journey had cost him only five silver coins. He was astonished to discover that the man meant fifteen for each yak, and that he would make a profit.

Yeshe, who had sold his for less to the Labrang Amchit, was impressed. He also congratulated Nishikawa on selling the animals to a merchant who would not simply resell them to a butcher. In spite of all the dried meat they had eaten on the way and the game they had freely accepted from the Tangut hunters, the stricture on killing was still applied whenever it could be. 'Even when getting rid of yaks, their future treatment is considered just as if they were human beings, and this shows the love that Mongolians have for their animals,' comments Nishikawa. Most of all, however, Yeshe urged him to conclude the deal immediately, before the symptoms of yak fever became evident.

The story of the yak deal was far from concluded. The Chinese paid him with a torn Tibetan note that was pasted together, and Nishikawa had no way of knowing that such a note would not be accepted in Tibet. The Labrang Amchit had noticed this while the deal was taking place, but while he sympathized with Nishikawa, he explained that 'one merchant cannot interfere in another's deal'. Two years later in Chamdo, however, Nishikawa was to meet the man who had bought the yaks, who accosted him on the street to accuse him of cheating since the animals had died three weeks later. Nishikawa rejoined that he had been paid with a worthless note, and the two parted amidst mutual recriminations. 'It seems that the gods were watching us and making sure we made no profit from our dishonesty.'

For the final ten days or so of the journey, Nishikawa had to carry all his possessions on his back, and though he had eaten most of his supplies, this was still a considerable burden, so he had trouble keeping up with the caravan. The Go La, the final pass before Lhasa, is not normally particularly difficult, but because of his load he found it the toughest crossing of the trip. That night

they slept within sight of Lhasa, and as they entered the Holy City the next day they were accompanied by – of all things – a military band playing British marching music as they passed a barracks.

Nishikawa was confused about the date he entered Lhasa. First he gives it as 28 September 1945; then, after a long explanation about the Mongolian calendar, he concludes that it was probably actually some time in October. This would put him more than a month behind Kimura.

As with Kimura, the wonders of the Holy City were secondary to the news about the end of the war. Though this was the biggest topic of street gossip, most of the talk was about the effect on trade and travel. Thrown in was a story that Japan had been totally destroyed by something called an ‘atom bomb’. The Tibetans used the English word ‘atom’ and the Tibetan word for ‘bomb’, and this was completely unintelligible to Nishikawa, or anyone else. Though there was no way to find reliable information, which was what he wanted more than anything, he rejected out of hand the practical course taken by Kimura of going to the Chinese and the British, because ‘I could not approach my enemies for information’. He also heard the story of the Chinese victory celebration being attacked by Tibetans. The explanation he heard was: ‘Because we are all brothers in Asia, there is no reason to celebrate when one Asian country defeats another.’

And now Nishikawa was confronted with the same problem Kimura had faced. If he was going to stay in Lhasa he would have to join a monastery, probably Drepung, and if he did that he would be with other Mongolians from his ‘birthplace’. Confronted with the *nyerpa* of Drepung, who invited him to the monastery, he made up a story about entrusting his money to a monk from Shigatse who had already left for home, and said that he had to go and get his things back first. When the *nyerpas* of Sera and Ganden came, he told them he had decided to live at Drepung: ‘I have never hated myself more than at this time when I had to tell so many lies to survive.’

And then he heard that ‘the young monk who was arrested by Babu Noyen’ had disappeared after less than a week in Lhasa:

I blamed myself for not having visited him when he was under detention, and regretted the lost opportunity. Deep in hiding in enemy territory, our souls may have been calling out to one another. Perhaps it was our fate to drift apart like the clouds and never meet.

Though Nishikawa had decided that he himself must inevitably head for India, his friend Baltan was about to set off for a pilgrimage to Tashi Lhumpo, and he decided to accompany him. Again, it was more than 'fate' that was to keep the two Japanese from meeting.

# Chapter Ten

## Pilgrim, Pedlar, Beggar, Monk

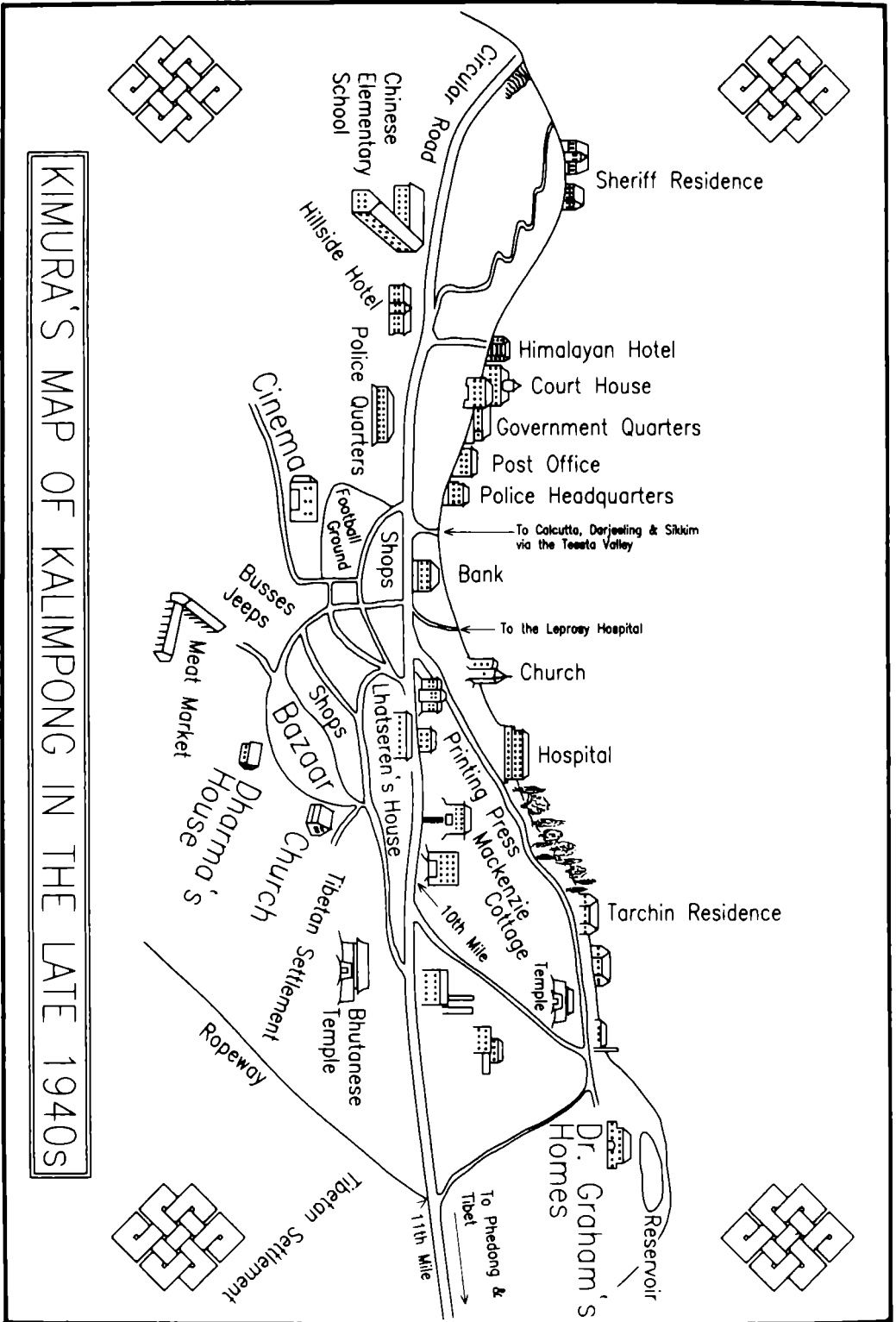
When Kimura broached the subject of a little pilgrimage to India to Danzan and Tseren-tso, they thought it was a wonderful idea. After all, they had come this far, and the only thing that could surpass worshipping at the shrines of holy Lhasa was to do the same at the places associated with the Buddha himself.

However, they were all but broke, and would need money if they were to continue. Here the resourceful Baarin Jimba was able to provide assistance. He helped them to sell all their belongings – even their trusty old tent – and then introduced Kimura to someone who could lend him money.

His name was Namgyel Dalama, and he had an interesting connection with the Japanese. Back in the 1930s, it might be remembered, the Japanese had hatched a plot to discover a new incarnation of Mongolia's highest lama, the Jebtsundamba Khutughtu, and it was this scheme that had led to Nomoto's journey to Tibet. The original plan had come to nothing, but a second attempt had been launched under one of the most respected refugee lamas from Outer Mongolia, the lama Dilowa Gegen. Namgyel Dalama, an Inner Mongolian lama from the East Sunit Banner where Kimura had worked, had been his closest associate.

Again the mission had ended in failure. The plan had been for the Dilowa to go by sea to Calcutta, then north to Lhasa, but he was betrayed in Hong Kong and arrested by the British, who handed him over to the Kuomintang. He was sent to Chungking, where he spent the rest of the war under house arrest. But since he





Map 4 Kalimpong

was allowed to receive visitors freely, he was able to build up an information network all over Mongolia and Tibet, and was said to have been as well informed about events in these lands as anyone.

Somehow Namgyel Dalama was forgotten in Hong Kong, and so was most of the money. He simply continued on to Lhasa, and set up a business lending out the money – not for his own benefit, but to keep the Dilowa's wealth intact. Baarin Jimba told Kimura that Namgyal Dalama had spent a lot of time around the Japanese and was so sharp that he would probably see through Kimura's disguise, but would probably take the attitude that the less said the better. This, in fact, is what happened, though Kimura was not to learn of it until much later.

He was taken to a neat and clean room with ornately painted pillars, an elaborate altar, and an empty throne, all of which was being kept in readiness should the Dilowa suddenly arrive. Basing his appeal on being from the same banner, and promising only that he would repay the debt if he ever returned to East Sunit, Kimura was amazed at the ease with which he was able to borrow a thousand rupees.

With some of the money the travellers bought two horses, so that now they had one each, and this gave them an easy trip to India. Distressed over the outcome of the war, and suffering from snow-blindness around Phari, Kimura found himself in India almost before he knew it. Their first stop was – naturally enough – Kalimpong.

Kalimpong had been well known to Japanese in the past. Kawaguchi had passed through several times, as had Teramoto. It was here that Aoki and Tada brought Tsawa Tritrul, and delivered him to the Dalai Lama; and here Yajima met Aoki before continuing his journey on his own. But it is only now that this charming little hilltop town with its famous market, its churches, temples and mosques, its mixed population of Indians, Nepalis, Bhutanese, Tibetans, Chinese, and even a few Mongolians, as well as the office of the only Tibetan-language newspaper, becomes central to our story.

Kimura and his party first made their way to the home of an Outer Mongolian artist named Dharma. When they introduced themselves as being from Inner Mongolia he at once congratu-

lated them on the liberation of their homeland, informing them again, though without malice, that the Japanese themselves were now to live under foreign domination. Still, Kimura wanted to be absolutely certain. As an Inner Mongolian his interest was understandable, and Dharma took him to the cinema that night. In horror he watched the newsreel which showed Tokyo almost completely levelled, General Tojo looking very small and shabby after a failed suicide attempt, and – most shocking of all – Japanese troops doing the unthinkable: surrendering. This scene was accompanied by cheers from the Ghorkha soldiers in the cinema, who were just back from Burma.

Kimura allowed himself few illusions about Japanese behaviour towards subject peoples, and he knew that if Japan really was occupied by the Chinese, the revenge would be terrible. The idea was already gnawing at the back of his mind that Japan had brought this defeat on itself. Even so, the certainty of defeat was devastating, and for the next week he hardly spoke to anyone, going every day to brood by a large rock on the hilltop above the town. It was one of the most beautiful spots in Kalimpong, looking down on one side to the Teesta Valley and the foothills of Sikkim with Kanchenjunga in the distance, and on the other to the pleasant little town. Here: 'I allowed the pain and disgrace to wash over me in waves', as he attempted to come to personal terms with a defeat that nothing in his education or training had prepared him to face.

Beyond his emotions lay more practical problems. His plan had always been to take Danzan and Tseren-tso back to Inner Mongolia, where the three of them would manage a ranch together. This way was now blocked for him, and though the couple could return, they would return impoverished and without reward. Nor was there any way he himself could return to his defeated nation. If he went to Calcutta and turned himself in, he was certain to be arrested as the spy he was. He knew nothing of how the British treated vanquished enemies, but his own nation's performance in this respect gave him little encouragement. In the end he took refuge in the pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya he had promised his friends.

It was the best thing to have done for all concerned. This was all Kimura had to reward the couple for the years they had spent

with him, and in fact there were few better things he could have given them. A visit to the spot where the Buddha was enlightened would be a high point in the life of any Buddhist, and they were deeply grateful. 'I, a poor and unworthy Mongolian woman, have only you to thank for being able to worship in this sacred place!' exclaimed Tseren-tso. 'Should I die now, I would be satisfied.'

For Kimura as well, the trip marked a turning point:

For whatever reason, my own spirits began to recover at this point, and I faced our return to Kalimpong with a new resolve. Perhaps it was seeing part of a new country where life went on in its age-long way with no considerations for the kind of nationalistic feelings that had recently swamped me. Japan, I decided, was for the moment in the past. It would be best if I forgot who I really was, gave up any idea of returning home, and looked to my future like any destitute Mongolian pilgrim. (Kimura, 1990, p. 134)

The first thing he needed was a job, and Dharma took him to one of the leading men of Kalimpong, Tarchin Babu, owner and editor of the *Tibet Mirror Press*, the only newspaper published in the Tibetan language. Tarchin was from a culturally Tibetan part of India, near Ladakh, but he had been orphaned and brought up by Christian missionaries, so he was one of the few Tibetans to practise the Christian faith.

Dharma told Tarchin that this young Mongolian, Dawa Sangpo, had been educated at a Japanese school in Inner Mongolia, and Tarchin asked in turn if he recognized the map of Asia on the wall for what it was. When he said he did, he was asked to use the map to explain his journey. Tarchin was impressed, and offered him a job on the printing press at fifteen rupees a month. Danzan and Tseren-tso were offered work spinning wool. Their wages would not put them much above survival level, but at least they had breathing space.

Working at the printing press in a neighbourhood called 'Tenth Mile' on the main road from Tibet, Kimura was able to pick up some Tibetan from his colleagues, and soon found that he could hold his own in conversation. Then one day he drew a political cartoon about the Chinese Civil War that had

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started up again with the defeat of the Japanese, and Tarchin liked it so much that he switched him over to office work. The work involved despatching the papers – which were distributed not only to Tibet but to India, Europe, and even New York – and keeping the subscribers' list in order. This office was in a Western style house called Mackenzie Cottage, just above the press.

In mid-November, only about two months after his original arrival in Kalimpong, Tarchin asked him to draw a map of his journey, along with brief explanations of who was holding what territory, troop strengths, and so on. A few weeks later he was told to make himself as respectable as possible and taken to meet the Sikkimese who was in charge of security for Kalimpong, a Mr Lhatseren, as well as the man in charge of intelligence for the entire northeast frontier region, Eric Lambert. It suddenly occurred to Kimura that everything he had done had been reported through intelligence channels.

At first he assumed that he was about to be arrested, but it soon became apparent that they had other plans for him. With the present turmoil in China it was becoming difficult to obtain reliable information, particularly from remote areas, and it seemed that they were thinking of sending him back to Inner Mongolia under cover. This was just the sort of thing he wanted to hear. It would get him a lot closer to Japan than he was at the moment, and give him a better possibility of sneaking back. As part of his training they were thinking of teaching him English, and he was told that if he agreed he would begin studying at Dr Graham's Homes – a school established by a missionary for children of mixed parentage – in the spring. In the meantime he was instructed to keep up his progress in Tibetan as well.

November was to be an eventful month for Kimura. By the end he was beginning to feel quite settled. He had a new language to look forward to, a secure – albeit poorly paid – job, and the long-term possibility of being sent back to Mongolia. One day he was sitting at his desk at Mackenzie Cottage when he heard someone shouting in Mongolian: 'Is there a Mongolian here?'

Thuptden, the office boy, went to the door but could not understand, so called me. At the door I saw a man clad in ragged Mongolian clothing, wearing a lambskin cap and carrying a large bundle over his shoulder. In his hand he held a long, thick stick. For a moment we stood there in silence looking one another over, both trying to remember what was so familiar. It came to me first, for his eyes had grown even worse in the past two years.

‘Nishikawa-San?’ I asked softly. . . . (Kimura, 1990, p. 140)

Completely by chance, the house where the newly arrived Nishikawa had called in search of a rich Mongolian who might be able to offer him work happened to be Mackenzie Cottage.

The two Japanese could not believe they were standing face to face, but they had to be careful. Baltan was still with Nishikawa (he had remained at the bottom of the steps, intimidated by the ‘grandeur’ of the cottage) and they were wary of revealing their true identity. Kimura immediately took them to the small room he shared with the Danzans, and when Baltan went out to relieve himself they were able to snatch a few words alone, though they had to get over an embarrassed few moments when they both found themselves unable to speak Japanese. Nishikawa’s first question, when they had decided to revert to Mongolian, was of course about the war, and Kimura was finally able to confirm for him what had happened. Before they had time for any more they were interrupted by Baltan’s return. Kimura then took them to Dharma, who was willing to rent them some space cheaply.

That evening Nishikawa managed to sneak away, and so that they could be more private Kimura took him to the veranda of the small church on the edge of the market, a spot Nishikawa was later to come to know intimately. Here he showed him his collection of newspaper and magazine photos of the devastation in Japan, and of the formal surrender on the *USS Missouri*. And now, finally, the war was over – or should have been – for Nishikawa as well.

Nishikawa’s story of this chance meeting differs from Kimura’s in details that become significant only with hindsight. In Nishikawa’s version the office boy, Thuptden, was a Tangut, and they were

conversing quite happily in that language when Kimura appeared behind the young man. Nishikawa recognized him instantly. There is no mention of weak eyesight: there never is in Nishikawa's account. Kimura says that this meeting took place in November; Nishikawa in January. Finally, Nishikawa does not mention Kimura helping him to find a room, and one begins to notice that Nishikawa never once mentions Kimura doing anything for him.

But since we are left with the question of how Nishikawa happened to arrive in Kalimpong at this time, it is necessary to backtrack to when he was in Lhasa.

For someone claiming to be in such a hurry to discover the fate of his country, Nishikawa behaved very strangely in travelling to India via Gyantse, Shigatse and Sakya – a detour on foot of several hundred miles. His excuse is that Baltan was going in that direction, and he hoped to meet his old friend Donrub in Shigatse. One is left with the feeling that the rumours had taken their toll and that he was, consciously or subconsciously, simply putting off the day when he would have to face the truth.

This impression is strengthened by a small incident that occurred on the trail. Their pilgrimage to Tashi Lhumpo and Sakya over, Nishikawa and Baltan headed south and were passing through the Chumbi Valley when suddenly they saw, coming the other way, an Englishman 'with a pistol at his waist and a camera around his neck'. Nishikawa's reaction is fascinating, and tells us a great deal about his personality and state of mind. His initial emotion was hostility, and his first impulse was to fight and kill this man whom he had never seen before. His second – and more reasoned – response is just as telling: 'Seeing an Englishman wandering around in this area worried me because it meant the Japanese army had not invaded India after all.'

Nishikawa's capacity for self-deception whenever the glory of Japan was involved would seem to be almost infinite. In spite of the many rumours he had heard about the end of the war, it does not seem to have occurred to him that if any part of India (the country which, after all, bordered Tibet to the south) had fallen under Japanese administration, everyone in Lhasa would have known all about it.

Baltan's reaction was more reasonable. 'I saw a big-nose in Sining

once, but he did not have such a red face,' he exclaimed, then wondered aloud if the camera was some sort of *gao*.

'All big-noses have frightening faces like that. They don't eat people like the Kazakhs, but they eat countries,' Nishikawa lectured, thus neatly ignoring the twentieth-century histories of Korea, Manchuria, Inner Mongolia and Taiwan, as well as more recent events in Hong Kong, Indo-China, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma, and large areas of China. He seems to have honestly believed (and to have gone on believing, since his book was not published until 1968) that the Japanese had come to all these places as peaceful liberators rather than as conquerors.

The nameless Englishman, however, managed to escape unmurdered, doubtless unaware of the wonder and hostility he had provoked.

Nishikawa and Baltan had now travelled together all the way through Tibet from Tsaidam, but their relationship is not easy to define. Whenever there were any difficulties – such as here in the Chumbi Valley, when they had to pass through a Customs post and were worried about having their silver confiscated – they began to bicker. At Baltan's suggestion they based their decision about just when to go through on divinations, then they sat squabbling like children over whose divination was more likely to be correct before finally walking through unnoticed.

Standing on top of the Jelap La a day or two later, on what would be the first of many crossings, Nishikawa took stock of his trip so far. It had been two years and three months since he had left Inner Mongolia, and he estimated that two hundred days had been spent in walking. By supporting himself doing the meanest jobs in several large monasteries, and several times working his way as a caravan man, he had shored up experiences unique to foreign travellers in Tibet. Indeed, the only travellers with whom he can really be compared are the pundits and Kawaguchi, and perhaps Alexandra David-Neel. Even Kimura's trip, as he would make a point of stressing in his book, had been easy compared to his. Had he finished here and returned immediately to Japan, he would have carved for himself a unique place in the history of overland travel, for he travelled not only in the physical sense but, much like Kawaguchi early in the century, he became deeply involved with the people, their ways of life, and their thoughts, wherever he went.



But he was nowhere near finished yet.

Once they began descending the southern face of the Himalayas into India, their fur clothes began to cause them problems, for it was beginning to get considerably warmer than it had been on the plains and passes. Again and again they were warned by people along the way that they would make themselves ill wearing such clothing, but they had nothing else. Eventually, still in their furs and complaining about the heat (though these hills are cooler in winter than Lhasa on a summer's day), they reached Kalimpong, and the next day the chance meeting with Kimura took place.

On reflection, Nishikawa waxed lyrical about this meeting:

No one could have imagined that having left Pailingmiao in the summer of 1943 and crossed into enemy territory, we would have approached one another then separated time and time again, travelled tens of thousands of kilometres, crossed the Himalayas, and now would meet by chance in Kalimpong after three years.

This chance meeting must have been the will of the gods. Perhaps our souls were calling out to one another. It was fate. It was stranger than fiction. It could only be called a miracle.

Behind these words, however, lurks the suspicion that neither man was overly pleased to have a countryman around. Each seemed to regard this part of the world as his own territory, and their joy at meeting was almost certainly tempered by irritation at having to share it. Indeed, the most striking thing about this meeting after three years is its casualness, making Stanley's famous description of finding Dr Livingstone sound almost boisterous by comparison.

Nishikawa's first priority was to get some more suitable clothes. In these lower altitudes their furs had begun to stink, and people would get out of his and Baltan's way as if they were a couple of dung carts. Changing some of the silver he had been hoarding, he ordered a Tibetan robe made of cotton. His next goal was Calcutta.

Nishikawa reacted very differently from Kimura when he was confronted with proof of Japan's defeat. Kimura had gone through a week of heartbreak and misery, but with that behind him the experience seemed to open his mind and allow him to look at the world in a way that would have been unthinkable before. He began

to question in his own mind things which it had previously been taboo even to speculate about, such as Japan's historic liberating role in Asia, and the very role of the Emperor. Nishikawa went through no such depression and transformation because he quite simply refused to give up and let go of the past. Even now he clung to the hope that in Calcutta he might find evidence that the defeat was not so total as Kimura seemed to think.

Originally he and Baltan had intended to go to Bodh Gaya, but they were advised that walking all that way in the heat of the Indian plains, even in winter, would kill them, and taking the train would cost them a hundred rupees. Later Nishikawa was to become skilled at the art of fare-dodging, but now everything was new to him. Baltan, who was thoroughly enjoying all the new experiences and sensations, decided to go along to Calcutta just for the sake of it.

The journey to Calcutta, which was full of wonder for the excited Baltan, was just an irritant to Nishikawa. Riding in a taxi (they were given a lift by three Tangut monks) and then the train, which they boarded at Siliguri, were things he could not even have imagined before. The Indians were friendly and treated them with the respect due to holy men, and the engine crew gave them hot water straight from the boiler to make their tea with.

In Calcutta they stayed at a *dharamsala* near Chinatown. In his quest for a Japanese flag Nishikawa gave Baltan the slip and wandered fretfully all over the city. Baltan, on the other hand, had a marvellous time getting totally lost. Whenever he tried to ask his way back outside a shop, people thought he was begging, and when he finally did return he was laden down with cakes, fruit, cigarettes, and small change. The experience convinced him that he was truly in the country of the Buddha.

And now Nishikawa relates a tale which really does begin to stretch the imagination. As he sat discouraged in a park he was approached by a middle-aged Indian who addressed him in English. There has been no mention up to this point that Nishikawa knew any English at all, let alone enough to carry on a conversation at a complex level. Yet now he alleges that from this talk he learned that there used to be a Japanese Consulate, but it had been withdrawn during the war. Now there were no Japanese left in Calcutta.

How he could have learned all this without giving himself away

is as unclear as where his surprising fluency in English suddenly sprang from. Also unclear is why he would be convinced by what could only have been a partially understood conversation with a stranger, when he had previously been presented with rather stronger proof by a fellow Japanese with whom he was acquainted. At any rate, he says he was now fully convinced that the war was over and his responsibilities were at an end, but he makes this claim many times. In fact, when he describes his return to Tokyo in 1951 he says that it was not until he observed the 'air of defeat' at the Foreign Ministry that he was truly convinced that Japan had lost the war. It gradually becomes apparent that here is a man who, in spite of his near superhuman physical strength, endurance, and ability to ignore physical discomfort, was utterly unable to confront certain aspects of reality.

Baltan had no such worries. He had spent most of his time in Calcutta shopping for presents and trade goods. For the return journey he had converted his Chinese silver into ivory bracelets, aluminium pots, powdered colours and dyes, paper, needles, and embroidery yarn. Since he could not afford coral he bought necklaces and rosaries made of plastic, glass and porcelain. His purchases were rounded off with saffron and medicinal herbs, and he seems to have had a thoroughly satisfying trip.

Back in Kalimpong, Nishikawa, like Kimura before him, was faced with the problem of how he would support himself. Worried that the police would notice too close an association between him and Kimura, he seems to have avoided him and sought neither his help nor his advice. With eighty rupees to his name, and nothing else to rely on but his strength, he hit upon the idea of doing some trans-Himalayan trading. When he had come through Phari he had noticed that the most profitable trade item was tobacco. Other goods were imported in large quantities by the big merchants, but with tobacco a reasonable profit could be made from a small investment. This was not, however, without risk. Since tobacco was considered both expensive and useless, the Tibetan government had forbidden its import, and if he were caught at the border it would be confiscated.

Baltan was now preparing to return to Lhasa, so they decided to go together. Just before leaving Nishikawa met Kimura secretly (though it is difficult to see why two Mongolians should not meet

openly). He told Kimura that if his trading venture was successful he would return, but if not he would live somehow in Tibet, or even perhaps try to work his way back to Mongolia: 'Then we promised that no matter what happened we would take care of ourselves and that at least one of us would try to get back to Japan and tell everyone that we had both made it to India.'

On the way Nishikawa and Baltan again quarrelled about the checkpoints. Baltan, who had only a little tobacco and was in much less danger of getting caught, left Nishikawa behind while he was camouflaging his luggage and went through the Chumbi Customs post alone. Though he was to have no problems – the Customs officers took one look at him and thought he was a mad beggar pilgrim – Nishikawa regarded his friend's action as disloyal, and berated him for it all the way to Phari.

In Phari, that bitterly cold and dirty market town dominated by the snow-clad Chomo Lhari and within sight of Bhutan, they met a Mongolian monk who told them that they could sell their goods for a better price on the other side of the border, and could also pick up extra money going around the villages chanting and reciting prayers. Nishikawa spent only one night in Bhutan, but he was so pleased with the profit on his tobacco that he was anxious to return at once to Kalimpong and begin again. Though Baltan had been his companion all the way from Tsaidam, their relations seem to have been soured by the incident in Chumbi to the point where he does not even mention their parting except to say that he left him to linger in Bhutan and read the scriptures.

Back in Phari he loaded up with dried cheese, fat, leather and *tsampa*. He still needed to exercise caution at the Customs post, since it was forbidden to export grain from Tibet, but in the event he fooled everyone again, and long before arriving in Kalimpong he had sold everything, and made what he hoped would be some regular customers along the way. Pleased that he had now found a way to make his living, Nishikawa did not pause in Kalimpong except to load up with more stock. This time his plan was more elaborate. He bought empty tins of the most expensive cigarettes available in Kalimpong<sup>1</sup>, taking care to get the ones that looked like new, and stuffed them with an inferior brand.

It is concerning this scheme that Nishikawa shows real malice towards Kimura for the first time, for he claims that the whole

plan was his idea, and when he himself expressed doubts over its morality he was silenced by Kimura, who told him it was 'only' Tibetans he would be cheating, so there was nothing to worry about. Kimura, though he was aware of this scheme, categorically denied any involvement in it.

In Phari, Nishikawa went to an inn where he was known, and fell into conversation with a Khampa and a Tangut who immediately started bargaining with him over his cigarettes. The genuine article would have been worth five rupees a can in India, but those he had stuffed the can with were worth no more than a rupee. Conscience-stricken, he claimed that someone had given them to him and he did not know their real value. He was apparently believed, since Mongolians are regarded by the Tibetans as hopeless at business. The Tangut offered to buy the lot, and they walked to his inn through the filthy but lively streets, accompanied by the din of buying and selling mingled with the words of lewd songs exchanged between men and women who lounged about drinking all day.

At the inn three Tanguts bought his entire stock at two-and-a-half rupees per tin, and all went well until he went back to his own inn and told the Khampa there what he had done. Scandalized at the deal he had allowed to get away, the Khampa was just beginning to work himself into a temper when the satisfied Tangut walked in and was immediately accused of 'cheating this poor innocent Mongolian'. Angry words were exchanged, and in no time swords were drawn. A general mêlée ensued, with a dozen or spectators trying to disarm the fierce combatants. Eventually the Amdo man was thrown out of the door and the Khampa was restrained from chasing him.

His good humour spoiled by the violence he had unwittingly caused, Nishikawa bought butter and *tsampa* again, and headed back to Kalimpong. Again he stopped for only long enough to gather fresh stock, deciding to go back to the less profitable, but also less troublesome, rolled tobacco. But this time he was to have companions on his return journey: Danzan and Tseren-tso.

During January they had both been terribly ill with the debilitating diarrhoea that often affected Mongolian or Tibetan pilgrims in India. Though this affliction was so severe that some people died of it, anyone who recovered was usually immune. But the couple had now had enough of travel and strange lands. They had remained

with Kimura for years out of personal loyalty, and in hopes of them all going back to Mongolia together and managing a ranch there. That dream had now been shattered by the outcome of the war. They had been compensated by the opportunities to pray at the shrines of Lhasa and at Bodh Gaya, but having been to the latter place, there was nothing more to keep them in India, so they told Kimura they would like to accompany Nishikawa on his next trip to Phari, then continue on to Lhasa.

'For two and a half years we had been a family,' wrote Kimura, 'had shared hardship and trials, laughter and tears; and though it would have been much to Danzan's material benefit, I do not think he once considered betraying me.' He wanted to do something for them, but his job provided little more than subsistence. Finally he sold the only two things he had that were of any value – an image of Chenrisig and his agate snuff-pot – for a hundred and thirty rupees, and gave the money to them. It seemed to him so little after all they had done, but it was all he had.

It was a sad day for Kimura when the three of them left and he walked to the end of town with them on a cold and foggy morning in late January:

They kept turning back to wave until they suddenly disappeared around a corner of the town leaving me standing in the middle of the street; the only one with a job and a secure future, the only one utterly bereft. I could never remember having been so completely alone before. (Kimura, 1990, pp. 145–6)

The Tarchin family were quick to sense his loss. They invited him to move into Mackenzie Cottage, and to have his meals with the family. Every morning he climbed the ridge to the Tarchin house, not far from the rock he had resorted to for his week of torment, and after breakfast he would return to the office at about ten. At noon a servant would bring them lunch, then at five a horse would be brought for Tarchin, and Kimura would follow him on foot for his supper. These family evenings replaced the evenings he had spent with Danzan and Tseren-tso, and were also good for his Tibetan. The Tarchins, he felt, were some of the finest people he had met on his entire journey.

The affection shared between Danzan, Tseren-tso and Kimura cut no ice with Nishikawa. Kimura, he felt, was happy to be rid

of them, since it would lessen his worries about being found out. Nishikawa claimed that rumours about 'Danzan bringing a Japanese with him' had preceded them on their entire journey. For this reason they had supposedly been unable to settle at Kumbum, and it was the spread of these rumours to Lhasa which had led to their quick departure from the Tibetan capital. From this point on Nishikawa attempts to portray Kimura as weak, cowardly and cunning. Danzan, he says, attempted many times to leave, but Kimura always persuaded him to stay.

These accusations fly in the face of obvious facts. Had it been as well known that Kimura was Japanese as Nishikawa claims, he would certainly have been arrested and probably shot while he was still on Chinese territory. But while he had in fact spent ten months under detention, for something not related to him being Japanese, his real identity had remained a secret. And then Kimura never indicated in any way that he intended to stay in either Kumbum or Lhasa. Indeed, there was no reason for him to stay in either place. In addition, Nishikawa catches himself in a contradiction, for he reports universal admiration for the Japanese among normal Mongolians, and a wish for them to come and throw the Chinese out. Had this in fact been the case, and had it been known that Danzan was guiding a Japanese, why should anyone have minded? It is more probable that they would have been assisted by an Underground network.

In fact it was Nishikawa who was not at all happy with Danzan and Tseren-tso. He always travelled faster and carried more than anyone else, and Baltan seems to have been about the only one who could keep up with him. On the trip from Tsaidam he had ridiculed the altitude sickness suffered by the Mongolians and Tibetans in the caravan while he himself remained unaffected, and he could not tolerate physical weakness in any form (one of his main gripes against Kimura was that he had ridden a camel for most of his journey while he, Nishikawa, had walked every step of the way). But Danzan and his wife were still convalescing from a serious illness and were not able to move at all fast, so that Nishikawa became irritated at the speed at which he was forced to travel. They had with them some rather pathetic belongings they had accumulated in Kalimpong which Nishikawa describes as 'empty cans, empty bottles and old clothes', and a wooden box they

were particularly fond of. Gradually they were forced to discard all of this because of the weight, even burning their precious wooden box for fuel on the third day.

It took them sixteen days to reach Phari. Danzan and Tseren-tso then staggered off towards Lhasa while Nishikawa again went off to the Bhutanese border to sell his tobacco then, as usual, bought butter and *tsampa* and once more turned back towards Kalimpong. Right from the beginning the weather was bad. He was caught in a blizzard as he left Phari, and it was a relief to descend into the warm Chumbi Valley. But he still had the Jelap La ahead of him, and it was reported to be blocked with snow. In spite of the small profits he was making, Nishikawa was never one to spend an anna needlessly, and he was determined to push on 'since my provisions and travel money were limited'.

Travellers had been gathering for days at the hut which provided the last shelter before the summit, as they waited for the pass to open. When Nishikawa arrived it was too full for him to squeeze in, and the best he could do was a roofless ruin nearby where the walls might provide some protection from the wind. Brushing away the snow he found some roofing boards, some of which he used to make a lean-to, and some to make a fire. But he was unable to sleep, and kept from freezing only by crouching over his fire all night. The next morning a tiny patch of blue sky encouraged the caravan of about a hundred and twenty horses to make an attempt on the pass. 'A dozen or so of us pilgrims and black market traders followed behind them.'

The fine weather did not last. The sky got heavier and darker, and just when they were on the final approach to the pass, on a narrow trail in a canyon with a drop to one side, the blizzard descended and snow came from all directions at once. 'Men were blown down and could do nothing but lie with their faces in the snow to prevent themselves from plunging into the valley.' It was only about three hundred metres to the summit and Nishikawa, cursing, attempted to force his way there. He edged forward little by little, unable to stand because of the wind and the weight of his luggage. As he crawled on all fours he entered a dream-like state where he lost all feeling, even of cold in his hands and feet; nor could he feel the weight of his luggage, fatigue or hunger. He was also under the illusion that he had to continue going



forward at all costs, so that it never occurred to him to retreat to the hut.

Eventually he found himself in front of two buildings buried in the snow, which he recognized as being on the southern side of the pass. Inside were forty or more snowed-in travellers around a fire. Recognizing his state as near-hypothermia, they quickly gave him hot tea and made sure he did not go too near the fire too quickly. He was the only one to cross the pass that day, but at a terrible price, for though he did not yet realize it, his feet were frostbitten. Later he learned that one pilgrim had frozen to death on the pass:

I did not even know the name of the one who had died. The officials would not investigate his identity and there was no one among the officials nearby to give him a funeral. His remains would only be left to nature. Those passing by and hearing the tale would only quickly chant a mantra, voice an expression of sympathy, then continue on their way.

Whatever his condition, he had no choice but to go on. Two days later his feet swelled up and oozed pus. He could not wear his boots and walking was agony, but somehow he made it back to Kalimpong. He had stretched himself to the limits, and once he arrived he was no longer able to walk. 'Perhaps it was a judgement passed on me for trying to earn my living by smuggling.' More probably it was a judgement for being quite so miserly. Had he simply waited a day or two at the cost of perhaps a couple of rupees (a cheap inn in the Chumbi Valley cost only four annas, a quarter of a rupee), he would have been fine.

But now he was in a fix. He had about a hundred and twenty rupees left, and he felt that would last him about three months if he lived the cheapest possible existence. He could not work while he waited for his wound to heal, 'so there was nothing to do but to join the cheapest of all lifestyles: that of the beggars'.

For anyone but Nishikawa this would have meant hitting rock bottom, a move into despair. But for him it was simply a new adventure. There are times when Nishikawa seemed positively to revel in physical discomfort, and the literature of travel has never produced anything quite like his account of the three months he spent with the beggars of Kalimpong.

But first he was faced with a rather unique problem: he lacked suitable clothing. His furs were too hot, and the cotton robe he had ordered when he first arrived in Kalimpong was too good to be convincing on a beggar. Kimura had an old beat-up Mongolian cotton robe that was just the thing, so he borrowed it. It must have been an ill fit, since Nishikawa was more than a foot taller than Kimura, but with this short red robe, a cooking pot, a blanket, and his old pack frame, he felt that he looked the perfect picture of a beggar.

He went first to the beggars' shanty at the *dharamsala* on the eastern edge of town:

It was a large room with no partitions. People had divided off their own spaces in what looked like spiders' nests with bits of rubbish like old string, bits of rope, and pieces of wire. Then they secured their places with bits of tent, rags, and bamboo netting which they picked up in town. The spaces between were always damp and full of rubbish, and since I could see no one in the huge room, I had the eerie feeling of being in a haunted house.

He was welcomed by a ragged monk from Kham who made room for him among the debris. In the evening the rest of the beggars began returning. They were mostly Tibetans, fifty or sixty in all, and the room now took on a feeling just as eerie as before, but far busier as cooking fires were lit illuminating the filthy figures.

Many of the beggars were not professionals, but had made the pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya and would beg for a week in Kalimpong in order to get their food for the return journey to Lhasa. An amazing variety of items came out of their bags: rice, onions, tea, leeks, red pepper, aubergines, tomatoes, turnips, pears, tangerines, bananas and cigarettes. The beggars were happy to share what they had with the newcomer. This sharing was no hardship for them, since in a good day's begging they could collect two or three days' worth of food. Some of them would sell the surplus rice and onions, the most plentiful items, and use the money to buy drink. So the beggars' hall was a noisy place at night, full of all sorts of life. Some people were chanting sutras or singing hymns accompanied by drums and bells. Some gambled with dice. There were angry quarrelling voices, crying babies, and laughter. Then,

in the morning, each individual or group mapped out a strategy for the day and went out, leaving behind only the sick and infirm, Nishikawa among them.

It soon became obvious that his feet were in worse shape than he had feared. Far from improving, his condition deteriorated, and he worried that this might be partially because of living in the dark, damp room. After a week he decided he should move to a brighter and more airy place, and he went to join Kalimpong's other group of beggars at the bazaar in the centre of town.

At the time the Kalimpong bazaar was one of the most famous in the Himalayas. Kalimpong was still known as the 'harbour of Tibet', being the closest urban centre in India to the border. The town had grown wealthy on the Tibetan wool trade, but the market also attracted Bhutanese, Sikkimese, and Nepalis. Though this market has often been described, Nishikawa was to give us a completely different view of it.

The bazaar beggars slept under the roofs of the market stalls at night. During the day, when they went out to beg, they left all their possessions under the eaves of an Indian warehouse to one side of the market:

All day long there would be a number of beggars there under the eaves engaged in various activities like de-lousing their clothes, talking, sleeping, mending clothes, playing cards, reading sutras, or chanting. They did not look in the least troubled or worried, and anyone seeing them would think their lives looked romantic and inviting.

Once he had been with them for two or three days, Nishikawa was accepted as an old hand. Since he was still immobile, he was assigned to stay behind and guard the belongings, then at night the others would share out the take with him, though he did pay for his rice, since selling the surplus was an important source of income for the beggars. 'Beggars' rice' he describes as being a mixture of all different kinds and qualities, since small amounts were collected from many different sources.

His closest friend in the bazaar was nicknamed 'Gyantse' after his home town. Having failed in trade, he settled into the begging life in Kalimpong, and had somehow managed to keep his sense of humour through it all. A kindly elderly couple worried about

Nishikawa's injured feet, and more or less adopted him. The most eccentric of the lot was nicknamed 'Khampa Monk'. Nishikawa describes him as a 'hard-working beggar', on his rounds from morning till night. He would pick up anything, no matter how dirty or useless, and had a big pile of rubbish that he proudly called his own.

Strangest of all was a family group, a couple with an eight-year-old child. The husband was rather delicate, but the woman was as strong as an ox and henpecked him unmercifully. He let her get away with it because she supported them through prostitution. Her customers, who came from the ranks of the porters and caravan men, could not have been very discriminating, and she could hardly have charged a very large fee. During the day, when the others went out to beg, she would make her arrangements, and the client would come to the market at night, to where the couple slept beside Nishikawa with the child between them:

Sometimes she was so brazen that when morning came and people began walking by, her husband and child would get up to make tea, but the woman and her client would just continue to lie there, sometimes squirming about and making funny noises.

Nishikawa did not like doctors and had always been one to let his problems heal themselves, but when his feet continued to get worse he allowed Gyantse to take him to the free clinic. This was located in the small Christian church by the market – the same one on whose veranda Kimura had finally told him of Japan's defeat. Once his wounds were properly washed and he applied the free salve he was given, he finally began to improve. Putting this improvement down to 'the mercy of Christianity, I began to chant "Amen" as well as "Om Mané Padmé Hum" '.

Just as he was struggling back to his feet, the beggars were all evicted from the market. They were, of course, a filthy lot: lice-ridden, with unwashed clothing and hair, and absolutely no sense of hygiene. They threw their waste water from cooking anywhere, and did not care where they relieved themselves. Khampa Monk's pile of rubbish was particularly offensive. It was only natural that the townspeople would not want them in such close proximity to their food in the market. Gyantse and Nishikawa tried to organize a general clean-up campaign, but it was too late.

When they were evicted, Gyantse led Nishikawa and Khampa Monk to a cave in a nearby hill whose previous occupant had died, leaving only an army of fleas behind him. Their lonely exile, during which they missed the bright lights of the town and the sound of the radios in the shops that they could listen to for free, did not last long. In a week they were back in the bazaar, though from now on they slept on the church porch. The police did not bother them there, but it was crowded: 'Since forty-some of us were living in this small space, at night we slept like piglets, back to back. But it was peaceful and quiet and we were like one big family.'

Even in this crowd the woman continued to entertain her clients, and one morning Gyantse commented, in his jocular way, 'Sister, why should you bring people from outside when there are so many friends here you could be of service to? Just take care of us instead.' The suggestion was not taken kindly, and poor Gyantse, who was weak and thin, found himself attacked by a raging harridan. He turned and fled, while 'she took after him like a madwoman, her hair flying, bare-footed, and with her red underwear showing. A running fight began while the others followed them, cheering.'

The entertainment was too good for anyone, even her husband, to try to stop them. Just as Gyantse was about to succumb to her furious onslaughts, he managed to throw her to the ground. Her dress flew up, revealing her huge bare behind and exposing her to so much ridicule that she dissolved in tears and was unable to continue the struggle. That evening, however, she and Gyantse behaved to one another as if nothing had happened, and she brought back a client, as always.

As his feet healed, Nishikawa began to wonder what to do next. Though he was reluctant to leave 'the friendly and comfortable society of the beggars', he made a trip to nearby Darjeeling to look for work. But he had no luck, pined for the homey society of his friends, and was depressed by the constant cloud, mist, and cold rain. Back in Kalimpong after this failure, he was encouraged by Gyantse to return to Lhasa and enter Drepung. There, no matter how poor he might be, he would still be able to eat and have a roof over his head. Since he had never even bothered to learn the Tibetan alphabet he was reluctant, thinking that this ignorance would lay him open to exposure. But then something happened that gave him a completely different outlook on life.

One day the band was joined by a young Khampa monk returning from Bodh Gaya. He had contracted some tropical disease along the way, and was weak and shaky. The beggars, as always, proved themselves generous, concerned and helpful, getting for him delicacies like fresh milk and *tsampa*, the latter acquired by the prostitute from one of her customers. Nishikawa was impressed, feeling that 'she proved her human qualities by this act'.

That night, however, as he slept beside Nishikawa, the pilgrim took a turn for the worse. When he awoke in the morning, Nishikawa found the young man spread-eagled and naked. Along with Gyantse and the old couple, he ascertained that the young man was dead, and that someone had stolen his clothes. Having been the closest one to him during the night made Nishikawa feel that the death was somehow his fault. But more than that, waking up beside the poor young man, cold and stiff and stripped of any dignity, was a powerful reminder of the impermanence of all things. Not long afterwards he began his preparations to return to Lhasa, and in mid-May he began the journey.

It is not clear just how often Nishikawa and Kimura met during these three months he spent with the beggars. Kimura mentions occasionally visiting him on the church porch with medicine, and a long talk they had at his rock on the ridge when he informed Kimura of his decision to enter Drepung. Nishikawa mentions none of this. By this time Kimura had been enrolled in Dr Graham's Homes, where he had private English lessons and use of the library. He had also acquired a young Tibetan roommate who had been raised by a Dutch scholar and was fluent in English, so his progress was rapid.

When Nishikawa reached Lhasa it took him several days to work up the courage to go to Drepung. Once he did go he found himself almost immediately a part of the scene. When he went to the dormitory where the Mongolians lived, he was recognized from the time he had passed through Lhasa – in fact they had been expecting him to return ever since. When he said he was from the Damda Kung Banner, a lama named Yeshe from the same banner appeared. This Yeshe Lama, 'a small monk in his mid-thirties with shining eyes and a drooping moustache', was the most academically gifted of the more than two hundred Mongolian monks at Drepung, and

Nishikawa was afraid that he would see through his disguise. To his relief, however, the lama turned out to be from a banner of the same name in faraway Manchuria, so that there was no chance of him being recognized, or of them having mutual friends.

Yeshe Lama was to be Nishikawa's adviser and protector during his year at Drepung, and he was to find a remarkably well-organized, tight-knit, and supportive society among the Mongolians there. He had an impressive example of this straight away. Yeshe Lama's teacher had recently died after thirty years at Drepung. Though Yeshe Lama had inherited most of his property, since Nishikawa was expected (his story of having gone to Tashi Lhumpo to recover his property having been accepted at face value) the lama's clothes and household utensils were being held for him as his share of the inheritance.

Faced with such kindness, Nishikawa began to feel a little guilty. He explained that he had no money, had always hated studying, and that all the times he had spent in monasteries had been as a manual labourer rather than as a student. Yeshe Lama replied with patience and reason. Poverty was no problem. They had all arrived poor. Lobsang Sangpo was young, so there was no reason why he could not start his studies from the beginning. He recalled an Inner Mongolian layman of fifty who joined Drepung without even being able to read the Tibetan alphabet; after ten years at Drepung he took an advanced degree and returned to Inner Mongolia a respected lama.

Much as these words encouraged him, Nishikawa now faced a new trial as he was asked if he knew a monk named Gomchuk Namgyal, who had been at one of the monasteries in Inner Mongolia where Nishikawa and Nakano had lived. Luckily he had come here to Drepung two years before they had been there, so Nishikawa was able to get away with claiming to be from the far side of the banner.

Nishikawa had really planned only to have a look around at this stage, but events were taken out of his hands, and he found himself stepping into a situation that had already been set up for him. That very day he was taken through all the registration ceremonies. His head was shaved, and he had to be helped into his inherited monk's robes, since the Tibetan outfit was more complicated than the Mongolian one.

Then one of Yeshe's students took him to prostrate before the *kanbo*, or headmaster, of Gomang Tatsang, the college to which the Mongolian dormitory was attached. He was supposed to take a thank-offering of tea with him, but because he was so poor this was supplied by Yeshe Lama. Next he was registered with the disciplinarian, and finally he was taken back to Yeshe Lama, and formally became one of his students. At this ceremony he was supposed to present a meal of tea, dumplings and boiled meat. However, impoverished students like him needed only to present a small coin wrapped in paper. That evening Yeshe Lama and Gomchuk Namgyal in turn gave a celebration dinner for their new student.

Events had perhaps moved a little too quickly. The next morning he had to be helped into his robes again, and after his first ceremony he got lost in the crowd of monks and wound up in Loseling Tatsang, a college where Mongolians were not supposed to be. He was lucky to escape without being whipped for the offence.

Though Nishikawa could carry on a reasonable conversation in Tibetan, he was completely ignorant of the written language. No one had ever seen quite such an ignorant monk. Most students had two teachers: one who was a sort of adviser and surrogate parent, and another who supervised academic studies. But Yeshe Lama, as his adviser, was embarrassed to place such a backward student with a proper teacher, so he taught him basic reading himself for two months until he was ready for better things.

Nishikawa's days at Drepung were long and tiring, and left him little time for his own thoughts. Every day, after returning from morning prayers, he would find Yeshe Lama studying. The lama would offer his high-quality tea – a real treat compared to what they could normally afford – to his students, who would then clean his room. After that they were presented with a shopping list and sent to the morning market in front of the monastery. Then he had more lessons, and as soon as they were over he had to fetch water for Yeshe Lama and Gomchuk Namgyal. This took him six round trips to the spring, and then he might have a few minutes of free time before evening service, after which it would be time to prepare the evening meal.

At dinner time Yeshe Lama always called him and told him that he had a little left over from his own dinner. In fact he always



prepared enough for two, since he worried about a student so poor that he had only *tsampa* to eat. He helped him out in many other ways as well, but he was never able to find boots to fit Nishikawa's huge feet, so Nishikawa got into the habit of going barefoot, even in the coldest weather.

During his time at Drepung, Nishikawa heard a story that both shocked and saddened him. It might be remembered that the party he had accompanied to Lhasa had included the Labrang Amchit's nephew, who was named Danzan, and two incarnate lamas. One of these incarnate lamas became Danzan's lover, so when they arrived in Lhasa he did not enter a monastery as he should have, but lived with the family and helped with the business. Early in the New Year the Labrang Amchit went to inspect the animals he had left at Nagchuka, and took the incarnation with him. Within days the lama returned alone, saying that the Labrang Amchit had sent him back. Not long afterwards the incarnate lama went missing, along with a number of guns and mules; and at about the same time the Labrang Amchit's body was discovered three days east of Lhasa. He had been killed by a single shot in the back of the head, then robbed.

Racked with guilt over his unwitting part in his uncle's death, Danzan disposed of his property, made offerings to all ten thousand monks at Drepung, and paid for a memorial service there. This was how Nishikawa heard the tale. At Tibetan New Year Danzan made offerings to all the monks of Sera, Ganden and Drepung for the comfort of his uncle's soul. Nishikawa saw him looking drawn and haggard at the memorial service. When he recognized him, Danzan asked only if he had seen the incarnate lama.<sup>2</sup>

The days at Drepung passed quickly, and soon Nishikawa noted that the annual caravan from Tsaidam was due. This meant that it had been just a year since he had first arrived in Lhasa, and a very eventful year it had been. He had been a pedlar, a beggar, and now a student monk. But the arrival of the caravan meant that there might be someone on it who knew him, and he fretted until he was sure that no old friends had arrived.

Then, one day, he was surprised to receive a note written in Japanese from Kimura, saying that he had arrived in Lhasa the day before and needed to see him urgently.

# Chapter Eleven

## Journey to Kham

That Kimura would do anything so foolish as to send Nishikawa a note written in Japanese is, of course, highly unlikely, and it should come as no surprise that his story is different. This episode ushers in the period of greatest strain between the two men, and it is particularly unfortunate that it should coincide with one of their greatest achievements.

During the months when Nishikawa had been studying in Drepung, Kimura had also been busy with his own very different studies. Being in Kalimpong also gave him the opportunity to make quite a number of contacts. Anyone on the pilgrimage from Lhasa to the holy places of India would pass through Kalimpong, and Tarchin made it a point to accommodate them by printing leaflets and guide maps to the sacred places, as well as by placing a warehouse across the street from the Press at their disposal. Tarchin, then, was often the first person the pilgrims called on, and this could not help but be of value to his intelligence-gathering. As a Mongolian employed by Tarchin, Kimura was often assigned to look after the Mongolian pilgrims, and so he began to develop a wide network of friends. A merchant whom he befriended named Gyamtso, for example, who came to Kalimpong to buy ivory and sandalwood, would always provide a place for him to stay in Lhasa.

But being in contact with so many Mongolians meant that his secret could not remain safe for long. One of those who passed through was Namgyel Dalama, who had lent him the money in Lhasa. One day when they were alone in the warehouse he

revealed that he had recognized Kimura as Japanese right away, largely from his agitation over the war rumours and his desire to get away quickly. But he reassured him, saying that since he seemed to be doing no one any harm, it would be of no benefit to anyone to reveal his identity.

This still left him with the worry over how he would repay the loan. 'Don't worry about that,' replied the lama. 'You told me when you borrowed it that you would never return it.' Kimura, of course, had told him that he would repay the money if ever he returned to East Sunit, but Dalama knew that this would never happen. The money had come from the Japanese in the first place as part of the Jebtsundamba Khutughtu project, so when he saw a Japanese in trouble he felt he could hardly refuse.

Another acquaintance he made was Takster Rimpoché, eldest brother of the Dalai Lama. Kimura found him friendly and easy to talk to in this environment, away from the mystique that surrounded him in Tibet, and he was amused that Kimura had thought him so imposing in the caravan from Chinghai.

The British had secured the release of the Dilowa Gegen from Chungking, after which he had flown to Calcutta and passed through Kalimpong on his way to Lhasa. When he called on Tarchin, Kimura was asked to serve him tea:

He sat in the Tarchins' guest room, tall, dignified, and commanding even after the years of house arrest, and I knew as soon as I looked into the searching, intelligent eyes behind the large round glasses that he had recognized me; even though we had met only once years ago. I was relieved that he said nothing. (Kimura, 1990, p. 153)

Later the Dilowa told him that he had agreed with Namgyel Dalama that there was no reason to publicize Dawa Sangpo's real identity. Some of the Dilowa's followers, however, were less discreet, and in the autumn of 1946 someone told Tarchin. Having no immediate use for the information, he simply filed it away for future reference, and Kimura did not learn of this until much later.

When an eccentric American named Theos Bernard, who had made a brief visit to Lhasa ten years before in Tarchin's company, came through Kalimpong hoping to sneak back into Tibet, Kimura hoped to be appointed as his guide. His English was now quite

serviceable, and he hoped to put it to some practical use. He did not realize that Bernard had written a book in which he called himself the 'White Lama' and claimed to have passed quickly through Tibetan monastic initiations because he was an incarnation of Padmasambhava – claims that were not appreciated by the few Tibetans who had heard of him. It was lucky in the end that Kimura did not get the job, since Bernard's entire party were killed the next year trying to sneak across the border.

Tarchin had something altogether more interesting lined up for the young man. He had recently sent two agents to eastern Tibet to try to discover if the Chinese had any plans for invading Tibet while the British were preoccupied with handing over power in India. The first had died of illness; the second had simply disappeared. Tarchin had wanted Kimura to try to succeed where they had failed, wandering through some of the most lawless and dangerous parts of Tibet.

Kimura accepted without hesitation. His only reservation was whether he would be doing anything harmful to his own country, but this did not seem possible in the circumstances. Officially he was doing nothing more than searching out a story for the *Tibet Mirror Press*, but the size of the advance he was given for his preparations made him feel that there had to be some government backing. He was also promised that he would be well paid if he returned successfully:

Here was a chance to put my newly acquired skill in Tibetan to use, and perhaps to help a country to retain its independence. I think that subconsciously it might have been a way of atoning for having been part of an oppressive colonial establishment. . . . I had been through all this before, it seemed; long ago, far away, and in a different language. It felt strange to step back into my old shoes. (Kimura, 1990, p. 156)

Kimura confined his preparations in Kalimpong to ordering a sword from a Nepali blacksmith and asking Dharma for some ivory dust, which was used as a medicine to stop bleeding. Then he did the rounds of the inns, and found a caravan ready to leave in a day or two. It belonged to Drepung and was led by a young Khampa warrior monk. This was ideal, since being with Khampas would help him to improve his knowledge of their dialect. He paid

them to take his bedding and belongings on a mule, though later he wished he had toughened himself up by carrying a heavy load.

On 10 December 1946, fourteen months after his initial arrival in Lhasa, he left Kalimpong with a caravan of about a hundred mules and ten drivers. He soon began to help with the mule-driving, and on a whim dressed in Khampa clothing, much to the amusement of his companions, who began to teach him to behave like one of them. He found this way of travelling easy compared with what he had done before. They did not set out until 5 a.m. and would halt around noon, after covering fifteen to twenty miles. This main trail to Lhasa was so well used that they were able to stop every night at an inn, though only the caravan leader had the privilege of sleeping indoors. The main attractions at the inns were their kitchens, with their fires where the muleteers could make tea without having to go to the trouble of collecting fuel and building their own fire. They could eat in the comfort of the kitchen as well.

So it was from the point of view of a muleteer that Kimura passed through the towns of the Chumbi Valley where Nishikawa had trudged with his loads of tobacco. The leisurely journey to Lhasa took twenty days, marred just at the end by a rare case of diarrhoea (like Nishikawa, Kimura was hardly ever ill). This may have been brought on by sampling the local delicacy – raw fish – at the village of Chushul, where the Tsang Po and Kyichu rivers join. Fish are hardly ever eaten in Tibet, but here they were gutted, cut into small pieces (bones and all), pounded with a stone mortar and pestle, then seasoned with salt and pepper.

He was so ill that he had to tell the caravan to go on, and since he was worried about attracting attention if he entered the city late at night, he slept in a river bed north of the Potala. It was the night of 31 December 1946, and bitterly cold. The caravan had gone ahead with his bedding, and the only way he could think of keeping himself warm was to bury himself in the sand. It did not work, and for comfort he had only the dark silhouette of the Potala against the sky as he shivered through the night.

Except for the embarrassment of nearly freezing to death just outside Lhasa, he suffered no further ill effects besides being tired and hungry the next day. He went to the house called Go Khangsar, where Namgyel Dalama had lent him the money, and there he found his friend Gyamtso living with his wife and two daughters.

The Dilowa Gegen and his retinue now occupied the rooms that Dalama had kept for him. There was also an Outer Mongolian lama staying here whom Kimura had known at the experimental ranch, so there were quite a few people in Lhasa who knew who he was.

From the people at Go Khangsar he heard that Lobsang Sangpo was doing well in his studies at Drepung, that he was well liked by his instructors and colleagues, but that he was very poor. 'I asked a monk returning to Drepung to let Lobsang know that Dawa Sangpo was in town, then went out to the Barkhor to savour the excitement of being back in the Holy City.'

The next day Nishikawa, barefoot and wearing only a thin monk's robe, came to see him in Lhasa, and Kimura told him what he had been hired to do. Both men agree that Nishikawa did not initially approve. 'I could not understand why he had agreed to this. It would have been understandable only had it been for the sake of Japan.' He protests that since the Japanese surrender he had begun a new life, but he sounds suspiciously as if he was still fighting the war. Kimura replied that he was certainly doing nothing against Japan and might even be helping Tibet, but here all agreement ends. According to Kimura, Nishikawa said that he would like to see Kham, and was told he could come along if he liked. Having been accepted as a student at Drepung, however, he did not want to betray Yeshe Lama and the confidence that had been placed in him. Kimura felt that while it might be nice to have a countryman for company, it might also expose them to more danger, and he was happy enough to join a caravan going east, having thoroughly enjoyed the trip to Lhasa. The next day, Nishikawa returned and told him he had decided to join him if he could wait until after he had fulfilled his religious duties during Monlam, the twenty-one-day New Year festival that began on 4 January.

It is all straightforward in Kimura's account, but in Nishikawa's Kimura cuts a confused and pathetic figure. Though he had already accused him of duplicity concerning the fake cigarettes, now for the first time Nishikawa becomes really unpleasant with the first in a series of accusations that Kimura was to claim were entirely fictional. Nishikawa claims that Kimura had received an advance of five hundred rupees, of which he had squandered more than half before arriving in Lhasa, leaving him completely undecided about

what to do next. He moaned that if he did not complete his journey he could not return to India, but he was afraid that if he did go to Kham he would not return alive. He was even considering trying to sneak back to Inner Mongolia:

Hearing his anguished words, the only thing I could think of to cheer him up was to ask if he wanted me to help him. It was natural that here under a foreign sky I should make this offer to my only countryman. Perhaps by taking this chance to explore the unknown road to Kham never taken by Japanese or foreigners before, we might some day help our country. My patriotism and sense of adventure made my blood boil with desire to go.

It was quite a mental feat to work patriotism into this rationalization. Had he not initially disapproved of Kimura's accepting the job on the grounds that it was not 'for the sake of Japan'?

Nishikawa was probably the most natural traveller of all the Japanese to visit Tibet. He had that compulsion to see what was over the next hill that is fatal to the born traveller in the way cards or dice are to the gambler, or gin to the alcoholic. Yet he seemed to feel a real loyalty to Yeshe Lama, and no matter what decision he made at this point he would have been left with regrets.

It is noteworthy that except for a few comic incidents early in his travels, Nishikawa never shows himself in a bad light. Kimura is honest enough to admit to an 'irritability and harshness towards my neighbours' brought on by years of enforced deception. He tells of losing his temper and doing things he was later ashamed of. Nishikawa portrays himself as a paragon – a belief born, perhaps, of his extraordinary physical prowess coupled with his old-style Japanese patriotism. Anyone imbued with true Japanese virtue could never, by definition, be disloyal or insincere. His disloyalty to Yeshe Lama, then, had to be blamed on someone, and Kimura was the logical choice. For though he claims that he was torn between travel and study, the fact that he never went back to Drepung, even though Yeshe Lama wrote to him repeatedly asking him to come, shows that he had probably had enough of the intense intellectual life of the monastery. Once he was free of Drepung, he never showed the slightest inclination to return.

Whatever really happened – and Kimura insisted that he was

quite indifferent as to whether Nishikawa came along or not – the fateful decision was taken. Once Monlam was over, they would go together to Kham.

Travelling with Nishikawa could never have been easy for anyone. It would be incorrect to say that he was unlucky or jinxed, for in spite of the terrible conditions he always found himself in he always succeeded in what he set out to do, and in much the way he intended. It was more that his style of travel, admirable from a distance, would have been absolute hell to share. He just had to do things on a cheaper and more basic level than anyone else, as when he did not take a riding animal to Lhasa when everyone else in the caravan had one. There is a point where pride becomes obstinacy, and it is quite probable that had Nishikawa not decided to accompany Kimura, many of the difficulties they were called upon to face might not have occurred at all.

It is important to remember that the two men hardly knew one another at this point. They had met briefly in Mongolia, and a few times in Kalimpong. That travelling together was a mistake would soon become obvious, but once they had started there could be no splitting up or turning back. It is probable that up to this point they had got along as well as could be expected for two countrymen in their circumstances, but the strain of being together all day every day was to turn their relationship into something very near hatred on Nishikawa's side. What is really surprising is that this seems to have been a secret hatred. On the surface they maintained friendly enough relations, and even when Nishikawa considered himself to have been betrayed by Kimura several years later there was no complete break between them until the publication of Nishikawa's book in 1968.

During Monlam Nishikawa lost himself in the great sea of monks that thronged Lhasa at this time, busy with prayers from morning till night. Kimura rented a small room over a noodle shop behind the Jokhang, enjoyed the festival, bought supplies, and learned whatever he could of the road ahead in the *chang* shops, market stalls, and restaurants.

Finally, in early February, Nishikawa received permission to leave Drepung on the excuse that he wanted to make a pilgrimage of two or three weeks to Samye, the oldest monastery in Tibet, founded by Padmasambhava in the eighth century:



I felt terrible about deceiving this teacher who trusted me and who had taken care of me. It was also a shame to leave a place where I was trusted, fed and clothed, and to break off my studies in the middle. The only thing worse would have been to betray Kimura. I would not have been able to betray him even if I tried. Japanese blood flowed through our veins, and we had come here with the same motive.

They began their journey early in the morning in a way all too familiar to Lobsang Sangpo: with swords at their waists, *gao* around their necks, and carrying pack frames holding all their possessions and supplies on their backs. It was far less familiar to Dawa Sangpo who had always had either a riding animal or a pack animal. Nishikawa never lets the reader forget this difference between them in the hierarchy of travellers, and presumably never let Kimura forget it either. Yet at this point Kimura, for the first time, casts doubt on his companion with the extraordinary claim that Nishikawa's Mongolian language skills were so poor that he had to claim that he was from a Sinicized area of Mongolia where the language was not properly spoken.<sup>1</sup> While he always refused to hit back at Nishikawa with character slurs, he was quite emphatic that his Mongolian was shockingly bad, and that it was amazing that he could get away with his disguise. With no possibility of independently verifying this, we again have only statements of the two men to go on. In addition, of course, there are those eyes of Nishikawa's. He himself mentions eye trouble only once, when he says that it made writing his book difficult back in Japan, but according to Kimura he was often unable to see what was right in front of him.

The first few days were a sore trial for Kimura as the straps of the pack frame cut into his shoulders and he struggled to keep up. They were probably almost an equal trial for Nishikawa who, as we have seen, hated hanging back for anyone. For the first few days they covered no more than fifteen kilometres a day, and after five days they had completed what was normally done in two. It was at this point, even so close to Lhasa, that they were first warned of bandits ahead on the trail. However, their trip continued more or less uneventfully for the next several weeks as Kimura got his legs into condition and was nearly able to keep up with his taller

and fitter companion. Along the way they were joined by a young Khampa couple with a small child returning to an uncertain future in their home near Dege. They had previously been forced off their land by high taxes. This was the two men's first inkling of the misgovernment they were to find ahead.

There were more than twenty passes to cross between Lhasa and Chamdo, and even Nishikawa had to admit that the travelling was far from easy:

In spite of all my crossings of the high Himalayas, I had never tasted such suffering as this. It was like climbing a glacier through a blizzard, and I often slipped and fell, or was short of breath due to lack of oxygen. When we descended it was into black or grey valleys that were like something out of hell. We seemed to repeat these crossings again and again.

They thought they had come upon a bit of luck when they were offered a feast of yak intestines in a village called Aladoto, but at the next village they were told that there had been an epidemic of cowpox, and it was believed that anyone who had eaten the meat of a diseased animal would bring harm to the people, the animals, and to the house itself anywhere they slept. They found themselves turfed out to sleep outdoors.

The next day, craving for fresh vegetables, Kimura ate something they found growing in a forest that he thought was wild parsley. Soon afterwards he began to feel ill and to experience headaches, vomiting and diarrhoea, before turning deathly pale. In the next village, Alando, they were told that the grass was poison, and that many cows and horses died each year from mistakenly eating it.<sup>2</sup> While Kimura was to recover with no ill effects, perhaps the most interesting outcome of this little episode is Nishikawa's reaction when it appeared that his companion might not survive:

I thought shamelessly to myself, how could I ever go home again if Kimura should die here in Kham? Neither his parents nor anyone else would believe my story about his eating poisoned grass, so I was filled with worry.

The implication was that while Kimura's living or dying was not all that important in itself, what people at home would think of it certainly *did* matter. It was a similar consideration that was to

lead Kimura to commit what Nishikawa would regard as a betrayal several years later.

What was reputed to be the most difficult pass between Lhasa and Tatsienlu – the Sharkhang La, or East Snow Pass – lay ahead of them. Yet this was to prove relatively easy in comparison with what followed, which Nishikawa was to dub ‘the road to hell’.

But first they were subjected to a sample of Khampa bargaining after obtaining lodgings at a monastery. For trade goods they had brought with them the lightest and most valuable of items: the large needles that were always in demand here, and could almost be considered a form of alternative currency; and dried orange pips, which were used in making snuff. The monks surrounded them for a friendly trading session and offered them a large bowl of *tsampa* for each needle. Since the price of a needle in Lhasa was the equivalent of only a very small bowl of *tsampa*, they quickly agreed, and realized their mistake when virtually the entire monastery turned out, each monk carrying a large bowl of *tsampa*. Others offered salt, butter, and dried cheese. Finally they had to refuse to trade any more because they had too much to carry. Later they discovered that they should have got up to three bowls of *tsampa* for each needle.

Now that it was spring, the passes should have been clearing of snow, but at the same time the rainy season was coming on. Most of the rain came at night, and often they were drenched as they slept. This was less disturbing to Nishikawa, whom – as we have seen – Kimura describes as being able to sleep lying on his back with his mouth open even in the heaviest rains. Nishikawa adds that since their clothing could dry in the sun as they walked the next day, the rain was really not very inconvenient at all.

But even though it was spring, the notorious Ichu La (Nishikawa) or Yitruk La (Kimura) was still snowed in, and they were lucky to be able to follow an early yak caravan ploughing its way through. Even so, this was a very long and difficult trail, and included one whole day where there was not even a place to stop and eat. In fact this was not a single pass, but a series of four. After camping a night in the snow they were encouraged by the fine weather the next day, not at first realizing that this would be the cause of their greatest suffering, for they had neglected to bring along any eye protection.

The third pass was the most difficult, and here something very odd happened. Nishikawa says that he was concentrating so hard on the climb that he did not notice when Kimura began lagging behind. He himself was beginning to suffer muscle spasms from the effort, and was afraid that if he stopped he would not be able to move again, so after writing 'Gambaré, Kimura-ani' (Put your heart into it, Brother Kimura) he continued on. Kimura, however, says that they reached the top of the pass together, and when he closed his eyes for relief from the glare, he lost consciousness. When he awoke he found the message and struggled on to where he found Nishikawa below the snow line. Though Kimura seems to attach no particular blame to Nishikawa for this, leaving an unconscious companion on a high pass is a strange way of expressing those Japanese virtues of 'loyalty' and 'sincerity' that Nishikawa is always on about.

They camped for three days by a stream, bathing their eyes in the cold water and worrying that they would never be able to see properly again. The fourth pass still lay ahead of them but posed no serious problem, and soon they found themselves in the village of Nyenda, only two days from Chamdo. On their last night before Chamdo two attractive Khampa girls made a concerted assault on their virtue. It was undoubtedly Nishikawa who led the defence, for Kimura was later to lose all shyness around Tibetan women and take full advantage of the traditional Lhasa introduction system, whereas Nishikawa proudly declares himself to have been celibate for eight full years in countries 'where there were no Japanese' because of worries over venereal disease: 'Though I broke my vow against drinking, when it came to women I would drive myself to the limits of study and hard work. . . . Though I was a monk, of course I did not indulge in homosexuality either.'

It had taken them two months to cover the five hundred miles to Chamdo, and considering that they had come alone and on foot instead of with a caravan, it was a trip to be proud of. In Chamdo they came upon a system of government that had been allowed to degenerate shamefully during the long regency since the death of the thirteenth Dalai Lama thirteen years before. Kham was always governed by one of the four Cabinet ministers who was appointed governor for a period of three years. He and his followers from Lhasa, without a strong Dalai Lama to answer to, regarded Kham

as a region to be fleeced rather than properly administered, an unfortunate and short-sighted view that was not only inhumane but was to make the local population far more receptive to the promises of the Chinese Communists a few years later. Because of the prevailing corruption, Kimura had to be quite careful with his enquiries here:

Snooping was not appreciated, whether on the part of a British agent or by someone from the Central Government gathering facts on the mistreatment of the local inhabitants – or perhaps trying to get a true picture of the military situation that local officials were bribed to distort. (Kimura, 1970, p. 169)

Tarchin had supplied Kimura with a letter of introduction to the governor. Though he approved of little that he saw, he thought it best to present this as a precaution, so they called on him and were received formally in a brief ceremony.

There were Tibetan military people at their inn who proved a good source of information, and the caravan inns were another good source. Kimura found caravan men straightforward and honest, and the offer of a few cups of *chang* was usually enough to get whatever they knew out of them. He concluded after a week that there was no unusual military activity in the area, and that it was the wrong time of year to try to get to Tatsienlu. All the caravans were coming the other way, and the route was so infested with bandits that it would be virtual suicide to try to go by themselves. Just two days east of Chamdo was a notorious bandit den that the government was unable to control, and some travellers had been killed by this gang only a few days before.

While Kimura was doing all his snooping, Nishikawa had his chance encounter with the Chinese who had bought his sick yaks and paid him with a bad note two years before on the road to Lhasa. As we have seen, the yaks had died three weeks later. They might have been expected to laugh about the way they had cheated one another, but the meeting was altogether unpleasant, with each accusing the other of dishonesty.

It is by no means clear whether Kimura was under firm orders to try to reach Tatsienlu. The fact that his work was deemed satisfactory when he returned to Kalimpong would indicate not, yet at this point Nishikawa launches into one of his most forceful

and vindictive attacks on his companion's character. He says that before they found out about the road to Tatsienlu being blocked Kimura had already given up the idea of going there, as well as that of going to Jyekundo, which *was* a firm objective, and that they continued only because of Nishikawa's own insistence.

Kimura firmly denied these accusations. Yet it is interesting to look at Nishikawa's tortured reasoning, which all hinged on the right and proper way for a Japanese to behave. A Japanese should not give up in the middle, no matter what the odds. Since Tarchin knew that Kimura was Japanese, if he gave up and turned back it would be a disgrace on the entire Japanese nation. Poor Nishikawa would never be able to bring himself to admit that his country had already brought such disgrace on itself with its double-dealing and treatment of civilians on the Asian mainland, as well as its violations of the Geneva Convention in the way it treated prisoners of war, that small acts of foolishness or good sense in the face of bandits here in a remote corner of Asia could have no effect whatsoever on the 'honour' of Japan. 'How can he call himself a Japanese?' was all Nishikawa could conclude about Kimura. He must have kept these doubts to himself, since Kimura was amazed to read them many years later in Nishikawa's book.

Difficult as their journey to Chamdo had been, the real problems began only now, several days north, at a border town called Tsokysisumdo. Though they were constantly warned of Khampa bandits, it was in fact Lhasa officials who were first to prove most difficult.

Like Chamdo, Tsokysisumdo was at the confluence of two rivers, one of which marked the border between Tibet and Muslim-governed Chinghai. The border guards here were known to be very strict, but at first the two travellers were waved across the bridge. When they were halfway across someone called to them to halt, but since they had already been waved on Kimura continued while Nishikawa stopped and called to him to do the same.

Once again, at least in Nishikawa's account, it is all Kimura's fault. 'If we had just acted humble and made them feel important it would have been all right, but Kimura kept making them more and more angry.' The chief was a self-important man with a shaved head who turned out to be a monk from Drepung. When he heard that they were from Lhasa he questioned them closely on monastery

life, how long they had been there, and what they had studied. Since the questions were all about Drepung, Kimura, for once, let Nishikawa do all the talking. 'I did let it drop, though, that we had been received by the governor in Chamdo, and that seemed to thaw him a little.' (Kimura). 'One reason we were detained was that Kimura said we had met the governor in Chamdo, and took the attitude that because of this we could lord it over these petty officials' (Nishikawa).

The real reason they were detained is that they were suspected of being not from Drepung, but from its rival, Sera; and now, for the first time, they heard of the Reting Rebellion, one of the more unsavoury episodes in modern Tibetan history, which had taken place shortly after they had left. It seems that Reting Rimpoché, the former regent whom Kimura had met on his way to Lhasa, had been plotting with the Chinese to put himself back into power. When he was arrested, his followers from Je Tatsang at Sera had invaded the capital, and the battle had continued for a week until the monks ran out of ammunition. Kimura and Nishikawa were now suspected of being renegades who had been involved in this uprising. A messenger was sent to Chamdo with a sealed pouch to check out their story. He would not return for ten days, and though they were innocent and should have had nothing to fear, some of the soldiers were in an ugly mood, having heard stories of their comrades being shot down in Lhasa by the Sera monks.

While it is unlikely that the whole episode was Kimura's fault, as Nishikawa claims, he certainly bore the brunt of the punishment. They were first put in the custody of a Khampa farmer named Gyal Tsering and his wife, but that night (Nishikawa says it was a week later) Kimura was taken away by the soldiers, who were drunk and getting drunker. In the barracks he was suspended from the ceiling by the wrists, then slapped and punched about. Fortunately, the soldiers soon got bored with this and went out, talking of women. A Khampa civilian and his lady friend, who were left in charge of the prisoner, cut him down and fed him, telling him that they had to put up with this sort of treatment at the hands of Lhasa soldiers all the time. Kimura realized that seeing this remote border region near the end of a long and corrupt regency he was seeing the Tibetan government at its worst, but it was striking that no matter how badly they were treated the Khampas had complete faith that

the Dalai Lama would set things right once he came of age. Again and again he heard the lament: 'If only His Holiness were older . . .'. The tragedy was that in the meantime the population was being driven to the verge of rebellion, and in spite of their traditional hatred of the Chinese, some people said openly that conditions were better on the Chinghai side of the border.

Kimura got little sleep that night as the couple who had untied him noisily made love by his pillow. The next day he was taken to an officer of Ma Pu-fang's Muslim army. Since there were no open hostilities between China and Tibet, Tibetan and Chinese soldiers here lived on both sides of the border. The officer treated Kimura sympathetically with the object of trying to find out what he knew of the Tibetan military in the areas he had passed through, while Kimura tried to discover, with equal lack of success, how loyal the Muslims were to Chiang Kai-shek. That night he was returned to Gyal Tsering's house and Nishikawa; here another shock awaited him. As soon as it was dark the soldier who had roughed him up came into the house, forced Gyal Tsering out, and bedded down with the man's wife. This whole incarceration seemed to be accompanied by the sounds of copulating.

Unpleasant as this enforced stay may have been, it was invaluable for teaching Kimura about conditions along the border. It was obvious that the regency and its representatives were destroying Kham. Night after night as he lay there listening to the rape of the farmer's pretty wife, which symbolized for him Lhasa's treatment of Kham, Kimura began to formulate plans for the future. He felt a deep sympathy with the people of Tibet, though the more he saw of the feudal system and the corrupt aristocrats, the less he liked them. As a well-travelled foreigner who spoke Tibetan, he felt that he might be in a unique position to sound a warning of the dangers should the chance ever present itself, and he resolved to get in touch with young dissident Tibetans if he ever made it back to Lhasa.

After ten days the messenger returned and they were released. The chief even sent them a large chunk of butter and some local mushrooms as a present. That very day they were off, following the river north. A further ten days of trekking up river valleys brought them to a high plateau. They knew they could not be far from their next major destinations, the Panchen Gompa and Jyekundo, but



there was no clear trail. When they saw a woman tending a herd of horses at the foot of a hill they approached to ask directions, only to be set upon by armed men who accused them of being horse thieves. Nishikawa managed to find no way to blame this incident on Kimura, and it was he who was on the receiving end of several blows from rifle and pistol butts.

They were ordered to open their packs on the assumption that they might contain the nooses that would brand them as horse thieves, but they were saved by speaking to one another in Mongolian. It turned out that though these men wore greasy pigtails and Tibetan clothes, they were in fact Chinese who had traded around Kumbum, so they were well acquainted with Mongolians. 'Everyone knows that Mongolians are honest to the point of stupidity,' scoffed the leader. Both were grateful that they had never got into the habit of speaking to one another in Japanese. In any event, they were given directions to help them on their way.

That evening they were minding their own business by the side of the road when a man suddenly rode up to them out of nowhere and insisted that unless they left immediately he would set his dogs on them. They had to stumble along in the dark and finally make camp where they thought it was safe. 'I think there can be few more suspicious or unfriendly areas in the world,' Kimura concluded. They turned out to have camped on the airfield surveyed by Colonel Ilya Tolstoy of the United States Army, who had set up a series of airlift stations in 1942. He and his companion Brooke Dolan, who spoke Tibetan fluently, had travelled through Tibet in that year seeking permission to open a supply route to Chungking, but the Tibetans had been adamant about maintaining their neutrality. Beyond was the Panchen Gomba, now in a state of disrepair, where the last Panchen Lama had died in 1937 without ever being allowed back into his homeland.

When they reached Jyekundo, both men were surprised to find that the town, also located at the confluence of two rivers, was larger than Chamdo. Here, however, they were back on the high plains. They stayed at a small temple across the river with an acquaintance of Tarchin who had stayed at Kalimpong during a pilgrimage to the holy places of India.

There was really not much to learn at Jyekundo, a centre of the wool trade in the same way that Tatsienlu was a tea centre.

Though well within the traditional boundaries of Tibet, it had been included in the 'Inner Tibet' of the Simla Conference, and was now administered by the Chinghai government. The Muslim cavalry had largely been withdrawn to fight the Outer Mongolians, who had turned aggressive towards the end of the war. After three days, this time with no protests from Nishikawa, they turned their steps back towards Lhasa. At first they intended to take the northern route to Nagchuka, but they met a pilgrim along the way who was near death from having taken that route, so they decided to turn southward, though this put them against the grain of the mountains, and meant that they would have to climb and descend range after range.

A few days later they were relaxing and sipping their tea when two (Kimura) or three (Nishikawa) armed Khampas burst upon them and demanded that they sell them some needles. It was simply robbery in a modified form, since the men with the gun would dictate the terms. This time Nishikawa's account of Kimura's behaviour is so bizarre that it can probably be discounted out of hand. He is supposed to have insisted that they not even consider bargaining over needles, but that Nishikawa simply hand over his sword without a fight. Both accounts agree, however, that they managed to capture and tie up one of the men, though the one with the rifle escaped.

Their plan was to take the robber to the village which was their destination for the day, and they could not understand why the man with the rifle did not shoot at them until they discovered that their captive had all the bullets. He was not proving an easy prisoner, and at one point he just sat down in the middle of the road and refused to go any further until Kimura hit him across the shoulders with his spear. Then he got up and began to run so fast that even Nishikawa could barely keep up.

At this point the stories again diverge. Nishikawa says that as Kimura (as usual) lagged behind, the robber complained that his bonds were hurting him and pleaded that they be loosened. Nishikawa obliged, but loosened them too much. Free of baggage and noticing that his burdened captor was beginning to tire, the man ran up the next hill, leaving Nishikawa behind, then at the top he broke free and ran. Kimura said that the fault lay not so much with Nishikawa's compassion, but with his eyes. He

was simply unable to see that the man's ropes had come loose. Whatever the reason, he had escaped and was trying to join his friend with the rifle.

Kimura says that as soon as they sized up the situation he and Nishikawa ran away together, but Nishikawa again stretches belief by claiming that Kimura, who could never even keep up, now came running past him at great speed, leaving him to fight it out with the bandits himself. But for some reason the bandits fled, and Kimura was soon found talking to a mounted nomad. A little while later they reached the village.

Now they were beginning to worry about their diminishing needle supply, for these needles were the currency in this area, and when they ran out they would have nothing left to trade for food. At a monastery where they stayed for two nights they were warned of a village of thieves ahead. Finding no way around, they had no choice but to confront the village head on. It turned out not to be as bad as they had feared. They were taken to a tent, given a nice meal, and invited to spend the night. The upshot was that they were forced to trade on the villagers' terms:

In the end our cotton clothes were traded for old and dirty Tibetan robes, our boots for old boots, our silver *gao* for leather ones, Kimura's fine sword for a blunt one. Our dirty shirts and trousers, and needles, became butter and dried cheese. They badly wanted cotton to make into *tsampa* bags and carrying cloths, so it was all traded for dried cheese. They were just like thieves. It was an uneasy night, but since they had already taken everything we had from us, there was nothing more to fear from them.

In the end, Nishikawa could not but admire the straightforward way the villagers went about fleecing them.

Though what they were left with was worth little, they were reduced to trading even that for subsistence. *Tsampa* here was a luxury, so they had only butter and powdered cheese to eat, and the resulting indigestion did not improve their tempers. At least they felt fortunate in having not relinquished their cooking pot, so they could still make hot tea, and the final disaster took place one morning when they awoke to find that had been stolen as well. Though some villagers gave them a clay one, it took so long and so

much fuel to make tea in it that it was virtually useless, and they were reduced to cold water with their butter and cheese.

The accounts of both travellers get very vague at this point, and they were probably suffering from such severe malnutrition that neither was particularly aware of where they were. Yet something was happening which was central to their relationship, and which quite possibly begins to explain all of Nishikawa's later hostility towards Kimura. It is mentioned in Kimura's account, but not in Nishikawa's, possibly because he found it too shocking.

All these other problems led to the occasional rankling between us. . . . Our most serious quarrel could only have occurred between two Japanese, and seems thoroughly silly in retrospect. It was about the Emperor. I happened to remark off-handedly one day that with or without the Emperor the Japanese people and the Japanese nation would survive, while to Nishikawa – for all his nonconformity – the idea of Japan without the Emperor lay somewhere between heresy and treason. We argued all day – in Mongolian, of course – becoming quite heated, though neither of us had the slightest idea whether or not the Emperor still existed. In the end he became so angry that he did not speak to me for several days. (Kimura, 1990, pp. 182–3)

It might have seemed 'thoroughly silly in retrospect' to Kimura, but to Nishikawa this was dead serious, another – and perhaps the most serious – example of Kimura's refusal to be a proper Japanese.

When they finally reached cultivated land again it made little difference to their state, since by now they had nothing to trade and were reduced to begging. The short summer wore on as they approached Lhasa in August, and at night they would steal unripe wheat, barley and beans, which they ate raw. 'Of the last two or three weeks of the journey I remember little besides the constant struggle to survive: always tired, always so hungry that my ears were ringing, and always with no choice but to go blindly on,' wrote Kimura. Nishikawa waxed philosophical. Their clothes were in rags and their boots were ruined. His pack frame contained nothing but the useless earthenware pot. Though he was no stranger to hard travelling, this was by far the most difficult trip of his eight years. 'But in such tribulations, one finds one's own strength. . . . Now I

realized that there is no one stronger than he who owns absolutely nothing.'

Kimura's friend Gyamtso did not recognize them at first when they knocked at his door in Lhasa. Once he did he made them change into something less lice-ridden than their rags, for they had transgressed even the loose standards of Tibetan cleanliness, then they were able to eat their fill for the first time in months. Kimura rather foolishly went to the British trade mission, where he tried to borrow money from Hugh Richardson, and was turned down flat on the grounds that he had no right to divulge his mission to anyone. He was disconcerted to see the Indian flag flying there, his first hint that British India no longer existed.

Another friend, however, lent them the money to make the journey back to Kalimpong. 'With full bellies and no fear of robbers, our personal relations improved, and the three-week walk through southern Tibet in the summer was a real pleasure,' wrote Kimura. Though Nishikawa would have been surprised to learn it, he was now leaving Tibet for the last time.

It might have been expected that whatever their differences on the trail, the time had come to forgive and forget, and indeed this seems to have been what happened on Kimura's side. But with Nishikawa it was different. The times when he felt that Kimura had let him down, and most of all Kimura's refusal to act the part of a proper Japanese, continued to fester in his mind until, years later, he made a concerted effort to spoil one of the great travel books of all times with his vindictive outbursts.

# Chapter Twelve

## The Road Home

Great changes had taken place in India during their absence. The country was now partitioned and independent, and British officials were being replaced by Indian ones. Hugh Richardson, who had represented the British in Lhasa, had been asked to stay on for a time to represent the new Indian government, while Lhatseren, whom Kimura knew well, took over from Eric Lambert. Still, Lambert's plan for sending him to Mongolia now looked dead and buried.

Kimura was asked to go to Shillong and make his report, which he says he did after setting Nishikawa up with a job as a typesetter at the *Tibet Mirror Press*. Nishikawa, of course, gives Kimura no credit for this job. In his version Tarchin was so impressed with the map he drew as his part of the report that 'he could see I was not an ordinary person, but someone who could be useful'. When Kimura went to Shillong, Tarchin asked Nishikawa to stay and make another map. It was a huge affair, about six feet square, which took him about six weeks to complete, and since Tarchin did not want anyone to know what he was about, he worked in a closed and windowless room.

It is hardly credible that Tarchin did not see through Lobsang Sangpo's disguise. He had known for some time about Dawa Sangpo's secret, though he never let on. Now suddenly an abnormally tall man who could draw maps, an ability never found in any Tibetan or Mongolian, turned up. Nishikawa insisted that Tarchin had no idea he was Japanese, but later admitted that he must at least have suspected. The war had been over for two years now,

and it is probable that no one cared much about solitary Japanese any more.

We are left with the question of why Nishikawa did not return to Drepung. True, he had lied to Yeshe Lama and run out on him, but the kind-hearted lama was not the sort to hold a grudge over something like that, and later he was to write to Nishikawa asking him to return. The truth of the matter seems to be that he left Drepung not reluctantly in order to help a countryman in distress, but because he had had enough. Kimura had supplied the excuse he needed. It would never do, of course, to admit that a true Japanese could ever, in any way, be disloyal or insincere.

For now he had his eye on travel in India, and the main reason he accepted the job at the Press was because of the reference books and dictionaries available for studying Hindi, Urdu, Nepali and Tibetan: 'Wherever you travel, language is more important than money.' Money was something he was now again without, and though Tarchin offered him a three-year contract to work on the paper, he valued his freedom so much that he claims to have offered to work for only board and lodging provided he could be free at a moment's notice. His plans now went well beyond India to Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, and the last thing he wanted was a secure job.

Nishikawa is by no means an easy man to figure out. Generally speaking, travellers fit into one of two broad categories: those who flit superficially from place to place, and those who throw themselves deeply into one or two countries or cultures. Nishikawa delved more deeply into Tibetan culture than any travellers since Desideri, Kawaguchi or Tada, but in the end he seemed to be able to go only so far before getting bored and searching for new horizons. The sedentary life of the scholar was not for him, and it is impossible to imagine him studying for years on end the way Tada had.

Or is there, perhaps, something else he is not telling us? Is it possible that there had been hints at Drepung that some of the monks were on to him? It was very important to Nishikawa to believe that no one ever penetrated his disguise, yet there remain lingering doubts, such as Kimura's assertion that his Mongolian was not really all that it could have been. Enough people knew about Kimura by now, yet he was never arrested. It is more than probable

that Nishikawa's nationality was an open secret at Drepung which no one thought it worthwhile to pursue.

Kimura, meanwhile, just missed out on a remarkable opportunity. The London School of Oriental Studies was looking for a Tibetan teacher, and Tarchin recommended him. One can only wonder if Tarchin was having a little joke at the expense of his English friends. At any rate he went to Gangtok for an interview with Arthur Hopkinson, the political officer there, who, like Hugh Richardson, had been asked to stay on for a transitional period by the Indian government. Though he was encouraging, he was really looking for a native Lhasan rather than a Mongolian who spoke Tibetan as a second language, and in the end the job went to one of Mrs Tarchin's brothers.

Until payment for the mission to Kham came through, Kimura worked in his old job on the Press. When he was paid in January 1948, he concluded that someone must have been happy with the report, since the money came to a great deal more than he would have expected, and even after giving a third of it to Nishikawa he was better off than he could have imagined. Nishikawa never mentions getting any money from Kimura, but insists that he was always on the edge of poverty.

Kimura now found himself with more money than at any time since he had left Inner Mongolia, and he decided to try his hand at trading in hopes of making enough to be able eventually to return to Japan, since the plan of planting him back in Mongolia looked doomed. One of the riskier items to export from India to Lhasa was kerosene, but because of the risk – from leaky cans – a successful venture could also bring high profits. Tarchin voiced no objections to him leaving his job (Kimura felt that he was being kept on largely through kindness now), and gave him a letter for an old friend who was one of the men he most wanted to meet.

For Kimura hoped to do more during this journey than simply make a profit. Back in Tsokyesumdo, as he lay in the dark every night listening to the rape of Gyal Tsering's wife, he had resolved to try to make contact with the sort of Tibetans who were attempting to reform the old system before it was too late.

The letter Tarchin gave him was for Gedun Choephel, one of the most remarkable and tragic figures of twentieth-century Tibet. He was a historian, a poet, an artist of rare ability, and a legendary



adversary in debate. But he was also a revolutionary, a nationalist, and a socialist. During a brief stay in Kalimpong, after fifteen years of wandering around India and Ceylon picking up everything from languages to ideas on democracy and socialism, he had issued revolutionary pamphlets (printed at the *Tibet Mirror Press*) and had been deported by the British.

Another person whom Kimura hoped to meet was a young man named Phuntsok Wangyel from Batang, whose brother he had become acquainted with in Kalimpong. Phuntsok Wangyel had achieved the remarkable feat of being in the bad books of both the Chinese and the Tibetan government. In 1944 he had been instrumental in a rebellion against the Chinese who had occupied his homeland for many years and renamed it Sikang Province (earlier he had come to Kalimpong to try to win British support for the scheme, and had supported himself working at the Press). For this reason the Tibetan government protected him from the Chinese, but he was also known for submitting unwelcome proposals outlining reforms in the way Tibet was governed.

Kimura arrived in Lhasa in March, more than doubling his capital in the process. A few queries told him that the most profitable item to take the other way would be gold, and he began buying it in small and inconspicuous amounts, since its export was illegal.

One of the first people he looked up was Phuntsok Wangyel, who was living under the protection of his uncle, a Tibetan officer in the Kuomintang, and teaching at the Chinese school. Batang was a largely bilingual area, and the uncle had attended the Paoting Military Academy, where he had graduated at the top of his class. Prejudice against him as a Tibetan, however, had hindered his career, and harbouring his rebellious nephew was a way of getting back.

Kimura and Phuntsok Wangyel soon became close friends. They met every morning in a park for lessons in Tibetan pronunciation, but soon their conversations began to branch out. It is possible that Kimura joined Phuntsok Wangyel's 'Young Tibetans Under Oath', a secret society whose purpose was to unite the Tibetan people and start a full-scale revolt in areas held by the Chinese. He was particularly interested in Kimura's experiences of bad government in Kham, and his knowledge of Japanese history,

which he claimed to have learned at a Japanese school in Inner Mongolia.

Kimura felt that Tibet was in a similar position to Japan just before the Meiji Restoration in 1867: both countries had developed their own unique cultures during long closed-door periods, and he felt that the Japanese experience in absorbing what it found useful of Western technology might prove beneficial to Tibet. A particularly relevant feature of the Japanese experience was the way the Emperor had been restored to power. Kimura felt that Tibet might be able to transform itself from a feudal to a modern parliamentary system on the Japanese model, with the Dalai Lama in place of the Meiji Emperor, and the aristocracy relegated to a House of Lords where their power would gradually be eroded. He and Phuntsok Wangyel together drew up a draft constitution for Tibet based on the Japanese constitution of 1889.

While to Kimura this was an end in itself, Phuntsok Wangyel thought of it merely as a step along the way, for he was one of the very few Tibetan Marxist-Leninists. Like his uncle he had had a Chinese education, and while he was at the Kuomintang's Central Political College, which had been moved from Nanking to Chungking during the war, he was secretly recruited by the Chinese Communist Party. But though he was a Party member, his object was not a Tibet subjected to China, but an independent Socialist Tibet.<sup>1</sup>

Though Phuntsok Wangyel was able to keep himself out of jail at this point, Gedun Choephel had been less fortunate. He returned to Tibet in 1947 after being expelled from Kalimpong, saying that he wished to work only for the benefit of his country. His only possessions at the time were a bed-roll, a cooking pot, and a black box full of books and manuscripts. It was later rumoured that he had one more possession: a life-sized rubber woman with perfectly made sexual organs whose face he had painted himself.

Nobles often invited him to their houses, and this, it turned out, was largely to gather information to be used against him. This was not difficult, since he had never been prudent. Before he had left Tibet, for example, he had demonstrated his debating skills by defeating a panel of learned lamas, arguing against the possibility of Buddhahood (a crowd of less learned monks then demonstrated just how far they themselves were from Buddhahood by beating

him until he admitted that it might exist after all). This time he was arrested and flogged, then locked away in Shol Prison below the Potala with murderers and thieves. Here he took up with an illiterate woman prisoner from Kham and became addicted to opium and alcohol, supplied to him by the government in order to discredit him further.

When he was arrested the rubber woman was supposed to have been discovered. Gedun Choephel explained that since he was no longer a monk, he had become accustomed to the 'companionship' of a woman. A wife, however, would take up too much of his time, and he found that the rubber wife allowed him to concentrate on his studies and writing.

After more than two years one of the more progressive noble families was able to secure his release, and was encouraging him to continue with the history of Tibet he was writing, but imprisonment had largely destroyed his mind. Phuntsok Wangyel arranged for Kimura to meet and deliver Tarchin's letter to the man who spoke thirteen languages and had, like a grand master at chess, once debated with nine different scholars, listening to all their arguments in turn before going back and answering them one by one. There was now no sign of brilliance in him, as he mumbled to his lady friend to go out and buy drink. Kimura did meet him once more in the company of a Sikkimese friend when he was more lucid and spoke in English. He died in 1951 or 1952, and today he is remembered as a saint by many Tibetans.

Kimura also got to know Tsarong, the richest – if no longer the most powerful – man in Tibet. As a much younger man Tsarong had, of course, been the patron of Yajima, and had worked closely with both Aoki and Tada. He had made a point of meeting every foreigner who came to Tibet, and was still the most progressive of the nobles. To Kimura he represented the best of the old generation of Tibetan nationalists, just as Phuntsok Wangyel represented the best of the younger generation. Tsarong, who still spoke fluent Mongolian from the years he had spent in exile with the thirteenth Dalai Lama, welcomed Kimura as a Mongolian, though he would undoubtedly have been just as friendly had he known he was Japanese. At this time Heinrich Harrer, whose *Seven Years in Tibet* has introduced so many people to Tibet, and Peter Aufschnaiter, his companion, were staying at

his house, and though Kimura met them he did not get to know them well.

At Tsarong's house he also met a Mongolian monk named Geshé Choitok. His name was already familiar to Kimura from an unsavoury incident during the war in Peking when he had walked off with some Japanese money, but now they decided to work together. Geshé Choitok had heard about Kimura's gold purchases, and he agreed to provide further capital if Kimura would supply the labour and the risk to smuggle the gold into India. He agreed, but almost lost everything right at the beginning as his horse, weighted down with gold in the saddlebags, shied and jumped off the ferry across the Tsang Po. Fortunately he had a good grip on the reins, and was able to keep the horse from sinking until they reached the far shore.

In Gyantse he had lunch with Marco Pallis, the Greek-born British Tibetologist. They had met in Kalimpong, and after a rocky start they had become friends. Pallis had obtained permission to come as far as Gyantse, but the authorities would not allow him to proceed to Lhasa. 'Again the Tibetan government was exhibiting its lamentable tendency of being unable to recognize its true friends,' comments Kimura.

Several years before, Nishikawa had sneaked through the border post at Chumbi any number of times with his loads of illegal tobacco going north and *tsampa* coming south, and now it was Kimura's turn with a considerably more valuable contraband cargo of gold. But the border guards did not even seem interested in catching anyone, and it took a bribe of only a rupee to convince them not to be too thorough.

In Kalimpong he found Nishikawa still working at the Press, and preparing to make a pilgrimage to the holy places of India and Nepal. They met, apparently on friendly terms, for a drink, and on their way home they ran into a long memorial procession. This was the first news they had of Gandhi's assassination. 'Neither of us could hold back our tears,' wrote Nishikawa. 'We were as sad as the Indians.'

In Calcutta, after successfully unloading his gold, Kimura bought legal goods (dyes, gold paint, and Italian coral), then set out on his return journey. A Mongolian pilgrim in Kalimpong who had just come from Nepal brought him sad news. Danzan and

Tseren-tso, instead of returning to Mongolia, had gone to Nepal, where they had settled down at Namu Buddha, a stupa just east of the Kathmandu Valley commemorating a Buddha of the past who had cut off his own arm to feed a hungry tigress and her cubs. It was without a caretaker at the time, and they had taken the job. But Tseren-tso's old sickness had returned, and she had died not long before. The last word on Danzan was that he had gone off with a rich Ladakhi who needed a monk to take care of his family chapel.

Kimura was back in Lhasa in July, having made a handsome profit. Though he was ready to be off again immediately, his partner, Geshé Choitok, was ill, and asked him to put off the trip. In fact this time he was to remain in Lhasa until the following May.

In all the years of his travels, Kimura had not had much time for fun, but now he discovered the life of the Lhasa *changkangs*, or drinking houses. It all began when a friend in Kalimpong asked him to look up his fiancée, who was supposed to have followed him to India but was working instead as a waitress in a *changkang*. Though he had frequented these establishments to collect information for the trip to Kham, it was only now that he learned of the full range of activities that could be enjoyed there. Most interesting were the arrangements that could be made for 'romantic liaisons'.

There were few professional prostitutes in Lhasa: the amateurs provided too much competition. An old lady in a *changkang* told Kimura one day that if he had someone in mind, normally a widow or an unmarried girl saving up for her marriage, it would be possible to arrange a meeting, either in her home or in one of the rooms the *changkang* kept for the purpose. Money was involved, but it was not all that much. To Kimura it seemed like 'just good clean fun with a little money to be made on the side'. It was not a case of women being exploited, for it was the women who were in control.

The *changkangs* also gave him the opportunity to meet some interesting people. One of his drinking companions claimed to have been a jailor at the time of the Reting Rebellion that had got Kimura and Nishikawa into such hot water in faraway Tsokysisumdo. Rumours abounded as to how Reting had died in prison, particularly after his body had been examined and was

found to be without marks. This man claimed that the Rimpoché's testicles had been bound and beaten until he died of the pain.

The end result of all this was that for the next ten months Kimura frittered away most of the money he had earned trading and smuggling. But it was to be an interesting year, and very different from the one Nishikawa had spent at Drepung. In order to keep his money from running out completely he did a little petty trading, and started giving English lessons at the houses of noble families. At one of these houses was a pretty young nun with whom he would often stop and chat. Perhaps it was her non-availability in a city where so much was possible, but he found himself more and more attracted to her. It was more than a passing fancy on his part, and he even asked her to marry him, but she took her vows very seriously.

Eventually he took a job as live-in English teacher at a new house in the Muslim neighbourhood of Wobaling. The Chinese Muslim landlady had a lovely sixteen-year-old daughter, and Kimura was astonished to discover that his friend Phuntsok Wangyel, who knew her from the Chinese school, had fallen in love with her.

As the Communists swept to victory in China, the strain between the Tibetans and the local Chinese began to show. The latter were either traders or officials of the Kuomintang at the Tibetan–Mongolian Affairs Commission. Salaries to the officials were not getting through, and they began selling off their belongings to support themselves. Since it appeared that they would be permanently cut off from their source of income, a group of Chinese (including Phuntsok Wangyel's uncle, who was a Tibetan in the Chinese army) bought an old house on the Barkhor and converted it into a Chinese restaurant and mahjong parlour.<sup>2</sup> 'In a typical display of my business acumen,' laments Kimura, 'I became a minor shareholder in the doomed venture.' The restaurant was regarded by the Tibetans as nothing more than a rendezvous for Chinese Communist agents, and was used as one of the excuses for what followed, as the Tibetans finally began to wake up to the threat posed by the victorious Communists in China.

In May 1949 a full session of the Tibetan National Assembly, which was convened only in times of national emergency, met and, in the belief that the local Chinese would form a Communist fifth column, ordered all Chinese residents out of the country

within a week. It was not only Chinese who were ordered out, but anyone thought to be a political undesirable. This inevitably involved dissident patriots and innocent bystanders as well. One of the patriots was Phuntsok Wangyel, while one of the innocent bystanders was Dawa Sangpo. This was largely because of his friendship with Phuntsok Wangyel, though his shares in the restaurant did not help. Not unnaturally Kimura, who had hoped for political reform from the Tibetans, regarded this expulsion as 'an action of pure unreasoning panic', though it did at least emphasize Tibetan independence.

As soon as he heard he had to leave, Phuntsok Wangyel wasted no time in proposing to his Muslim girlfriend, and was immediately accepted. He asked Kimura to act as go-between with the girl's mother. Her only objection was that Phuntsok Wangyel was not a Muslim, so for form's sake – since he was more of a Marxist than a Buddhist anyway – he agreed to change.

It was an unwieldy caravan that set out from Lhasa. Many of the people in it, including women and children, were city bred, and it took more than twice the normal time to get to Chumbi. There they were held up for another three weeks as the Indians prepared for a large number of people who were being expelled as potential Communist agents.

During this time in Chumbi, Kimura was out for a walk one day when he saw two Westerners. Thinking that they were British and hoping to get some news from them, he stopped for a chat. They turned out to be Lowell Thomas and his son, who had been invited to Tibet, at the same time as the Chinese had been expelled, as part of the government's sudden realization that the new Chinese government posed a very real threat. Kimura felt that it was ironic that after years of refusing visits from real friends of Tibet, like Marco Pallis, the government should suddenly invite two American journalists who knew nothing about the country, and whose only qualification for visiting was their anti-Communism. They questioned Kimura closely (he answered in what they describe as 'perfect English'), but he was evasive, and was amused later to find himself described in their book, *Out of This World*, as a Chinese who had worked in the Tibetan government and had once studied in Japan.

When they were finally escorted across the Jelap La, it marked

the seventh time Kimura had crossed this pass, but his spirits were at their lowest since that first time, four years before, when his world had collapsed with Japan's defeat:

I had pieced together a new [world] for myself, but Asian and global politics had again brought it to the brink of disaster, and the old question came back to haunt me: did I really have a place outside my own country? When the question had first occurred to me I had tackled it head on by confronting and conquering the Mongolian language. Now it had all come to this. Nearly overcome with foreboding as I stood on top of the pass, I could not bear to look back at the land which I doubted I would ever see again. (Kimura, 1990, p. 208)

Nishikawa had not been idle during these months. Yeshe Lama wrote to ask him to return to Drepung, but Nishikawa put him off. Drepung was now in the past for him, and he was looking ahead to future travel and exploration. Tarchin wanted him to stay at the Press, and even offered to find him a wife. But he was anxious to be off. His next move confirmed him as one of the most eccentric travellers of all time.

On a hilltop in the northeast corner of Kalimpong was a small temple and stupa belonging to one of the old sects. By the temple was a cremation ground for the use of Tibetans and Nepalis. It was looked after by an ascetic from Kham who lived with a nun from Sikkim and their four children. It was here that Nishikawa now went to live in order to make the final preparations for his journey through India. He had always wanted to learn to chant Buddhist hymns properly, but more important: 'Wherever I went I always took nothing and travelled as cheaply as possible. Since I had so little money, I decided to extend my travels by going as a religious mendicant.'

The old man, who agreed to take him in, had spent twenty years meditating in a cave in the mountains of Kham before settling down here with his nun. At first the couple had been thought mad, but gradually his followers had increased, and they had built the temple for him. He received a considerable amount in offerings from these followers, but he insisted that this was the Buddha's



money, not his own, and it was all used for the upkeep of the temple and the cremation ground. He himself lived so simply that even his one garment was patched together from the shrouds of deceased Nepalis.

For his studies Nishikawa would need a thighbone flute, a small drum, a bell, and a bowl made from a human skull. He chanted and meditated just below the cremation ground, surrounded by bones, where he had a view of the Himalayas. For firewood he had to use wood left over from the cremations, which gave off an odd smell when it burned because of the human fat on it. After several months of these practices, he felt that he was ready to go. He claims that he also felt confident of his Hindi and Urdu, though where he found anyone to talk to is a mystery, since neither language is commonly spoken around Kalimpong. But he had spent all his money again, and to raise some more he did something so completely out of character that it leaves the reader gasping in disbelief.

Just outside town lived Kalimpong's richest man, a Bhutanese noble named Raja Dorji. His family and the royal family of Bhutan were rivals, and though he was powerful and respected, he found it prudent to live outside the country. The only thing Nishikawa owned that was of any value was the Tibetan dictionary that Tarchin had given him as part of his wages, and since there were no pawnshops in Kalimpong, he decided he would try to borrow fifty rupees from Raja Dorji, using the dictionary as security.

In all the years since he had left Inner Mongolia he had not told a single person he was Japanese, but now he decided to tell Raja Dorji, a complete stranger. He offers no explanation. He got the fifty rupees, though he took offence at being called a 'Jap' and being exhibited to the rest of the family. Dorji was not interested in the security, though Nishikawa attempted to insist. For some reason, however, he seemed worried that Nishikawa might tell someone about this loan, and he swore him to silence.

Nishikawa's travels and adventures in India do not really form a part of this narrative, and can be briefly summarized. On this trip he became a past master at the art of fare-dodging, and seemed to regard it as a point of honour not to pay for transport. On the occasions when he did get caught, he would chant until the conductor or station master relented.

After visiting the holy Buddhist places he went as far as Amritsar, but when it became obvious that he would not get to Afghanistan because of trouble between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, he doubled back and spent several weeks in Nepal, which, of course, was still a closed country in 1949. He was probably the first Japanese to visit Nepal since Kawaguchi, and like him he stayed at Boudhanath as a guest of the Chiniya Lama. This was the fourth Chiniya Lama, a talented multilingual man, now in middle age, who in his later life would become a familiar figure to the travellers from the West who began to invade Nepal in the 1960s.

After about six months of travelling in India and Nepal, Nishikawa again turned up at the cremation ground. Having failed to get to Afghanistan, he now set his sights on Burma. Up to now he had travelled in countries where followers of Tibetan Buddhism were freely welcomed, but to get to Burma he would need a visa, and he had no idea how he could get around this. Then he came up with a plan that no one but Nishikawa could have thought of.

The bravest and most effective soldiers who had fought against the Japanese in Burma had been the Ghorkhas. As a result, newly independent Burma was allowing a number of Nepalis to immigrate. While they were waiting for the formalities to be completed, demobilized Ghorkhas were working as coolies on the new Calcutta to Assam railway, which had to be built, since the old one kept cutting into East Pakistan. Nishikawa's plan was to work as a railway coolie, become friendly with some of the Ghorkhas, and try to get them to pass him off as some sort of family member.

But – one wants to cry out at this point – these are the enemy! The Ghorkhas were all volunteers who willingly fought for the British, and had been the most formidable enemies of the Japanese. The mere sight of an Englishman long ago in the Chumbi had made him want to kill, but now he had no scruples whatsoever about joining people he should logically have regarded as collaborators.

Few people in the world would regard being a railway labourer in India as a soft job, but then few have been through Nishikawa's experiences. He did not find the work difficult, and while the Nepalis and Sikkimese on the crews were constantly trying to

fool the overseers, he stood out as a hard worker by doing nothing more than working normally. He even felt guilty about the two-and-a-half rupees a day he was being paid for such easy work. It was not long before he was put in charge of a squad of Tibetan coolies.

In September he received the surprising news that Kimura had been deported from Tibet along with the Chinese. The deportees would be passing through Siliguri, not far from where Nishikawa was working, but he decided against trying to see him. The rumour was that the 'Chinese' were all to be deported to Taiwan: 'I realized that now I would be alone under a foreign sky with no countryman, and I felt very lonely.' His loneliness was short-lived: 'Before me hung the prospect of sneaking into Burma, and from there going to Thailand, Indo-China, and finally returning to Japan via China. There was nothing else I wanted to do.'

About ten days later – when, he says, he had forgotten all about Kimura – he received a letter from him asking him to come to Kalimpong. What happened in Kalimpong was, as usual, perceived very differently by the two men, and since they were the only two present, we have only their words to go on. Since this conversation is instrumental to what happened later, here is the way it was reported by both parties.

According to Kimura, Nishikawa 'seemed confused, talking one minute of Burma, the next of Afghanistan, and then of how much he missed Japan. He left me with the impression that he would jump at the chance to return to Japan if it presented itself.' This is not at all the way Nishikawa remembered it. It is possible that he simply did not realize how he came across to other people, but he alleges that he told Kimura quite clearly not even to consider him: 'If you go as far as Taiwan, it will be easy for you to return to Japan. I don't really want to go back to Japan now. My plan is to sneak into Burma if I can. . . .'

There is no doubt that Kimura was now exhausted. His old resilience had left him. While he had bounced back from detention and illness in Tsaidam, the loss of the war and the physical hardships of the journey to Kham, the deportation from Lhasa just seemed to take too much out of him. Had he wanted to he probably could have gone back to working at the *Tibet Mirror Press*. He thought of continuing on to Batang with Phuntsok Wangyel and his bride,

but by the time he arrived in Calcutta they had left. In was in this mood of depression and uncertainty, as he lay in the dingy room of a Calcutta hotel, that he read in a newspaper of the arrival of a Japanese ship called the *Jakarta Maru*.

All his recent feelings now came to a head in a homesickness he had never felt before, and he rushed out to get a taxi to the docks. It was late, the gates to the dock were shut, and he had to part with a five-rupee bribe to get himself in. The first sight of Japanese sailors in loincloths and *geta* (wooden sandals) made him so nostalgic that he found himself close to tears. This was the first time he had seen a Japanese besides Nishikawa since Kangai-nuuji in 1943. Making his way to the captain's cabin, he found himself unable to utter a word of Japanese. The captain and the mate must have wondered what this strange, silent figure was up to when he picked up a pen and wrote: 'I am Japanese. My name is Kimura Hisao. I have not spoken Japanese for seven years.' The mate offered him some seasoned sea urchin paste from a jar, and he felt that it was this taste from the past that decided him. He picked up the pen again and wrote: 'I want to go back to Japan.'

The ship, however, was headed for Saudi Arabia, and at any rate, with Japan still under American occupation the captain told him that entering the country, except by the proper channels, might prove quite difficult. After leaving a letter for his father with the captain, Kimura made his way back through the darkened streets of Calcutta. On the way he made his decision.

The next day he turned himself in to the police. The officials were polite and allowed him to remain at the hotel, though he had to report every day for questioning. At first he was worried about whether they would send him back to Japan or arrest him as a foreign agent. It was only when they told him that he would be sent to Japan and not taken into custody that he decided to tell them about Nishikawa.

Kimura's decision to turn Nishikawa in is probably the single most questionable moment in their entire stormy relationship. It is probably this, along with his acceptance of defeat and the passing of the old ways, which irrevocably turned Nishikawa against him, so the reasoning behind his decision is important.

The last time they had met they were still friendly on the surface, and it had seemed to Kimura that Nishikawa wanted to go back

to Japan. But there was more to it than this, and it is worthwhile comparing his reasoning with Nishikawa's worries about Kimura dying on him during their trip to Kham:

I did not see how I could go back without him. His relatives and friends would surely reach the conclusion that I had abandoned him in a hostile land. No explanation of mine that he was happy and doing what he wanted was likely to carry much weight. I could well imagine the scene as I presented myself at his house: 'Yes, he is fine. He has a good job shovelling gravel with Indian Railways. He owns an old monk's robe, a *dhoti* and a pair of sandals, and he is saving his rupees to wander around Burma for a few years. . . .' It was an explanation that might have worked twenty years later in the West, but we were Japanese. and this was 1949. . . .

Nishikawa might despair over Kimura not being Japanese enough for him, but in this case he was all too Japanese.

It was, of course, a mistake, though Kimura always maintained that he would have done the same again. Kimura had reached the end of the line, but Nishikawa was still in mid-trip and going strong. Had Kimura not informed on him he might well have turned up somewhere in the 1960s in the same way that old soldiers kept turning up in the Philippines. Yet oddly enough, he did not object very strenuously at the time, and it is probable that he did not feel the full weight of the 'betrayal' until he got back and realized just how much he disapproved of the new Japan.

Nishikawa was unusually relaxed when he heard the news. It was early October, and work had stopped for several days for the festival of Dasshura. The camp was virtually deserted, and Nishikawa was enjoying a rare holiday. He had spent the morning fishing, and was lying on his cot reading when they came for him. He knew at once that they could only have heard of him from Kimura.

In Calcutta Nishikawa was not taken into custody, but stayed at a *dharamsala* by the river and the burning *ghats*, though there was a twenty-four-hour guard kept on him which rather curtailed his freedom. He describes this period as the most relaxed time he had spent in eight years. Yet he began to develop a rather morbid fascination with the burning *ghats*, and spent quite a bit of time there. He also became so ill that he had to be hospitalized for a

week with what he thought was the fever he had last had in Alashan. It was only the second time he had been ill in eight years.

The day after he returned from hospital, a jeep came to get him. In it was Kimura. They exchanged few words, and Kimura realized for the first time how badly he had misjudged Nishikawa's mood. The strain between them deepened as the jeep took them not to the docks as they had expected, but to the Presidency Prison, where they were held for the next eight months. 'The thought that he felt I had betrayed him when I believed I was fulfilling my duty to his family,' wrote Kimura, 'made the months we were to spend in prison even harder to bear.' Nishikawa's comment on imprisonment was typical: 'We did not argue since our food, clothing, and shelter were provided. To us, who had slept in the fields and the mountains, it was a kind of paradise.'

It was not until early May 1950 that they were put on a ship to Japan. The delay was never satisfactorily explained.

Later that year, in October, the Chinese Communists began their invasion of eastern Tibet assisted, as Kimura had reluctantly predicted, by many of the Khampas who were fed up with Lhasa officialdom. Within a year an independent Tibet would be only a memory, though one that would become more potent as Chinese promises turned to overt oppression. With the last two Japanese travellers home, and Tibet reduced to a Chinese colony, our story is all but concluded.

# Epilogue

Nishikawa seemed resigned to returning to Japan until he actually got there and discovered it was not the country he had left. 'Ministers and politicians talked loudly of democracy,' he wrote, 'abandoning all our beautiful traditions as old-fashioned, as they screamed about liberty and undisciplined freedom.'

It never seemed to occur to him that the Japan of the past for which he so longed had proved itself inadequate for the twentieth century by playing an outdated and dangerous game, and losing. Among the 'beautiful traditions' which were no longer around had to be counted the military and the secret police, reverence for an Emperor who was cynically ignored whenever the Imperial Will was found lacking, and the almost annual right-wing coups of the 1930s. The prosperity brought on by the Korean War had not yet arrived, so Kimura and Nishikawa returned to a country that was not only defeated and disillusioned, but desperately poor. The most horrifying thing of all about the new Japan to Nishikawa were the many mixed couples and the children of mixed blood he saw everywhere, for he had branded such children 'the cancer of any nation' even when speaking of the offspring of mixed Chinese and Tibetan marriages.

It is not surprising that Kimura decided to co-operate when the Americans summoned them to Tokyo to tell their stories. He had decided long ago that much of what the Japanese had done in the past had been wrong and that he, in common with most of his generation, had simply been taken in by government propaganda:

We regarded ourselves as pure and noble, while in fact we were

only pawns in a great game of deception. Now, with bitter regret, I recall that contrary to the rosy dream of 'Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity' touted by the Japanese army and government, we simply embarked on a programme of vicious racial conquest. Few of us knew at the outset of the cruelties of war, but there was no excuse for not knowing the truth by the end. The great tragedy of the war for Japan was not that we lost, but that we learned so little from our defeat. . . . (Kimura, 1990, p. 223)

But why did Nishikawa give up without a fight to the hated and racially different rulers he still considered the enemy? He tells us that when he was summoned by the Americans, he first went to the Japanese Foreign Ministry: 'If they should request a report on my travels, I was determined to ignore the orders to report to GHQ in favour of my own government, no matter how much trouble it might cause me.' But at the Foreign Ministry he found only lackeys obeying American orders who scoffed at him because of his Indian clothes. 'Call me stupid, but it was not until this point that I realized that we had been truly defeated.' Defeat was an idea that seemed to take a little getting used to.

It took nearly a year for the men to retrace their footsteps in these interviews. Nishikawa reasoned that throughout his eight years of travel and sacrifice the Japanese had not even noticed him,<sup>1</sup> then, when he had gone to the Foreign Ministry, they had all but sent him away with a scolding. The Americans, on the other hand, were paying him ¥1,000 a day, and providing room and board besides, during the time he was being questioned. But he knew that he was always holding something back; that these foreigners could never get to the essence of his travels. He ridiculed the fact that the Japanese-American interpreter who handled him was promoted two ranks for his report (it must have been a reasonable reward for having had to put up with Nishikawa every day for so long), and made a secret resolve to write it all down to his own satisfaction.

There were little gestures of defiance that in a decent cause would have been noble. As winter set in, the interpreter commented that he must be cold in his *dhoti* and sandals, and offered him an army uniform, including an overcoat and boots. But when



he imagined himself dressed like the many Japanese he had seen working for the Americans he felt positively nauseous, and gave the interpreter a piece of his mind:

You probably think you are doing me a favour, but this body of mine has been tempered by crossing the Himalayas on my own two feet no fewer than seven times. If you think I am dressed like this waiting for a handout, you can think again. We may have lost the war, but my spirit is not defeated.

He began his writing project straight away, even checking details with Kimura, since they were in the same dormitory in the former Japanese Military Academy at Ichigaya, for he seems not to have decided yet to turn him into the villain of the piece. Perhaps he eventually concluded that one good betrayal deserved another, or perhaps he really decided he disliked Kimura only when he saw that his comrade had no trouble accommodating himself to the new Japan.

Writing was no easy task for Nishikawa, and it is only in reference to this that he mentions his poor eyesight. At first his Japanese was so bad, and came out so much like Tibetan or Mongolian, that no one could understand it. When the manuscript was finally finished, it took him another ten years to find a publisher. By that time it had undergone so many rewrites, under so many different editors, that it is impossible to say just how much of it was actually written by Nishikawa himself, though even the final printed version contains some very obscure passages.

Were it not for the personal slurs on Kimura's character and the reactionary and racist politics that keep intruding, it would be a wonderful book, concerning as it does everything from how to make snuff in a Mongolian monastery to fare-dodging on Indian Railways. What other traveller wrote from first-hand knowledge and in minute detail about living as a labourer/monk, working as a yak driver, studying in Drepung, living among beggars in Kalimpong, and meditating in a cremation ground? When he tells us: 'There is no one stronger than he who owns nothing, nothing at all'; or 'Wherever you travel, language is more important than money', there is no doubt that he means it, and that we are seeing him at his best.

It is only fair to say, however, that Nishikawa has his detractors as

well as his admirers. Kimura was never to criticize him personally, and called his account very accurate and detailed except when it concerned the two of them. But others have called into question how he was able to survive so long with such poor Mongolians, and have wondered if he is always entirely honest about his experiences. One story is that he spent much of his time (such as when he was doing manual work at Baron Hiid) pretending to be dumb so that his language deficiencies would not be exposed. There are also some remarkable gaffes, particularly when he writes about India. He says, for example, that he returned to Japan wearing a 'sari', and mentions 'an Indian festival called Puja'. The nature of Nishikawa's travels means that for many of his adventures there are no witnesses besides himself, yet not even his most serious detractors doubt that Nishikawa went everywhere he said he did, and it cannot be denied that as a traveller he has had few equals.

But something about returning to Japan seemed to take the wind out of his sails. Never again was he to leave his country, nor was he to have anything more to do with Tibet or Mongolia. In the difficult postwar years he was reduced to supporting himself as a travelling cosmetics salesman. Eventually he married the daughter of the owner of a cosmetics factory in northern Japan, and succeeded to the business, which he still runs today.

Kimura's life followed completely different lines. While he was still undergoing questioning, he assisted the US Air Force to make a Mongolian phrase book (first phrase: 'Don't kill me, I have money'), which made him fear that the Americans were about to invade China. A Japanese teacher of Mongolian asked him to move in to help him improve his knowledge of the colloquial language. When the year-long debriefing was finished, because he knew both Mongolian and English he was offered a job by the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) monitoring Mongolian language broadcasts from Radio Moscow, Radio Ulan Bator, and Radio Peking.

In the mid-fifties, ten years ahead of Nishikawa, his rather thin book came out. He was not a particularly good writer, and there is little in the book of the tremendous enthusiasm that came across whenever he spoke of his travels. Yet it is still in print, and fairly widely read.

Gradually he began teaching, and in 1977 he made the full

switch from FBIS to academic life, eventually becoming a full professor at Tokyo's Asia University. In the intervening years he had kept up contact with Tibetan and Mongolian friends. When Takster Rimpoché, the Dalai Lama's brother whose caravan he had originally accompanied to Lhasa, came to Japan during the 1950s and was stuck for some time without a passport, it was Kimura who helped him out, and the two became close friends. After getting to know Tsering Dolma, one of Tsarong's daughters who also came to Japan and stayed for seven years on a Ford Foundation grant, he was also able to assist Tibetan refugees in a number of ways. Later he spent a year on an exchange programme teaching at Western Washington University in the United States, and made a number of trips to Outer Mongolia and western China in connection with his academic work. In 1967, when the Dalai Lama visited Japan, Kimura was introduced to him by Takster Rimpoché, and friends have noted that 'Dawa Sangpo' was always welcomed by His Holiness.

On several of his trips, when travelling through Peking he was able to meet Phuntsok Wangyel, who had finally been released from prison at the end of the Cultural Revolution. His wife had died during their long imprisonment. The fate of Phuntsok Wangyel shows clearly how little China's takeover of Tibet had to do with socialist principles. Though a bit of a fuss was made over him on his release, as there was over so many victims of the Cultural Revolution, he was still not allowed to speak out on Tibet.

Today there are two attitudes towards the past in Japan. Nishikawa and Kimura so typify the two sides that one can only conclude that this was the real basis of their quarrel. When Nishikawa's book came out in 1968, Kimura was bewildered by the portrait of himself he found in it, and felt that it was the fault of the right-wing editor in charge of the final draft who, perhaps, wanted to discredit his beliefs and those of people like him.

Kimura's remarks quoted on page 324-5 could have been aimed directly at Nishikawa. This is not an insignificant disagreement, for many people – including many of Japan's political leaders – share Nishikawa's reactionary views. Such people have done their best, in spite of vocal opposition from many Japanese teachers and Asian governments, to make sure that history texts are written in such a way that only the most inquisitive of young Japanese (or those who study abroad) will ever learn what their country was up to in Asia

before and during World War II.

It is an unfortunate coincidence that the quarrel that splits Japan to this day should have come between two of the greatest travellers of the twentieth century. In the end it was not Kimura about whom Nishikawa was writing, but anyone who did not believe in the 'beautiful old traditions'. There is no room for disagreement in Nishikawa's world. Kimura did not believe in the Emperor, or in Japan's sacred mission in Asia. He worked for the hated Americans and accommodated himself to the new, emerging, non-militarist Japan: therefore, in Nishikawa's view, he simply *had* to be weak, cowardly and despicable.

The saddest thing is that such a determined and in some ways admirable traveller should have gone through so much yet learned so little, for if anyone ever disproved the old saw about travel broadening the mind, it is Nishikawa. It is perhaps more difficult for some Japanese, so many of whom cling to a belief in their 'uniqueness' and racial superiority, than for others to admit to such concepts as 'the brotherhood of man'. Nishikawa would go so far as to admit to the brotherhood of all Asians, but his sympathies never extended to people of other races. When his book was republished in 1990, he was shown to be completely unrepentant. He still believed, for example, that those convicted of massacring civilians and mistreating prisoners of war should have been greeted as heroes because they had acted 'for the sake of the country', and he equated people of mixed race to a 'cancer'. It may or may not be significant that this new edition was not issued until after Kimura's death.

Professor Kimura died in 1990 after being taken ill in Peking on his way to Sinkiang with a group of students. Nishikawa lives in Morioka and is still running his business, which is open three hundred and sixty-four days a year, with the same energy he put into his Central Asian travels. He is not terribly fond of talking about his experiences. When the Tibet Culture Centre International did manage to arrange a rare interview in 1990, even though a Sunday had been chosen and the interviewer was a personal friend, he did not even take time off from work, but fitted the interview in between phone calls.

'Japanese as a rule,' wrote Sir Charles Bell, 'with their patriotic feelings so firmly embedded, find it difficult to abstain from politics' (Bell, 1987/1946, p. 387). If we look back over our nine travellers, in spite of the fact that there are some notable eccentrics it is noteworthy that not one of them could be said to be apolitical.

This goes particularly for the Buddhist priests. Travel for the sake of it, or even purely for the sake of religion, was never quite enough, and they always sought a patriotic justification. Nomi knew that the one sure way to get his wife's approval was to tell her that he was going 'for the sake of the country'. Even such a maverick as Kawaguchi could not refrain from some amateur espionage. But it was Teramoto who most successfully combined the vocations of priest and diplomat – in the same way that Dorjieff did – bringing Tibetan and Mongolian lamas to Japan, introducing the thirteenth Dalai Lama to important Japanese and very nearly arranging for him to visit Japan. He was followed by Aoki, who was very much of his stamp, and Tada, who was probably the most reluctantly drawn into the world of politics. While the two of them were living in Lhasa they of course shared the stage with Yajima – as eccentric as Kawaguchi, but always hoping to bring about some sort of military ties between Japan and Tibet. By this time Kawaguchi was deeply involved with the Panchen Lama, and later went so far as to try to bring him to Japan – like O'Connor, he completely misjudged the Panchen Lama's political role in his enthusiasm. Nowhere among any of these travellers do we find a Thomas Manning, an Alexandra David-Neel, a William McGovern, a Henry Savage Landor, or even the sort of missionaries who put religion above national interest.

The later group of travellers in the second quarter of the century – Nomoto, Kimura and Nishikawa – were laymen, all government agents of some sort, and all completely ineffectual. Nomoto's trip might never have been, while Kimura and Nishikawa were not even supposed to be there.

Though Nishikawa never became involved politically, his writings – which express views that were outdated even in the thirties, and positively anachronistic in the second half of the twentieth century – leave us in little doubt that he would have liked nothing more than to have been at the forefront of a Japanese takeover of Asia from Mongolia right through Tibet to India. Only with Kimura

do we see a real difference, and an advance beyond narrow nationalistic aims. His involvement in Tibetan politics, though it had no real effect, was motivated by a desire to see Tibet reform itself, and sprang from his guilt at having been involved with Japanese imperialism.

It is one of the tragedies of twentieth-century Tibet that nothing came of all this involvement. Tibet had more contact with Japan than with any other country except British India, Russia and China, and it was Tibet's misfortune that Japan was just as imperialistic, if not more so, than these other three. Otani Kozui leaves us in no doubt in his writings what his intentions were towards the rest of Asia. The way the Japanese took over Inner Mongolia probably shows us what they would have done to Tibet given the opportunity, and the cynical use to which they would have put their shared religion.

But though Tibet escaped being colonized by the Japanese, it was also unable to forge any diplomatic ties. Both Japan and Tibet were living in the past. Japan did not realize that the age of imperialism was over (though to be fair, neither did the colonizing powers or China) and approached the world just as the European powers had a century earlier. The Tibetans never really learned what a twentieth-century nation-state was. The world had moved on past the days of the flexible borders and vaguely defined national status with which they felt comfortable. The four countries that took an interest in Tibet were interested either in taking it over (China and perhaps Japan) or in becoming the dominant foreign power at the expense of the others (Britain, Russia and, for a time, Japan), so that it was in none of their interests to assist the Tibetans to come to terms with the twentieth-century. In the end Japan was probably the least guilty, if only because it was the farthest away and because the government never really became involved.

In a curious way these men both confirm and deny the clichés and stereotypes about their nation. That such formidable linguists came from a country supposedly hopeless at languages, or that a culture noted for its group mentality produced men who travelled on their own with little or no support shows how inspiration can triumph over cultural limitations. On the other hand, while the West produced such iron ladies as Alexandra David-Neel, Susie Rijnhart and Annie Taylor, there is not even a hint that any

Japanese woman ever considered a similar journey.

But where all these men proved themselves most thoroughly Japanese was in their inability to dissociate themselves from what they were told was the national interest. Not until Kimura did anyone break the mould, and even he did not rebel until well after the end of World War II. There is a strong probability that the thirteenth Dalai Lama learned so much about the blatant national ambitions of the Japanese in Peking and from Tsawa Tritrul that he felt he had to keep even the representatives of Japan's largest Buddhist sect at arm's length, so a real friendship between the two nations was never allowed to develop. Kimura and Tada, the least political Japanese to visit Tibet, proved good friends to Tibetan refugees after the Chinese invasion, but the Tibetans were never to find in Japan as a whole the sort of ally they so badly needed when they found themselves isolated in the face of Chinese aggression.

# Notes

## ONE DEATH IN THE BORDERLANDS

- 1 *kuni no tamé bukkyo no tamé*. So much harm was later done 'for the sake of the country' that this phrase, which seems capable of reducing the average Japanese to an unreasoning pulp of patriotic jelly, has a great deal to answer for. Today it goes hand in hand with *kaisha no tamé* – for the sake of the company.
- 2 This was the basis of the 'patron and priest' relationship that grew up between the leaders of Tibet and China which the post-Manchu Chinese leaders have attempted to use to back up their claim of political sovereignty over Tibet.
- 3 The printing press has so far survived the ravages of Chinese occupation, and is again in operation.
- 4 The term 'Chinghai' can be a sensitive one to some Tibetans, particularly since the creation by the Chinese in 1965 of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, which is much smaller than the area traditionally claimed by Tibet. Much of Chinghai is inhabited solely by the Tibetan Buddhist Golok and Tangut tribes, and though it has seldom been under the direct political control of Lhasa, it has still been considered part of Tibet by its inhabitants and other Tibetans. To many Tibetan nationalists the term Chinghai is anathema and should be replaced by Amdo. On the other hand, Mongolian and Turkic nationalists also claim large parts of this vast province. 'Chinghai' is used in this text not in recognition of present day Chinese territorial claims but simply to reflect the political realities of the time.

## TWO ON THE ROAD TO NATURE'S MANDALA

- 1 At the time of writing the Chinese have plans, which are opposed even by Tibetan Party members, for a hydroelectric scheme that could drain this natural wonder.
- 2 In fact, the Assembly had not long before vetoed his planned trip to Russia at the invitation of the Tsar through Dorjieff.
- 3 Kawaguchi, for his part, never seems to have figured out how Nepal



was governed, although it was remarkably similar to the familiar situation in Japan, where a strong martial family ruled and kept the emperor around as a figurehead. The actual ruler of the country at the time was the hereditary Prime Minister, Chandra Shamshere Jung Bahadur Rana. Though the king put in an occasional appearance at his side, he was never allowed to speak.

- 4 In fact an associate of Dorjieff's named Norzunov had taken photographs of Lhasa, which were later published, earlier in 1901. See Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia* (1993), p. 174.

### THREE A MONGOLIAN LAMA OF GREAT LEARNING AND ATTAINMENTS

- 1 Though in the past wars were fought between these sects, Tibetans today insist that the differences between them are no longer particularly important. Followers of one sect often study in temples belonging to another.
- 2 The note says, in part: 'This photograph is sent to Mr. Kawaguchi by the hand of the fearless traveller Mr. Teramoto as a token of his esteem from his well-wisher, Capt. O'Connor' (Kawaguchi, 1986, p. 283).
- 3 He should probably not be blamed for failing to note *which* Count Otani, since both the Higashi Honganji and the Nishi Honganji sects were headed by members of different branches of the Otani family, each with the title of *Hakushaku*, or Count.
- 4 The identities of the Panchen Lamas are sometimes confused because two separate numbering systems are used to identify them. According to the one favoured by Lhasa, the one mentioned here was the sixth. The Chinese and officials from Shigatse would call him the ninth.
- 5 An edited version in English appeared in *The Journal of the Central Asian Society*, 1927, vol. XIV, pt IV; and 1928, vol. 15, pt 1, under the title 'Struggle and Intrigue in Central Asia'.
- 6 I am indebted for this information to Alex McKay, who came across this letter from Ludlow to F.M. Bailey while researching the British Trade Agents.
- 7 The end of the tale is as good as the beginning. After the Russian Revolution Zerempil first fought against the Bolsheviks, but he was so impressed by a personal meeting with Trotsky that he switched sides. Torn himself between the ideals of Communism and those of Buddhism, he eventually sought refuge in a monastery and ended his days as a recluse.
- 8 The Dalai Lama is the earthly incarnate form of this bodhisattva, also known as Kwanyin in Chinese, Chenrisig in Tibetan, and Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit.
- 9 There was also an intriguing meeting between O'Connor and Dorjieff, described in Snelling, 1993, pp. 134-5.
- 10 Filchner's account continues well in the realms of fantasy by having

Teramoto at the Dalai Lama's side over the next few years, and even organizing his retreat from Lhasa in the face of the Chinese invasion of 1910. He seems to have confused Teramoto with Yajima and Aoki, and embellished a bit as well.

#### FOUR WORLD TRAVELLING

- 1 Many years later, in 1963, he was to make up for lost time with a deathbed conversion to Christianity, followed by a Buddhist funeral just to make sure.
- 2 The Chinese were using this telegraph line as the easiest way to communicate between Lhasa and Peking. It is known that the British were tapping the line, most probably here at Phari.
- 3 The American scholar Paul Hyer claimed that during the 1950s he was working with Yajima on writing his biography, but nothing seems to have come of this project (Hyer, 1960, p. 141).
- 4 Much of the following information comes from an unpublished but invaluable doctoral thesis: Ronald S. Anderson, *Nishi Honganji and Japanese Buddhist Nationalism, 1862–1945*. University of California, Berkeley, 1955.
- 5 From Otani Kozui, *Kokumin no Jikaku* ('The Awakening of the People'), Tokyo, 1930, as quoted in Anderson, 1955, pp. 248–9.
- 6 Otani Kozui, *Shina Jihen ni Taisuru Waga Kokumin no Kakugo* ('Our People's Preparedness for the China Incident'), a 1931 article published in his magazine *Daijo*, v. 10, p. 28. Quoted in Anderson, pp. 267–8. Similar ideas are not unknown in Tibetan Buddhism, but they are reserved for the most extreme of cases. Thus in an incident commemorated in the Black Hat Dance, a young monk assassinated the Tibetan king Lang Dharma, who had attempted to stamp out Buddhism violently, as an act of mercy to keep his *karma* from getting any worse. The monk then went to a cave and spent the rest of his life atoning for this single murder.
- 7 Anderson, 1955, p. 183.
- 8 Later, when he was short of money, Kozui sold about a third of these to his old friend General Terauchi, then Governor General of Korea. After surviving the Korean War and waiting for many years for a new display hall to be built, they have been displayed in the Seoul National Museum since the eve of the Seoul Olympics in 1988.
- 9 Incarnate lamas are more often than not discovered among peasant and nomad families, a unique form of upward mobility that also – in theory, at least – prevents aristocratic families from gaining too much of a stranglehold on power.
- 10 The thirteenth Dalai Lama's own name was Thubten Gyatso, and each of the Japanese who received a name from him had 'Thubten' as part of it.
- 11 For anyone trying to follow by the awkward Japanese calendar, this

makes 1912 both the forty-fifth and final year of Meiji and the first year of Taisho.

#### FIVE THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE AND THE DIPLOMAT

- 1 The last sentence is typical of asides we find scattered throughout Yajima's writing. It would probably have made sense to him, and might well have been either explained or eliminated had his notes ever been prepared for publication during his lifetime.
- 2 Eventually coal was discovered with the help of these samples, but it was in a such a remote area that transport difficulties made its mining impractical.

#### SIX THE YEARS OF PROMISE

- 1 Yajima himself is a remarkably unreliable witness when it comes to details. He told David MacDonald that the barracks was for one thousand men, and later wrote that it was for twice that many. He also informed MacDonald that he trained two hundred troops, and later wrote that the actual number was five hundred (Yajima, 1983; trans. Berry).
- 2 Yajima and Tada seem to be the only two Japanese from this period who remained friends after returning to Japan. They were both from the north and spoke similar northern dialects of Japanese, while speaking Lhasa Tibetan without an accent.
- 3 During the 1920s and 1930s he was able to regain much of his influence in government circles, though he was living abroad. The Japanese Empire expanded to embrace the places where he lived, and his Fascist, chauvinist and racist outlook, constantly reiterated in his writing, was appreciated by the militarist rulers of the time.
- 4 It was in fact at this time that Kozui sold much of his collection from these expeditions to General Terauchi in Korea: see Chapter 4, Note 8.
- 5 At the beginning of the war the Dalai Lama had offered a thousand soldiers, but had no rifles to send with them. In the end many Tibetans joined the hospital and ambulance corps.
- 6 Tada says that this happened in 1918, but since he was using three calendars (Tibetan, Japanese and Western) he seems to have got the Western date confused.
- 7 Like so many other plans, this one was ended by World War II. Ishinobu was drafted after the Japanese invaded China in 1937, and survived the fighting in North China, only to be sent to New Guinea, where he was killed in 1944 at the age of twenty-seven. He had hoped to go to Tibet on his discharge.
- 8 One of his students claimed that the manuscript did not measure up

to the books by Kawaguchi or Aoki, and possibly as a result it was not published until after Tada's death.

#### SEVEN THE SCENE SHIFTS TO MONGOLIA

- 1 Otani Kozui was fully to approve of the use of this term: 'We are not fighting China. . . . We are merely ridding China of her devils in Manchuria and Shanghai. . . . Our government has called the situation *jihen*, and this exactly describes the events. There are people in our government who are more clever than the Chinese in their use of Chinese characters. I am very much impressed with their use of the word "incident"' (Anderson, p. 242).
- 2 For the story of Nomoto's journey I am indebted to Paul Hyer's unpublished doctoral thesis, *Japan and the Lamaist World*, University of California, 1960; and to a talk given by Nomoto to the Tibet Culture Centre International in Tokyo in 1991.
- 3 All quotes are from my own translation of Nishikawa's *Hikyo Sai-iki Hachinen no Senkou* (1968).
- 4 'Sikang' was the name the Chinese gave to parts of eastern Tibet, including Batang and Tatsienlu, which had been brought under their administration. The term was never acceptable to the Tibetans, particularly since the Chinese claim extended to within two days' march of Lhasa. Nishikawa used this Chinese term for all of Kham, possibly because of the convenience of using the familiar Chinese characters.
- 5 He does not explain whether the Chinese servant survived the attack, but later informs us, with some satisfaction, that he proved in fact to be a Communist agent.

#### EIGHT INTO THE RUINED LAND

- 1 Such cairns, or stupas, to which travellers and pilgrims constantly add stones, are familiar sights in Buddhist lands everywhere from Mongolia to Nepal.
- 2 Chapter 1, Note 4. As before, the term Chinghai is used to reflect contemporary political realities. However legitimate Tibetan claims might be, the province was under the control of neither Lhasa nor Chungking, but of Ma Pu-fang.
- 3 See Chapter 3, Note 4.
- 4 Though Nishikawa writes extensively about homosexuality among Mongolian monks, there is never any hint of anything improper in the relationship between Ozul and the boy, and the implication is that the man simply wanted a son.

## *Monks, Spies and a Soldier of Fortune*

### NINE FLIGHT TO LHASA

- 1 Nishikawa and Kimura's dates are two months out here. Kimura says his own caravan, with which the Labrang Amchit's was to join up, departed on 18 May. The discrepancy could be due to faulty memory, or to confusion caused by the Mongolian lunar calendar.

### TEN PILGRIM, PEDLAR, BEGGAR, MONK

- 1 According to Nishikawa this was a brand called 'Westminster'. Hugh Richardson, in his weekly reports from Lhasa, mentions this practice, but says the brand in question was called 'State Express 555' (L/P&S/12/4202).
- 2 In 1948 Nishikawa saw the incarnation in question being taken under armed escort through Kalimpong. He had been arrested in Calcutta for arms and opium smuggling, and would be handed over to the Tibetan authorities at the Jelap La. He never learned of his fate, though the case against him in the murder of the Labrang Amchit was considered proven.

### ELEVEN JOURNEY TO KHAM

- 1 The only time Nishikawa himself was to mention this concerned his excuse for being able to swim.
- 2 Kimura tells the story of the cowpox and the poisoned vegetables in the opposite order. Of course neither of them was keeping a journal, so both wrote only from memory.

### TWELVE THE ROAD HOME

- 1 Though, like non-Communist Tibetan officials, he initially co-operated with the Chinese in the fifties, he was arrested in 1957, and was not released until after the Cultural Revolution.
- 2 This house, called the Doshirnimba, had once been the home of the lady alleged to have been Aoki Bunkyo's mistress.

### EPILOGUE

- 1 That is not quite true. Once he had been ordered to turn back.

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