

# Christian missionaries and Tibet

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# Lungta 11

## Christian Missionaries and Tibet

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# Editorial

I met Dorris Shelton Still at her home in Arizona, on 17 December 1994. She was very old and not at all well, but seemed happy, almost excited to meet a Tibetan again. She was born in Dartsedo on the frontier of Eastern Tibet and China, in 1904. Her father, Albert L. Shelton, was the American surgeon and missionary who in the early nineteen hundreds ran a mission hospital in Bathang in Eastern Tibet. Dorris began her reminiscences with an expression of great satisfaction. "My sister and I were the only American girls ever born in Tibet, and it was the most beautiful place in the world." She talked about the green, sunlit Bathang valley, about her Baba girl-friends and the games they played, about the Shelton gardener who knew her liking for *pak* (tsampa dough) and would sneak her a lump, which she had to be careful not to let her mother see. A special occasion for the two girls was the visit to Markham Garthok across the Driчу (the upper Yangtze river), and meeting the Tibetan governor, the *theiji*, and being entertained by his bagpipers. The girls thought the governor's wife beautiful, and admired her Lhasa costume and jewellery. Dorris claimed that they also taught her to skip rope. She described the great monastery of Bathang and the lama who was a friend of her father's.

Dorris maintained a correspondence with the new incarnate lama to whom she had sent money to help rebuild the monastery destroyed by the Communist Chinese. She talked to me for a couple of hours and I could see the people and country coming alive before her eyes, and how much it all meant to her, especially now towards the end of her life. I left when she began to tire. She gave me, for AMI, all that she had left of her father's photographs and papers and letters (the main collection being in the Newark Museum), and also his hymn book (in Tibetan), and the manuscript of her mother's book on her experiences in Tibet. Dorris passed away in 1997.

Tibetans have had a long history of contacts with missionaries. Those of us in exile have had even closer relationships. Many of us, including the Dalai Lama's sister, brother, nieces and nephews, were educated at missionary schools in the hill stations of Northern India: St. Joseph's College, Loreto Convent, St. Paul's and Mount Hermon in Darjeeling, St. Augustine's, St.

Josephs Convent, Dr. Graham's Homes in Kalimpong, Wynberg Allen and St. George's in Mussoorie, among others. Our sick were treated and cared for by missionary doctors, paramedics and nurses in mission hospitals, probably the most well remembered such physician being Dr. (Meg) Patterson. Perhaps less qualified but equally dedicated were Miss Carlson and Miss Christianson at the Lutheran clinic at Topkhana in Kalimpong who would minister to the sick and needy. They would also set out extra beds in their infirmary when the Tibetan New Year came by, knowing how the drinking and revelries would incapacitate a number of the local Tibetans. The Catholic Relief Services distributed milk and other foodstuff to Tibetan refugees in their initial years in exile when we were in a seriously bad way. The only really Tibetan newspaper we had then (and that too a fiercely nationalistic one) was founded and run by a Christian pastor, the Rev. G. Tharchin.

Earlier, the Moravians in Lahaul and Ladakh had not only contributed to Tibetan letters with their dictionary and their early newspaper but even benefited the local populace with the introduction of such skills as knitting and the cultivation of potatoes, now the main crop of Lahaul. Another missionary, whose relationship with the native people was one of friendship and trust, Marion Griebenow, is still remembered by many in Amdo by his Tibetan name Sherap Tempheh. He is reputed to have taught English to Gedun Chöphel the great Amdo scholar.

Even among the ranks of the converts to Christianity we have had such outstanding benefactors as the Rev. G. Tharchin, and also the Gergan family, whose members have made great contributions to Tibetan and Ladakhi scholarship, especially with their monumental history of Ladakh.

On the whole, the question of conversion was (from the Tibetan point of view) a side issue. Protestants were much keener proselytisers than the Catholics, the Jesuits generally not bothering at all (at least in my old school, St. Josephs). But few Tibetans converted. One Tibetan managed to enjoy the best of both worlds. I remember as a child this middle-aged Tibetan evangelist in Kalimpong (whose trademark was a rather grimy fur



cap) who vigorously preached the Gospel at the Saturday market (*bart*). But on Buddhist festivals up at the Tirpai monastery he would be there with his *sangkuk* (incense-bag), tossing *tsampa* in the air with the best of them. The biggest catch the missionaries made was Wöser Trulku, a famous lama from Markham. He was well known in Darjeeling as David. L. Tenzin, for he was a champion bodybuilder and is still remembered as one of the great Mr. Darjeelings. But faithful disciples from Markham would still go to receive his blessing, and he would give it to them, without seeming in anyway perturbed by the incongruity of it all.

Darjeeling society was snobbish and class-ridden in an English sort of way. Bhutanese and Nepalese royalty, Indian Maharajahs, Tibetan aristocrats, and Tenzing Sherpa were perfectly acceptable at the clubs but missionaries were not considered quite *pukka*. In such a climate it was easy to poke fun at them, especially those painfully earnest Mid-Western types who made asses of themselves in the bazaar pumping away at wheezy harmoniums and belting out Gospel songs in bad Nepalese or excruciating Tibetan. Still, one could respect them and even like them after a fashion, even when you knew they only saw you as a sinner who was going to burn in hell. They were products of strong, stable societies where everyone went to church as a matter of course, and one's faith was a lifelong and fulfilling commitment. Whatever their faults, they were transparently sincere and open.

Nowadays the whole mission field seems to have become a harder, more businesslike, and even conspiratorial enterprise with little place for friendship or respect — of even a grudging kind. N. was a seemingly pleasant Englishman, who taught at a Tibetan school in Dharamshala, and was into mountain-biking and hang-gliding. He also travelled to Tibet. Some years ago a Tibetan historian in Britain got hold of the records of a missionary group there and discovered, among their papers, reports from N. stressing how ripe Tibet had become as a mission field since traditional beliefs had been undermined by Communist occupation; but N. also mentioned that Tibetans in exile were too protective of their faith to be amenable to conversion. This kind of undercover missionary work is at present rife in Tibet, where certain travellers have noticed a dis-

turbing rapport between evangelist groups and the Chinese Public Security (*Gongan*). Something like this was going on in the early nineteen hundreds when certain missionaries in Eastern Tibet collaborated with Chinese warlords and Guomindang officials to undermine Tibetan monastic influence. But there were others who worked to provide medical services and education, and professed their faith in an open and sincere manner.

In the light of such contemporary developments in Tibet, the editors felt that it would be timely and perhaps even beneficial to bring out an issue on "Christian Missionaries and Tibet", so that even the disturbing trends of present-day evangelical activities in Tibet could perhaps be discussed in the context of previous friendships, good works and genuine contributions to Tibetan culture. In this issue there is a concentration of articles on Protestant missions, but we hope to put together a separate issue on Catholic missions in Tibet in the future.

We would like to apologise to all our subscribers, and most especially our generous contributors to this issue, for the unforgivable lateness of its appearance.

Finally, I must also thank Felicity Stone for proof-reading this issue.

Ki ki so so lha gyalo

Jamyang Norbu



# The Contribution of the Moravian Mission to Tibetan Language and Literature

JOHN BRAY

Throughout history, missionaries from any religion — whether Christian or Buddhist — have faced the challenge of expressing their ideas in ways that are understandable, both in language and in broader cultural terms, to their target audience. This task requires a deep understanding of both cultures. Missionaries see their prime task as spreading their own religious traditions, but they frequently serve simultaneously as interpreters between their host community and the outside world. Typical missionary contributions to the wider academic community include linguistic research, anthropological studies and historical analysis. This article reviews the linguistic and literary activities of the Moravian Church in the Himalayan region during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.

As the church's English name suggests, the Moravians trace their origins to Central Europe. The original *Unitas Fratrum* or "Unity of Brethren" was founded in 1457, but suppressed in its Bohemian, Moravian and Polish homelands in the 17th century. In the early 18th century a group of Moravian refugees found sanctuary at Herrnhut in South-Eastern Germany — hence the church's German name, which is *Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine*. From 1732 onwards the revived Moravian church sent missionaries first to the West Indies, Greenland, North America — and then much further afield. A strong emphasis on international missionary activity has been part of the Moravians' tradition ever since.

In 1854 August Wilhelm Heyde and Eduard Pagell became the first Moravian missionaries to travel to the Himalayan region. Their first objective was to travel north to Mongolia, but they were prevented from crossing the Tibetan border and therefore decided to settle in Northern India instead. Their first mission station was in Kyelang (Lahul), and this was followed by further stations in Poo (Kinnaur) in 1865, Leh (Ladakh) in

1885 and Khalatse or "Khalsi" (Ladakh) in 1899. The last European missionaries, Pierre and Catherine Vitoz, left Ladakh in 1956.

The Moravians believed that their principal vocation was to interpret Christian teaching to the Tibetan world, but they would have been unable to do this without a detailed understanding of the linguistic and cultural environment in which they operated. Important by-products of their work included a series of works on the Tibetan language; and studies of the region's history, culture and folk-stories; as well as a newspaper and a series of Christian tracts in Tibetan and various local dialects. Such tasks demanded extensive co-operation between European missionaries and their indigenous colleagues. This article focuses on the lives and careers of four of the most important figures in the history of the mission: two Germans and two Ladakhis.

## heinrich august jaeschke

Heinrich August Jaeschke (1817–1883) was the first and perhaps the most brilliant of a series of Moravian linguists to work in the Himalayan region. In the wider academic world he is best known for his *Tibetan-English Dictionary*, which was first published in 1881 and has been reprinted many times since then. He himself regarded the dictionary as a by-product of his principal life's work, the preparation of the first Tibetan translation of the New Testament.

Jaeschke was born in 1817 in Herrnhut, Germany, the headquarters of the Moravian church. He spent the first half of his career as a schoolmaster but then in 1857, at the age of forty, was called to serve as the Superintendent of a new mission station which had been founded a year earlier in Kyelang, Lahul, by August Wilhelm Heyde and Eduard Pagell. Although Lahul is



in India, most of its inhabitants are Tibetan Buddhists and the Moravians intended Kyelang to serve as a base for future work in Tibet as soon as its borders opened to foreign missionaries. Hence, the Moravians' first priority was to master the Tibetan language.

Jaeschke spent part of the summer of 1857 studying Tibetan in Stok, near Leh in Ladakh. He stayed at the home of Sonam Stobgyas, a former monk from Hemis monastery, who was later baptised together with his son Samuel Joldan; their descendants are active members of the Moravian congregation in Leh to this day. Jaeschke's other informants included Tibetans from several different regions who travelled along the trade and pilgrimage route through Kyelang, and he spent part of 1865 studying the Lhasa dialect in Darjeeling. Literary sources included Tibetan treatises on grammar and medicine; a life of the Buddha; the Ladakh chronicle (*La dvags rgyal rabs*); and, Jaeschke's favourite work, the *100,000 Songs of Milarepa*.

Jaeschke's dictionary highlights the many regional differences between spoken and literary Tibetan and between regional vernaculars. These linguistic variations presented him with a dilemma: which dialect should he use for his Bible translation? He decided to employ a simple form of the classical language, arguing that literate people throughout Tibet would be able to understand it. In theory, they might find it easier to understand a version which was closer to their ordinary speech, but the many regional variations meant that a version which was acceptable in, say, Western Tibet would be incomprehensible in Kham or Amdo. Moreover, a text written in *chos skad*, the religious literary language, was more likely to be taken seriously. By contrast, a text in the vernacular risked being mocked as a rustic curiosity.

Jaeschke then faced a second problem. Most available religious terms were explicitly linked to Buddhist philosophy, and it was often hard to find a term corresponding to Christian conceptions. This applied even to the word for "God". *Lha*, the word used for a local deity, was obviously inappropriate, and Jaeschke decided on *dkon mchog*, meaning "the precious one". This word also was normally associated with the *dkon mchog gsum*, the "three precious gems" of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. However, Jaeschke hoped that the Christian sense of the word would become generally accepted with time and frequent usage.

Ill-health forced Jaeschke to return to Germany but he continued his work on the dictionary and the New Testament translation from his home Herrnhut. He died in 1883, two years before the translation was published. It has been revised three times since then, but Jaeschke laid the foundations on which all subsequent



Heinrich August Jaeschke  
(Courtesy Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Photostelle, Munich)

work was based. The epitaph on his tombstone in Herrnhut is a Tibetan quotation from his own translation meaning, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant".

## august hermann francke

August Hermann Francke (1870–1930) never met Jaeschke, but he came from a similar background in the Moravian church in Germany, and had worked as a schoolmaster before arriving in Ladakh in 1896 at the age of twenty-six. He spent his first years in India at the Moravian mission in Leh (founded in 1885) before moving to Khalsi in Lower Ladakh in 1899 and then to Kyelang in 1906.

Francke agreed with Jaeschke's decision to translate the Bible into classical Tibetan. However, he discovered that most ordinary Ladakhis found it difficult to understand the translation because of the many differences between classical Tibetan and spoken Ladakhi. This led him to make a special study of the spoken language. In due course he prepared translations of the Gospel of St Mark in the Ladakhi vernacular as well as the Lahuli dialects of Bunan, Tinan and Manchad.

Alongside his other activities, Francke studied local songs and folk stories, including the Ladakhi version of the Gesar epic. Writing from Herrnhut, Bishop Benjamin La Trobe questioned whether this was an appropriate activity for a missionary: perhaps he ought to concentrate his energy on more directly evangelistic work such as preaching and teaching. However, Francke replied that his researches were an essential means of understanding the Ladakhis' culture as well as their language. Without this kind of understanding it would be impossible to communicate effectively.

Francke used the Moravians' lithographic press in Leh to publish a variety of texts: religious tracts, school-books and folk-songs. He also published the memoirs of a Khalsi villager who remembered the Dogra invasion of Ladakh in the 1830s. In 1904 he brought out a monthly newspaper, the *La dvags kyi ag bur*. This was the



August Hermann Francke (from a drawing made in the Ahmednagar internment camp in 1915).

first newspaper to be published in Tibetan. It consisted of a combination of local and national news; an extract from one of the historical texts he had been studying; and a Christian exposition of a Ladakhi proverb. In 1907 he published his *History of Western Tibet*, the first historical study of Ladakh.

Francke had to return to Germany in 1908 because of his wife's ill-health. However, he came back to India the following year on temporary secondment to the Archaeological Survey of India, and travelled on the Survey's behalf through Kinnaur and Ladakh to investigate historical monuments. His work for the Survey was published in *The Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, whose two volumes came out in 1914 and 1926. The second volume consists of a selection of historical documents with translations and notes.

Francke returned to Ladakh a second time in 1914, travelling overland via Russia, Xinjiang and the Karakorum pass. His purpose was to conduct a mixture of archaeological and linguistic research, and he wanted to travel on to Darjeeling to study the Lhasa dialect from there. However, when he arrived in Leh after several weeks in which he had been out of communication with Europe, he found that war had broken out between Britain and Germany. To his dismay, he was dispatched to an internment camp in Ahmednagar before being repatriated to Germany in 1916. He then served as an interpreter in a camp for Indian prisoners of war before himself being imprisoned a second time in Serbia in 1918.

Francke never returned to India but spent the last years of his life in Berlin where he combined his two main vocations: translation of the Old Testament into Tibetan and historical research. The translation was sponsored by the British and Foreign Bible Society and was a collaborative initiative. A Ladakhi Christian named

Joseph Gergan (see below), prepared the first draft and sent it to Germany where Francke revised it extensively. Francke then sent the draft to Kalimpong for further comment by David Macdonald, a British official of half-Scottish, half-Sikkimese descent who was fluent in the Lhasa dialect. Meanwhile Francke also worked at Berlin University where he was appointed a professor in 1924. His academic contributions included further articles on Ladakhi folk-songs and history as well as studies of a Bön text, the *gZer-myig*, and Tibetan historical documents from Turfan (Xinjiang).

Francke died in 1930, aged only sixty: his adventures in the First World War had undermined his health. At the time of his death his work on the Bible translation was incomplete, and he was still working on several historical projects. Nevertheless, he had been able to make a major contribution in both fields. Two German scholars, Manfred Taube and Hartmut Walravens, have recently published a bibliography of Francke's books, articles and reviews: it lists 221 publications as well as substantial collections of manuscripts which are now scattered between archives in Germany, Britain and India. Later scholars of Ladakh may disagree with Francke's historical judgements, but all acknowledge the importance of his pioneering work.

## Joseph Gergan

From the beginning the Moravians understood that, if Christianity were ever to take firm root in the Himalayan region, they would need to build up an indigenous leadership which could express Christian teachings in a local idiom. Joseph Gergan (c. 1880–1946) was one of the most prominent Ladakhis to play this role. In 1921 he became one of the first two Ladakhis to be ordained to the Christian ministry (the other was Dewazung Dana). He was also a historian, and he is particularly famous as a Bible translator.

Joseph Gergan was born in 1876 in Nubra, the valley which lies on the northern side of the Khardong pass from Leh. "Gergan" (*dge rgan*) means "teacher" and according to family tradition his father, Gergan Sonam Wangyal, had been a tutor of the Panchen Lama before fleeing Tibet as a result of some political intrigue. The older Gergan came into contact with the missionaries and later moved to Leh, although he was never baptised.

The younger Gergan was one of the first Ladakhis to receive a Western secondary education at the Tyndale Biscoe school in Srinagar in the Kashmir valley. He then returned to Ladakh where he served as a schoolmaster at the Moravian mission until his ordination in 1921.



In the 1920s he served as the minister of the Kyelang congregation but then returned to Leh where he died in 1946.

Gergan supplemented his Western education with wide reading in the Tibetan classics and acquired something of a reputation as a scholar. His writings included *Understandable Expressions of Moral Thoughts*, a Tibetan-language exposition of Christian teachings which was intended for a lay audience. It takes the form of a dialogue between a teacher and his disciple and reviews Islam and Buddhism before concluding — not unexpectedly — that Christianity is the best religion. Unlike earlier works produced by the Moravians, which were mostly translations of Western books and tracts, Gergan's work adopted an authentically Tibetan language and style.

Gergan helped Francke gather copies of important historical documents (as the latter acknowledges in his *Antiquities*) and in the process acquired a taste for historical research on his own account. He prepared a history of Ladakh and in 1976, 30 years after his death, this was edited and published by his son S.S. Gergan under the title *La dvags rgyal rabs chi med gter*.

However, Gergan's principal life's work was the translation of the Bible into Tibetan. As noted above, he collaborated with Francke on the Old Testament and then, after the latter's death, worked independently on a revision of the New Testament. The complete Bible was eventually published in 1948, more than ninety years after Jaeschke had begun his first translation work.

## elijah tsetan phuntsog

Tsetan Phuntsog (1907–1973), who later took the baptismal name “Elijah”, was Gergan's son-in-law and, at least in the field of Bible translation, his successor. His life is of particular interest because he was highly educated in traditional Tibetan culture and, perhaps more than any other, had a deep personal understanding of both the Buddhist and the Christian traditions.

Tsetan Phuntsog was born into an aristocratic family in Sabu, near Leh, in 1907. As a young man he spent two years in Rizong monastery, a Gelugpa foundation which then as now is renowned for its high standards of discipline. He left the monastery because he was an only son and faced pressure from his relatives to manage the family inheritance. As a layman he entered Kashmir government service, but remained a devout Buddhist. However, he came under the influence of Joseph Gergan, and spent many hours and days discussing religious issues.



Yuseb Gergan, Sonam Tseten  
(photograph from his book *History of Ladakh* [bLa dvags rgyal rabs chi med gter], Sterling Publications, New Delhi 1976)

Tsetan Phuntsog later attributed his Christian conversion to a religious tract entitled *Traveller's Guide from Death to Life*. He would have preferred to keep his new beliefs secret, and continue living outwardly as a Buddhist. However, he had fallen in love with Gergan's daughter Sungkil, and Gergan refused to allow the marriage to go ahead unless his prospective son-in-law made an open declaration of his faith. He finally did so seven years after reading the *Traveller's Guide*. His relatives responded by trying to disinherit him, and there were two attempts to poison him: he fell sick but survived.

Tsetan Phuntsog continued in government service. Among other tasks, in 1940 he was sent to the Tibetan border to negotiate with the Tibetan authorities over a murder case where the chief suspect was a Ladakhi headman, and he played an important role in arranging supplies for Indian troops in the conflict with Pakistan in 1948. After the ceasefire, he became *tehsildar* of Leh, the highest local government official, but decided to resign after a series of public agitations against him. The Buddhist inhabitants of Leh rejected his leadership partly because he was a Christian, and specifically because he tried to introduce a modification of the Tibetan script to write colloquial Ladakhi. They regarded his attempt to modify the letters used to write down the Buddhist scriptures as an attack on the religion itself.

After his resignation, Tsetan Phuntsog entered full-time service with the Moravian mission working as an equal with the last two European missionary couples, Norman and Mary Driver and Pierre and Catherine Vittoz. The Ladakhi Christian congregation was still very small — about 150 people — and Tsetan Phuntsog believed this was partly because of “Christianity's foreign flavour”. He tried to amend this by drawing on Tibetan and Ladakhi cultural traditions to express Christian ideas. For example, he wrote Christian hymns using local tunes and he wrote a life of Christ using a traditional Tibetan verse form.

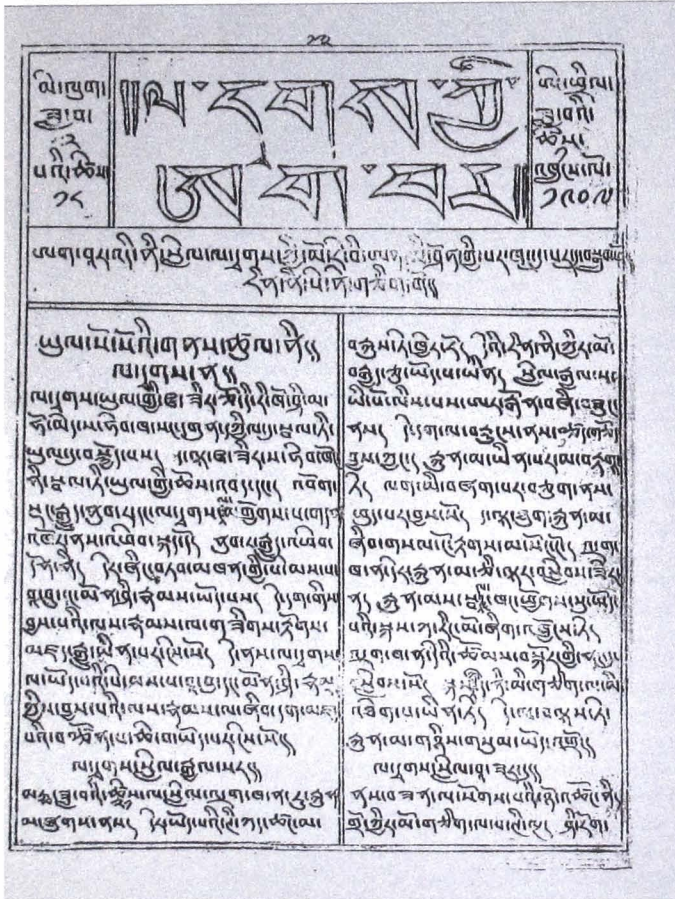
In 1957 Tsetan Phuntsog and Yonathan Paljor, a younger Ladakhi, were ordained to replace the last European missionaries. However, in 1959 Tsetan Phuntsog moved to Mussoorie to work on the revision

Particularly towards the end of his life, Tsetan Phuntsog drew on the contemplative training of his earlier youth. He wrote that he drew on the meditation techniques he had studied in Rizong to pray in a Christian way. In his way of life as well as his thought, Tsetan Phuntsog represented an authentic fusion of Ladakhi/Tibetan tradition and Christian inspiration. He died in 1973.

## the moravians today

Small Moravian congregations still exist today in Leh, Shey and Khalsi (Ladakh) as well as Rajpur, near Dehra Dun (Uttar Pradesh). Their principal contribution to the wider community is in the field of education. The Moravian Institute in Rajpur continues to serve the children of Tibetan refugees, although in recent years it has broadened its intake to include children from several other communities. In 1980 the Moravian Mission school in Leh, Ladakh, re-opened after a gap of some twenty years and is now one of the most popular local educational institutions. The last Western missionaries left India more than forty years ago, and the church's leadership is now entirely indigenous, although it retains close contact with other provinces of the Moravian church in Europe, Africa and North America.

Many of the questions faced by the original missionaries still apply. Buddhism has often been seen as a key feature of Tibetan, Lahuli and — despite the presence of a large Muslim minority — Ladakhi identity. So is it possible to be a Christian while at the same time remaining faithful to local cultural tradition? Today, the great-great-grandchildren of Sonam Stobgyas, Jaeschke's first Tibetan tutor, are active members of the Leh congregation. They and their forebears would certainly affirm that it is indeed possible to be both Christian and Ladakhi (just as it is possible to be both Buddhist and European). The legacy of Jaeschke, Francke, Gergan and Tsetan Phuntsog is part of the Ladakhi Christians' cultural inheritance, as well as being part of the wider tradition of Tibetan and Ladakhi scholarship. ■



The Ladakh Newspaper (La dwags kyi ag bar), July 1, 1907.

of the Tibetan New Testament with Pierre Vittoz (by this time Ladakh had been designated a restricted area which was closed to foreigners).

Tsetan Phuntsog spent the remainder of his life in the Mussoorie/Dehra Dun region. His first activity was the New Testament revision: his skill in Tibetan combined with Vittoz's competence in Greek resulted in a version which was both accurate and true to the spirit of the Tibetan language. Secondly, in 1963 he founded the Moravian Institute, a school to help educate Tibetan refugee children and this still flourishes.

# The Life of Rev. G. Tharchin Missionary and Pioneer

TASHI TSERING

Rev. G. Tharchin (*dge rgan mthar phyin*) was born on 18 April, 1890, in the village of Poo in the Kinnaur valley. He was baptised by Rev. Shreve of the Moravian mission in Kinnaur, where he also received his elementary education. He completed his training at the Teacher's Training School in the Scottish Universal Mission Institution at Kalimpong, where he also served as a Tibetan teacher. His first visit to Tibet was to the Dromo Valley (Yatung) in 1918. Thereafter he visited Lhasa about five times, mostly to study Tibetan. In 1921 he opened a small primary school on the Indian model in Gyantse.

In October 1925 Tharchin launched a newspaper called the *Tibet Mirror* (*yl phyogs so so'i gsar 'gyur me long*) which he continued to publish for thirty-eight years until 1963–64, when Tibetan refugees started their own publications. He was a personal friend of the 13th and the 14th Dalai Lamas. He regularly sent them copies of the *Tibetan Mirror* and they in turn sent him letters and gifts, congratulating him and encouraging him in his work.

Inspired by the British liberal press, the *Mirror* published articles on world events and especially reported what was taking place in India, Tibet and in the region of Kalimpong. It was a rich source of information on the world of high Asia of the time. It reported the movements and diplomatic activities of government officials of Bhutan, China, Britain, Sikkim and so on, as well as the goings-on within the Tibetan aristocracy and the endeavours of Tibetan scholars. The paper also debated the question of the status of Tibet and the position of Tibet *vis-à-vis* China.

The *Mirror* carried profiles of contemporary political personalities such as Gandhi, Stalin, and Hitler as well as prominent Tibetans. It also reported on the doings of the great military powers, developments in weapons and the latest scientific discoveries and inventions. Important international events such as the Olympic

Games as well as the anniversaries of the Indian Empire were also reported.

There was a classified advertisement section for the Kalimpong wool market, and gold and silver prices were reported. Cultural articles and classical Tibetan poetry were published regularly. In 1936 Tharchin hired Gedun Chöphel (1903–1951) the great Tibetan scholar and progressive, and the Duke of Changlochen, Sonam Gyalpo, to work for the *Mirror*. Subsequently there was a marked improvement in the quality of writing in the paper.

Besides publishing the *Mirror*, Tharchin was known for encouraging and popularizing Tibetan lay literature. He published such didactic stories as the *Shastras of the King and his Minister*, *The Dispute between the Tea goddess and the Beer goddess*, *The Dispute between the Mother Mouse and the Baby Mouse* and so forth. He was an active educationalist and published many manuals and small pedagogical pamphlets for the study of Tibetan, Hindi and English. He produced practical books for self-instruction in English and Hindi for Tibetans as far back as 1938.

In his scholarly activities Tharchin was associated with such prominent personalities as Rev. Dr. J.A. Graham, Dr. R.B. Knox, Sir Charles Bell, Sir Basil Gould, Hon. Hugh Richardson, Hon. David McDonald, Prof. G. Tucci, Hon. Marco Pallis, Gedun Chöphel, the Mongolian Geshe Chodrag, Changlochen Sonam Gyalpo, Rabga Pangdatsang and high-ranking government officials.

Tharchin took an active interest in the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology in Gangtok, Sikkim and was an advisor to the Educational Council of the present Dalai Lama. Not only did he contribute wholeheartedly to the spread of the Tibetan language and literature in which he excelled, but he was also a staunch proponent of Tibetan independence. As far back as the 1930s the *Mirror* condemned Chinese mil-

itary advances into Kham. Then, in the 1950s, Tharchin strongly protested against the Chinese take-over of Chamdo, and carried on a "One Man War with Mao", as an American newspaper described his activities. At the same time, he warned the Tibetan Government and the aristocracy about the Chinese, but they took little heed of his timely warning.

After closing his newspaper in 1963, Tharchin devoted most of his time to preparing an English-Tibetan dictionary and published many other philosophical and devotional Buddhist texts.

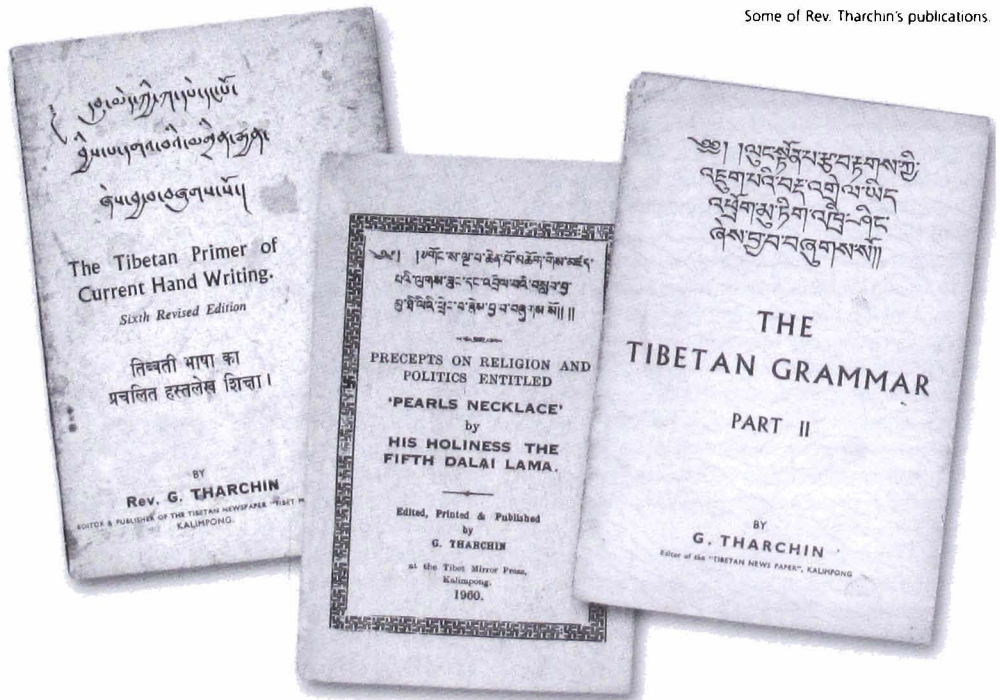
Tharchin passed away on 6 February 1976 at his home in Kalimpong. He is survived by his son Sherab Gyatsho Tharchin who now runs the Tibet Mirror Press which is still the main publishing establishment for the peoples of the Himalayan region.

For more details about his life and activities refer to "G. Tharchin: Pioneer and Patriot", in *Tibetan Review*, December 1975, pp 18–20. "Tharchin Passes Away", in

*Tibetan Review*, April 1976, p.13. Also see Heather Stoddard, *Le Mendiant de L'Amdo*, Société d'ethnographie, Paris, 1985, pp.87–88, 94, 103, 124, 130, 157, 160–162, 175–178, 182, 206–209, 212, 219, 250, 255, 300, 303, 330. According to Dr. Dawa T. Norbu, in his obituary, Tharchin was born in 1888. ■

This article is an excerpt from a paper, *Short Biographical Notes on Some Prominent Kinnauris at the Turn of this Century*, presented at the Seminar on Development of Himalayan Art, Culture and Religion for Peace, Manali, India, October 1987.

Some of Rev. Tharchin's publications.



# *Pioneer and Patriot*

## *An Extract from an Interview with Rev. G. Tharchin*

DAWA NORBU  
TIBETAN REVIEW, DECEMBER 1975, VOL. X NO. 12

Q: Did you as a pioneer face a lot of problems in launching your newspaper?

G. THARCHIN: Yes, but I liked them. When I was first trying to start a Tibetan press, a Nepali friend of mine who ironically enough later started his own Tibetan press, told me: "Why are you wasting your money? There is no future." In the first issue of October 1925, I printed fifty copies and sent most of them to my friends in Lhasa, including to His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama. His Holiness was very pleased. He sent me a letter with some gifts congratulating me and encouraging me to carry on publishing the newspaper.

Q: You enjoyed a cordial relationship with the 13th Dalai Lama through your publications on Tibet. What was your impression of him and what do you think was his main achievement?

A: He was made of stern stuff. You could never look straight at him even if you were non-Tibetan. The British officers used to have the same feeling. He was tough and dignified — almost born to command. He was shrewd too.

His main achievement was his realisation that Tibet must change or perish. His lifelong attempt was to modernise Tibet and make her independent, free from China. He wanted to be friendly with China but not under China. And the present Dalai Lama (14th) seems to follow the same line initiated by his predecessor.

Q: After the Chinese invasion of Tibet, did you change the editorial policy of your newspaper?

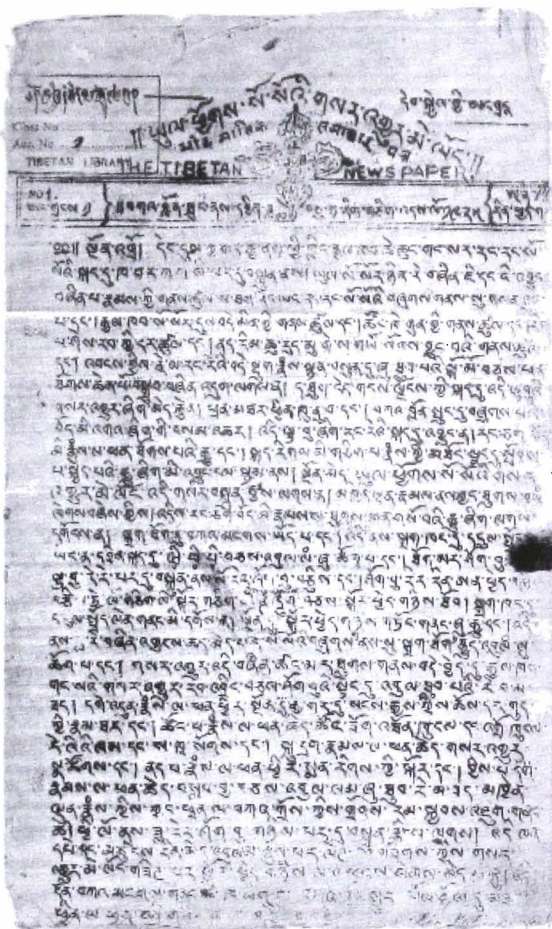
A: I had to. An American newspaper once described my activities as a "One Man War with Mao". In my articles I often used to refer to Tibetan history, and in



Rev. G. Tharchin, 1937.

particular to the "Great Religious Kings" which prove Tibet's independence. The Chinese used to say Tibet is "backward" and my endeavour was to demonstrate in my writings that Tibet was far from being a "backward" country; it was a great civilization. It had everything in it. I also used to warn the aristocrats in Lhasa that they were deceived by the Chinese with sweets. But they never listened.

But the Chinese Communists were very clever. In the 50s they had a trade consulate in Kalimpong and



First issue of *The Tibet Newspaper*, later *The Tibet Mirror* (*ylul phyogs so so'i gsar gyur me long*), 1925 (Courtesy Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, manuscripts section, Dharamshala).

they used to try to woo me. Once a *Tibetan* aristocrat came to me here with presents. He said in the usual roundabout aristocratic way that I should not publish any more anti-Chinese articles. Instead I should concentrate on the progress made by the Chinese in Tibet. If I agreed the Chinese would order 500 copies of every issue of *Tibet Mirror* and they would also make sure that I didn't run at a loss. I refused.

Q: You have had a lifelong affair with the Tibetan language. Do you think Tibetan needs some reforms in order to meet contemporary needs?

A: Yes, so far it is not so reformed. But every now and then I come across new words which are, I suppose, signs of a new lifestyle and new realities. But I don't think Tibetan needs any reforms. There is an increasing tendency which considers that if the meaning is conveyed, the rest can be dispensed with.

Some years ago the late Prime Minister of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji tried to introduce drastic language reforms which in essence did away with the canons of Tibetan grammar and spelling rules. Everything was to be written phonetically. He ordered, without the late King's consent, new "Tibetan" primer textbooks meant for schools in Bhutan. Mr. Dorji knew that I would not tolerate such destruction of the Tibetan language and did not dare to ask me to print them. The new textbooks were printed at Mani Press. When a copy of the new textbook was presented to the late King, he was furious, and of course the monks were absolutely enraged. The King at once ordered the destruction of the new textbooks. Some 10,000 copies were burnt in the Press itself.

To introduce such destructive "reforms" is the quickest way to cut ourselves off from our past historical and cultural heritage.

Q: Lastly, may I ask you a rather personal question? I have observed that usually when a Tibetan becomes Christian, he gets alienated from his fellow Tibetans, from his own community. But you are held in such high esteem by all sections of the Tibetan community, and the fact that you are a Christian comes in no way in your relations with Tibetans. How is it?

A: Throughout my life I have tried to practise what Jesus Christ taught. I don't smoke, don't drink, don't tell lies or cheat other people. I try to be helpful. Tibetans even in my early days might not have understood what is meant by my being a "Christian", but they accepted me for what I am. Besides this they know that my heart is with Tibet, though my body is in Kalimpong. ■

# *A Bibliographic Essay on American Missionaries to the Tibetans prior to 1950*

WILLIAM S. MARTIN

At the close of the 20th century, Tibet is in the hearts and minds of many Americans. This is not the first time. A hundred years ago, a rallying cry went up in the United States, but the call was not to free Tibet. The call was to save Tibetan souls. Over the course of the next half-century, scores of Americans from nearly a dozen different missionary organizations would answer the appeal. Of these, five U.S. organizations and one British-based organization in which Americans participated — all Protestant — engaged in sustained and substantial efforts to evangelize the Tibetans. Because the Tibetan Government did not permit missionaries to establish permanent mission stations in the areas under its de facto control, the missionaries were based in the borderlands in Western China or Northern India. What follows is a description of the literature on that work and the key individuals involved. Although none of the organizations enjoyed great success in numbers of converts, each left traces on Tibetan and American life which are still evident today.

## **scandinavian alliance mission**

Probably the first American missionary organization to work with Tibetans was the Scandinavian Alliance Mission, S.A.M., which was based in Chicago. It was also the only U.S. organization to have a long-lasting mission of significant size working with Tibetans in Northern India or Nepal prior to 1950. Ten missionaries under the leadership of John Frederickson (who died in 1900) established the main mission in Jorebunglow, Ghoom, in North-Eastern India in the spring of 1892. Their goal was to win converts among the Tibetans, frequently traders, who lived there or passed nearby.

Ghoom was less than 10 miles from the celebrated hill station of Darjeeling. Although S.A.M. handed over the Ghoom mission to the related Finnish Alliance Mission in 1906, S.A.M. missionaries continued working with Tibetans in Sikkim and near Bhutan for several decades. The last Americans did not leave the region until 1925.

There are four English-language biographies of Fredrik (Frederick) Franson, the Swedish-born founder of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission: Edvard Torjesen, *Frederick Franson: A Model for Worldwide Evangelism* (William Carey: Pasadena, CA, 1983), David Woodward, *Aflame for God* (Moody: Chicago, 1966); Otto C. Grauer, compiler and editor, *Fredrik Franson, Founder of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission of North America: Evangelist and Missionary in Worldwide Service* (Chicago, 1940?); and Josephine Princell, *Frederick Franson, World Missionary* (Bladet: Chicago, 1909?). Franson, who cooperated closely with Hudson Taylor, spent several months working with the missionaries in Ghoom in 1894.

Perhaps Franson's most notable convert was a young Scottish-Sikkimese man named David Macdonald. Macdonald would later accompany the Younghusband Expedition to Lhasa and serve as the British Trade Agent in Dromo (Yatung), Tibet, from 1909 to 1924. Franson also published a book on Tibetan Buddhism entitled: *The Religion of Tibet and the True Religion for English-Speaking Tibetans* (Baptist Mission, Calcutta, 1896; reprinted, London, 1897). He returned to Northern India in 1905. A brief description of S.A.M.'s work among the Tibetans can be found in Vernon Mortenson, *God Made It Grow: Historical Sketches of TEAM's Church Planting Work* (William Carey: Pasadena, CA, 1994).

## christian and missionary alliance (c&ma)

As in North-Eastern India, the first American organization to seek to evangelize the Tibetans in Western China did not come from one of the established Protestant denominations. Like the Scandinavian Alliance Mission of North America, which was formally incor-



Dartsedo, c.1940 (A. Gubaut)

porated in 1897, the Christian and Missionary Alliance came into being in New York in 1897 at least in part because the mainline churches were not sufficiently responsive to the era's strong missionary impulse. The founder of the C&MA, a Canadian Presbyterian minister by the name of A.B. Simpson, had also established its predecessor, the International Missionary Alliance. It was the IMA which, only a few months after Frederickson arrived in Ghoom, placed its first missionaries to the Tibetans in China. They were William Christie, a Scottish-born stonemason, and William W. Simpson of Tennessee.

After language training in Beijing, Christie and Simpson set up a mission station in Daozhou, an important Tibetan trading city in Gansu Province in 1895. Annie Taylor, an English missionary, had used Daozhou as her base in 1892 (she also preceded the S.A.M. in Ghoom) before attempting to reach Lhasa, the Tibetan capital. David Ekvall, another missionary, joined the mission in Daozhou some years later. In time, nearly all of David Ekvall's siblings would enter the Tibetan mission field. The following year, Christie and Ekvall made the C&MA's first foray into Labrang

(*Chin. Xiahe*), the site of one of the largest Tibetan monasteries. In subsequent years, the Alliance had its main mission in a former Buddhist monastery on the Dao River and later still in Labrang. Marion Griebenow is perhaps the best known of the C&MA missionaries from that latter period. He and his wife did not leave Labrang until 1954.

Christie is the subject of a biography by Howard van Dyck entitled *William Christie: Apostle to the Tibetans* (Christian: Harrisburg, PA, 1956). David Ekvall told of his experiences in *Outposts or Tibetan Border Sketches* (Alliance: New York, 1907). His son, Robert Ekvall, who also served as an Alliance missionary in Gansu prior to World War II, and was later a professor at the University of Washington, wrote a number of books and articles. They include a history of the C&MA's Tibetan work — *Gateway to Tibet: The Kansu-Tibetan Border* (Christian: Harrisburg, PA, 1938) — a history of his own work in Amdo — *Tibetan Sky Lines* (Farrar, Strauss & Young: New York, 1952) — and two novels about Tibet — *Tents Against the Sky* (Farrar, Strauss & Young: New York, 1954) and *The Lama Knows: A Tibetan Legend is Born* (Chandler & Sharp: Novato, CA, 1981). Robert Ekvall also published at least three anthropological texts: *Cultural Relations on the Kansu-Tibetan Border* (University of Chicago: 1939), *Religious Observances in Tibet: Patterns and Functions* (University of Chicago: 1964) and *Fields on the Hoof: Nexus of Tibetan Nomadic Pastoralism* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston: New York, 1968). Another source for information about the C&MA is *The Alliance Weekly*.

## assemblies of god

William W. Simpson parted with the Christian & Missionary Alliance over the issue of speaking in tongues. He returned to the area near Labrang and resumed his work, this time for the Assemblies of God. He was subsequently joined in the mission field by several others, most notably Victor Plymire, who left the C&MA a few years later. His son, William Ekvall Simpson, also worked as a missionary until bandits killed him in 1936. Of all the American missions, the Assemblies of God appears to have made the largest number of converts.

Gary B. McGee, *This Gospel... Shall Be Preached: A History and Theology of Assemblies of God Foreign Missions to 1959* (Gospel Publishing: Springfield, MO, 1986) provides an overview which emphasizes the extent to which the Assemblies of God drew on the C&MA for much of its early leadership. Details about the Tibetan work can be found in the denomination's weekly, *Pentecostal*



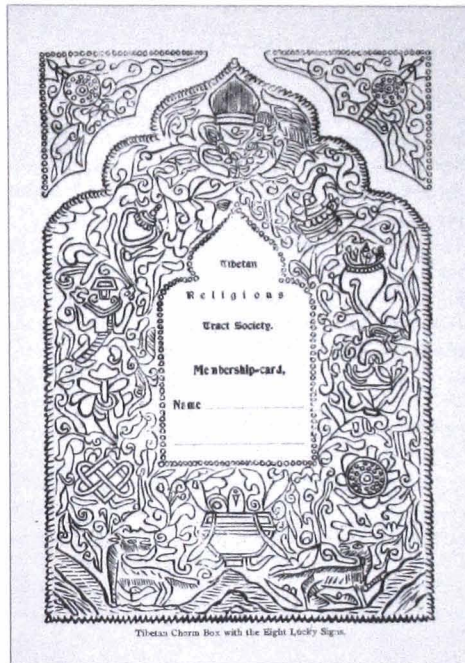
*Evangel.* Victor Plymire's son David also wrote a biography of his father, *High Adventure in Tibet* (Gospel: Springfield, IL, 1959).

## disciples of christ

Susie Carson Rijnhart, a Canadian doctor and a member of the Disciples of Christ, provided the impetus for the Disciples' mission in Bathang. In 1902, the young widow, who had lost her husband Petrus and her infant son on an ill-fated journey toward Lhasa in 1898–1899 (she told the story in *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple*), returned to the Tibetan borderlands. This time she had the sponsorship of the Disciples' missionary society — the Foreign Christian Missionary Society. At her request, two Americans accompanied her: Dr. Albert Shelton and his wife Flora, both of Kansas.

Shelton was justly the most celebrated of the American missionaries to the Tibetans prior to 1950. Fewer than twenty years after arriving in Western China, he succeeded in establishing, with the help of his wife and other Disciples' missionaries, a hospital, school, orphanage and church in the monastery town of Bathang. He traveled widely tending to the sick and was called on to mediate between warring Chinese and Tibetan armies. Although the C&MA's mission work had preceded the organized work of the Disciples by two decades, it was the goodwill Shelton created which convinced the Tibetan authorities to permit the Alliance to relocate its mission deeper into Tibetan territory in 1922. His collection of Tibetan artefacts formed the foundation of the Tibetan collection of the Newark Museum, probably the premier such collection in America. (See Valrae Reynolds and Amy Heller, *Catalogue of the Newark Museum Tibetan Collection*, Vol.1 (Newark Museum: Newark, 1983); and *The Museum*, New Series, Spring-Summer 1972, Vol. 24 (The Newark Museum Association)). Shelton's capture by bandits in 1919 and his death in 1922 at the hand of bandits were widely reported in U.S. newspapers. A range of denominations eulogized him. He was even the subject of a play: *Shelton and the Crimson Trail* by J.B. Hunley (Powell and White: Cincinnati, 1924).

Shelton, his wife and one of his two daughters wrote a number of books. The best known is *Shelton of Tibet* by Flora Beal Shelton (George H. Doran: New York, 1923). Shelton himself wrote *Pioneering in Tibet: A Personal Record of Life and Experience in Mission Fields* (Fleming H. Revell: New York, 1921) as well as an article, "Life Among the People of Eastern Tibet", which appeared in *National Geographic* in September 1921.



Membership card of the Tibetan Religious Tract Society, organized in 1918 in Dartsedo by Theo. Sørensen, who was twenty-five years a missionary to the Tibetans for the China Inland Mission

Other books by the Sheltons include: Flora Shelton, *Sunshine and Shadow on the Tibetan Border* (Foreign Christian Missionary Society: Cincinnati, 1912); Flora Shelton, ed., *Tibetan Folk Tales* (George H. Doran: New York, 1925); Dorris Shelton Still, *Sue in Tibet* (John Day: New York, 1942) (a novel); and Dorris Still, *Beyond the Devils in the Wind* (Synergy: Tempe, AZ, 1989). In addition to her English works, Flora Shelton also wrote three books for Tibetans. The Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta published her geography, hymnal and storybook for children in Tibetan translation in 1922.

Several of the Sheltons' colleagues and successors at the mission in Bathang left a written record as well. *World Call*, which from 1919–73 was the magazine of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society and its successor the United Christian Missionary Society, contains dozens of articles on Tibet, most of which the missionaries themselves wrote. Published memoirs include: Zenas Loftis, *A Message from Batang* (Fleming H. Revell: New York, 1911); Marion Duncan, *The Mountain of Silver Snow* (Powell and White: Cincinnati, 1929); and Duncan, *The Yangtze and the Yak* (Edwards Bros.: Alexandria, Va., 1952). (Duncan also wrote two books on Tibetan harvest festival dramas, as well as books on Tibetan love songs and Tibetan customs.) The story of the Disciples' mission after the society turned it over to the local Christians in 1932 is told in two unpublished books: *Nurse in Tibet* (1983) by Gladys Schwake,

an independent Church of Christ missionary, and *The Bare Facts* (197?), by Phyllis Dye, a biography of Norton and Lois Bare, who worked among the Tibetans from 1926–1941. The autobiography of Philip Ho (Hodabah), *Wandering Tibetan* (Christian Press: Long Beach, CA, 1966), provides a different perspective on Bathang from a convert of Chinese-Tibetan parentage who married an American. Duncan's daughter Marian Adams is currently writing a history of the mission.

## seventh day adventists

Although Seventh Day Adventists expressed interest in serving as missionaries to the Tibetans as early as 1909, the first missionary did not arrive in the Tibetan bor-



Dr. Shelton on his mule. (Albert L. Shelton)

derlands to stay until 1919. John Andrews, like Albert Shelton, was a doctor. He began by establishing a dispensary in Dartsedo (*Chin*: Tachienlu or Kangding) in Western China. In time the mission, with help from the China Inland Mission (CIM), was able to obtain Tibetan type and start a simple Tibetan press. When the opportunity presented itself, Andrews made periodic excursions ("itinerations") westward towards Tibet as did other missionaries on the marches. The mission appears to have been active at least until 1936.

The Adventists' weekly magazine, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, is one source for information. An

as yet undisclosed publication by Crisler, who died sometime in the 1930s while visiting the Tibetan borderlands, is another. The oral history of Dr. Andrews, which was preserved, is a third.

## china inland mission

Arguably, the most important of the organizations was not American. Hudson Taylor, a Scotsman, founded the China Inland Mission (CIM) in 1888 to reach the Chinese who had not heard the Gospel. Taylor managed to turn CIM into the largest missionary organization in China with missionaries across the country, including in the Chinese-Tibetan borderlands. Although the CIM drew most of its personnel from Great Britain and the British colonies, it also soon had a significant number of Americans among its ranks.

The persuasiveness of Hudson Taylor's message inspired many Americans to enter the mission field. At the present time, I cannot with confidence list the Americans who worked with the China Inland Mission among the Tibetans. I suspect there were nearly a dozen. One American in CIM whose ability as a Tibetan linguist proved invaluable was George Kraft. Kraft, a Presbyterian from Minnesota, who arrived in China in 1935 and was based in Dartsedo from 1945 to 1951, assisted numerous missionaries in their efforts to learn Tibetan. His recollections appear in an article in the alumni magazine of his alma mater, Northwestern College. In 1991, he published *Kham Tibetan Primer*. More information about the mission's work in Amdo also appears in *Rusty Hinges* (CIM: London, 1932), written by a British missionary Frank Learner.

Hudson Taylor is the subject of a large body of literature and is widely known, at least in evangelical circles, even to this day. Finding out about the CIM's work with the Tibetans is more difficult. The CIM magazine, *China's Millions*, may be one source. One of the leading CIM missionaries to the Tibetans, a New Zealander named James Edgar, wrote at least one book: *The Marches of the Mantze* (China Inland Mission: London, 1908). In addition, his biographer, A.G. Castleton, wrote *Rough, Tough and Far Away: James Edgar of Tibet* (Friendship: New York, 1942). Furthermore, in *The Call of China's Great Northwest or Kansu and Beyond* (China Inland Mission: London, 1930), Mrs. Howard Taylor, Hudson Taylor's daughter-in-law, discusses CIM, Tibet and the Dalai Lama.

## other groups

In addition to the six groups described above, a number of other U.S. missionary organizations undertook to bring the Gospel to the Tibetans prior to 1950. All of them were Protestant. (Although the Roman Catholic Church was active among the Tibetans for centuries, none of the Catholic missionaries appear to have been Americans.) For example, the Methodists had a short-lived mission to Tibet at the beginning of the 20th century. (Wade Barclay, ed., *History of Methodist Missions*, Vol. IV (United Methodist Church: New York, 1973; pp. 682–685).) In some instances, individuals or a single couple operated almost independently. This was the case with the Tibetan Frontier Mission of Rev. and Mrs. Ezra Steiner, who had previously served as Moravian missionaries. In 1927, they revived a mission in Dharcula in Northern India, just west of Nepal, which an American woman doctor had previously operated. They joined the Scandinavian Alliance Mission in 1946.

Two groups — the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC) and the World Mission Prayer League (WMPL) — rushed into Western China in the wake of World War II. As it turned out, the window of opportunity within China closed after a few short years. WEC's missionaries arrived first. David Woodward was one of them. Woodward, who was educated at Princeton Seminary, began his work among the Tibetans in Dartsedo in 1945. Other Americans with WEC who were also in Dartsedo at that time included Woodward's wife Betty, Hester Withey, Margaret Landahl and Edith Seager. The Woodwards, like the Krafts of the CIM, chose to stay until 1951. Woodward has written about his subsequent work among Tibetans in Nepal in the autobiographical novel *Detour from Tibet* (Moody: Chicago, 1975).

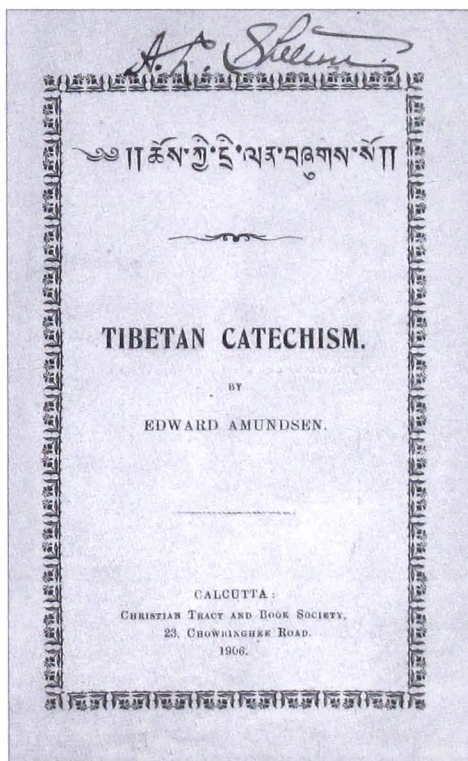
The recollections of three women members of the Tibetan mission of the World Mission Prayer League, a Lutheran organization based in Minneapolis, are collected in *If the Vision Tarry* (WMPL: Minneapolis, 1988). Margaret Miller, who had spent 1940–1944 in Central China, arrived in Dartsedo (in the company of George Kraft) in March 1947. Dorothy Christianson and Lillian Carlson joined her there in August 1948. In September 1949, Miller left Dartsedo for Hong Kong with two other WMPL missionaries. Christianson and Carlson left two months later. They had little choice. As Lillian Carlson wrote: "The threat of the Communist take-over was beginning...we were a band of new workers without much language and with no one to really look out for us." (*Vision*, p. 54.) Christianson and

Carlson would go on to work with the Tibetans in Kalimpong in Northern India for several decades.

## secondary literature on missions

The secondary literature on the missionaries to the Tibetans — American or otherwise — is fairly thin. As John Bray has written in "Christian Missions and the Politics of Tibet, 1850–1950," in *Kolonien & Missionen, Referate des 3. Internationalen Kolonialgeschichte-Symposiums 1993 in Bremen*, edited by Wilfried Wagner: "Research on the various Tibetan missions is still at an early stage". Vol. xvi, No. 4 (Winter, 1991) of *The Tibet Journal* was devoted to Christianity in Tibet, but the focus, unsurprisingly, was on Tibetans. "The Story of Christian Missions to Tibet," by Lillian Carlson, a Kansan who went to Western China with the World Mission Prayer League in 1948, provides a useful

Dr. Shelton's personal copy of *Tibetan Catechism* by Edward Amundsen, Christian Tract and Book Society, Calcutta, 1906 (AMI-Shelton Collection)





The Bathang valley with its meandering river and the town of Bathang. The steep path on the background mountains is the trail coming from China. "Three days later we reached Bathang after having crossed the Ads pass, the highest on the road, being nearly 17,000 feet. We had gone down, down, and down from the top of this pass, following a narrow road, sometimes built up and sometimes blasted out along the edge of the rolling torrent, which runs down to Bathang." (Dr. Shelton's impressions on first travelling to Bathang in 1908 from *Pioneering in Tibet*, p. 46.) (Albert L. Shelton)

overview. Her essay, which she first published in May 1971 in "The Lutheran World Vision," is reprinted in *If the Vision Tarry* by Carlson, Christianson and Miller. Literature about missionaries in China is far more abundant. Two books worth noting are: Paul A. Varg's *Missionaries, Chinese and Diplomats: The American Protestant Missionary Movement in China, 1890-1952* (Princeton University: 1958) and J.K. Fairbank, ed., *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Harvard University: Cambridge, 1974); Suzan W. Barnett and J.K. Fairbank, eds., *Christianity in China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985); George Patterson, *Christianity in Communist China* (Waco, Tx: Word, 1969); Donald E. Hoke, ed., *The Church in Asia* (Chicago, Moody Press: 1975) (one chapter is devoted to Tibet).

## archives

Much of the most interesting primary material on American missionaries to the Tibetans has yet to be systematically reviewed. Below are the addresses of the archives for the CIM (which changed its name to the Overseas Missionary Fellowship in 1952), the Alliance, the Assemblies of God, the Disciples and the Scandinavian Alliance Mission (which changed its name to

The Evangelical Alliance Mission — TEAM — in 1949). In addition to being the depository for the CIM archives, the Billy Graham Center has other Tibetan material, including interviews with Robert Ekvall. Because of the range of its Tibetan collection, which incorporates photographs and objects collected by Alliance missionaries as well as the better known Shelton/Disciples' materials, I have listed The Newark Museum also.

Reference Archivist  
 Billy Graham Archives  
 500 College Ave.  
 Wheaton, IL 60187  
 (630) 752-5910  
[www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/archhpt.htm](http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/archhpt.htm)  
[bgcadc@wheaton.edu](mailto:bgcadc@wheaton.edu)

Rev. Joseph C. Wenninger, Ph.D.  
 Director for the Archives  
 The Christian and Missionary Alliance  
 P.O. Box 3500  
 Colorado Springs, CO 80935-3500  
 (719) 599-5999  
[www.gospelcom.net/cmlliance/archives.htm](http://www.gospelcom.net/cmlliance/archives.htm) ■

# A Jesuit Missionary

## Undermines the 5th Dalai Lama's Prestige

In 1652 when the Great 5th Dalai Lama traveled to Beijing, historians generally agree that he was received not only with great respect and devotion, but also as an independent sovereign. The Emperor Shunzhi, a deeply spiritual person wanted to go beyond the Great Wall to welcome His Holiness. Though the Manchu ministers favored the Emperor's welcoming the Lama in person outside the Great Wall, the Chinese ministers were opposed. The Emperor said: "We shall decide it ourselves." On the eleventh day (October 13) he told the ministers that he was prepared to go to Daiga (outside the Great Wall) where he would meet the Lama. The Chinese ministers (with the crucial help of the Jesuit astronomer, Johann Adam Schall von Bell) managed to thwart this plan, and overcome what they perceived as the Emperor's demeaningly submissive attitude to the Dalai Lama. An account of this incident, taken from Qing records, is given in *A Documentary Chronicle of Sino-Western Relations (1644-1820)* compiled, translated, and annotated by Luo Shufu, The University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

"On the twenty-ninth day (October 31) the Chinese ministers again opposed his welcoming the Lama in person saying: "Your servant has read the memorial of the Imperial Board of Astronomy (Schall von Bell). Yesterday Venus competed with the sun shining and a meteor penetrated the constellation of the Tzu-wei Star. Your servants humbly think that the Sun is the symbol of the Monarch, yet Venus dares to challenge its brilliance. The constellation of the Tzu-wei Star is the location of the ruler, yet the meteor dared suddenly to penetrate into it. Heaven has shown us to be cautious and prudent. Therefore, Your servants think it is not a proper time for Your Majesty to make a long journey, since the regions outside the Great Wall are not as safe as the palace. If Your Majesty would only dispatch one high minister as Your representative to welcome the Lama, this should be quite sufficient." After their memorial was handed in, they received an edict saying: "This memorial is correct."

According to the Tibetan historian W.D. Shakabpa a compromise of sorts was arrived at between the Chinese and the Manchu ministers. The Dalai Lama with only a part of his vast entourage crossed over into China,

but the Emperor came up to the city of Khotor to meet him. Some Chinese accounts say that the Emperor was on a hunting trip when he ran into the Dalai Lama's party.

Rockhill mentions that the Emperor wrote to the Dalai Lama that he would send princes and ministers of state to meet him, and escort him in safety to a point just inside the frontier, where he the Emperor would meet him. But Rockhill also mentions that though Chinese records do not mention that the emperor did not make the journey, "there is good reason for believing that he finally decided not to, for when we next hear of the lama, in the following month, he was in Peking." [J.N.] ■



Adam Schall in Beijing, wearing the embroidered White Crane plaque, insignia of Chinese Civil Officials of the First Rank. The oil painting was probably made from life in 1660. (Courtesy Verlag J.P. Bachem, Cologne)

# *The Journey to Tibet of Dr. Albert L. Shelton*

1904–1922

VALRAE REYNOLDS

Albert Shelton seems to have been a person with an unusual ability to immerse himself in a new environment and culture. Born in Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A., in 1875, Shelton decided as a young man on the career of a medical missionary, obtained a medical degree and was sent to China in 1903 by the Foreign Christian Missionary Society, a group connected with the Disciples of Christ. He and his wife Flora Beal arrived in Dartsedo (renamed by the Chinese as Tachienlu and more recently, Kangding), a town in the mountain wilds of the erstwhile Xikang, Western China, in 1904. Although under Chinese political control at that time, Dartsedo was on the edge of Kham, the Eastern Tibetan province. The Shelton's two daughters, Dorris and Dorothy, were born in this border town in 1904 and 1907 respectively. The Sheltons adopted two half-Chinese brothers here, Lee Gway Gwong and Lee Gway Yen, whose Tibetan mother had died earlier.

After four years the Sheltons moved their mission hospital west to the more completely Tibetan town of Bathang. The adopted boys moved with the family and later became important to the work of the mission there. At that time Bathang was just outside political Tibet but well into the Tibetan cultural area of Kham.

Although Shelton was allowed to establish a Christian mission in Dartsedo and then in Bathang because of the presence of Chinese military control over these areas starting in 1904, he was careful to cultivate close relationships with both Tibetan and Chinese authorities. It is clear that genuine fondness existed between Dr. Shelton and the many persons, high and low, living in and passing through Dartsedo and Bathang. For example, Shelton proved himself sensitive to the Buddhist structures of this new location by carefully arranging permission from the Bathang "High Lama", in 1908, through his Tibetan teacher and close friend in Dartsedo, Gezong Ongdu (Kelsang Wangdu), to establish a medical station in Bathang.

## historical background

All of Kham had for several decades been politically destabilised by disputes between and among local ruling clans and provincial authorities. From the 1860s through 1918, the Lhasa and Beijing Governments sent troops and representatives to intervene in these disputes, with frequent changes in borderlines. These local wars were influenced by (and contributed to) the larger geopolitical situation between Tibet, China and Great Britain (which was trying to expand its control over the entire Himalayan region). The British military expedition of 1903–1904 led by Colonel Younghusband proved to be a disaster for Tibet. With British troops triumphing in Guru and Gyantse, and then occupying Lhasa, the 13th Dalai Lama fled to Amdo (North-Eastern Tibet), Mongolia and Beijing in 1904–1909.

The Chinese took advantage of the chaotic situation in Tibet, establishing a new post of Imperial Resident at Chamdo in Kham. This Resident travelled in 1904, first to Dartsedo where he deposed the King of Chagla, the autonomous state of which Dartsedo was capital. The Chinese Resident then proceeded to Bathang, interfering with Gelugpa control of the region. In 1905, the monks led a revolt and the Resident was killed. A general uprising of all the monasteries in Kham ensued. A Chinese punitive mission from Sichuan razed the Bathang monastery and executed the Tibetan headmen in retaliation. Zhao Erfeng was appointed to regain Chinese control of Eastern Tibet and he soon earned the nickname "Zhao the Butcher" for his aggressive actions against local Tibetan authorities. In autumn, 1908, Zhao took his turn at resolving the long-standing succession dispute of the throne of Derge. By the summer of 1909, Zhao, having secured Chinese control of Derge, started for Chamdo, the eastern gateway to Central Tibet. With troops from Bathang and Derge, Zhao occupied first Chamdo, then Drakyab and Markham. Only Nyakrong remained an obstacle.

Using the northern route via Kumbum, the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa in December, 1909. Lhasa sent public appeals to Europe and Beijing to stop the advance of the Chinese forces but to no avail. In February, 1910, Chinese troops invaded Lhasa. This time the Dalai Lama sought asylum in India, and in Beijing the British officially protested violation of the conventions in Tibet. One contingent of Zhao's troops advanced west of the Salween into the Brahmaputra basin, while another took Kandze, just outside of Nyakrong. Zhao forcibly annexed Nyakrong in the spring of 1911, completing his control of Kham. He would have organized this area into a new Chinese province called Xikang but in December, 1911, Zhao was executed as the Chinese Revolution broke out. Taking advantage of China's chaotic political situation, Lhasa forces overcame the Chinese troops stationed in Central and Southern Tibet, and uprisings occurred in Kham. The republican successor to Zhao Erfeng looted Dartsedo where he burned the Chagla Palace, then destroyed the Chamdo monastery and reinstated Chinese control of Bathang, Chamdo, Derge and Kandze.

The Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa in January 1913, and issued a declaration of independence. A tripartite British, Chinese and Tibetan conference was held in 1914 at Simla to attempt to resolve the boundary issues. Despite the initial approval of all parties, only the British and Tibetan Governments ratified the agreement. A tentative settlement was reached dividing the disputed territories roughly along the 1725 Bum La boundary, but leaving the monasteries of Bathang and Lithang (inside "Chinese" territory) under Tibetan control. Hostilities along the border led to a new mediation in 1918, upholding Tibetan claims to Chamdo, Drakyab, Markham and Derge, while ceding Bathang, Lithang, Nyakrong and Kandze to China.

The Sheltons and their daughters lived in Bathang from 1908 until the end of 1919, with a break between 1910 and 1913 when they returned to the United States on three years leave. The absence of the Sheltons from Eastern Tibet during this period saved them from experiencing the violence attending the fall of the Manchu Empire.

## shelton and the newark museum

It was during this leave that the association of Dr. Shelton with the Newark Museum was established. Shelton met Edward N. Crane on the steamship *Mongolia*, en route from Yokohama to America in December, 1910.



Dorothy (left) and Dorris Shelton, soon before leaving Bathang in 1919, pose with a local boy. The Sheltons and other missionary families chose to maintain their American dress even in remote outposts. (Albert L. Shelton)

Crane was then involved with the founding of the new Newark Museum Association, and as their friendship developed, it was decided that Shelton's approximately one hundred and fifty Tibetan objects would be lent to Newark for display. The hope was that they would eventually be purchased by the Museum. In a letter to Crane in March, 1911, Shelton explained, "I have no desire to go into this business about the curios in any commercial spirit whatever. My only object in bringing the articles to this country at all was that they might go to some *American* institution" (italics are Shelton's). The fledgling institution in Newark was rather timid about purchasing one hundred and fifty items from such an esoteric location as Tibet. When the Shelton pieces had been put on view in Newark, however, the very exotic nature of the material seems to have made the exhibit a great success. From February to June 1911, 17,724 people visited the display rooms. The matter of purchase was settled, in the end, when Crane suddenly died in the summer of 1911. His wife and brother, in appreciation of Crane's interest in the collection, purchased it from Shelton and presented the entire lot to the Museum as a gift.

This founding collection set the precedent for the Newark Museum's Tibetan holdings: a breadth of material of the highest quality representing all aspects of Tibetan culture. Included in this 1911 group are pen cases, sling shots, coins, teapots, earrings, boots, hats,

guns, swords, monastic garments, ritual vessels, images and *thangkas*. Perhaps the most important pieces are a silver Wheel of the Law associated with the 6th



A Tibetan picnic. Dr. Shelton, Dorris and Dorothy in wide-brimmed hats sit with the Jöl Lama. To either side are Kham men in heavy *chubas*, their long hair braided and wound around their heads. (Albert L. Shelton)

Panchen Lama which Shelton received from the Jöl Lama in Bathang and a set of fourteen manuscript volumes of the *Prajnaparamita* (now Carbon-14 dated to the twelfth century) rescued from the destroyed royal palace in Dartsedo. The Museum commissioned Dr. Shelton, upon his return to Bathang in the fall of 1913, to continue to collect Tibetan “curios” with the idea of adding to the Museum’s original group.

## the war in eastern tibet

Letters from Shelton to the Museum from 1915 and 1916 refer to the precarious situation in the border areas. Although the Shelton family’s own writings have little to say on the “war conditions” prevailing from 1914 to 1918, Eric Teichman’s book, *Travels of an English Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, cites Bathang, with Chamdo, as a centre of Chinese military activities in the period.

With the loss of Chamdo to Tibetan forces in April 1918, Bathang became the primary Chinese garrison. Dr. Shelton was an active player in the intense peace negotiations of 1918, as cited by Teichman. Shelton’s fluency in both Tibetan and Chinese and, especially,

the universal trust in his honesty, made him an invaluable go-between. In 1983 Dorothy Shelton-Thomas gave the Newark Museum documents relating to these negotiations: notably two bi-lingual letters of March 8, 1918, from General Liu Zanding the Chinese commander at Bathang, authorizing Shelton and the “Ba Lama” to confer with the Kalön Lama (the Tibetan Governor General of Eastern Tibet) whose troops had the Chinese under siege at Chamdo. In the late spring of 1918, Dr. Shelton again visited Chamdo, at the Kalön Lama’s invitation, to treat wounded Chinese prisoners. Teichman mentions Shelton again in June, 1918, accompanying General Liu on a peace mission to Markham Gartok where the Tibetan governor (*Teji*) negotiated Sino-Tibetan settlement arrangements. Shelton and the “other American and Canadian missionaries” at Bathang are cited by Teichman as personally securing rations for the starving Chinese troops stranded there in the winter of 1918–1919, before they could be transported back to Sichuan.

Captured by Chinese bandits in late 1919, the Sheltons again left Bathang for the United States, taking with them a large group of objects for the Newark Museum. In the vicinity of Yunnanfu, in the Chinese province south of Kham, twelve days out of Bathang, their caravan was attacked by robbers. Dr. Shelton was taken captive and held for ransom; the rest of the party and most of the baggage escaped. In a hurried note to the Museum dated February 24, 1920, from Yunnanfu, Mrs. Shelton wrote:

*Dear Sirs,*

*I’m sorry you have been disappointed in the arrival of the boxes from Tibet. Dr. Shelton was taken captive by Chinese brigands January 3 just two days from this place and is still held. He is greatly fatigued I know and must come home with us if he lives through the hardships which he has had to bear this long time with the robbers...*

A letter of the same date from Dr. Shelton’s sister in Kansas urged the Museum’s aid in pressuring Congress to obtain Dr. Shelton’s release. Dorris Shelton Still has written a sympathetic account of the robber band’s motives in holding Dr. Shelton. The leader Yuan Dianfu and his men had been Chinese Government soldiers who had been abandoned by the Government and had been reduced to stealing from merchant caravans to survive. Many of the men had been wounded in skirmishes with other soldiers sent to arrest them. Yuan Dianfu, learning that the Shelton party was passing through, saw the prominent doctor both as an important hostage with which to pressure the Chinese Government



for amnesty and past payments and also as immediate help in giving medical attention to the wounded.

Although the American newspaper accounts credit Dr. Shelton's release to payments made through the United States legation at Beijing, it appears that Yuan Dianfu's men panicked when the doctor became seriously ill and just abandoned him.

Mrs. Shelton published the diary the doctor kept during his seventy-one days as a prisoner. It is an impressive record of patience and strength:

4 January

Have no idea how things will turn out and it does not matter much just about me. Glad loads were not taken and Flo [Mrs. Shelton] and girls allowed to go.

Headman just been here scheming to get help. Want me to help him get ammunition which, of course, I cannot do.

12 January

Letter came at dark from colonel of soldiers, telling them that they would be allowed to submit to [Chinese] government. They want six things granted over the government seal before releasing me.

1) Pardon for all past offenses. 2) Restoration to citizenship. 3) Reinstatement of soldiers. 4) Release of headman's family. 5) Two hundred rifles. 6) Twenty thousand cartridges...

4 March

I've much to write, but don't feel equal to it. I've been "cached" as yesterday was about my finish. We started at 2:00 p.m. and traveled hard till 7:00 p.m. Sighted soldiers at 5:00 p.m. They started on early this morning, but left me in this village and I'm locked in a barn loft back over behind all the hay... This position will become very confining shortly as I can only sit up and that not very erect, for my head hits the roof, but I am in nice clean rice straw. O, how I thank God that wife and babies were let go! This morning about two o'clock when they brought me in here, the boy who has sort of been my caretaker during the last two months came and crying knelt down by my side, and asked me to pray for him. The officer who has been my jailer held my hands and cried also. These are the only two who know where I was put. It is getting too dark to see, as the only light I have is a hole from which I asked my



Mrs. Shelton and her daughters cross a river in a yak-skin boat. These light flexible boats were used to float passengers and goods from bank to bank or downstream. (Albert L. Shelton)

keeper to remove a loose brick. Thanks be to God for all His mercies.

Shelton was finally rescued on March 9 and returned with his family to the United States in the late spring of 1920.

The objects for the Museum, none the worse for the trip, arrived safely as well. Over six hundred objects were included in this 1920 group. The diversity and quality of Tibetan pieces obtained earlier by Dr. Shelton is again to be seen, with guns, quivers and arrows, tea and beer jugs, saddles, *tsakali*, ritual textiles, sculpture and paintings. Important individual objects include a set of fifteenth century manuscripts, brass and silver monastic musical instruments and an eleventh century gilt copper image of Tara.

## a hospital in lhasa

After a recuperative stay in America, Dr. Shelton returned to Bathang. This time he was alone, Mrs. Shelton having gone to India to work on some translations, the two girls remaining in the States for their schooling. Shelton now intended to go on to Lhasa, Tibet's capital, and establish a medical mission there. It is a testament to the doctor's high regard among Tibetans

throughout Kham that plans for such a bold move were progressing at the highest level in Lhasa. Shelton hoped to train young Tibetan men in simple Western medical procedures such as sterile bandaging of wounds.



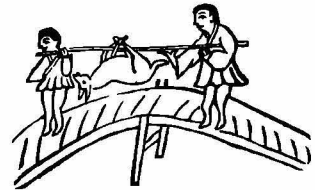
Dr. Shelton examining a young boy while his mother and brother look on. (Albert L. Shelton)

Dorris Shelton Still has given the Museum a copy of the letter sent to the doctor from the 13th Dalai Lama giving permission to visit Lhasa, a gesture arranged by the Markham Teji and the Kalön Lama in thanks for Shelton's help in the 1918 peace negotiations.

Shelton started out from Bathang accompanied by the son of the headman of Bathang, his teacher Gezong Ongdu, and some companions on February 15, 1922. One day out they received a note from the Governor of Markham, asking them to turn back temporarily to Bathang as the times were unfavourable for foreign visits to Tibet's interior. The next day, while heading back, Dr. Shelton was most tragically killed by bandits. ❀

Excerpt from: "Journey to Tibet, One Man's Experience, 1904-1922: Photographs from the Dr. Albert L. Shelton Archive", in *The Museum News Series*, Spring-Summer 1972.

## Missionary Books For Tibetan Children



When my mother was a little girl in Eastern Tibet an occasional treat her parents allowed her, if she had done her lessons well, was to browse through a pictorial geography book. What distinguished this from other Western picture-books was the fact of it being in the Tibetan language. This was probably the book written by Mrs. (Flora Beal) Shelton and published by the Baptist press in Calcutta. A copy had made its way to her father, the Governor of Derge. My mother would carefully turn the pages of the big book and enter the world of Eskimos and their igloos, and the pygmies from "Darkest Africa", lingering over the photographs and drawings that accompanied the accounts. This amazing book also contained photographs and descriptions of the great monasteries of Tibet. My mother recalls seeing pictures of Chamdo and Lithang monasteries.

Another book that gave my mother much pleasure in her childhood was a collection of fairy tales translated and compiled by Mrs. Shelton. She particularly enjoyed reading the story of "Rikki Tikki Tavi", from Kipling's *Jungle Book*, which was also in the book. The collection concludes with the "Story of Esther" from the Bible.

Mrs. Shelton had written to Kipling, then living in Brattleboro, Vermont, for permission to reprint the story. Kipling himself had written about Tibetans, for instance the lama in *Kim*, and kept a Tibetan pen-case on his desk in his house in England. So he must have been intrigued with the idea of a story of his being printed in Tibetan.

In the preface to the first edition (1922) of the collection of fairy tales, Mrs. Shelton wrote: "To the boys and girls of Tibet this little book of stories lovingly given with the hope that they may enjoy them as much as my own two little girls, Doris [sic] and Dorothy have done". [J.N.] ❀

# *J.H. Edgar* *an Australian Missionary* *in the Tibetan Marches*

DAVID TEMPLEMAN

In 1972, while curating a small exhibition of Tibetan art in Melbourne, Australia, I spotted a gentleman whose face I seemed to be able to place. At that very instant a clear image sprang to mind. It was of a photograph of the great Australian/New Zealand missionary J.H. Edgar that appeared as a frontispiece to his 1927 book, *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*. The photograph depicted a strong, clear-eyed, solidly built man in the prime of his life, clad in what appears to be a bearskin overcoat, evidently a form of dress he liked to adopt when on his fund-raising and preaching tours in Australia and New Zealand. The gentleman I had noted who bore many of these similarities turned out to be none other than Edgar's son. In our ensuing conversation he referred to a collection of Tibetan artefacts, documents and photographs which had unfortunately gone down at sea during the Second World War when it was being shipped home. I tried in subsequent years to contact him to find out more concerning what might have proved to be a treasure trove of data about a seriously under-documented area of Tibet during a period of great instability and uncertainty, but to no avail. That brief meeting now reaches something of a focus in the present article, in which I will look at the accomplishments of Edgar and will attempt to place him within the wider sphere of events in Eastern Tibet from the turn of the century to the mid 1930s.

A fine article by Chris Elder dealing with Edgar has recently been published in New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> Rather than duplicate this thorough and well-documented narrative, I will focus on the aspects of Edgar's life and thought not dealt with by Chris Elder, especially those which might have played an active and formative role on the Tibetan milieu around him. One of the remarkable things about Edgar, which emerges from his writings, was his apparent satisfaction with his work without the need for some physical evidence of his achievement, like a church or a flock of his own. He did not want,

nor had, the flocks of Christian converts so commonly found among missionaries in Yunnan with the Lolo, Nosu and Misu peoples. His "long-range" impact was far more subtle. He sent his many dozens of tons (!) of Christian literature deep into the interior of Tibet with a remarkably clear view as to its final disposition. He preached in Tibetan at trade marts and other centres of the people's daily activity and quietly consigned his God's message into a land he had grown to love, a message whose exact result was a matter of unquantifiable faith rather than quantifiable numbers of converts.

## **early life and travel in china**

James Huston Edgar was born in Australia in 1872 and went with his parents to New Zealand when he was about five years old. There at Tapanui, "...not far from the southern limit of trees and permanent population... in every sense a frontier town,"<sup>2</sup> he became familiar with the bush-dweller's craft common at the time. This in itself may not have served him particularly well during his many years in Tibet, but the sense of stoicism and the slightly devil-may-care attitude to danger and privation, so typical of the Antipodean bush-dweller, certainly show up from time to time in his adventures on the border.

Edgar's call to missionary work while in New Zealand, which preceded his rather late decision to become a committed Christian, and the necessity of his return to Australia to receive the requisite training for missionary work, is well outlined in Chris Elder's article. Equally important is Elder's reference to the sense of betrayal Edgar felt at the hands of the New Zealand authorities who did not recognise the sincerity of his motivation, judging him solely, it appears, by his relatively unorthodox education.

After training at the Belair Bible Institute in South

Australia, Edgar was able to join the China Inland Mission and was among the 1898 group that departed for China in October 1899. A photo of this group shows him as young, intense and physically somewhat shorter than his confreres. In his November 1, 1898 piece, included in *Testimonies by Out-going Missionaries*, we read of his reluctance to go to China. He says, "I realize that if I go forth to China in my own strength I shall be a miserable failure...I always detested the great land of China...I said, 'Oh Lord, send me to Africa, send me to India, send me anywhere, but not to China'." But when he was chosen he did not falter. "I am glad that the Lord has called me into China, and, as I believe, into the dark land of Thibet..."<sup>3</sup>

At this stage it is worth noting something about the state of knowledge concerning Tibet in Australia around this time. Australia had some fifty years earlier seen a major influx of Chinese miners and ancillary workers rushing to the gold diggings. After the initial period of infatuation, a fever pitch of anti-Chinese feeling was reached, especially on the gold fields, climaxing in personal violence and the beginnings of a more institutionalised anti-Chinese feeling. Nevertheless there was, running parallel with this parochialism, a definite sense of wanting to know more about Asia, in particular the aspects which dealt with the mysterious and the arcane. Many Australian libraries had reciprocal relationships with Government publishers in India, and were well stocked with Tibetan dictionaries and grammar books, Tibetan language texts and translated historical works by Sarat Chandra Das, as well as the works of early travellers such as Rockhill, Huc and Gabet, Hedin, etc. It is therefore quite possible that Edgar read such books and consequently formed a reasonable view of what he might encounter in Tibet.

It might also be pointed out that Australia was an early and enthusiastic supporter of the Theosophical movement. Home-grown variants also existed, as evinced in a series of publications, one of which by Dr. H. Hensoldt, *Orient and Occident*, might have given Edgar a quite different view of what he was stepping into. Hensoldt, having supposedly met the 12th Dalai Lama when the prelate was a young lad, noted that Dalai Lamas were *always* children seldom reaching more than twelve years of age. Even more remarkable was that the incumbent he met spoke the most fluent idiomatic German in a local dialect, "limited to a small district of the Fatherland" with which Hensoldt was familiar, and had a "profound knowledge of Western science...thoroughly at home in every department of research..."<sup>4</sup> The message that Edgar might feasibly have gained from such mystic sources was that he could, in Tibet,

be dealing with a group of people of a "...subtle and superior race with fifty centuries of experience behind them...". If he did heed this view it barely shows in his early writings, but strange little gleanings emerging from time to time in his post-1918 works suggest that he had at least heard some of the then "alternative voices" on Tibet.

## the missionary view of tibet and zhao erfeng

After an initial period in Anhui and with the Lolo peoples of Yunnan Edgar seemed somehow to have known by 1901 that he was destined to work in Tibet and asked for the prayers of his supporters in his work there.<sup>5</sup> It was not until 1903 that a vacancy occurred at Dartsedo (known to the Chinese as Tachienlu and Kangding) and it was there that he went. By this stage he felt a stronger call than before and in 1906 wrote, "I feel that my own life is bound up in an endeavor to benefit this people...I am assured that this is my work...I have a church of 130 members and 170 enquirers. I am hoping for 50 new members this year..."<sup>6</sup>

However Edgar was not content with the limits of the frontier town of Dartsedo and saw the "prize" of Tibet existing in Bathang and Lithang, if not even further into the hitherto closed land of Tibet. In 1903 he travelled to Bathang and apparently engaged himself in a bout of pure exploration. His views of missionary possibilities in Bathang were not encouraging. In of his pieces written for the China Inland Mission journal, *China's Millions*, he put his finger on what he perceived as the real source of effective power in the area. He wrote in September 1904, "I found the Ba-tang lamas suspicious and truculent, but was unmolested. The religion of Tibet is remarkable in many ways. The real rulers of the land are the lamas. Priests and saints by profession, they are *roués* and rogues by practice. As in Rome, the lamas exercise spiritual as well as temporal power..."<sup>7</sup> It was this turbulence of the lamas which prompted him to observe that their control by the Chinese, although not desirable in itself, at least rendered the country accessible and safe for missionary work, with the newly installed re-forestation programmes, newly found Tibetan and Chinese business confidence, telegraphic communication and "...orderly government, uninfluenced by Lamaism".<sup>8</sup> Directly following the so-called "pacification" campaigns of the Chinese General, Zhao Erfeng, Edgar set up a mission station in Bathang in 1909 but by 1911, the year of the fall of the Qing dynasty, the China Inland Mission's tenure

there became no longer viable as the area descended into lawlessness. Edgar was forced to move to various other parts of China until he was able to return to the borderlands, effectively only in 1922.

The ungainly haste with which mission groups followed the armies of Zhao into the "pacified" areas, despite their full knowledge of the atrocities he had committed and the colonial policies set in place in his wake, is one of the rather unsavoury aspects of that troubled area in that period. Edgar was somewhat sympathetic to what he perceived as the "civilizing" forces of China. He did note the horrendous barbarity wreaked on the Tibetans by Zhao's forces, but also mentions the bizarre range of tortures which Tibetan monks inflicted on captured Chinese soldiers, especially in the affair at Chathreng about 140 km. south of Lithang.<sup>9</sup> No doubt the all too common process of grossly exaggerating atrocities, as noted by Bailey, was at work in these reports,<sup>10</sup> and it is to this explorer's credit that he too, like Edgar, regretted the support for Zhao so commonly and opportunistically shown by his missionary confrères in Chengdu and Dartsedo.

Edgar does seem to have regretted this relatively early indiscretion of supporting certain aspects of Zhao's policies, even as cautiously as he did. In 1925 he wrote: "There may be peace on the frontier now, but as the aim of the new commissioner is to get back to the 'Zhao Ri Feng line', it is unlikely the Tibetans will welcome the change... I doubt if China can put and keep conquering armies in Tibet in our day and generation."<sup>11</sup> This concurs with his earlier observation that, "It is obvious, therefore, whatever the maps may say, that these native states cannot be included in China Proper. It is doubtful whether the suzerainty claimed by China over the imperfectly known regions of Inner and Outer Tibet is anything more than a name. In the temporal affairs of the Chia Rung (Gyalrong/Gyalmorong) states China has no voice; in spiritual affairs they acknowledge the supremacy and direction of the Lama hierarchy in Lhassa...the Chia Rung states are tributary to China...practically, they acknowledge no obedience save that of fear."<sup>12</sup>

The opportunism of missionaries in desiring Chinese control in Tibet to allow them access to a hitherto undreamt of mission field does not seem to have been characteristic of Edgar. There is substantial evidence suggesting that Edgar held a more complex set of views than those of his colleagues. In his early work, *The Marches of the Mantze*, he notes how "...this wild land has always resisted Chinese pretensions...it has insulted and killed China's high officials...arrogantly defied China for years...(and) the wild Marches will



James Hugh Edgar  
(from his book *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*, Melbourne 1923)

continue to exasperate and perplex China."<sup>13</sup> Throughout his writings there is frequently expression of much more than a sneaking respect for these turbulent, independent, lawless and proud people, and he appears caught in a series of tensions between Tibetan freedom and Chinese order.

Later in his career Edgar was eloquent in his praise of China. His tone was sincere and his sentiment direct. He marvelled at its social organisation,<sup>14</sup> and in one of his books he regarded comparative levels of social organisation as a measure of civilisation. This, of course, might be construed as representing more than a measure of the so-called "race theory" so popular in Europe and, rather paradoxically, in Australia at the time, but Edgar refers to it as simply a yardstick by means of which to make sense of the various peoples he had worked with in his life, including the Australian desert aborigines.<sup>15</sup> In Edgar's opinion, we rise "...higher and higher, until Tibet is reached, where we find the cohesive power of the social organization at the five million mark. Now this means that Tibet is in possession of, and can use a secret that entitles her to be classed with 'highly civilised races'. With some such norm as the above in view, where shall we place China which has been a nation of many millions for 4500 years? ...We should be done with jibes about chopsticks, edible dogs and birds' nests for our contempt and ill-will may react very seriously on our children. For China may yet inherit the earth... Our civilisation is...too delicate to last, but China is crude and more robust... What if she hibernates till the phase of annoyance, modern Europe and America, passes away? Will the earth not then be hers?"<sup>16</sup>

## the madman in the tower

It was on his exploratory trip to Bathang in 1903 that one of the most bizarre events of his life occurred, one

which he wrote about in several publications on several occasions. Edgar's "right corner" story also well illustrates the dangers of travel in Eastern Tibet at the time. He writes, "My most startling experience, however, was in December, 1903. I arrived in Choskia (Thrökyab in Tibetan, or in Chinese Chuosijia, in the Ngaba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan) one afternoon without passports in Tibetan, and the prince was mightily incensed. He peremptorily dismissed my Chinese escort, but later housed me in a high unfinished tower. At the same time a homicidal maniac, who had been tied up for three years, was let loose and put in with me, after which the ladder was removed. The man tried hard to work himself into an attacking position. Fortunately for me, my eye was blue and sinister, but darkness was coming on, and hundreds were expectantly waiting for developments on the flat roofs down below. The angels of the Lord, however, were with me, and the madman, breaking through a barred door into another section of the tower, began operations in an unexpected quarter which called for prompt action on the part of the authorities. Thoroughly scared, I made my escape early next morning, and have kept away from Choskia ever since."<sup>17</sup>

Edgar's courage in the face of adversity may also be illustrated by an incident he records thus, "Some months earlier I had actually walked into a market occupied by a robber army of 500. They might have been a very disorderly band of Bashi-bazouks, armed to the teeth and bristling with weapons. I began to sell Gospels; moreover, I demanded payment. This nonplussed them, and gave me an opportunity to slip out of the market unharmed."<sup>18</sup> At another time he escaped from an attack by brigands by performing a New Zealand Maori war dance known as a *haka* with the accompanying rush towards the enemy, in this case the robbers. While they were still in a state of confusion, he managed to make good his escape. Although he reported these events with a rare gusto in the pages of *China's Millions*, the journal of the China Inland Mission, there nevertheless is an underlying tone that suggests he was fully aware of the dangers he was running in performing these deeds. Only rarely in the records of other missionaries of the China Inland Mission on the Tibetan borders do we come across quite so many records of direct confrontation with lawless forces, and almost never are we made to feel so much a part of them as we are with Edgar's rollicking writing style.

Informing this undeniable courage was a seemingly unshakeable religious conviction. Mrs. Bailey, who knew Edgar in 1927 when he was back in Australia, recalls a scene in a Salvation Army shop in Melbourne.

As Edgar was in the process of making a purchase, the saleswoman asked him: "Sir, are you saved?" Turning his penetrating, blue-eyed gaze upon her, he replied: "Madam, I most certainly am saved."

## the renaissance man of the borders

A great deal of Edgar's time appears to have been spent on the road. Indeed, he seems to have been more than willing to share his profound knowledge of the tribes and land patterns from Lithang in the west to Dartse-do in the east, and from Kandze in the north to Atuntze in the south, with anyone who sought his help. Moreover, it appears that at the merest hint by anyone of taking to the trail in that area, Edgar would invariably volunteer his service, as a guide. His name is especially associated with the travels of F.M. Bailey and Frank Kingdon-Ward.<sup>19</sup>

His *métier*, apart from his missionary work, was real-ly in the fields of geographical exploration and the study of the tribes of Kham. In his 1908 book, *The Marches of the Mantze*, he does a creditably thorough job of analysing the Gyalrong (Jiarong in Chinese) area in terms of tribal structure, towns and settlements, monasteries, the matriarchal system and the population of the region, all with the ulterior motive of making the area more accessible to subsequent mission work.<sup>20</sup> He is said to have discovered the pygmy race of the Nung, 400 miles south of Ngaba, from which the Tibetans are said to have taken slaves.<sup>21</sup> He certainly was the first European to write in the Gyalrong language and he translated a wide range of Christian scriptures into that language,<sup>22</sup> a portion of which may be seen in his book, *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, he said in that same work, "If you were to ask the geographical societies of Europe about the people of that tribe, they would stare at you. Probably no European besides myself knows one word of their language."<sup>24</sup> To this end, he and a nameless assistant constructed a 4000 word Vocabulary in Gyalrong and Tibetan, later to become an *English-Gjarung Vocabulary* list.<sup>25</sup> The second highest peak in the Minyak Gangkar mountain range was named after him, Mt. Edgar, 20,850 ft.,<sup>26</sup> and he became an Elected Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1909 and, some years later, of the Royal Anthropological Institute. He was a co-founder of the West China Border Research Institute, and the Journal of the Society "remains even now a uniquely authoritative source of information about the geography and society of the Marches."<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps due to the increasing missionary traffic in the area of Dartsedo, or perhaps due to his own restless soul, Edgar felt less than comfortable in his role there. By the late 1920s he was actively seeking to move elsewhere, perhaps where missionary opportunities were more as they had been on his arrival in Kham so many years before. As one who had seen the area in its heyday of opportunity for a deeper penetration into a Tibet under some sort of Chinese control in the period up to 1911, the years thereafter must have seemed rather disappointing. He was able to move about the borderlands up to the de facto boundary between China and Tibet drawn in 1918, which ran roughly from Atuntze northwards to Bathang and up to the Hor states. But travel beyond that line into Markham, Gonjo, Drakyab, Chamdo, Riwoche, Derge, and areas even further westwards, were denied him.

## preaching and distributing the word

Edgar felt that the best way of introducing the Gospel deeper into the country was by employing one of Tibet's most highly organized and pervasive characteristics — that of trade. He was unable to enter the land of Tibet itself but that did not mean that the Word could not enter. It was there at Dartsedo in Sichuan province, where Chinese tea was re-packed and distributed to Tibetan merchants for re-transport into Tibet, that Edgar developed one of his ideal schemes — preaching to those employed on the tea caravans and letting them carry the message and the Gospel portions deeper and deeper into the Forbidden Land. He preached at the China Inland Mission House at Dartsedo to

## *Missionary Cannons Defeat the Tibetans of Gyalrong*

In the 18th century, when Manchu power was at its ascendancy in High Asia, the imperial army fought two long wars in the Gyalrong region of Eastern Tibet which overshadowed all the other campaigns that were undertaken during the reign of the Emperor Qianlong. Though these wars were fought against the two relatively small kingdoms of Rabden and Tsanlha, in expense alone (sixty-one million taels) to the Imperial treasury they far exceeded the costs of the campaign against Burma in the late-1760s (nine million taels) and the two campaigns against the Gurkhas from 1788 to 1792 (over three and a half million taels). Even the conquest of Ili and Zungaria, a war which lasted five years (1755–1760) and involved a territory almost ten times as large as Gyalrong, cost only twenty-three million taels, approximately one third of the cost of the two Gyalrong wars.

Besides the tenacity, military skills, and fierce spirit of the tribesmen of Gyalrong, the formidable stone towers and forts of the region played a vital role in its effective defence.

According to such scholars as J. Dehergne, Luo Shufu and A.W. Hummel "...the stone forts (of Gyalrong) would perhaps have been impregnable had A-kui (the Manchu General) not made use of cannon, constructed under the direction of the Portuguese, Felix da Rocha".

A Portuguese Jesuit missionary, da Rocha (1713–1781) was in the permanent employ of the imperial court. "He not only directed the construction of the cannons to be used (perhaps designed for ease of transport in this rugged terrain), but he served as 'surveyor' (cartographer) as well, when they were actually in use, arriving at the front late in 1774 in time for the main assault on the Great Gold Stream." (*Da Jinchuan*, the Chinese name for Rabden.)

The two Gyalrong "punitive" expeditions were such a significant drain on the imperial treasury that the budget would ultimately suffer from depletion over the next fifty years and the Qing dynasty would never again approach the heights of its former imperial power.

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(Dan Martin, "Bonpo Canons and Jesuit Cannons", *The Tibet Journal* Vol.xv No.2 Summer 1990, Dharamshala. Roger Greatrex, "A Brief Introduction to the First Jinchuan War (1747–1749)", *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, Fagernes 1992. Vol.1. The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, Oslo, 1994.) [EDITORS] ■

tea-packing guild members, at trading fairs and generally wherever he could muster an audience. He took great care to keep an extremely accurate tally of the number of Scripture portions he distributed and regularly remitted his punctilious figures for publication in the *China Inland Mission Journal*, *China's Millions*. For example, in 1920 he visited sixty-five towns over 2,100 miles and distributed 37,594 books and tracts. In 1923, 10,000 books and 32,000 tracts in Tibetan were distributed, along with 4,000 large Gospel portions sold in the month of March alone! In 1924, 8,200 tracts and 4,021 books were distributed over thirty-six days, during which time he preached 190 times in Tibetan, usually in five minute sermons. Edgar notes that according to his records he performed no fewer than 1,700 of these five minute sermons in Dartsedo in just two years!<sup>28</sup>

In what he called his worst year for tract distribution in a decade, Edgar placed 19,806 Tibetan books and 10,000 tracts, surely by any account a prodigious figure.<sup>29</sup> Even in 1934, two years before his death, a year in which the "old cowboy" (he was never renowned as a good horseman) took a nasty fall off his horse, he travelled 2,000 miles and distributed 42,000 Scripture portions in Tibetan.<sup>30</sup> It must be reasonable to expect that a sizeable number of his tracts and Scripture portions were used in precisely the way that he intended, as there is sufficient evidence to suggest that this was so.<sup>31</sup> However Bailey expresses a contrary view when he says, "Edgar distributed tracts written in Tibetan which were gladly received. The Tibetans tie these "Christian" charms, along with their own, on bridges and trees by rivers. The wind blowing on these holy scraps of paper carries merit over the country while the river also takes the virtue down to other countries. The fish also benefit."<sup>32</sup>

When Edgar travelled on missionary business he went for the most part alone, with one or two trusted colporteurs as his carriers, camping out as often as not and rejoicing in the freedom of the life on the frontier. Many of his photographs are of the ranges and peaks he traversed, and the mighty forests he camped in. Mrs. Bailey, who remembers Edgar as a "long-haired" (his hair almost touched his shoulders at the time), somewhat romantic figure, recalls his boast to her that, during a six-week camping expedition in the Tibetan mountains, he had not washed his socks once!

Edgar felt that the other means ideally suited to act as intermediary distributor for new ideas of Christianity as well as the tracts themselves was the monasteries, where the very Tibetan alphabet in which the Christian Scriptures was written, was revered and was there-

fore certain not to be treated disrespectfully. He wrote that the tons of Christian literature "penetrated to the most distant parts of that sequestered and almost unknown land, and has reached men and women in hundreds of monasteries...most of the literature we hand to them will be carried away with them into the interior, where the natural curiosity of the Tibetan will, in some way, find out its meaning. In most cases the services of the lama will be obtained to read it. At the reading most of the people in the settlement will be present to hear what is contained in the strange book."<sup>33</sup>

He spent a great deal of time visiting monasteries and despite his initial feeling of the hostility of the lamas after his 1903 visit to Bathang, he later wrote that in almost all cases he was received in such places with kindness and consideration. Perhaps the respect accorded him was in some measure because he did not engage in some of the ill-advised antics that even those experienced border missionaries like Theo Sorensen allowed themselves to perform from time to time. Sorensen writes, "At Bagemeh we visited a small temple, on the hill, in which a hermit was locked up for life. We tried to enter his place, knocked on his door and called him, but all in vain, he was not to be moved by influences from the outer world... Finding it impossible to get in communication with this recluse, we left the place after having thrown a few copies of the gospels into his cell..."<sup>34</sup>

As an example of the general goodwill he engendered among lamas, Edgar reports that in Lithang, his "most important objective" since 1903, he was able to erect a mission hall in 1911 with the full blessing of the lamas. Unfortunately it had to be abandoned the same year because of the restlessness in the area which accompanied the fall of the Qing dynasty.<sup>35</sup> Bailey attributed his own safety while travelling with Edgar to the fact that the latter was discreet, not excessively zealous, and did not generally hold the Chinese views so universally held by missionaries in the Marches.<sup>36</sup> The fact that Edgar seemed to have friends among the Chinese soldiery, perhaps due to proselytisation among their numbers in Dartsedo, a common enough missionary activity, also smoothed their passage through otherwise sensitive areas. Although not one to write of his activities other than those of his missionary work and scientific observations, it is also clear that Edgar was able to work in situations of great trust with those who had suffered physically. In these ministrations his reputation as a true friend of the Tibetan people must have spread in the area and it is no surprise that he was able to record in 1934 that, "Since 1902 I have visited practically all the political divisions in Eastern Tibet; nevertheless I can

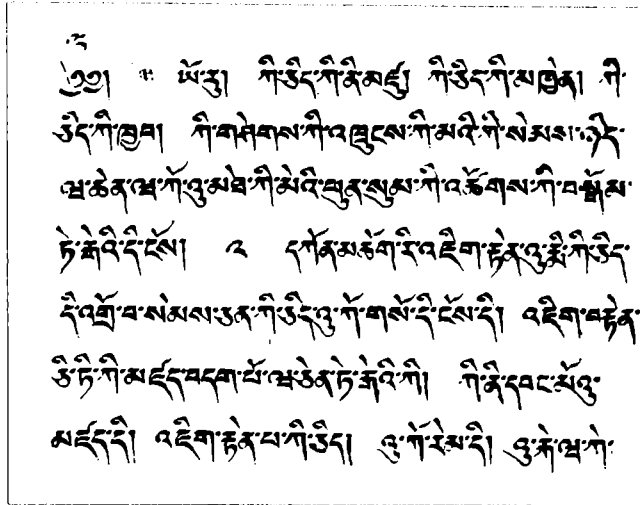


record no injury inflicted on me by my fellow man, nor the loss of goods or equipment amounting to more than a few shillings...my constituency is as a rule very friendly...(and)...the literature very popular. Even in the lamaseries we are rarely, if ever, scowled on as enemies."<sup>37</sup> He spent six weeks attending to the survivors of the 1915 earthquake,<sup>38</sup> and F. Kingdon Ward observed him day after day pouring balm into the wounds of a Tibetan prince who had been subjected to five hundred blows.<sup>39</sup>

However, there remained the lingering mistrust among Tibetans of any missionaries who employed Chinese as agents of the Christian faith. John Muir in 1908 optimistically said that the China Inland Mission intended to send workers to Bathang and that the American Christian Mission "intends to move their entire force there from Dartsedo". Rather short-sightedly he went on further to say that it was "expected that the Chinese will be used much in the evangelization of Tibet".<sup>40</sup> Edgar was never a strong advocate of this policy and this perhaps goes some way to explaining the extremely high regard in which he was held. The employment of Chinese evangelists, a scheme which the Catholics had employed for years, buying land and encouraging the "settling down of their converts in communities instead of having them scattered about"<sup>41</sup> had brought meagre results and only hostility from the Tibetans who saw the Chinese as interlopers and unwelcome settlers on their land. No doubt this reminded the Tibetans of the earlier efforts of Zhao Erfeng to "sinicise" the borderland areas not only by re-settlement of Sichuanese but by enforcing Chinese customs in marriage, methods of disposal of the dead (so as to encourage "filial piety"), even Chinese dress and Chinese names on the Tibetans.<sup>42</sup> Observers of the Catholic approach to missionary work on the Tibetan borders were more or less unanimous in their opinion that such an approach had failed.<sup>43</sup>

## the reflective missionary

Elder observes that Edgar felt a sense of deep accountability to those through whose donations the China Inland Mission's work could be maintained but that this was also coupled with a sense of regret that the full story of what was happening in China, and presumably on the Tibetan borderlands, could never really be told. Edgar wrote that, "Many, too, in the Mission Field have created an Ideal China for the Homeland...they...build up a composite Edifice from which the ordinary elements are excluded...it is not Reality."<sup>44</sup>



A portion of a tract in Jah-rung written by J.H. Edgar.

In his ruminations on the nature of what his life's calling was actually about, we can see a side of Edgar which might be considered unusual for one in his position. In defining the struggle between Christianity and Buddhism he also, perhaps quite unwittingly, went some of the way towards defining certain aspects of Tibetan national feeling. In his early days, in 1908, he wrote, "the missionary's aim... is to oust false faiths... and to establish in their stead a religion purer than anything conceived by the great and self-denying Gautama!"<sup>45</sup> Later, in 1927, he observed, "Lamaism as a matter of fact, is right across the path of Christian progress, and yet it is not entirely antagonistic. While Lamaism is distinctly and fanatically opposed to anything inimical to the national solidarity of the Tibetans, there seems to be no real antagonism to the principles of true Christianity."<sup>46</sup> This sense of national identity being so closely allied to the practice of Buddhism goes some of the way to explain the strength of the lamas' opposition to conversion, a point made by several writers on the borders at the time.<sup>47</sup> Edgar says in *The Land of Mystery, Tibet* that, "... a general change of religion must mean racial disintegration and national extinction... the Tibetan would not forego Lamaism, because Tibetan national existence and Lamaism are one and the same thing. But Christianity is the enemy of Lamaism and must therefore be rejected... In Lamaism there is very much that true Christianity could never condone or endure. At the same time, both will admit that Lamaism has recognised and applied great fundamental principles that have made national life in Tibet possible."<sup>48</sup>

At times there are signs in his writings that suggest a deeply rooted pessimism about the future of the border areas as the Communists were clearly becoming a major force in China itself, and the beginnings of its ideology were starting to influence Tibetans in Bathang and Lithang. He wrote, "But more than human knowledge is needed; education without the modifying influences of Christianity, will make Tibet Bolshevik, and that may prove to be worse than Lamaism for Tibet and the world."<sup>49</sup> There were signs in his writings of a sense of deep concern at the perceived malaise of some of the supporters of the China Inland Mission who, he suggests, were delaying the effective opening up of Lithang because the "paltry 100 pounds to do so is corrupting in some bank".<sup>50</sup> This sense of coolness towards the supporters of the China Inland Mission, as well as his own punctilious accounting of the disbursement of those monies run like a thread of discontentment throughout his writings. Elder makes the revealing point that Edgar had, even in his early days at Belair, espoused Socialist principles. Even though he went into hiding as Communist forces closed in Dartsedo, the "possibility of entering into dialectical dispute with genuine Communists was one he found rather attractive".<sup>51</sup> In a letter to Anna Malcolm a year before his death in March 1936, he reconstructed the course such a discussion might have followed:

RED: You are an Imperialist.

MISSIONARY: I am not. I have been a Socialist from the days before you were born. I am a poor man and in a mission where all share alike... I am a friend of the poor and needy... I am a Christian, but all the same fully believe that some such theory of Government as Russia proclaims will be universal. But the people of China are not ready for it... the present class system and inequality of opportunities is wicked and must go.

RED: Do you really believe that?

MISSIONARY: I have believed it and advocated it for more than forty years!

RED: But you are English.

MISSIONARY: I am Australian."<sup>52</sup>

It may be observed that in this imaginary discourse with himself, Edgar is in fact defining a rather ingenuous view of what it felt like to be an Australian, for much of the struggle in this country has been to overcome the very inequities he mentions in his conversation. Perhaps in a strange way this was Edgar's homage to the land which gave him the opportunity to achieve so much for both his faith and the people of the borderlands he had

come to love so much. He once wrote in *China's Millions*, "Away in Central Asia there is plenty of work for men and women who cannot adequately express themselves here in Australia."<sup>53</sup> It was precisely in this expression of himself that Edgar will be remembered as the Australian above all others who worked for the people he came to love and as the pre-eminent scientific and sympathetic recorder of life in the Marches of Tibet between 1902 and 1936.

The author wishes to express his most sincere thanks to D. Paul Harrison of the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, for his great kindness in obtaining several relevant materials for me, and also to the Bible College of Victoria at Lilydale, especially its Director, Dr. Adrian Rickard and Librarian, Kathy Caddy for their kind courtesy in allowing me full usage of their extensive Library. Thanks are also due to Dr. and Mrs. Bailey of Doncaster, Victoria (Australia) for their personal reminiscences of Edgar in Melbourne in 1927.

#### Notes

1. "The Man Who Found Shangri-La: James Edgar Huston [sic]", by Chris Elder, in *New Zealand Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol.1, No.2, Dec. 1993.
2. *ibid.*, p.23.
3. J.H. Edgar, "Testimonies by Out-Going Missionaries", in *China's Millions*, Nov. 1, 1898.
4. Dr. H. Hensoldt, "New Light on the Lhasa Mystery", in *Orient and Occident*, Melbourne, 1907, p.15-17.
5. *China's Millions*, Melbourne edition, Oct. 1, 1901.
6. J.H. Edgar, "Pioneering Among the Tibetans", in *China's Millions*, Aug. 1906.
7. "On the Borders of Tibet", in *China's Millions*, Sept. 1904. For an equally negative view of the lamas near Bathang in 1897, see C. Polhill, "The Tibetan Border", in *China's Millions*, Feb. 1909.
8. J.H. Edgar, *The Marches of the Mantze*, China Inland Mission, London, 1908, p.19. For another view of this "modernisation" process see, C. Polhill, "Some Notes on a Journey to the Tibetan Border", in *China's Millions*, Oct. 1908.
9. "We heard also of others being impaled on stakes; of wretches suspended by hooks in the lips and cords round the thumbs; of tongues torn out; of boiling tea or butter being poured down captive throats, or of pined sufferers being fed daily on the grilled flesh of their own bodies." J.H. Edgar, Xiang Cheng or Du Halde's "Land of the Lamas" in *Journal of the West China Border Research Society*, Vol. VII, pp.13-22. See also, J.H. Edgar, *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*, China Inland Mission, Melbourne, 1927, p.19 and E. Teichman,

- Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1922, p.228, f.n.
10. Lt.-Col. F.M. Bailey, *China-Tibet-Assam. A Journey, 1911*, Jonathon Cape, London, 1945, pp 64–65.
  11. "On the Tibetan Border", in *China's Millions*, March 1, 1925.
  12. J.H. Edgar, *The Marches of the Mantze*, p.60. For a view on the relative lack of effective power of the Chinese in Chamdo, see Theo. Sorensen, "Eighty Days of Travel in Eastern Tibet", in *China's Millions*, April, 1910. On the error the Protestant missions made in regarding the Chinese military as almost "divine instruments for the destruction of the monasteries and the subjugation of the Tibetans in the interests of Christianity" see E. Teichman, *Travels of A Consular Officer In Eastern Tibet*, p.227, fn 2.
  13. J.H. Edgar, *The Marches of the Mantze*, p.8.
  14. "China—the World's Problem", in *China's Millions*, Feb. 1, 1927.
  15. It may be opportune to note here that the above-mentioned Australian journal, *Orient and Occident*, was rather sententiously subtitled, "A monthly magazine devoted to original studies of the race problem, its oneness, diversity and potential factors in evolution, as affected by morals, religion, science and philosophy."
  16. J.H. Edgar, *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*, p.32 and 36.
  17. *ibid.*, 1927, p.5. This incident was also recorded in, "Interview with Mr. J.H. Edgar, F.R.G.S." in *China's Millions*, June 1, 1918, p.43.
  18. J.H. Edgar, "A Mission Station at the Tibetan Foot Hills", in *China's Millions*, Oct. 1, 1928.
  19. See for example, F. Kingdon Ward, *The Land of The Blue Poppy*, Penguin Books, London, 1941, pp.79, 99–101, 139, and Lt.-Col. F.M. Bailey, *China-Tibet-Assam*, pp.64–65, 78, 85, 89 as well as index citations.
  20. J.H. Edgar, *The Marches of the Mantze*, p.63.
  21. J.H. Edgar, *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*, p.50. and F. Kingdon Ward, "The Valleys of Kham", in *The Geographical Journal*, Sep. 1920, p.89 and 188.
  22. J.H. Edgar's address as recorded in *China's Millions*, July 1, 1927 p.101.
  23. The sample may be seen on p.61, and is reproduced in this article on p.31. Edgar noted that the Chinese refer to the sound of this language as being similar to the twittering sound of birds.
  24. J.H. Edgar, *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*, p.16.
  25. J.H. Edgar, *English-Giarung Vocabulary*, Supplement to *Journal of the West China Border Research Society*, Vol.v, 1932, pp.1–63.
  26. G.H. Johnston, *Journey through Tomorrow*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1947, p.313 and J.H. Jeffrey, *Kham or Eastern Tibet*, A.H. Stockwell, Ilfracombe, 1974, p.52.
  27. Elder, p.40.
  28. J.H. Edgar, *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*, p.15.
  29. *China's Millions*, April 1, 1923; July 1, 1924; July 1, 1927; Aug. 1, 1934.
  30. *China's Millions*, May 1, 1935.
  31. C. Polhill-Turner, "On the Thibetan Borderland". in *China's Millions*, April 1, 1900. Dr. D.V. Rees, "A Journey into the Closed Land", in *China's Millions*, Nov. 1, 1932. M. Broomhall, *The Bible in China*, China Inland Mission, London, 1934, P.121.
  32. Lt.-Col. F.M. Bailey, *China-Tibet-Assam. A Journey, 1911*, p.85.
  33. J.H. Edgar in *China's Millions*, July 1, 1927.
  34. Theo. Sorensen, "Eighty Days of Travel in Eastern Tibet", in *China's Millions*, April, 1910.
  35. J.H. Edgar, *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*, p.31.
  36. Lt.-Col. F.M. Bailey, *China-Tibet-Assam*, pp.64, 78 and 88. For the important function of missionary work among Chinese soldiers on the borders, see A.J. Clemens, "Gospel Work Among the Soldiers in Tastiness", in *China's Millions*, Feb. 1914.
  37. J.H. Edgar, "Above the Clouds in Eastern Tibet", in *China's Millions*, Dec. 1, 1934.
  38. J.H. Edgar, *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*, p.46.
  39. F. Kingdon Ward, *The Land of the Blue Poppy*, p.101.
  40. J.R. Muir, "The Opening of Bathang", in *China's Millions*, July, 1908.
  41. Major H.R. Davies, *Yunnan, the Link between India and the Yangtze*, Cambridge University Press, 1909, p.282.
  42. E. Sperling, "The Chinese Venture in K'am, 1904–1911, and the Role of Chao Erh-feng", in *The Tibet Journal*, Vol.1 No.2, 1976, p.19. See also, E. Teichman, *The Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, p.227.
  43. F. Kingdon Ward, *The Land of The Blue Poppy*, p.70 noted, "Personally I think we owe more to these bold priests for their additions to our geographical and scientific knowledge of the country than for their efforts at proselytizing the natives." A. Migot observed in his *Tibetan Marches*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1955, p.127, "Our Missions in Tibet...have been a failure; their original object — the preaching of Christianity to the natives — has for practical purposes been abandoned..." For a measure of the depth of this dislike for the Catholic missionaries see W.W. Rockhill, *The Land of the Lamas*, The Century Co. New York, 1891, p.273.
  44. Elder, op. cit. p.30.
  45. J.H. Edgar, *The Marches of The Mantze*, P. 42.
  46. J.H. Edgar, *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*, p.41.
  47. See, C. Polhill-Turner, "Tibetan Mission Band", in *China's Millions*, 1898. J.H. Edgar, *The Marches of The Mantze*, pp.38–39. F.D. "Learner, our Tibetan Gospel Inn", in *China's Millions*, April 1, 1925.
  48. J.H. Edgar, *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*, p.3.
  49. *ibid.*, p.42.
  50. J.H. Edgar, "Extract from a Letter from the Field", in *China's Millions*, Oct. 1, 1909.
  51. C. Elder, op. cit. p.44.
  52. Quoted in Elder, op. cit. pp.44–45.
  53. J.H. Edgar, "Address" in *China's Millions*, July 1, 1927.

# Graham of Kalimpong

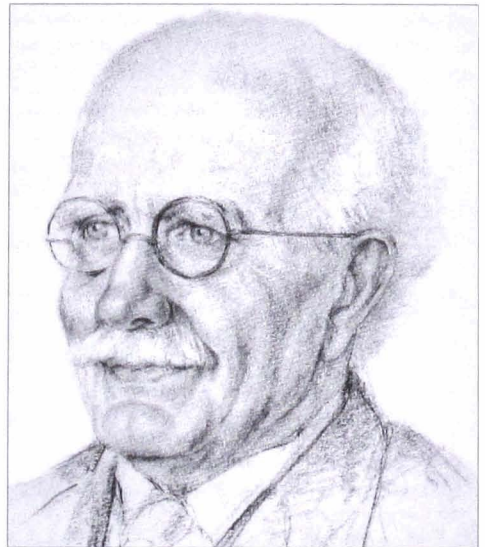
No account of missionary work among the people of the Himalayas would be complete without the mention of the Rev. Dr. J.A. Graham (1867–1942). He was one of the few missionaries whose legacy is respected and valued to this day.

When Dr. Graham first arrived at Kalimpong in 1889, the place was a collection of a few huts — not even a proper village — but the good doctor and his wife were immediately captivated by the beauty and magnificence of the surroundings, especially the distant peaks of the Kanchenjunga range. He was also struck by the exceptional situation of the hamlet which had made it a natural meeting place for Tibetans, Sikkimese, Bhutanese, Lepchas, Nepalese and Indians. Earlier missionaries had put in the basic foundations of a mission station but Graham transformed Kalimpong into a prosperous frontier town, a centre of active and varied missionary works: with hospitals, a leprosarium (founded by Dr. Macdonald Smith), a school for the blind and also a haven for unwanted children of Anglo-Indian parentage.

To encourage agriculturists Dr. Graham started the Mela, where prizes for best livestock and products were awarded. He was also instrumental in starting the sericulture industry in Kalimpong, and also had a hand in starting the Co-operative Credit Society and the Co-operative Bank. He and his wife founded the Charteris Hospital, which is still the main medical care centre in Kalimpong and surrounding areas.

But he is probably best known for the remarkable orphanage he started in Kalimpong, Dr. Graham's Homes. Though it was initially intended for the benefit of Anglo-Indian orphans, it was later widened in scope to become a proper boarding school where a large number of students from Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal, and also Tibetan refugee children, received a valuable modern education. He and his wife were also involved in the establishment of other educational establishments like the Nepali Girls' High School and the Scottish Universal Mission Institute School for boys. Mrs. Graham's efforts to help the Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha women-folk resulted in the Kalimpong Arts and Crafts Centre, which trained lace-makers, carpet-weavers, carpenters

and builders, and is certainly the first instance of the utilisation of traditional Tibetan design to create "curios" and artefacts for sale to tourists. This has now evolved into a big business in the Tibetan refugee world, with organisations such as Paljor Handicrafts, Norbulingka Institute, Zi Tibetan Collection and other enterprises in Nepal, India and even the West, benefiting from Mrs. Graham's initial inspiration and effort.



Dr. J.A. Graham  
(Illustration by Mrs. Grace Clark, in James R. Minto's  
*Graham of Kalimpong*, William Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1974)

Dr. Graham's influence and good works extended further than Kalimpong. He acted, virtually, as an intermediary between the British Government and the Maharajah of Bhutan. He was very close to the family of Raja Ugyen Dorji and his son Tobgay, who were the agents for Bhutan to the British Government. Dr. Graham also outlined the plans for the development of Bhutan and repeatedly attempted to get a reluctant Government of India to provide the necessary funds for this — which eventually materialised, after Dr. Graham's death.

Dr. Graham also played an important role in the establishment of Rev. G. Tharchin's Tibetan newspaper the *Tibet Mirror*. In the Silver Jubilee Number of the paper, Tharchin has a photograph of Dr. Graham on the front cover and recounts that the first issue of the paper "was first printed with an old Roneo duplicator in October 1925. The duplicator was so kindly presented by the late very Rev. Dr. J.A. Graham, C.I.E., whose kindness is always remembered." In September 1928 there was a major improvement in the production of the only Tibetan newspaper, which came about through an old lithographic hand press presented to the Tibet Mirror Press by Dr. Graham.

In the thirties Dr. Graham became friendly with the great Bengali poet and Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, and also with his son who had a house in Kalimpong. Dr. Graham greatly admired the poet's philosophy and his noble character. Graham's political views were coloured by his association with Tagore and

he even became a great admirer of Gandhi. Towards the end of his life he published a pamphlet *Stray Thoughts on the Possibility of a Universal Religion*, which in a sense reflected the tolerance and liberalism of his views, that had broadened and mellowed in his forty years of living in India.

Dr. Graham died in 1942. At his funeral procession in Kalimpong, Tibetan monks were there to pay tribute. The scene is described in his biography, *Graham of Kalimpong*, by James R. Minto, published in 1974:

*They formed a beautiful group of maroon-clad figures, some carrying cylindrical banners with pennons fluttering, others blowing their copper horns and beating their drums, a salute to their friend and to the God whom both he and they served.*

[J.N.]



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# *Saving Tibet from Satan's Grip*

## *Present-day Missionary Activity in Tibet*

ROBBIE BARNETT

Tibet has always held a great attraction for Christian missionaries, who were frustrated for 200 years by its refusal to admit them. The open door policy of the last ten years allowed the missionaries who worked on the Sino-Tibetan borders 50 years ago to resume their activities in Eastern Tibet, usually with official consent. At the same time, Chinese authorities appear to have turned a blind eye towards the small number of less orthodox evangelicals who have attempted to spread their religion in Tibet, sometimes operating under the cover of being tourists or teachers.

### **evangelical activists from hong kong**

In 1990 a group of fundamentalist Christians issued a call for evangelical activists to go to Tibet in disguise in order to convert Tibetans to Christianity. The missionaries, who planned to enter Tibet as tourists or guest workers, intended to distribute bibles and tracts throughout Tibet in order to convert Tibetans from Buddhism, which the organisation describes as "demonic spiritual bondage".

The call was made by a U.S.-based organisation called "The Sowers Ministry" which operates from Kowloon in Hong Kong. The group sent "undercover" missionary teams to Tibet in 1989 and 1990, and in 1990 issued leaflets calling for volunteers to join an "intercession team" which it planned to send into Tibet in 1991. According to the leaflets, the visit by this team would mean that "the roots of evil can be identified and dealt with, and Satan's forces can be thrown down and destroyed". One of the teams, sent by the group in July 1990, consisted of a Western couple who used their daughter to attract Tibetan interest. According to the group's leaflet, "The Lord opened the doors for Neil and Kathy to give away bible tracts and gospels of John.

On the first day they walked their three-month-old baby Maria to the park. Attracted to Maria, the Tibetans invited them for yak-butter tea. That day they gave away fifty per cent of their Christian literature."

The group describes Tibet as "a nation long steeped in demonism and Tibetan Buddhism, called Lamaism, a nation in desperate need of sharing the Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ...". In its literature it describes sky burials and the use of "rancid smelling yak butter" as examples of how "Satan has enslaved the people". (See "Extracts from the Sowers Ministry Website" on page 42 for more such descriptions of Tibetan customs and beliefs.)

### **groups on the indo-tibetan border**

Christian organisations have been attempting to convert Tibetans since the mid-eighteenth century. Some of these groups are still active amongst Tibetans in Northern India and Nepal. Some of the present-day evangelical groups focus on long-term scholarly work and charitable activity. In this they are largely following the initiative of the Moravian church, which established a permanent station in Ladakh in 1885.

Other groups have a more aggressive approach to evangelism. A group in Kathmandu produces apocalyptic tracts in Tibetan and two organisations operate radio stations broadcasting evangelical material in Tibetan to Northern India and Tibet. One of these, apparently operated by a U.S.-based organisation with additional funding from the Norwegian Tibetan Mission, broadcasts from the Seychelles, and the other, which is based in Sri Lanka, is run by Indian evangelical organisations in association with the Kathmandu group.

The groups in India are loosely connected through membership of the Tibetan Christian Fellowship, which

produces a newsletter from an address in California. The movement to convert Tibetans, working in India for some 250 years, is reported to have at present about 200 Tibetan converts to the Christian faith, according to Reverend Stephen Hishi, a former Moravian pastor of Tibetan parentage who was interviewed by *Tibetan Review* in March 1990.

The Central Asian Fellowship, which on 1 November 1990 launched a Tibetan language evangelical radio station called Gaweylon, gives slightly different figures in one of its leaflets. "The number of Tibetan-speaking Christians in India and Nepal is not more than sixty in all," says the leaflet, adding that twelve of these are in Nepal. But the organisation adds that the number of Christians using the Tibetan Bible is around 250, mostly concentrated in Ladakh.

All these groups are evangelical, unlike some of the other Christian organisations involved in charitable and educational work with Tibetan exiles. Although they are not all trying to operate clandestinely within Tibet itself, the Tibetan Christian Fellowship shares with the Hong Kong evangelists a long-term interest in work in Tibet. The Moravians in Kinnaur had tried to cross the border into Tibet in the late 1860s, and sent one of their Tibetan converts as a preacher into Tibet forty years later, but none were allowed to proceed very far by the Tibetan authorities.

The Tibetan Christian Fellowship has also expressed some concern about the spread of Tibetan religious ideas in the West. It noted in one newsletter in 1987 that thousands of Western Buddhists had been allowed to attend a recent Buddhist ceremony in the United States. "Surely we should be free to share the knowledge of Jesus Christ", the newsletter added.

Since 1986, however, some of these groups have begun to work with the Chinese authorities in an effort to re-initiate missionary activities in Tibet. This has led them to operate not just on the Indian border with Tibet but to station themselves, as they did before the Communist take-over of China, on the Chinese-Tibetan border.

## resurgence of chinese christianity

In late 1949 the remaining Western missionaries in China were finally forced to flee. But in a way the eviction of missionaries from China cleared the way for what became in the 1980s a resurgence of indigenous Christianity in China. Under what some evangelical Christians in the West today refer to as the "refining

fire" of the Cultural Revolution, Christianity in China, reportedly only about one million strong in 1949, became what one Westerner has called "every missionary's dream" — a Church which is self-sustaining and self-propagating.

The official Church organisations are allowed to function so long as they have no traditional links with foreign Churches and respect the authority of the Communist Party. These Church organisations have, since 1979, gathered around them some four million Protestants and five million Catholic converts (though a grey area surrounds the Catholics since many privately support the officially condemned Vatican loyalists). These official organisations continue to flourish, but are rejected by many Christians because of their rigid links with the Chinese Government. As a result, the "Three-Self Patriotic Church" and the other official organisations are now dwarfed by the growth of the House Church Movement, as the major clandestine Protestant movement is called in China.

The current missionary movement among Westerners mirrors this division. One sector works through the existing Chinese state, accepting its laws in return for its patronage, while another sector operates clandestinely, and opposes Communism almost as much as Tibetan Buddhism. Many of the denominational groups and the Catholics tend to take the first option, whilst the fundamentalist evangelical movements prefer the second.

Both sectors, however, take essentially the same view of political activity as did the missionaries in China prior to the 1949 Liberation; they avoid any political involvement. The present-day fundamentalists, despite an ideological opposition to Communism, do not actively oppose the Chinese state or support Tibetan nationalism. In any case, by opening up China since 1979, the Communist administration in Beijing has dramatically increased missionary access to the country. Paradoxically, it is an atheist government that has rendered Central Tibet more accessible to Christian missionaries than at any time in recent Tibetan history.

Amongst the undercover missionaries the vitality of the House Church Movement in China poses something of a dilemma, since the work of evangelizing is already being done by the Chinese themselves. Yet most Western evangelicals include the Tibetans amongst those non-Chinese nationalities which require "traditional" conversion by foreign intermediaries. The methods used by these missionaries are contentious amongst their colleagues — many of them operate by "tracting", proselytizing by handing out literature in the streets. Such methods are considered "naive" by both the



official missionaries who work with the state organisations and by the unofficial ones who support the House Church Movement and consider themselves culturally sensitive.

The “reborn” fundamentalists do not accept such criticisms. To an extent, this reflects a theological divide as well as a dispute amongst Christians over the role of “sensitivity” in evangelizing. The fundamentalists maintain that those who are not baptised are damned; more tolerant Christians, including both the established Protestant and Catholic Churches, avoid this question and recognise the ethical and moral values of other religions. “The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions”, as the Pope put it in the edict *Nostra Aetate*. There are also doctrinal variations amongst the fundamentalists: one of the evangelicals working in Tibet told the Tibet Information Network in London that the Tibetans who are not Christians are damned only if they have heard the word of God but then not accepted it.

## official protestant activity: eastern tibet

In 1985 a group of former Protestant missionaries to Tibet met in Anaheim, California. They were mostly connected to the Christian Missionary Alliance or to independent missionaries like George Patterson or the Morse family. These evangelists were from the tradition

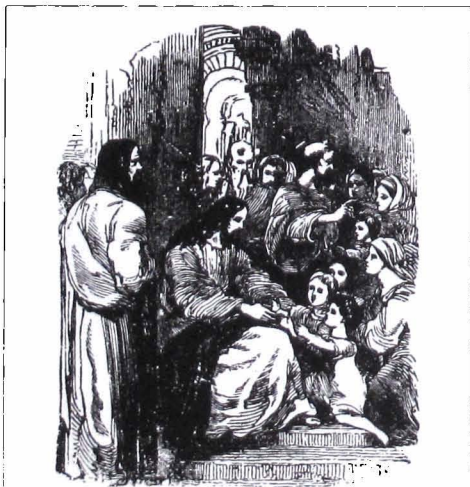


Illustration from *Tibetan Catechism* by Edward Amundsen, Christian Tract and Book Society, Calcutta 1906, p.29

of lifelong service in one area, and amongst them were several who had worked, lived, or even been born in Bathang in Eastern Tibet before 1949. The group negotiated with the Chinese authorities and was allowed to travel to Bathang in May 1986, on the grounds that it was, for them or their relatives, their former birthplace or workplace. They found five (Protestant) Christians, all in or around their eighties, still alive in Bathang. Under the direction of Philip Ho, they began preparations to establish a Protestant Church there.

These missionaries worked with the Chinese authorities, and were supportive of Chinese achievements in Bathang. An article by former Bathang missionary Marguerite Fairbrother (who was one of the six on the trip) praised advances in prosperity, population control, literacy and the provision of “electric lights, radios, cassette players, televisions, small Chinese-made washing machines” and, occasionally, flush toilets for the Tibetans in the town. The article (printed in the U.S. magazine *Horizons* in November 1986) condemned the earlier pre-Communist Tibetan society and “its mountain of superstition and enslaving tradition”, but lamented the “spiritual void” that remained.

The group undertook in a public statement to cooperate with the official “Three-Self” Church organisation in China, an arm of the State created to protect Chinese Christianity from foreign control. Chinese law allows freedom of belief but does not allow evangelizing except within the premises of official religious institutions. Nevertheless, this law does not seem to be strictly applied where foreign evangelists are involved, and the returning Bathang missionaries took part in “personal evangelism with people in whose homes we visited”.

## unofficial missionary activity: lhasa since 1985

In the last five years missionary activity, all of it covert, has resumed in Lhasa, where there had been no missionary work since the expulsion of the Capuchins 250 years earlier. Western missionary activity in Lhasa has been conducted mostly by evangelicals operating as English teachers.

Encouraging undercover evangelicals to work as teachers does not seem to be construed by the missionaries or by the Chinese as a political challenge to the Chinese state. There are indications that the authorities in China actually prefer such teachers and in some cases the authorities have tacitly encouraged the use of evangelical Christians as foreign teachers in China. This



may be because even covert Christian missionaries, unlike Buddhists in Tibet, for example, are traditionally likely to preach support of the state as well as energetic support of the post-Communist society. Organisations such as the Hong Kong-based Jian Hu Foundation and the U.S.-based English Language Institute, apparently dedicated to appointing Western evangelical Christians as teachers in China, are not known to encounter any opposition from Beijing.

The opening up of Lhasa to tourists in the early 1980s appears to have been seen as a God-given opportunity by all Western evangelical groups interested in Tibet. Even more opportunity presented itself with the decision of the Lhasa authorities to accept Westerners as English teachers. During the autumn of 1985 the first four Western teachers were appointed, and already two of them were Christians with a long-standing commitment to evangelism. By the autumn of 1986 eight other teachers had been appointed, and at least two of these were evangelists.

In late 1986 the authorities in Lhasa, perhaps in deference to the anti-bourgeois liberalisation campaign then under way in Beijing, are reported to have shown the first signs of nervousness about the appointment of Western teachers. That autumn, contracts for two teachers were not renewed. The teachers appointed after this in late 1986 and in 1987 were mainly from well-known organisations contracted through Beijing, namely the British Council and Voluntary Service Overseas.

The political sensitivity of the presence of teachers in Tibet became clear in October 1987, a few days after the outbreak of pro-independence demonstrations in Lhasa: all the Lhasa-appointed Western teachers were expelled from Tibet. There was no evidence of involvement by the teachers. The expulsions seem, therefore, to have been partly symbolic, perhaps designed to indicate official disapproval towards Western travellers who were regarded as sympathetic to the demonstrators.

Only the Beijing-appointed teachers were allowed to remain, but even they were encouraged to leave over the next year by less obvious forms of pressure. From that time until the end of 1991 only six Western teachers are known to have been allowed to take up posi-

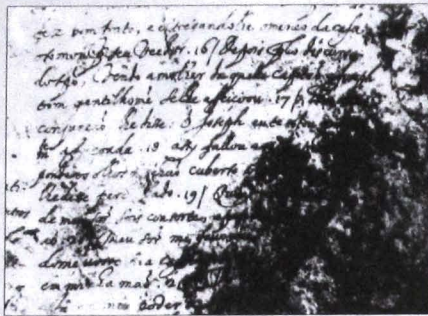


Illustration from *Tibetan Catechism* by Edward Amundsen, Christian Tract and Book Society, Calcutta 1906, p. 1

tions in Tibet, all of them American citizens with strong connections to evangelical organisations or traditions. In March 1989, when martial law was imposed on Lhasa, one of the teachers was quoted — not necessarily accurately — by the official Chinese press as approving of the decision to impose military rule.

Even fundamentalist evangelical groups do not rely purely on bible-running and “tracting” to convert non-believers. Some undertake intensive language learning in order to be able to preach in the local language. The most extreme fundamentalists, such as the notorious Summer School of Linguistics — already active amongst Tibetan-speaking peoples in Nepal — are motivated by the belief that the Messiah cannot appear until the Bible has been translated into all the world’s languages.

As a result, a number of the new generation of evangelists, those with a slightly more long-term vision than the tourists who were handing out tracts, are studying the Tibetan language prior to embarking on missionary activities made feasible again by the open door policy. Before 1949 missionaries were expected to study



## Remnants of Portuguese Bible Found inside Tibetan Mask

In the mid-1980s, Chinese archaeologists excavating the ruins of Tsaparang, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Guge, discovered a tantric skeleton mask. *China's Tibet* (No.1 1996) provides the rather astonishing dimension of 34 cm (height) by 23 metres (width) for the mask. It is more than probable the latter figure is also in centimetres.

Like Tibetan tantric dance (*cham*) masks in general, this one was made from layers of pasted cloth. This particular mask had its centre layers of cloth while both sides were covered with three layers of pasted paper, with a thin finishing layer of clay. When the clay layer was peeled off the paper exposed was found to be covered with Portuguese words, mostly hand-written and partly printed. The pages were from a Portuguese Bible.

In 1624, the Jesuit missionary Antonio de Andrade and his companions ventured from Agra to Tsaparang where being favourably received by the Tibetan king, they were allowed to set up a mission and build a church. After the overthrow of the King of Guge in 1633, the Jesuits were forced to leave Tsaparang. Constant raids from Muslim forces and neighbouring states, and a drop in the water table brought about the destruction of Tsaparang and the end of the ancient kingdom of Guge. [EDITORS] ■

Tibetan with other missionaries and local Tibetans in Dartsedo (*Chin.* Kangding) or Bathang; nowadays it has become fashionable to attend Tibetan language courses organised by the Chinese Government, such as the course for foreigners at the National Institute of Minorities in Chengdu. In the academic year 1990–1991 fourteen out of fifteen of the Westerners studying Chinese or Tibetan at the Institute were active Christians, of whom several belonged to evangelical organisations and intended to go on to work as missionaries.

## tibetan response

One of the evangelicals active in Lhasa in the last five years, who had worked for several years amongst Tibetans in exile, claimed later that Tibetans in Tibet are more responsive to Christian activity than are Tibetans in India. “We chatted all day with the people, and we got rid of the whole lot (religious tracts) at one time...they were so pleased and said “Can I have some for my parents, my family?” and so on... They wanted to take as much as they could”, he said of his first experience distributing tracts in a Tibetan village.

He attributed the resistance of Tibetans in India to strongly-held nationalist pride amongst the exiles. He did not think the welcome he received in Tibetan villages inside Tibet was due to the fact that the Tibetans he approached there were unaware of the intentions of Christian evangelism.

There is little published information about the attitude of Tibetans in exile to Christian Tibetans, although in his March 1990 interview with the *Tibetan Review* the pastor Stephen Hishi referred to hostility amongst Tibetans towards Christian converts, and spoke of a general feeling that Tibetan Christians “had sold out for a certain amount of money”. In 1988 there were reports of incidents involving local Buddhist opposition to Tibetan Christians in Ladakh, in which the Dalai Lama is said to have intervened to reduce tensions.

Historically, Christian attempts at conversion of Tibetans have been bedevilled, initially, not so much by intolerance but by the traditional openness of Buddhist towards other religions, which are regarded as equally acceptable to their own. Buddhism allows for an infinite number of people to discover perfection in a wide variety of ways, not necessarily through religions, and so easily regards Jesus as what is termed in Sanskrit a “Bodhisattva”.

As a result, evangelists in the past often reported that it was easy to persuade Tibetans to accept Jesus as a



Illustration from *Tibetan Catechism* by Edward Amundsen, Christian Tract and Book Society, Calcutta 1906, p.2

spiritual master, but difficult to get them to renounce all the other Bodhisattvas. Even The Sowers Ministry appears to have anticipated this problem, and their leaflet notes with concern that to Tibetan Buddhists, "Jesus is seen as an incarnate principle of enlightenment rather than [as] the unique Son of God."

## missionary hopes

Some contemporary Western evangelicals who have worked in Tibet speak of the place in semi-mystical terms as a place where the Holy Spirit is working, and tell detailed stories of miraculous events which have happened to undercover missionaries there. Many of these concern the ability to give out tracts without being arrested. "At the Jokhang monastery Kathy gave the literature to a monk and his young trainee. In a room normally full of worshippers no-one was there to report her action to the Chinese. In such ways the Lord provided opportunities," says a leaflet from The Sowers Ministry.

Other evangelicals are more sophisticated in explaining their belief that God is working through them in their effort to convert Tibet. "A lot of things happened in Tibet which would be difficult to explain to you if you're not a Christian", said one, apparently referring to miraculous events. In general, the missionaries are full of confidence about their future. Another Sowers Ministry fundamentalist said of evangelical work in

Tibet, "I am confident that slowly but surely the Lord is raising up hosts of armies in that forbidden land".

There are few claims so far of any converts made in Tibet, apart from the old communities in Bathang, although Woodward reports that there are Tibetan Christians living in Lhasa. There has also been a traditional reluctance amongst missionaries in Tibetan areas to reveal whether their converts are Chinese or Tibetans. However, one evangelical who worked in Lhasa in 1987 said recently, "As far as I know there were no Tibetans who were Christian".

The general reluctance to distinguish between Tibetan and Chinese converts is a reflection of the fact that missionaries based in Western China before the war moved into Tibetan areas at the same time as Chinese colonisers and settlers, and were to some extent part of the extension of Chinese influence over Tibetans. That pattern still underlies the increasing involvement of missionaries in Central Tibet today, which coincides with an increase in the number of Chinese settling in Tibet. Some of the Tibet evangelicals talk of Tibetans as though they are likely to follow the Chinese towards Christianity, and regard the issue as a subsection of the problem of converting the Chinese.

Unless the Chinese close the door again — a move which would encourage indigenous, unofficial Christianity — it is unlikely that the Western missionaries can be kept away any more than can the flow of Western ideas. The potential market of a billion souls is too great a temptation for Western evangelicals to resist. Western missionary activity seems likely to continue in Tibet, whether directed at Chinese or Tibetans, and the indications so far are that it is unlikely to face sustained opposition from the authorities. ■

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This article is based on a report in Tibet Information Network *Background Papers on Tibet*, September 1992, Part 2)

# Extracts from the Sowers Ministry Website, 1998

**U**our mother has just died. Fortunately, the Podeb is here. He yanks the hair from the top of her head, freeing her spirit from her body to go into the next mortal — man or animal, you are not sure which. What if her spirit stays around the house instead of departing? Fortunately, the joba can prevent that. He carries her body to some deserted spot. There he chops her body up and spreads the internal organs out, attracting vultures and wolves by eating some of her flesh himself. Later, some of her bones are used for fertilizer or carved into religious objects or musical instruments.

Is this some gruesome horror story? No, these are scenes from Tibet, a nation long steeped in demonism and Tibetan Buddhism, called Lamaism, a nation in desperate need of hearing the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **satan's grip**

Indeed, through the Buddhist promise of better reincarnations leading to Nirvana, Satan has enslaved the people to a life-time preoccupation with right words and works. "Om Mani Padme Hum" (Om, the jewel in the Lotus) and other phrases are chanted repeatedly to false gods who can supposedly stop the cycle of reincarnations and help the speaker enter Nirvana immediately. The phrases are found on the walls in every town, are inserted thousands of times into prayer wheels. People walk through the towns, spinning the wheels, thereby releasing millions of prayers that lead them, supposedly, to a hastier Nirvana. Prayer flags release the phrases every time they flap in the breeze. Every Tibetan owns a rosary; the worshipper recites Buddha's name 100 times. Actually, the rosary has 108 beads — eight extra in case the devotee forgets a prayer or loses his beads.

How radical they are! How fruitless their efforts! They perform Satanic rituals stemming from Bön, the animistic Tibetan religion that was replaced by Buddhism in the sixth century. Pilgrims trudge miles over the barren lonely land to reach a temple, where they fall prostrate time and again in front of Buddha statues. Some travel to the Potala in Lhasa, Tibet's capital

city, to bow before golden statues that house the bodies of deceased Dalai Lamas.

The Dalai Lama is chosen during the first year of his life by names of rites involving witchcraft; the Tibetans see him as their savior. They believe he has sacrificed himself on their behalf, "... Voluntarily re-entering the world of suffering, binding himself to it [and postponing release into Nirvana], until he has ultimately brought them all to the state of bliss he has won for himself." The Tibetans do not know Jesus, the true Savior who justifies them by His blood and frees them from guilt and bondage to good works.

## **the light shines in the darkness**

Is there no light that cuts through the demonic darkness in Tibet? According to reports in China and the Church Today from Gansu province, an area worked extensively by several mission groups before the communists came to power, a few Christian households had gathered together to worship during a Chinese New Year's celebration. Their neighbors, seeking to wipe out Christianity, disrupted their meeting and told them to disperse. The Christians, unwilling to stop their meeting, were severely beaten by the crowd. The next morning, their persecutors found their herds of sheep, cows, and horses dying. Their family members also began to die one by one. Realizing that the wrath of God had fallen upon them, they pleaded with those who believed in Jesus to pray. The Lord heard the believers' prayers, and the sick and dying were healed. As a result, more than a hundred Tibetans turned to the Lord!

## **tsm in tibet**

Workers from The Sowers Ministry (TSM) saw that the Tibetans are open to the Gospel of Jesus. When Tibet opened its borders, TSM workers visited the country to assess the situation, to explore ministry possibilities, and to feel the heartbeat of the people. In 1988 and

1989, TSM workers traveled to Lhasa and visited the Potala, Sera, Jokhang, and Drepung monasteries. As they distributed Christian literature, Buddhist worshippers argued with each other in an attempt to get a copy, and lamas requested Bibles. They saw a genuine spiritual hanger for the Truth. The monks and lamas were fully aware that this was not another printed matter about their god-king, the Dalai Lama. Instead, many of them recognized that the books were about Jesus. It was such a blessed time to be able to place in the hands of these people a means by which the Holy Spirit can work in their lives.

God provided opportunities for TSM team when they visited Tibet in July, 1990. They arrived in Lhasa after a two-hour drive from the airport, which was built by the Chinese away from the capital city for security reasons. Security has been very tight in Tibet since the Beijing Massacre of June 1989. One TSM staff reports, "All we saw were green uniforms everywhere."

In September of 1996, the Lord opened the doors for TSM to make another trip with a group of seven pastors to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. The TSM leader reported that this was the first time he had been to Lhasa that his group was not required to stay with a tour guide at all times. They moved freely from place to place without hindrance, going up to the "high places" of the Buddhist monasteries to worship God, intercede for Tibet, and leave tracts and Bibles for the fellowship. The TSM group also discreetly passed out tracts directly to the Tibetan people whenever possible.

## love tibet

Everyone needs to know the hope and joy of knowing Jesus, but most Tibetans have never even heard His Name. The Lord commands us, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16: 15), including nations with governments hostile to Christians. Including Tibet.

The challenge remains for each one of us to make a difference in the lives of the Tibetans. How can we spread the Gospel and introduce the Kingdom of God into Tibet?

Pray: "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5: 16). We need committed prayer-warriors who will pray for Tibet regularly. Help us win the spiritual battle. Your prayer will make a difference.



Capuchin missionaries bringing to Tibetans the light of the "True Faith"  
(Missio Apostolica Thibetano-Seraphica, Munich 1740)

**Go:** Accept the challenge to personally spread the Gospel into Tibet. Experience missions first-hand, and experience the Holy Spirit move through you.

**Send:** Assist someone who wants to minister in Tibet by providing the essential prayer support and funding.

**Financial Support:** There are different projects you can help support financially through TSM. You can help finance some of the printing and purchasing of Tibetan literature for distribution. You can help us purchase tape players and teaching tapes in the Tibetan language.

Recently, hand-wound cassette players were made available to us for a special low price. Many Tibetans, most of them nomads, do not have any electricity. Dynamos within these cassette players provide the power instead of batteries. A gift of US\$ 30 pays for one cassette player and twelve cassette tapes that teach Tibetans about Jesus in their own language. Your financial gifts will help us to carry out the work that has begun and enable us to change the eternal destiny of those who are perishing.

## is there anybody out there?

Who will pray for Tibet? Everyone can be a prayer-warrior! This list will help us pray for Tibet more effectively. Pray that:

the demonic spiritual bondage of Bön and Buddhism may be prevented from keeping its stronghold on the people. (Bön included demon-possession of shamans (priests), communication with the dead, and rituals that were supposed to satisfy demons.);

## The Mystery of Pentoc



The Pentoc guesthouse in Lhasa (Prof. Elliot Sperling).

Across the road from the Snowland Hotel in Lhasa, a new establishment has sprung up in the last few years. Called Pentoc it is a small guesthouse with about half a dozen clean, well-maintained rooms. It has a gift shop which sells yak leather goods and other handicrafts. It sells its own picture calendar, which is also distributed in Kathmandu.

The place is run by about six or seven Westerners: French, Danes and others. A number of small children also seem to be part of this group. What intrigues observers is how these families are allowed not only to live in Lhasa but also run their own business. After all it is common knowledge that foreign visitors have a hard time just getting a tourist visa to Lhasa, and a much harder time staying there for durations of more than a few months.

Also at a time of tremendous security restrictions in Lhasa, observers are beginning to wonder how Pentoc has a room at the back of the hotel fully equipped with various communications devices: computers, faxes, modems etc. It has also been reported that Pentoc received the first email account in Lhasa. They also have a full-time maintenance man.

Some travelers are voicing suspicions that Pentoc is under the protection of the Public Security. One tourist was warned against expressing sympathy with Tibetan aspirations in the presence of anyone from Pentoc.

What is Pentoc, anyway? In Tibetan it sounds like *phentok* which means succor, benefit or usefulness. One Tibetologist has pointed out that it could be a play on the word "Pentecost".

Sources have informed me that Pentoc is a subsidiary of Gensco, a corporation based in Hong Kong, and though seemingly commercial, is actually a missionary front organisation. [J.N.] ■

the multitude of pilgrims traveling to worship at Buddhist temples may find the Truth;

the Tibetan people will see the emptiness and deception of the present religious and political systems;

political leaders will keep the doors open to travelers, and that they will open doors to foreign workers;

lonely believers and secret seekers will be blessed by Christian radio programs that are currently broadcast into Tibet;

Christian literature, cassettes, and films will be written and produced and ways found to distribute them, especially to outlying areas. (So far, most Christian literature has gone to the main towns and monasteries.);

the Lord will lead people to provide finances for the production of Christian teaching materials and for those who want to minister in Tibet;

God will raise up Christian workers to go to Tibet, especially Tibetan converts in India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Pray that they will see and follow God-given strategies for extending His Kingdom in Tibet.

### did you know?

Tibetan Buddhism has invaded the West. Tibetan Buddhism, with its eastern mystique, appeals to intellectuals and seekers, many of whom have rejected Christianity. Resident lamas and their disciples have established Tibetan study centers in the western world. In the United States, several major universities, including Harvard, Berkeley, and Wisconsin, have set up departments of Tibetan studies. In some classes, parts of Tibetan scripture are required reading. Some countries have Tibetan Buddhist monasteries.

Pray against the spreading of Tibetan Buddhism into other countries.

Come to Tibet!

Join the Intercession Team May-October, 1997

TSM will be making more short-term trips to Tibet this year for spiritual warfare, prayer and literature distribution. We also want to place long term workers there in the future who will learn the language and work more directly with the people. Please contact us if you are interested in either opportunity.

As one TSM worker says, "I am confident that slowly but surely the Lord is raising up a host of armies in that forbidden land. I have settled in my heart to pray for them regularly and visit my dear brothers as often as possible. Will you join me?" ■





Институт Анише Мачен

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