

**FRONTISPIECE** M.A.J. van Manen reading a Tibetan Buddhist text in his office at the Calcutta-based Asiatic Society of Bengal, c.1924

# **Tibetan Lives**

Three Himalayan Autobiographies

Edited by

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CURZON

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# Description of Plates

*Frontispiece* M.A.J. van Manen reading a Tibetan Buddhist text in his office at the Calcutta-based Asiatic Society of Bengal, c.1924.

- 1 Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs, c.1923.
- 2 sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul *alias* sKar-ma Babu, c.1923.
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# Historical Foreword

In the early years of the twentieth century, control over Tibet was contested by three major empires, those of China, Russia, and Britain. The imperial powers and those who came in their wake – missionaries, scholars, traders and soldiers – employed local staff to assist in their dealings with the Tibetans. These employees had a crucial role in Tibet's encounter with the outside world. Yet they have been largely forgotten by history and most of the knowledge and understandings which they gained has been lost.

It was left to a Dutchman, and hence an outside observer of the British imperial system, to preserve the impressions of three of those who served on the periphery of the imperial process. The three vignettes that make up this work offer a unique insight into the world of the intermediary class. In addition to their entertainment value, they are an important contribution to our understanding of the history of Tibet and its encounter with the outside world.

To fully appreciate what follows, we must first understand a little of the background to these accounts, for they presume a knowledge of Tibetan history and culture. A recognisable Tibetan state first emerged in the seventh century of the Christian era, when tribal groups united under the rule of a king called Srong-brtsan sGam-po (605–49/50 A.D.), who extended the power of his Yar-klungs dynasty over most of the Tibetan-speaking world. To the period of his rule is attributed the introduction of Buddhism, although the influence of the new religion was initially confined to court circles. Srong-brtsan sGam-po's successors, however, increasingly turned to Buddhism at the expense of the existing belief system, an early form of the Bon faith which subsequently developed a close association with Buddhist beliefs and practises.

The initial introduction of Buddhism into Tibetan society was associated with the activities of an Indian Tantric master, Gu-ru Rin-po-che, who was invited to Tibet by a king called Khri-srong lDe-brtsan: 742-c.97). Although a historical personage, Gu-ru Rin-po-che became a legendary figure, who in the Tibetan understanding used his magical powers to subdue the forces of the Bon-po and establish Buddhism as the dominant faith in Tibet.

In the political sphere, Yar-klungs dynasty Tibet became a powerful Central Asian empire. Its forces ranged as far west as Samarkand, and in 763 they sacked and briefly occupied Changan (present-day Xian), the capital of China's T'ang empire. Internally, however, Tibet was far from unified during this period. There were frequent local revolts against central authority. The competing interests of aristocratic and religious forces culminated in 842 with the assassination of King gLang-dar-ma, the last of the Yar-klungs dynasty. The Tibetan empire subsequently collapsed, fragmenting into a series of principalities exercising purely local hegemony.

Buddhist sources depict gLang-dar-ma as a follower of the Bon faith and an enemy of Buddhism, whose assassination by a Buddhist monk was a necessary evil. More probably his death was the result of a complex struggle for power and influence by court factions, none of whom were then powerful enough to maintain the authority of the Yar-klungs dynasty.

Not until the eleventh century did a measure of unity return to Tibet and when it did Buddhism was to be the primary unifying force. In a remarkable period of religious fervour Indian Buddhist masters were invited to Tibet, Tibetans travelled to India to obtain Buddhist texts and teachings, and a massive programme of translating Sanskrit texts into Tibetan was undertaken. Much of the impetus for this movement came from the western Tibetan rulers, but Buddhism spread throughout Tibet with differing sects developing around particular personalities, monasteries, and central texts.

This second propagation of Buddhism established deep roots in Tibetan society and was given a solid economic and



political basis through the system by which monastic centres were closely associated with particular local aristocratic patrons. Buddhist beliefs spread throughout Tibetan society and the intermingling of Indian Mahayana and Tantric elements with indigenous beliefs produced the particular characteristics of Tibetan Buddhism.

The predominance of Buddhism resulted in accounts of Tibetan history which reflect Buddhist understandings of the past. Thus we read in the following accounts that 'meat-eating demons inhabited my country in the very early times when nobody had heard of Buddhism'. Such a statement reflects the Buddhist understanding of Tibetan civilisation as dating to the introduction of Buddhism, before which existed only darkness and ignorance, not least the practise of animal sacrifices abhorrent to Buddhist tenets.

The development of various Buddhist sects within Tibet lead to competition among them for power and influence. The dGe-lugs-pa, the last major sect to develop, eventually emerged as the most powerful. They drew their inspiration from Tsong-kha-pa (1357–1419), a reformer who emphasised the need for monastic discipline. His principal disciple established the great monastic centre of bKra-shis-lhun-po in gZhis-kha-rtse, Tibet's second-largest town, and later came to be regarded as the first of a series of incarnating monks. The third in the lineage of these incarnations was given the title of Ta-la'i bLa-ma by the Mongol prince Altan Khan.

Tibet had developed close ties with Mongolia, and in the seventeenth century Mongol forces intervened in Tibetan internal struggles, making the fifth Ta-la'i bLa-ma the religious head of the country. 'The Great Fifth' as he is often known, was an outstanding leader, whose reign marked the full flowering of the Tibetan religio-political system. More than 250 years passed before another Ta-la'i bLa-ma gained such authority over Tibet.

In the intervening years China became the dominant power in Tibet following events in 1720, when Chinese forces expelled the Dzungar Mongol force which had taken power in lHa-sa after disputes over the authority of the sixth Ta-la'i

bLa-ma. In time, the Chinese emperor appointed two civil officers, known as *Ambans*, as his representatives in lHa-sa. In the ensuing century and a half, power in lHa-sa was contested by the *Ambans* and the Tibetan Regents. The incarnation system meant a period of Regentship during the minority of a new Ta-la'i bLa-ma, and during the nineteenth century the ninth to twelfth Ta-la'i bLa-mas all died young (several in suspicious circumstances), meaning the Regents were the leading Tibetan authority in lHa-sa.

The weakening of central authority in China during the nineteenth century meant that by 1895, when the young thirteenth Ta-la'i bLa-ma was installed, China's power to influence events in Tibet was greatly restricted. Despite this Tibet remained, in the Chinese understanding, a part of the Chinese empire, but as the nineteenth century came to an end Tibet was attracting the attention of another empire: the British.

The central feature of the Tibetan socio-cultural system was its religion. The desire to protect this system meant that the Tibetans were increasingly concerned by the growing power of the British, who had brought most of the area to the south of Tibet under their control during the nineteenth century. During this time Tibet tried to maintain its isolation, refusing entry to Europeans and ignoring British attempts to establish diplomatic ties with lHa-sa.

In the early 1880s, Sarat Chandra Das, a Tibetan-speaking Bengali in British employ, travelled to gZhis-kha-rtse. There he established ties with the Pan-chen bLa-ma, the Abbot of bKras-shis-lhun-po who was Tibet's second-highest religious figure. Das was accompanied for much of his journey by bLa-ma O-rgyan rGya-mtsho, a Sikkimese monk, later to employ Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs. Das travelled to lHa-sa and returned to India to report his findings to the British. When the Tibetan government eventually discovered Das's role, they executed his main supporter, the Pan-chen bLa-ma's Prime Minister, and imprisoned most of his family and servants. The executed monk had been a popular and respected figure in gZhis-kha-rtse, but his Pan-chen bLa-ma had died in 1882 and lHa-sa

was able to enforce its authority over gZhis-kha-rtse (something it could by no means always do) and demonstrate its determination to resist official ties with British India. The Chinese encouraged Tibetan fears of the outside world in an effort to maintain their prominent position there, and when the thirteenth Ta-la'i bLa-ma took power in 1895 his country remained firmly isolationist.

In British India, Tibet's desire for isolation was viewed with some concern. The Raj relied a great deal on the flow of information concerning its interests. As there was little reliable contemporary information available concerning Tibetan government and politics, the imperial government sought to collect intelligence from across the Himalayas by means of Indian surveyors, who travelled through Tibet disguised as pilgrims while compiling maps and gathering information, and spies such as Chandra Das. The occasional foreign traveller who managed to enter Tibet, such as the Japanese Buddhist monk, Kawaguchi Ekai, also provided valuable information. Tibet, however, was not a priority for policy-makers in the British Indian government as long as it remained isolated and theoretically part of the Chinese empire.

Within late nineteenth century British India there was a great fear that the expanding Russian empire would threaten the British position. In its most extreme form, this fear centred on Russian forces entering India through the Himalayan passes, although more realistic thinkers saw the threat more in terms of Russian influence destabilising the British Himalayan possessions. The result was the 'Great Game', the clandestine struggle to map and to control the Central Asian passes into India. While all this was concentrated on the North-West Frontier of India, the fear grew that Russia might attempt to spread its influence into Tibet.

In 1899, George Nathaniel (later Lord) Curzon became Viceroy of India. Curzon had travelled widely in Central Asia and was a visionary thinker. A committed imperialist, he accepted and even admired Russian imperial ambitions, but he was determined to protect British interest in the East. In his

view that meant excluding Russian influence from India by preventing it reaching India's borders. Curzon was thus a leading proponent of 'forward' policies, those which countered foreign threats, real or imagined, by influence and actions beyond India's frontiers.

Soon after he became Viceroy, Curzon began to receive reports that Russia had succeeded in establishing ties with lHa-sa. While it now seems most likely that the initiative for these ties came from the Ta-la'i bLa-ma, who saw Russia as a pro-Buddhist state offering a possible counter-balance to Chinese and British power, Curzon saw ties between lHa-sa and St. Petersburg as a Russian threat to the British Indian interests. He made two attempts to commence communications with the Ta-la'i bLa-ma but his letters were returned unopened, a response Curzon took as an insult to British power and prestige. The Viceroy began to plan a dynamic response to the Tibetan situation and the machinery of empire began to portray Tibet as a fanatical religious dictatorship which posed a direct threat to India.

The thirteenth Ta-la'i bLa-ma had little knowledge of the outside world when he took over at lHa-sa. He had more immediate concerns, however. After the State Oracle had warned of a threat to his life, the Regent who had ruled for the previous ten years of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma's minority was found to have tried to kill the young Ta-la'i bLa-ma by means of sorcery. The Regent and his fellow conspirators were flogged and sentenced to life imprisonment, dying soon after. The incident was of course widely known and was to have later repercussions. The Regent was a former Abbot of the bsTan-rgyas-gling monastery, and these events alienated bsTan-rgyas-gling (where Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs worked as a scribe) to the extent that the monastery sided with the Chinese against the Tibetans during fighting in lHa-sa in 1911. As a result, it was subsequently disendowed by the Ta-la'i bLa-ma when he returned to power.

While the Ta-la'i bLa-ma was the supreme power in lHa-sa, there were many constraints on his authority. The monasteries called Se-ra, 'Bras-spungs and dGa'ldan had considerable

influence, while in gZhis-kha-rtse the Pan-chen bLa-ma had considerable autonomy. Many of his followers regarded him as their supreme authority. He had his own court and government, and at various times in Tibetan history the Pan-chen bLa-mas had even conducted their own foreign policy initiatives.

This devolved power presented problems for the British when they attempted to establish diplomatic communications with lHa-sa. In British eyes the Pan-chen bLa-ma became a possible alternative to the Ta-la'i bLa-ma, an idea which also occurred to the Chinese. Consequently both powers attempted to use the gZhis-kha-rtse Abbot as a tool with which to bring Tibet into their camp.

In 1903–4, Curzon despatched a British mission to Tibet under the command of an Indian Political Officer, Colonel Francis Younghusband. The mission fought its way to lHa-sa, where it forced the Tibetans to sign a treaty giving the British the right to establish three so-called Trade Agencies in Tibetan territory. In addition, from 1904–8 the British occupied the Chumbi Valley, a narrow wedge of Tibetan territory protruding between Sikkim and Bhutan, as security for an indemnity imposed on the Tibetans by the mission.

In the immediate aftermath of the Younghusband mission it appeared likely that Tibet would be drawn into a close association with British India. This was certainly the intention of Curzon and Younghusband. They had hoped to station a British representative in lHa-sa to ensure that the Tibetan Government followed policies beneficial to British India. But although frontier officers of the Raj wanted to use Tibet as a 'buffer state' between India and the Russian and Chinese empires, the British Government at Whitehall took a very different view. They had no wish to upset the Chinese, who regarded Tibet as their territory, and refused to allow the Government of India to extend its authority in Tibet.

The thirteenth Ta-la'i bLa-ma had fled into exile in Mongolia shortly before Younghusband's forces arrived in lHa-sa, and in the absence of any real authority at lHa-sa the Chinese were soon able to become the dominant power there. The British officers stationed at the Trade Agencies, who

were under the immediate command of the Political Officer in Sikkim, attempted to resist the growth of Chinese power and to support the Tibetans. But in the absence of any backing from their home government there was little they could do.

The British frontier officers who served in Tibet were appointed by the Indian Political Department which was, in effect, the diplomatic corps of the Government of India. The term 'Trade Agent' was a polite fiction for external consumption; their real duties were diplomatic. The Agents gathered intelligence concerning Tibet and cultivated the friendship of influential Tibetans in an attempt to influence them to follow policies favourable to the Raj. The men who served in Tibet were strong supporters of the policies developed by Curzon and Younghusband. Despite the lack of support from their home government, they continued to attempt to strengthen the British position in Tibet. But Whitehall refused to allow them to visit lHa-sa and they were confined to Yatung in the Chumbi Valley and to rGyal-rtse (Tibet's third-biggest town, 120 miles southwest of lHa-sa). Without access to lHa-sa, their influence was limited.

The most important of these British frontier officers all appear in the texts which follow. Captain (later Lieutenant-Colonel Sir) W.F. O'Connor had been Younghusband's 'right-hand man' on the lHa-sa mission. He remained in Tibet when the mission departed, serving as the Trade Agent in rGyal-rtse. O'Connor befriended the Pan-chen bLa-ma, but was put under considerable pressure by the Chinese in Tibet, who sought to get rid of the British Trade Agencies. O'Connor was an outspoken proponent of 'forward' policies, who frequently upset his own home government. He was withdrawn from Tibet in 1907 to accompany the son of the Maharajah of Sikkim on a world tour and never returned to Tibet.

O'Connor was replaced by Lieutenant (later Lieutenant-Colonel) F.M. Bailey. Like O'Connor, Bailey had served with Younghusband, and he was to become one of the most famous of frontier officers. After serving in the rGyal-rtse and Yatung Trade Agencies in 1905–9, he won fame with his

exploration of the upper reaches of the eastern Brahmaputra and as a spy in Russian Central Asia after the Bolshevik takeover. In 1921 he was recalled to the Tibetan frontier and served as Political Officer Sikkim until 1928.

The most influential officer was Charles (later Sir Charles) Bell, an Indian Civil Service officer attached to the Indian Political Department, who became the architect of British policy towards Tibet. Bell served as Political Officer Sikkim for most of the period from 1908–20, and became a close friend and confidant of the thirteenth Ta-la'i bLa-ma. He developed a great understanding of the Tibetans, and it comes as a surprise to read sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul's comment that 'Bell was never popular with Tibetans'. This may be an indication of the tendency for local employees at that time to associate themselves with a particular British officer, who acted as their patron. As the British frontiersmen did not always get on well with each other, or agree with each others policy initiatives, their local employees were often caught up in these conflicts and naturally adopted the views of their patron.

The longest-serving of the Raj's frontier officers in Tibet was David Macdonald, an Anglo-Sikkimese whose understanding of the local languages and cultures was unmatched. Macdonald first served as a translator on the Younghusband mission. In 1909 he was appointed Trade Agent in Yatung, where he remained until 1924. For much of that time he also had command of the rGyal-rtse Agency and he served briefly as Political Officer in Sikkim before the arrival of Bailey.

The Trade Agencies were also home to a number of other British officials. At rGyal-rtse there was a Medical Officer and one or two British Indian Army officers in charge of the Trade Agent's military escort, as well as a number of army or ex-army personnel in charge of supply and transport, communications and office work. Lieutenant Dr Robert Steen, who is mentioned by sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul, was the first of the Medical Officers. Like his friend and superior, Captain O'Connor, he was a young Irishmen who gained a good command of the Tibetan language.

Sergeant Johnson, who accused sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul of dishonesty, was one of the Head Clerks at the rGyal-rtse Agency, an ex-military telegraphist who transferred to the civil staff after all of the previous incumbents of the clerical position had proved either dishonest or incompetent. But, according to Paul, Johnson proved as dishonest as his predecessors, although there is no record of the cause of his suicide in the British archives.

Despite the many restrictions imposed on the imperial frontiersmen in the 1905–13 period, they were able to establish close ties with the Pan-chen bLa-ma, who was invited to India in 1906 to meet the Prince of Wales. Accompanied by O'Connor, the Pan-chen bLa-ma travelled to Calcutta and by train to Rawalpindi for talks with the British civil and military authorities, as well as visiting the sacred sites of the Buddha in north India. Ultimately however, the friendship of the Pan-chen bLa-ma was of little benefit, and support for him was to be abandoned after the Ta-la'i bLa-ma fled to India in 1910.

Since he had left lHa-sa in 1904, the Ta-la'i bLa-ma had spent several years in Mongolia and China. He had eventually travelled to Peking to seek a settlement with the Chinese, who had ordered him to return to lHa-sa. Once there, however, he was soon forced to flee when a force of Chinese troops arrived in lHa-sa. The Ta-la'i bLa-ma had by now concluded that the British were not a threat to him, and thus he fled south to India. Although many elements of British government regarded him as a spent force who was of little secular importance, Charles Bell, the Political Officer in Sikkim, saw the advantages of aiding the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. He befriended and supported the Tibetan leader and when the Chinese position in Tibet collapsed after the 1911 Revolution in China, Bell's foresight was rewarded. The Ta-la'i bLa-ma returned to Tibet as the undisputed ruler of the country and declared its independence from China. Bell was then in the position of being the most trusted foreign advisor to Tibet's religious and secular head, and he was able to ensure that Anglo-Tibetan relations proceeded on a sound and generally friendly footing.



Thus, despite the image of Tibet as an isolated and seldom-visited land, large numbers of British officers lived and worked there. They travelled up from India, staying in British built *dak* (literally: 'post') bungalows along the way, and many of them remained there for long periods. Much of our knowledge of Tibet comes from those men.

Apart from government officials, there were a number of other Europeans living in or visiting the towns near the Tibetan frontier, Darjeeling (rDo-rje-gling), Kalimpong (Ka-spungs) and Gangtok (sGang-tog), the capital of Sikkim. Along with scientists and scholars such as Johan van Manen, there were tea-planters, traders, teachers, and missionaries. The latter were generally forbidden to enter Tibet by the Government of India, in deference to Tibetans' strong opposition to allowing Christian missionaries to work in Tibet. The Reverend MacKenzie however, who spent much of his life on the frontier, was allowed into Tibet as far as Yatung on several occasions as a guest of David Macdonald, who had become a devout Christian.

Tibet also attracted another class of Europeans; those seeking spiritual enlightenment. Tibetan Buddhism attracted a number of Europeans to, and across, the frontier. The most notable of these was the Frenchwoman, Alexandra David-Néel, who travelled extensively on the frontiers of Tibet. Her relations with the British officials were often strained (Bell had her deported from Sikkim on one occasion for overstaying) but in 1923 she ignored the official restrictions on travel to Tibet and journeyed to lHa-sa disguised as a Tibetan pilgrim. On her return she stopped at the Trade Agency in rGyal-rtse. We may note that while there have been suggestions that David-Néel never reached lHa-sa, British officials on the spot, such as Bailey and Macdonald, had no such doubts.

In order to deal effectively with the Tibetans, the imperial powers needed intermediaries; local employees who were familiar with the languages and customs of the Tibetans. The British had begun to train candidates for these posts as early as the 1870s. They opened a school in rDo-rje-gling which

produced a steady supply of pupils familiar with both English and local languages and cultures. Others, such as sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul were recruited from among local scribes in the frontier regions, who had previously worked for the Tibetan government or monasteries.

These intermediaries had a difficult role. They needed to learn the subtleties of British imperial thinking, how, for example, to be deferential but not subservient, for the British frontier officers liked their employees to be straight-forward and plain-spoken like themselves. Some intermediaries, such as Laden La (who is referred to by Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs), became extremely powerful. But their own identities could be confused. Laden La dressed and in many ways behaved like a British officer, yet this made him enemies among the local communities and he was regarded with some suspicion by many of the British. They felt that their employees should, while maintaining the prestige of the Raj, not abandon their own culture. Striking the right balance was extremely difficult, as was resisting the opportunities for corruption.

While there are many records of the European presence in Tibet, and several accounts of the Tibetan perspective, the views of the intermediaries have largely been lost. Yet the insights of those individuals, 'betwixt and between' cultures European and Tibetan, are of great value. Thus the three accounts which follow provide a fascinating glimpse of the encounter between Tibet and the British imperial power.

While they are not free of bias, and are strongly influenced by understandings learned from the imperial officers, these accounts describe both day-to-day life in Tibet and the British imperial process from the perspective of those at the lower levels of society. They may be hagiographical, for they were written at van Manen's request and the authors were naturally keen to praise their patron. But generally they are refreshingly honest in their observations. We see how they routinely undertook long and difficult journeys. They accepted the great hardships of Himalayan travel as a matter of course. Thus they pass off in a few sentences tribulations which in European accounts occupy pages, and even

chapters. There is less awareness of landscape; the immensity of the Himalayas was not remarkable to them, and there is always a concern for spiritual progress, whatever religious tradition that may be expressed in.

Perhaps their most revealing aspect concerns the three authors' view of the contrast between Tibetan and European societies. While many Europeans admired Tibet's spiritual culture, these men admired the British. Such actions as providing free western medical treatment to all classes of people won the imperial government great favour. While they were reluctant to adopt Christianity, the intermediaries saw the British as living more by their religious principles than the Tibetans. They were highly appreciative of the justice system of the imperial government, which brought law and order to the formerly lawless frontier regions and treated its citizens far more equitably than the Tibetan system.

The intermediaries, largely free of the rose-tinted spectacles through which many Europeans viewed Tibetan society, emphasise the brutality of day-to-day existence in Tibet. They record the harsh treatment meted out to ordinary Tibetans by the monastic guards, soldier monks whose whips and sticks kept order in the monasteries. These guards were not the peaceful monks, serenely meditating on spiritual matters, about whom we read in so many European travellers' accounts. Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs is particularly critical of the Tibetan monks, these 'donkeys clad in tiger skins' who knew little about Buddhism and had no interest in learning more. He saw the corruption and degradation of Tibetan society, where 'nobody was interested in learning'. If this perspective is overly critical, it provides a welcome balance to the flow of idealistic accounts of Tibetan society and government.

The experiences of Ts'an-chih Chen, who worked for the Chinese imperial government, are very similar to those of the other two writers, who worked for the British. This is hardly surprising as the British, Chinese, and to a lesser extent Russian, governments used very similar methods to achieve their common aim: bringing Tibet under their influence. Nor

was it unusual that all three men worked for both imperial governments and the Tibetan authorities. The number of men literate in both Tibetan and English was never large, and those thus qualified were much in demand. Similarly the ease with which these men moved between the worlds of trade, monastic service and imperial government service reflects the close ties that existed among the literate sections of frontier society.

For sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul and Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs, there was no concept of loyalty to an Indian government; an Indian identity was foreign to them, they were neither Hindus nor Muslims. British government offered them the best prospects. The pay was good and those who worked for the government gained status among their communities. Their prospects were not governed by caste, class or family background; promotion was on merit, and despite its many defects, the imperial power gave the authors of these texts opportunities they could never had had under indigenous government.

The British Empire gained the loyalty of such men, whose support for the British was an important factor in maintaining and increasing the power of the Raj. The Government of India depended on its local employees, who became a cosmopolitan class, at home in European and Asian cultures. The insights gained by these individuals are an extremely valuable resource for the study of the imperial process. In addition to their entertainment value, the accounts which follow demonstrate the complexities involved in the study of the imperial process. They also indicate that the idealised view of traditional Tibetan society presented by many outsiders was, and still is, an incomplete picture of a society which, like any other, did not always live up to its ideals.

Alex McKay

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for Asian Studies, Leiden, 1997*

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# Introduction

In August 1948 the National Museum of Ethnology at Leiden the Netherlands acquired a fine collection mainly consisting of Tibetan Buddhist ethnographica and numbering some 350 objects. They had been brought together by Mari Albert Johan van Manen (1877–1943), a Dutchman who dedicated his life to the advancement of Oriental Studies. It led him from behind Dutch dykes to Himalayan heights.

Aged eighteen Johan became an active member of the Netherlands Section of the Theosophical Society, a global movement seeking to introduce elements of both Hinduism and Buddhism to western thought. This international fraternity had been founded in New York in 1875 by the Russian-born Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steele Olcott, a former spiritualist. The motto of the Theosophical Society is: 'There is no religion higher than truth.'

Applying this credo to his personal interest, being the language, religion and culture of the Tibetan people, Johan van Manen's first article published in Dutch on this subject includes references to books written on the Himalayan region by W.W. Rockhill, Sven Hedin, A. Grunwedel, L.A. Waddell *et al.* Here van Manen presents us with a critical analysis of views H.P. Blavatsky held on Tibet, reflecting his independence and desire to correct authorities whenever considered necessary.

After playing a considerable part in the promotion and acceptance of Theosophy in the Low Countries, Johan van Manen was appointed the first General Secretary of the European Federation of National Societies inaugurated in London (1903). He went on to organise the Congress at Amsterdam (1904), London (1905) and Paris (1906). During these years van Manen worked in close co-operation with the leading Theosophists of his time: Annie Besant and especially Bishop C.W. Leadbeater, the ideologist of modern theosophy.

Having left Europe for the Indian Subcontinent, Johan van Manen officiated as Assistant Director of the library attached to the Theosophical Society's International Headquarters at Adyar near Madras (S.E. India) from 1910 until 1916. The companionship of the Library's Director Dr Otto Schröder did indeed prove to be a rich one, thanks to the library's scholarship, constructive organisation, acquisition of valuable manuscripts and contacts with important foreign libraries.

At Adyar a friend of van Manen reports that his rooms were '... crowded with books, not only the walls but the floors also, and one had to thread one's way through piles of books on the floor to enter his study . . . 'On his appearance and character we read: 'A pituresque figure he was often clad in Javanese or Malay dress, a brilliant conversationalist, a companionable friend, never married, and generous to the poor folk around Adyar.' (*The Theosophist*, May 1943, pp 122–4)

Van Manen spent most of the period 1916–18 in the rDo-rje-gling (Darjeeling) District expanding his knowledge of the Tibetan language and culture. A long-time wish had now, no doubt, been fulfilled. He then moved to Calcutta, and was attached to the Imperial Library (1919) and the Indian Museum (1921–2).

In 1923 he was appointed General Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, a scholarly institute founded in 1784 by Sir William Jones. Through his devotion, enthusiasm and zeal van Manen not only breathed new life into the post of General Secretary but he also began to rebuild the Society as a renowned temple of science. During the following years he acquired a celebrity status in Calcutta. [He is mentioned in one of the *Two Tales of the Occult* (New York, 1970) by Mircea Eliade and in W. Somerset Maugham's *A Writer's Notebook* (London, 1949, pp 261–2). See also: P. Richardus, *The Dutch Orientalist Johan van Manen: His Life and Work*. Kern Institute Miscellanea 3 (Leiden, 1989).]

While residing at rDo-rje-gling van Manen had come into contact with two mentors in his study of the Tibetan language: Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs, a monk schooled in Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul,

trained in western culture along western lines. During daily classes the latter served van Manen as a translator, the former as a copyist of religious and historical texts. They were later joined by Ts'an-chih Chen, a clerk of Sino-Tibetan stock.

In due course these men wrote their autobiographies, at van Manen's request and inspired by his opinion that unique information could be acquired through such life stories. Moreover, each of them expresses in a personal manner the profound respect felt for their Dutch Sahib's eagerness to learn, his generosity, humanity and wisdom. At that moment in time it was, indeed, rather unusual for Europeans to work together with informants as anthropologists would nowadays choose to call them.

The late P.H. Pott was the first draw attention to these *documents humains*. In his *Introduction to the Tibetan Collection of the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden* (Leiden, 1951) we read on page 134 that these three texts are

*... crowded with ethnographical, sociological and historico-religious data, which after the work of analysing and putting into proper shape has been accomplished, will be gladly received by the orientalist.*

The three autobiographies provide us with an extraordinary insight into the perspectives of the lower ranks of frontier intermediaries (albeit above the average in possessing the skill of reading and writing) in the Himalayan region at a time when authority and identity there were contended between Tibet, China and the British Imperial Court of India. Most accounts of the period and the region handed down to us were either composed by official observers or learned scholars writing for a specific audience, their works censored by the governments they served. Here we are shown a different perspective: fresh insights and understandings or misunderstandings, providing us with an informative change from the usual hierarchical views. Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs, sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul and Ts'an-chih Chen travelled widely, regularly setting off on a journey which Europeans would have considered to require a fully-fledged expedition. They also crossed cultures, and in

recording their stories for van Manen they have left us fresh and stimulating insights into both our own and Asian societies.

Part I consists of the autobiography of Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs (1882–1926). Born and raised in Central Tibet, he serves as a scribe to the then Ta-la'i bLa-ma. While at lHa-sa he attends numerous Buddhist festivities, descriptions of which are given. Having sought refuge at the monasteries of dGa'ldan and bKra-shis-lhun-po, Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs travels to the Kathmandu Valley. From here he sets off to Raxaul and reaches the village of Ghoom (rDo-rje-gling District). Next, Tibet and Sikkim are visited. After a second pilgrimage to Kathmandu, he moves on to the northwestern region of Nepal before returning to rDo-rje-gling.

Here, in the second half of 1916, Johan van Manen requests Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs (whom he affectionately calls 'dGe-rgan', meaning 'tutor') to assist him with his Buddhist studies. The most significant result of their co-operation is perhaps the Tibetan's expedition to Central Tibet (April 1921) in order to acquire manuscripts and block-prints from local monasteries. This collection of Tibetan Buddhist texts was later divided between Johan van Manen, the University of Calcutta and the Imperial Library. When Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs died, van Manen must have felt heart-broken. Indeed, he had not only lost a most capable collaborator but also a close friend whom he described as 'a good and lovable man'. Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs's autobiography (Inventory nr. RMV 2739:189) consists of a 765-page long manuscript written in Tibetan. Shortly after its completion in December 1924 an anonymous verbatim English translation was made on which the present rendition is based.

Part II deals with sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul (1877–c.1935) of Tibetan (Khams) extraction. While being educated at the British High School in rDo-rje-gling, young sKar-ma becomes versed in Tibetan, Hindi and English. When the Pan-chen bLa-ma visited India as a guest of the British government, Paul was appointed interpreter. As such he visited Rawalpindi, Agra, Delhi, Benares and Bodh Gaya. After a short sojourn in Calcutta, the Tibetan party travelled on to rDo-rje-gling. Here



Paul is employed as a translator to Lieutenant Dr Robert Steen, an Irish physician on his way to the English hospital in Tibet. Observations on various facets of life (health, festivities, tax system) and the natural environment (passes, mountains, rivers) made in the years 1906–9 during which he served the British Trade Agent F.M. Bailey are reported.

Having been wrongfully dismissed (to be rehabilitated many years later) by the English due to alledged doubts about his political integrity, sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul spends almost a year (during which most interesting notes are made) at lHa-sa, the capital of Tibet. He stays there in the company of his brother, Mr. Jampey, who had served as the English translator to the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. It may be added here that another of his brothers, named Mr. T. Wangyal, had officiated as the Sub-Divisional Magistrate in rDo-rje-gling.

Back in the District of rDo-rje-gling Paul takes up teaching at the missionary Middle English School of Ghoom. He also instructs foreign Christians in the Tibetan language before being converted to Christianity himself in 1913. His co-translation of a booklet titled *New Tibetan Hymns* was published by The Mission House in October 1918. Two years later, however, Paul returns to his ancestral religion, Tibetan Buddhism, and was subsequently dismissed by the missionaries in charge of the Ghoom Middle English School. In despair he turns to his Dutch friend Johan van Manen, now residing in Calcutta, who sees to it he is appointed Tibetan Lecturer at the University of Calcutta.

In his above mentioned book P.H. Pott pictures sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul as

*a capable, perhaps more or less pedantic school-teacher, who had an eye for everything that happened around him and had outgrown his early, original surroundings. Moreover he had an implicit trust and faith in the government he served. In his portrait we find full confirmation of these traits.*

The final draft of Paul's autobiography (Inv. nr. RMV 2739:190) was finished in 1928. The Tibetan version has 617 pages, his own English translation has 414 pages.

Part III deals with the illustrated autobiography (Inv. nr. RMV 2739:191) of Ts'an-chih Chen and counts 1,035 pages. It was written in Tibetan as well as Chinese before being translated into an English of sorts by the author himself. Unfortunately little background information on his working with Johan van Manen has been handed down to us. Pott mentions in this connection the terms 'sketchy translations' and 'copies of manuscripts and drawings'. A small number of these illustrations went with two short articles by Johan van Manen entitled 'Tibet', *The New Outlook*, (March 1925), pp 16–19 and 'The Rope-sliders of Tibet', *The India Monthly Magazine* (December 1928), pp 40–3. The twenty-six pen drawings included in the present publication have been selected because of their relevance underlining the fact that Ts'an-chih Chen's existence was largely influenced by the political situation in Central Tibet and subsequent problems at the turn of the century.

In summary, all three texts contain candidly expressed views on matters played out against a background consisting of the Anglo-Indian and Sino-Tibetan cultures together with their socio-political characteristics. Moreover, the fact that nowadays Buddhism no longer flourishes in Tibet adds greatly to their importance. This can especially be said of the descriptions of Buddhist festivities as held in Central Tibet at the turn of the century. Indeed, these reports present us with a most interesting addition to the eye-witness accounts published by Hugh Richardson in his *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year* (London, 1993).

When considered necessary to transliterate a Tibetan term, title, name etc., the Wylie system (see T.V. Wylie, *A standard system of Tibetan transcription*, Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, Vol. 22 (1959), pp 261–7) is applied, while capitalizing so-called root letters of the segments of names as the authors did. Their renditions were seldom altered. In order to facilitate an approximate pronunciation of the Tibetan language one may refer to R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilisation*, (London, 1972). With regard to place-names and their retrieval in a present-day map by a non-Tibetologist, their

first appearance obeys the following convention: lHa-sa (Lhasa), rDo-rje-gling (Darjeeling). Chinese names are transcribed in the conventional manner or otherwise according to Wade-Giles and diacritical marks on Sanskrit terms are omitted.

Editing the three autobiographies as first proposed in my article *Some Remarks on M.A.J. van Manen's Contribution to Tibetology*, *Studia Tibetica* II (Munich 1988), pp 388–90, would have proved impossible without P.H. Pott's support. Indeed, as the Director of the above-mentioned National Museum of Ethnology and Keeper of this museum's Tibetan Department, he kindly provided access to, use of and permission to publish all the material presented in this book. A word of thanks is, furthermore, due to: Jim Cooper, P.N. Kuiper, David McCarthy of LaserScript Ltd, the late Ronald H. Poelmeyer, Jonathan Price of Curzon Press Ltd, P. C. Verhagen, Han J. Vermeulen and L. Vreeswijk. Without their keen interest and/or scholarly advice I would not have been able to complete this project. Last but not least, I am indebted to Alex C. McKay both for his contribution to the present work and for his inspiration shown during its final stage.

Peter Richardus  
*Leiden, 1997*

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The Autobiography of  
**Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs**



PLATE 1 Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs, c. 1923

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# Editorial Note

This first autobiography with Inventory number RMV 2739: 189 consists of a 765-page Tibetan manuscript divided into twenty-five Chapters and three Appendices. Writing this text was prompted by Johan van Manen when, on 16 September 1922 he addressed his friend, a Tibetan Buddhist monk called Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs as follows, 'Describe with great care where you have been and what you have seen and done in the past forty-one years of your life!'

The final draft of the first chapter was completed on 6 October 1922 and Chapter 17 (originally meant to be the last) at Calcutta on 4.36 p.m. on 22 December 1922. This minute dating took place with a view to astrological calculation as to the success of the book. Then, another three chapters were added, the last of which (Chapter 20) Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs completed in the middle of 1923. During the next eighteen months he added Chapters 21–5 whenever something worth mentioning had occurred. The first Appendix was composed in October 1920, the second in October 1920 and the third in December 1921. An Epilogue was added by Johan van Manen shortly after Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs had died on 22 February 1926.



## ❀ one ❀

I was born in the district of sNye-mo to the northwest of lHa-sa (Lhasa), the holy capital of Tibet. My parents had five children: four boys and one girl. I, Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs, am their third son. Because our father was a good wood-cutter, he was asked to help to repair blocks used for printing the *bKa'-'gyur* (i.e., the Tibetan Buddhist canon) at the monastery called sNar-thang. Having fallen ill, he died unexpectedly on his way home. I was seven years old at that time and can even now remember how his friends and next-of-kin comforted my mother. How they all wept! From then on life was difficult: borrowing grain and money forced us into high debts.

Together with some other young boys I would look after our family cow each day, taking with us a small leather bag filled with barley-flour to eat and a dried sheep's stomach containing barley-beer to drink. Whenever heavy rains fell in the afternoon, we would be drenched to the bone while trying to bring all the animals together before sunset. This often made us cry.

My mother died early one morning in spite of the ceremonies performed by a doctor. Her three younger children asleep on the verandah, woke up to the sound of a weeping aunt and uncle. A monk was now asked to perform the transfer-of-the-soul rituals. A few days later our dear mother's body was taken from the house. We children – I was ten years old at that time – now felt like small birds left alone by their parents.

Not much later my eldest brother dPal-ldan Tshe-ring returned home from lHa-sa where he had copied religious texts in the service of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma, Head of dGe-lugs denomination. Of course, those people who had lent us money now visited us immediately. My brothers, my little sister and I were, nevertheless, glad to be reunited!



It was soon decided I should also serve the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. Having been given new clothes and boots, a ceremonial scarf and some good advice, I travelled in the company of dPal-ldan Tshe-ring and reached lHa-sa after a five day journey.

❁ two ❁

Shortly after our arrival we found a place to stay in a house built at the foot of the hill on which the Potala, as the Ta-la'i bLa-ma's winter palace is called, stood. You can imagine how astonished a ten year old boy born and raised in a small village was to see for the first time the image of Sakyamuni Buddha inside the Jo-khang, the most sacred temple in Tibet.

Once able to spell the Tibetan alphabet, I followed reading classes. Soon afterwards I was taught to write on a wooden blackboard with lines of white powder. Examinations took place every seventh, fourteenth and twenty-ninth day of the month. After comparing our work, our teacher was able to see which boy could write the best, second best, third best and so on. If this proved difficult, he would strike the cheeks of all his pupils once with a bamboo stick. If this proved easy, we were forced to cane the boy who was not able write as well as ourselves. The last pupil in the row then had to beat a skin bag tied to the classroom wall, causing all his schoolmates to laugh at him. In this way we made fast progress. We also chanted verses to honour 'Jam-dbyangs, the Dispeller of Ignorance, from the school roof before going to sleep in the evening.

Besides days off on the eighth, fifteenth and thirtieth of the month we schoolboys also enjoyed Tibetan Buddhist holidays. A description of the nine most important ones is given below:

1. On the first day of the year according to the Tibetan calendar we rose at three a.m. and put on our finest clothes. After several cups of butter-tea, we offered delicacies and lit sacrificial butter lamps to honour the gods. He was thanked in prayer for the past year and asked to bless the coming one. Afterwards parents sent their children to their friends and

relatives with a plate of barley-flour, a mouthful of which was taken along with some barley-beer while wishing each other a long, prosperous life.

When officials of the Tibetan government exchanged New Year's greetings with the Ta-la'i bLa-ma in the Jo-khang, a number of ten to twelve year old boys (all of the same height) danced accompanied by drums and oboes. They were dressed in clothes of brocade, a round cap and held a wooden axe in their hand. Small bells were tied round their ankles. As soon as the music stopped, the doors of the Jo-khang opened. Then, all at the same time, everyone poured in pushing one and other aside in an attempt to go off with as many sweetmeats as possible. Needless to say, the strong and the quick could gather more than the weak. In order to avoid such misbehaviour four guards flogged the greedy while the Ta-la'i bLa-ma looked on with a smile on His face. Schoolboys would wait for a bleeding person to come out of the Jo-khang and then make him or her lose their temper by saying, 'You are a hero, that is why the Ta-la'i bLa-ma gave you a coral medal!' On this and the following festive days I would accompany my brother as a servant wishing luck to the noblemen and officials of lHa-sa. In return for our ceremonial scarf, we received delicacies.

2. On the thirtieth day of the second month the monks from the monasteries of Se-ra, 'Bras-spungs and dGa'-ldan proceeded from the Jo-khang towards the foot of the Potala. On its wall a huge embroidered hanging was suspended using ropes made of yak hair. These were pulled up from inside the palace making sure they ran over wooden wheels. For this reason men sat (not unlike jockeys) near those ends of each of the twenty beams extending from the palace windows and to which the wheels were attached. Each rope was, needless to say, tied firmly to the securely moored ends of the beams inside the building. On one occasion I visited my brother when he worked here.

3. The birthday of Sakyamuni Buddha was celebrated on the fifteenth of the fourth month. Having lit sacrificial butter-

lamps in the Jo-khang, we went to the outer pilgrim route of lHa-sa where the rich gave alms to the poor or blind. At noon young men and women gathered at a temple called gLu. As soon as darkness began to fall, they would return home singing songs and holding hands. In Tibet drunken people lie down by the side of the road. Apart from a little scolding nothing really happens. You are allowed to be happy in whatever way you wish. In countries the English rule, however, policemen will arrest you and fine you too severely!

4. On the fifteenth day of the fifth month everyone gathered in a large park located about half a mile east of the market of lHa-sa. Here the rich merchants pitched their tents, as many as stars in the sky. A monk dressed as an ancient king and possessed by the Protector of Buddhism's spirit then predicted the future of Tibet. He also informed individuals about their personal future. We boys were, of course, much too scared to come near this fearful looking monk. In the afternoon a fine banquet took place. Even those who did not own a marquee enjoyed this festive day.

5. A play about the former lives of Sakyamuni Buddha took place on the first day of the seventh month. The Ta-la'i bLa-ma now invited dancers to His summer palace. If their performance pleased Him, they received many presents. If not, they were either punished or fined. When my school mates and I attended a ceremonial serving of sour milk to monks from the monastery of 'Bras-spungs, several men had foolish thoughts when they saw girls dressed like princesses dance and sing. However, we boys attended this ceremony in order to learn how to live like deities and to learn how to change our sinful deeds into righteous ones.

6. On the twenty-ninth day of the eighth month, 177 monks danced in the courtyard of a monastery at lHa-sa called bsTan-rgyas-gling. They commemorated the birth of their Head Monk who is both King of Tibet and Regent to the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. That morning eight men carried the King to the Ta-la'i bLa-ma's chambers in a palanquin. As he passed, you had to

remove your hat or else you would be flogged. If you wished to speak with the King of Tibet in person, you had to be dressed neatly. Carrying a sword or knife in his presence was not allowed.

7. The tutelary goddess of lHa-sa, dPal-ldan lHa-mo, was worshipped on the fifteenth day of the tenth month. Many people came to see her image being taken out on the streets and reunited with the image of her husband which was normally kept in a shrine in the southern part of lHa-sa. Both images returned to their dark temples until the same day next year. It was said that this couple's two elder daughters had never obeyed their mother. The youngest, however, had always done as told. For that reason dPal-ldan lHa-mo blessed her saying, 'I wish you to be happy, wealthy and honoured by everyone!' During their lifetimes, however, the elder disobedient daughter was allowed to leave the house only once a year, while the younger one was forced to beg at crossroads.

Tibetan Buddhists worshipped these three sisters as follows. The image of dPal-dan lHa-mo's first born daughter was kept inside a small dark temple, her face covered with a cloth of silk. Here the women of lHa-sa revered her. In the early morning of this festive day the statue was placed outside the shrine, its face uncovered. At about noon devotees followed a monk who carried it around the four quarters of lHa-sa. This image consisted of the upper part of her body only and measured a little larger than life size. In one hand she held a skull-cap. The other hand was missing ever since a shepherd had caught her – she had changed into a wolf at that time – killing his sheep. In his anger he threw a stone at the animal, breaking off its foot. After returning to her normal body, she remained without one hand.

The image of the younger disobedient daughter was painted on stone slabs at crossroads. Here she received cups of butter-tea and barley-flour by way of alms: a lesson for us children how our future lives would be if we disobeyed our parents.

The obedient daughter resided at a beautiful temple built in her honour. She was dressed in the finest silk, wore golden

earrings as well as necklaces made of coral and precious stones. The mice (regarded as being her lice) in this shrine were allowed to nibble at the grains and butter offerings. Many tent-dwellers from the northern part of Tibet came to collect mice droppings which they used as protection against illness. In my fourteenth year I visited this goddess with some friends and, while kneeling before her, caught a mouse without the temple guards noticing. Once outside we tied a string to its tail and let it swim in a pool. It did so very well!

8. The ascension of Tsong-kha-pa (founder of the dGe-lugs school in 1409–19 A.D.) was commemorated on the twenty-fifth day of the tenth month. That evening lamps, as many as the stars of heaven, were lit on the rooftops all over Tibet, showing how Tsong-kha-pa's teachings had brought light in a dark country and in dark minds. We children would repeat a prayer loudly and clearly from the roof of our school to honour him. Before going to sleep, we ate some porridge. From this day on, the government officials had to wear their winter clothes.

9. Many people gathered at a monastery called rNam-rgyal on the early morning of the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth month to witness 175 monks dancing to the sound of cymbals, drums and wind instruments. These men staged a fight as in days of old using swords, shields and coats-of-mail. Their helmets were decorated with small flags and feathers. Afterwards they sat down to receive butter-tea and barley-flour supplied by the Tibetan government.

As soon as the Ta-la'i bLa-ma arrived here, His guards cracked their whips three times and shouted, 'Stand up!' Immediately everyone took off their hats and bowed their heads in prayer. The flowers He dropped from a window were regarded as a rare blessing by those lucky enough to catch them. Not much later, two monks appeared carrying long-horns. After the third blow masked dancers entered the courtyard accompanied by the sound of wind instruments, drums, cymbals and bells. Everyone whistled when four fearful-looking graveyard ghouls came forward to receive

some barley-flour from only two dancers. Meanwhile the two other ghouls were flogged as they waited for their meal. This sight made all the spectators laugh.

That afternoon monks wearing black hats danced around a pot filled with boiling oil. When a liquid was poured from a skull cap into this fluid, it sounded like a gunshot. Later, a paper image of a man tied with pieces of string to a stick was set on fire. Now everybody said, 'The demonic enemy is burning!' At that time I did not understand what all this meant. I now know they were ritually destroying all evil. Towards the end of the day unmasked monks wearing their religious clothing and a yellow hat carried a sacrificial cake made of dough into the courtyard. The flagbearers followed the two long-horn carriers. The musicians and the other monks from the monastery of rNam-rgyal fell in. At the rear guards fired blanks. Having arrived at a pile of grass, they said prayers. The sacrificial cake was then placed on top of the grass and set alight. Gun shots now sounded while everyone clapped their hands. Afterwards the laymen went home, the monks returned to the Potala. This concludes my description of Tibetan Buddhist holidays.<sup>1</sup>

### ❀ three ❀

At the age of fifteen I did my first copying work. This took place at the Ta-la'i bLa-ma's summer palace, in a room not far from His private chambers, allowing me to accompany visitors who came to honour and be blessed by their Saviour. I was then interested only in the delicacies they would share with me. Sometimes we boys held a picnic on the flower-covered banks of the river dKyid, just south of lHa-sa. At that time I liked catching fish, but now think this is a sin.

When, two years later, a number of scribes including myself were allowed to copy holy texts, our writing was examined

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on this subject, see H. Richardson, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year* (London, 1993).

first in order to make sure each hand looked exactly the same. My brother dPal-ldan Tshe-ring was in charge of our work. After the Ta-la'i bLa-ma's officials had told him the number of texts needed, the time given and the exact measurements of each page, the government supplied us with all the necessities. Having pasted three sheets of clean paper together using a mixture of barley-flour and water, we then cut the desired number of pages roughly to the right size. The wettened pages were now laid on a wooden board, on which we put ten dry pages, a second wet one, another ten dry ones and so on. During the night a plank on which a rock was placed, flattened the paper. Each sheet had to be checked the next morning. Having hammered its surface smooth with a stone, we cut the sheets to the desired length and width. Finally they were made to reflect like a mirror by rubbing them with bamboo.

We used two kinds of ink for writing. The black ink was imported from southern Tibet. The red one was also imported and contained ground stone. For a bamboo pot filled with dried ink the shopkeepers of lHa-sa asked three srangs (equal to thirty shos). To both inks we added: ground and boiled sugar, plant juices, barley-beer, urine and water. Our bamboo pens (imported from China) needed sharpening only twice daily.

As soon as a text had been copied, its pages were made exactly the same size by rubbing them with a dry bone. The four sides of a volume were painted with saffron. We then once again placed the pages between planks and flattened them by means of a stone. Having checked our work several times, it was wrapped in clean white paper. A government official then presented it to the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. If He felt pleased, we would receive butter-tea and a little money in addition to our monthly salary (grain, clothing and lodgings). If there was no copying to be done, we would till a plot of ground at a farmhouse in a village near lHa-sa.

My next task as a copyist was the following. After finishing a page, it was signed personally in order to bring about corrections by the same person who had made the mistake. When faultless, pages were given to those who looked after

the wooden printing blocks. They were paid one skar-ma (equal to one tenth of a sho) for each line – we scribes received one sho for one page only!

The following year I worked at the monastery of bsTan-rgyas-gling together with several other scribes copying the *bKa'-'gyur* for the King of Tibet. Before starting we were welcomed by means of a excellent banquet in the course of which everyone enjoyed themselves seated in marquees while women sang happy songs accompanied by musicians. My brother who was in charge of the work received 100 trang-kas (equal to 1,500 skar-mas). The copyists were paid eighty, sixty, thirty, twenty or twelve trang-kas according to their skill.

Our work began in the second month of the Tibetan year. We were given food and money from our patron on each eighth, fifteenth and thirtieth day of the month. The golden ink now used was made as follows. Having first heated lumps of gold, we hammered them as thin as possible. These leaves were then covered with sand and placed between two earthen-ware plates with iron handles. Having heated the plates using cattle dung as fuel, they were taken off the fire and cracked open as soon as they were chilled. The gold foil (seemingly even thinner than before) was laid in the sun to dry. Next, we cut the foil into small pieces with a pair of scissors. Pulverising the gold took us several days. By adding water to the grey dust and then pouring it from one cup to another, the powder regained its golden colour. After removing the water from the cup, urine was added. The fluid was then stirred and heated until the required thickness was reached. Next, we poured it drop by drop from a spoon onto a metal plate. Once cool, the golden or silver ink (made in the same manner) was ready for use. After its quality had been approved of, each scribe received a weighed amount of ink – enough to copy a certain number of pages. At first we were scolded at for writing the letters either too thick or too thin. However, everybody could write properly within a month.

The pages on which we copied the *bKa'-'gyur* in gold letters had to be done as follows. First three sheets of white paper



were pasted together using a mixture of barley-flour and water. Having let the sheets dry in the sun, we flattened them and beat them with a wooden hammer. They were then rubbed with a smooth stone, cut to the desired size and covered with black ink to which urine, water and the brains of an animal had been added order to keep the ink from running. The pages were left to dry in the shade to prevent them from fading and afterwards laid between planks on which stones were placed.

Copying was done as follows. Holding an ink pot in our left and a pen in our right hand, we sat on the ground and wrote on a page lying on a board resting on our knees. Having arrived at our office in the morning each scribe received a stamp on a piece of paper. When ill or on a day off, we would miss out on a stamp. At the end of the month our stamps were counted. For each one we received one *trang-ka*. From the tenth month onwards we were not able to work – the cold caused the ink to freeze.

At the beginning of the next spring the following events took place. After the *Ta-la'i bLa-ma* had invited the King of Tibet's brother to visit the Potala, He saw to it he was arrested on arrival, flogged and thrown in prison. The King (who was the *Ta-la'i bLa-ma's* Regent) and one of his officials soon followed. Not much later all three died. The *Ta-la'i bLa-ma* then had our books written in gold ink, placed behind locked doors. Needless to say, we were astonished and felt punished for copying holy texts. The reason of all this was said to be that the King of Tibet had presented the *Ta-la'i bLa-ma* with a pair of boots. In their heels a secret spell was placed in order to kill Him enabling the King to continue reigning over Tibet. When He started bleeding from the nose, however, a monk possessed by His tutelary deity pointed at those boots. In my opinion the real reason was that He was jealous of His Regent's power. A successor to the latter was appointed after some time – he hailed from the same place as the *Ta-la'i bLa-ma*. Because of these sinful deeds He suffered many hardships and fled to *rDo-rje-gling* (Darjeeling) in India when Chinese troops entered Central Tibet.

Due to an illness my brother returned home to sNye-mo that spring. I was now left with nobody to look after me at all. My clothes were torn and I had to beg for food. Thinking my situation would improve by going to the monastery of dGa'-ldan, I decided to leave lHa-sa.

## ❁ four ❁

With only a little money in my pocket I set off towards the east one morning at dawn. In order to cross the river dKyid, one sho had to be paid to the ferry-man. Having walked across a large plain, I reached a small village at the foot of the hill on which the monastery of dGa'-ldan was built. The farmers here said to me, 'You must have run like a horse! It takes us two days to walk from lHa-sa to here!'

The following morning I accompanied an old money lender monk. The house keepers we came across gave us something to eat and drink. To some laymen I now read the *rDo-rje gCod-pa*. This text explains the section of the *bKa'-'gyur* that deals with transcendental wisdom. They advised me to take a wooden pot containing white wash to a certain ward at the monastery of dGa'-ldan. I then helped to paint its walls. That day each worker received meals which in the evening included a small piece of meat. A monk now introduced me to his teacher. Once my head had been shaven, it was decided my inauguration would take place on the very day Tsongkha-pa's ascension was to be commemorated. Until that moment I looked after my tutor's cattle at his farm house.

In due course I returned to the monastery. After being ordered to go to the Head of my ward, I presented him butter-tea, a ceremonial scarf and some money. As I bowed before him, he recited prayers. Once again my head was shaven. The hair now mixed with some grain was thrown in all directions. What this ceremony meant, I did not understand. I was given a new yellow hat, vest, robe, cloak and a leather pouch filled with barley-flour that evening. I now belonged to a monastery!

According to tradition monks gathered on the night before the commemoration of Tsong-kha-pa's ascension. Still fully dressed and sleepy, I rose to the beating of drums. Hurrying towards the Assembly Hall, I saw two men with sticks trying to prevent everyone entering through the door all at the same time. At last we young monks could go inside to see a number of guards walking around and hit those making fun. This was, of course, an endless task. Within an hour the 3,300 monks had been served butter-tea, porridge and barley-flour. We then repeated prayers in Tsong-kha-pa's honour. Having returned to my room, I fell asleep at once. However, a second meeting had to be attended at sunrise. On this occasion the monks received butter-tea and two trang-kas. From this morning on, I was allowed to attend my ward's daily meetings.

Some ten days before commemorating Tsong-kha-pa's ascension monks sounded trumpets or drums while laymen, women and children proceeded past an old scroll-painting of Sakyamuni Buddha. I now heard say that long ago a holy man from Bhutan had been asked by monks from the monastery of dGa'-ldan to bless this image. Having told them to lay it on the ground, he urinated on it and said, 'Roll it up quickly! You shall see tomorrow if you are blessed or not!' The next morning, to their great surprise, the scroll painting had turned to gold. If you stand in front of it, you will become free of sins.

The monastery of dGa'-ldan included one shrine with a gilded roof. It houses Tsong-kha-pa's tomb and his golden throne now occupied by a monk bearing the title Khri Rin-po-che. To be worthy of this title your knowledge concerning the segment of the Tibetan Buddhist canon on transcendental wisdom must be perfect. In addition, you must prove to be superior to the scholarly monks in discussions held between monks from Se-ra, 'Bras-spungs and dGa'-ldan during the Great Annual Prayer Meeting. When appointed by the Ta-la'i bLa-ma (the only person more enlightened than the monk titled Khri Rin-po-che), you must see to it the best butter-tea, porridge and money from your own pocket is served to each of the 3,300 monks living at the monastery of dGa'-ldan. Khri Rin-po-che's throne is always vacant for those able to endure

suffering through learning. If you are imperfect, you die in office.

The knowledge of young monks including myself was examined during the eleventh month. We were now ordered to wear our clothing neatly before paying a visit to our superior who sprinkled water on our heads as we bowed. Next, we presented him various delicacies. When my superior asked me, 'Are you the son of a butcher, blacksmith or potter? Have you come without your parent's permission? Did you do anything sinful?', I answered, 'No!' My reply was, 'Yes, I would very much like to!', when asked if I wanted to become a man of religion. I then received the name Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs. Luckily, my tutor paid the butter-tea I had to serve to the monks of my ward.

We young men were ordered to carry the books, food, pots and pans during the two day long journey to lHa-sa. Here we attended the Great Annual Prayer Meeting. Monks from the monasteries of Se-ra and 'Bras-spungs were also present. On the twenty-ninth of the twelfth month the scholarly, incarnate and elder monks assembled in the Jo-khang. Soon afterwards boys wearing a cap, shoes and a small cloth over their mouth to keep clean, served butter-tea. It was said that even if a fire burned on their heads, there was no time to extinguish it. If they did not do their work quickly, they were hit with a stick. Butter added to the tea boiled in very large bronze vessels floated on top. The first served received mainly butter. Those served last, of course, had hardly any butter in their tea.

The conception of Sakyamuni Buddha was celebrated on the evening of the fifteenth day of the first month. On this occasion a large pile of barley-flour was covered with coloured butter to form very beautiful images of the Buddha, deities and holy men. In front of them flowers, sacrificial butter-lamps and delicacies were placed. Many people came to admire this sight, including the Ta-la'i bLa-ma, His officers and servants. Due to pickpockets men lost money and women their ornaments.

On the twenty-ninth of the second month monks from Se-ra, 'Bras-spungs and Ga'-ldan expel evil spirits by setting fire to a

pile of grass on which a sacrifice made of dough (gtor-ma) was placed. Everyone clapped their hands and whistled as it went up in flames. A monk from the monastery of bSam-yas, his face painted half black and half white now reached lHa-sa. If the shop keepers did not give him any alms, he foretold them a bad coming year. The next morning monks removed an image of 'Jam-dpal Tshe-bdag, the Lord of Long Life, from the Jo-khang, placed it on a cart and pulled it around the market-place.

In the period between these two festivities I remained in lHa-sa copying texts. Having met a friend, I learned that my brother dPal-ldan Tshe-ring was looking for me everywhere. In spite of his words I returned to my ward at the monastery of dGa'-ldan. As soon as my brother heard of this I was arrested and taken to one of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma's officials who asked me why I had run away and become a monk. I then answered, 'My life until then had been difficult. I no longer have parents, clothing or food, only a brother who beats me!' My brother was, nevertheless, asked to collect me. After working for him a short time in the course of which he went on hitting me as if I were a pack animal, I ran off again.

## ❀ five ❀

Having left lHa-sa behind me, I walked towards the north and reached the monastery of Se-ra at sunset. Here I heard say that strangers were not allowed to stay for the night. The reason for this was that not long ago thieves had been among them. This meant I had to try to sleep in a cave while a monk chanted prayers on the roof of a nearby house.

The next morning I reached the monastery of 'Bras-spungs. The nearby market place was now empty except for a woman selling turnips. She told me I was allowed to ask the monks for alms if I paid a monastic official half a trang-ka. Luckily a monk gave me some butter-tea and barley-flour after I told him how empty my stomach was.

I continued my journey to the southwest in the company of travellers willing to share their food with me. Later, some yak

drivers let me ride on the back of one of their animals in order to relieve my painful and shoeless feet. I then met a boy who had run away from home because he did not like being punished for being a bad blacksmith. We reached the town of rGyal-rtse (Gyantse) seven days after leaving lHa-sa.

Here I mixed with a group of donkey drivers. While sharing their meals with me, they took great interest in my stories about lHa-sa and the monastery of bsTan-rgyas-gling. The first two months at rGyal-rtse were spent copying parts of the Tibetan Buddhist canon, earning only daily meals and a small quantity of grain. As soon as this work was done, I set off for a monastery called rTse-chen, located to the west of rGyal-rtse. The large monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po was my next destination. I arrived here accompanied by two boys also on their way to 'ask for religion'. While walking around in the monastery I heard say that its Head Monk, the Pan-chen bLa-ma, planned to open a new school. Having asked for work, I found employment thanks to my experience as a scribe. My superior held back all my earnings. I received food and clothing only. Each evening was spent learning verses from religious texts by heart in preparation for exams. Not entering a monastery would mean a difficult future life for me. However, my superior did not allow me to become a monk!

As soon as my brother dPal-ldan Tshe-ring had been informed of my whereabouts he wanted me to return to the Ta-la'i bLa-ma's book copying office at lHa-sa. Due to the fact that my brother could not buy me out, I was forced to stay at the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po. And, from that moment on, my superior flogged me for not kindling the fire, fetching water or copying religious texts to his liking.

Not much later I explained my situation to a government official who had recently arrived at the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po and who hailed from sNye-mo like myself. My superior was then accused of not allowing me to enter the monastery and also of treating me as a slave. Instead he should have paid me at least one trang-ka a day for my work. Next, I was given some clothes worth fourteen trang-kas, a

monk's hat and a pair of boots and the amount of only fifteen *trang-kas*. As this proved to be an insufficient compensation, I was set free. After almost two years I could finally do whatever I wanted! The following months I spent copying the *rDo-rje gCod-pa* for a group of tent-dwellers. In return they gave me meat, cheese and a little money each day. Living with them made me feel happy again.

After my return to the monastery of *bKra-shis-lhun-po*, I was asked to copy holy texts for the Head Monk of a college called *dKyil-khang*. He saw to it I had a small room to work in, clothing and daily meals. When devotees visited my patron to ask their fortune or to receive blessings from him, his servants received one or two very tasty delicacies and sometimes even one or two *trang-kas*. At the end of each day we repeated prayers in honour of the goddess *sGrol-ma* while cleaning the cups used to offer water to the gods. After dinner, we would have to wait outside with a lantern lit so that our master could pass water. If he went out in the evening, he would order us to stay awake until his return. Rising at three every morning, we washed our faces, offered water to the deities and scrubbed the floors of our ward until told to stop. One night, having drunk too much barley-beer, we could not work properly the next day. For this reason our master first hit us on the head and then dismissed us.

Many monks at *bKra-shis-lhun-po* behave even worse than laymen. Instead of attending daily meetings they visited taverns to smoke, play card-games and enjoy the company of women. I was told the following pranks had been played. Once a monk had gone to the market place to buy mutton, cheese, onions, flour and butter before inviting some friends over for dinner. While preparing their evening meal, they had to leave the house to pray in the Assembly Hall. Meanwhile their pot filled with food was removed and later found empty. As soon as that monk had found out who had stolen his food, he entered the thief's house during his absence to put the kitchenware in the room and the objects kept in the room into the kitchen. Having lit the stove, he placed a pot filled with urine above the fire. This caused a very bad smell!

On another occasion several young monks had collected just enough money to prepare a tasty meal consisting of meat dumplings – their tutor was absent at the time. After an older monk had heard of this, he covered his body with a sheep's skin, coloured his face and then entered the house on all fours on the very moment the meal was served. Full of fear, the young monks ran outside. The clever man then locked the door and enjoyed an excellent meal.

While at the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po I witnessed ritual dances performed in the presence of the Pan-chen bLa-ma. On this occasion the men, woman and children of gZhis-kha-rtse (Shigatse) saw monks dressed as deer and birds dancing to the sound of wind instruments. When offerings of grass were presented to Him, He gave a ceremonial scarf in return. During this festivity you could enjoy delicacies, drink barley-beer and sing songs in marquees pitched in a nearby garden.

When a good friend of mine named Tshe-ring asked me to join him on a pilgrimage to the Valley of Kathmandu in Nepal, I was happy to do so. We could, indeed, become free of sins by visiting the holy places there. Tshe-ring had enough money to buy food for the both of us until we reached the monastery of Sa-skya. From then on, we would have to collect dues from the people his father had lent money to. Shortly after Tshe-ring was given permission to leave, we set off on an auspicious day.

## ❀ six ❀

Carrying our food and bedding on our backs, Tshe-ring and I left the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po at three a.m. Having passed through sNar-thang, we spent the night at a monastery called Khang-chen where we were told the following story. Some time ago a number of men while watching over their animals saw a fearful-looking woman with waving hair, long finger nails, only two teeth in her mouth and hanging breasts. When she asked them, 'Is Buddhism flourishing in Tibet?',



they replied, 'Yes!' She then said, 'It is too early for me to come now!' and disappeared into the ground. At first nobody believed these men. However, a fire burned on the very spot this demoness had stood. Wolves howled there every night, too. For this reason the people living in the nearby village sent a letter to the government. Not much later the Ta-la'i bLa-ma gave them the following advice, 'A monastery must be built to cover the hole from which that demoness appeared!' He also ordered many sacred images, the Tibetan Buddhist canon, its commentaries and eight monks to be housed there.

While collecting the money Tshe-ring's father had lent, we arrived at the monastery of Sa-skya. You could enter a shrine here only by climbing up a ladder. As Tshe-ring descended, he fell to the ground. For this reason a temple guard hit him three times on the back with a stick saying, 'You must be quiet!' Luckily my friend wore his thick coat. We then advised others to climb down the ladder noisily in order to receive the guard's wooden blessing. 'If you have any lice,' we added, 'he can shake them off for you!' These words made everyone laugh.

Once at the town of Ding-ri we had to ask the Chinese officials for a passport. Travelling on to the south, the wind blew red dust in our eyes and mouths. After three steps forward, we were blown either backwards two steps or to the left or right. Walking like intoxicated men, we arrived at a small village inhabited by nuns who let their hair grow over their ears. Soon after one of them had sounded a conch shell, their husbands and children came to say prayers with them. This was, of course, very new for me. Having continued our journey, we met a Tibetan official, and showed him our passports. For his wife's well-being I read a religious text. When we left the next morning the couple gave us rice, barley-flour and some salt.

Before arriving at the border between Tibet and Nepal as many as three seals were stamped on our passports. Once in Nepal we walked through a forest to reach the district of Tamang. The monks of the rNying-ma school residing here had built a shrine of leaves housing images of Gu-ru Rin-po-che (Skt. Padmasambhava). During their ceremonies the men,

women and children sat nearby. I was asked to make some sacrificial cakes. Having sounded their musical instruments the monks shared food and drinks with us.

One day, while wandering through small villages, Tshe-ring and I went different ways. After the sun had set, jackals howled in the sugar-cane fields. This made me feel very scared so I meditated to sGrol-ma in order to become at ease. Having heard drums beat, I walked through the dark night towards this sound to see a group of men standing around a fire. At first they thought I was a thief and grabbed me firmly. Not being able to understand my explanation in Tibetan they, nevertheless, let me go. The next morning Tshe-ring and I found each other again. He had been very worried fearing a tiger had attacked me. The pilgrims we then met on our journey said we would reach the Kathmandu Valley the following day. I now felt so excited I could not sleep that night.

The first holy place in this valley we worshipped at was called sTag-mo Lus-byin. A caretaker here told us that in days of old there lived a tigress in the nearby jungle. After giving birth to five young, she felt hungry, as if a fire burned in her stomach, and had even thought of eating one of her young. Needless to say, her love for them prevented this. As soon as her suffering became known to Sakyamuni Buddha, He showed great mercy by taking off His religious clothes, by lying down beside the animal and by saying, 'I now give you my body, please eat my flesh and be satisfied!' The tigress knew who He was and therefore could not bite Him. Sakyamuni Buddha then pitied her small mind and stood up to cut Himself with some thorns. The smell of blood, however, led the animal to devour Him. Only His bones and hair remained untouched. At the very moment of His death the earth trembled, both the sun and moon eclipsed. In addition, His mother dreamt that blood dripped from her breasts and that her teeth dropped from her mouth. The Nepalese told us that Lord Buddha's bones were kept at this shrine. We Tibetans believed this, too.

Once at Kathmandu with its countless houses, we wanted to see the speaking goddess Kumari but could not find her.

During our visit to a temple called Bya-rung Kha-shor we were told that long ago an old poultry-woman had hoped to have a small piece of land to build a shrine on for all the people in the world to honour. Having asked the King of Nepal, 'O, great and precious king, please give me some land to build a temple on!', her desire was soon granted.

This woman had three sons. The father of the eldest one kept dogs, the father of the second born herded pigs and the father of the youngest boy looked after oxen. All three helped their mother by carrying stones and earth in order to construct the temple. After several ministers had seen the three brothers at work, they said to their King, 'If a poor woman can build such a shrine, what should we build? Please order her to stop!' The King answered he could not withdraw his permission once given.

The three sons finished the building after their mother had died. The youngest then prayed: 'I carried many stones and earth, but it was all in vain. In my next life I wish to be an enemy of Buddhism!' However, the eldest son prayed, 'If he wants to destroy Buddhism, I shall murder him.' The second born now prayed, 'I want to be able to expel all demons and bind them by oaths!' Indeed, many years later there lived an expeller of demons called Gu-ru Rin-po-che and a very mighty king called gLang-dar-ma who was later killed by a monk called dPal-gyi rDo-rje.

King gLang-dar-ma ordered all the Tibetan Buddhist books and images to be destroyed. He also told young women to serve barley-beer to monks so that they forgot their vows. This king had horns on his head. The young women who dressed his hair daily were put to death afterwards for fear they would tell everyone about these horns. One day a young woman while combing his hair burst out in tears. 'Why are you crying?', the king now asked her. 'Because I must die!', she answered. The king then promised to spare her life if she remained silent about his condition. However, her desire to speak about it could not be held back, so she whispered, 'Our king has horns on his head!' into a mouse-hole. Not much later a shepherd cut a flute from the bamboo growing through

that mouse-hole. Whenever he played on it, the words the woman had whispered were heard.

Next, we pilgrims visited the Phags-pa Shing-kun, a Tibetan Buddhist temple built on a tree-covered hill. Having climbed up the stairs, we saw a large brass ceremonial scepter. It was said that if you were fit enough to run all the way up without resting and then touch this scepter, you would become free of sin. We tried to do so a number of times, without success. The monkeys took food from our hands and then ran off into the woods.

After Tshe-ring met some friends he no longer cared for me. Feeling sorry for myself I approached a whiskered monk travelling with his wife and children. Not much later we left the Kathmandu Valley setting off towards the border between Nepal and India. The Nepalese officials here gave us a passport. We walked for three days through a jungle quenching our thirst with water from a pipe made on orders of a Nepalese queen.

It was at the town of Raxaul that I saw a railway station for the first time. Having purchased train tickets, we went inside a carriage. Soon afterwards I heard a whistle and saw smoke in the distance. A loud bell sounded before the train started moving. We changed trains at midnight to reach the town of Siliguri after two days. The walk up to Kurseong in the District of rDo-rje-gling took us four days. From here we set off for Jorebungalow, a small village near Ghoom Railway Station.

## ❀ seven ❀

On arrival at Jorebungalow the friends of the monk I had travelled with welcomed us with butter-tea and barley-beer. Having rented a place to stay, I helped him perform religious ceremonies. We read parts of the *bKa'-gyur* dealing with spells to ward off ill-fortune and disease. Religious texts were also copied for the monastery of Ghoom.

A monk who was skilled as a painter and lived here turned out to be a distant relative of mine. For this reason we cared for each other like brothers do. While in Ka-spungs

(Kalimpong) in order to decorate walls of a building which housed an image of Queen Victoria, he met a high ranked official called bLa-ma O-rgyan rGya-mtsho.<sup>1</sup> My relative soon recommended me to him as an able scribe. After my hand had been approved of, I asked him for thirty rupees as monthly wages. We then agreed upon a wages of ten rupees and butter tea, roasted rice, boiled rice, pork and vegetables in the morning, English tea and bread for lunch, some barley-beer in the afternoon and curried rice for dinner. I began to work for bLa-ma O-rgyan the following day.

O-rgyan rGya-mtsho had been schooled at the monastery of Pad-ma-yang-rtse in Sikkim and then sent to school at rDo-rje-gling, as the English government had ordered. Thanks to this good education, he travelled in the company of the Indian scholar S. C. Das<sup>2</sup> to inspect Tibet. Afterwards bLa-ma O-rgyan received the titel Rai Bahadur. His first wife owned a tavern in rDo-rje-gling. As they had no children the Queen of Sikkim presented him with twenty horses and a second wife. She was the daughter of a Tibetan official and very kind to me because I was born in her homeland.

Once appointed lawyer of Ka-spungs, Rai Bahadur O-rgyan rGya-mtsho became a very rich. man. Earning a living by settling disputes, he travelled the countryside together with his pupils and students. During the summer rains leeches climbed up our legs. Elderlies of villages such as sPos-sdong (Pedong) would present us with very good food. If we were given meat, it had to be eaten as soon as possible.

Having taken leave of bLa-ma O-rgyan, I heard he received a pension from his sixtieth birthday onwards and that he owned two houses: one worth 5,000, the other worth 7,000 rupees. In Sikkim a house had been built for 5,000 rupees on ground costing 14,000 rupees. After he died in rDo-rje-gling,

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1 Of Sikkimese stock, bLa-ma O-rgyan rGya-mtsho (1851–1915) was educated at the Bhotia school of rDo-rje-gling from 1874. He travelled to gZhis-kha-rtse in 1879 under British instruction to later accompany S.C. Das on exploration in Tibet during 1881–2 and 1883–4.

2 Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Das (1849–1917): a Tibetan speaking Bengali who was the first Headmaster of the Bhotia School at rDo-rje-gling. He travelled to lHa-sa in the 1880s and wrote books on Tibet, including a dictionary.

his second wife who also bore him no children returned to her brother's home.

## ❁ eight ❁

One day a missionary Sahib called Mr MacKenzie invited me to his place. When asked to work at his school, I agreed to do so for seventeen rupees a month only if he promised to increase this amount in the course of time. Each morning I now taught Tibetan, Bhutanese, Sikkimese as well as Chinese children to read and write Tibetan letters. Besides monthly wages (which were increased after one year to eighteen rupees) I earned an extra seventeen rupees a month by copying Tibetan Buddhist texts for laymen.

Mr MacKenzie soon told me to give up my religion. Although I did not want to do this, the money from his pocket urged me to say, 'Yes, all right, Christianity is very good!' I now helped him each Saturday by preaching in Tibetan and by operating a record-player in the market-place of Kaspungs. The men, women and children invited to attend a magic lantern show each Sunday at seven p.m. would first see slides of Tibetan or Sikkimese landscapes. Prayers and a sermon by Mr MacKenzie followed religious scenes showing, for instance, Christ as a baby. On one such occasion, having handed out a book of hymns to some people who could not read, I heard them say, 'Thank you, we can use it as toilet paper!'

When Mr MacKenzie wanted to baptize me, I agreed with my mouth knowing it was not possible for me to give up Buddhism. The Sunday I was to be baptised was spent drinking barley-beer and singing in a tavern. That evening I went to Mr. MacKenzie's house to offend him and his religion. He forgave me the next morning and added he had not slept that night because the devil had tempted me. In spite of confessing my sinful deed to Christ in prayer I could now only be baptised after one or two months had passed. However, Mr. MacKenzie allowed me to continue my work as a school teacher.

Because the Chinese ambassador at lHa-sa wanted to help educate Tibetans, he ordered six men to travel to India and learn trades such as weaving, shoemaking and goldsmithry. One of those chosen was bKra-shis dBang-'dus, a Tibetan who had once worked for the British. As he wished to return to Tibet, he asked me to accompany him as a servant. After Mr MacKenzie heard of my desire to go back to my homeland, he let me do so.

### ❀ nine ❀

Walking towards the north we trod through melting snow along a muddy path. Because of heavy rains I caught a very bad cold and had to ask leave from bKra-shis dBang-'dus – I was not able to continue the journey to Tibet. Once recovered I spoke with a painter I had known in Ka-spungs who told me he was going via the town of Phag-ri (Phari) and to Bhutan. Eager to visit some caves Gu-ru Rin-po-che had once lived in, we set off together and reached Phag-ri two days later. It was said that British troops had destroyed the walls of the nearby fortress. The local people were dirty: they do their needs on the roof of their clay houses. Bhutanese come to Phag-ri to sell grains, fruits and herbs. They buy tea and goods to take home with them. Tibetan traders returning from India stay at Phag-ri before continuing their journey to lHa-sa.

My painter friend from Ka-spungs and I then walked through a pass located southeast of Phag-ri. After reaching a bridge, the Bhutanese official said that if we had visited his country before we need not pay to enter again. Otherwise we had to pay half a trang-ka or give him some salt and tobacco. Having passed the monastery of sTag-tshang, we arrived at the town of sPa-gro (Paro). My companion now fell ill and returned to Phag-ri.

Soon afterwards a man invited me to his house to read religious texts. In addition, he gave me meals for teaching his two sons to read and write. One day while in the market at sPa-gro, I was reunited with my friend Tshe-ring. We had

travelled together from the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po to the Kathmandu Valley. He introduced me to a monk who was in need of a good scribe. I accompanied him as a servant visiting the monastery of sTag-tshang and a cave once inhabited by Gu-ru Rin-po-che and housing holy golden images. Both these holy places were situated on rocks high above a dense forest where many tigers and leopards lived. We stayed a week in order to perform ceremonies, read prayers and sound drums as well as wind instruments.

Having returned to sPa-gro, the Head Monk here invited us to drink tea with him. Because it was served very hot, I could not drink it as fast as the Bhutanese did. Everyone received helpings of butter and sugared rice on a piece of cloth. Not being acquainted with this custom, I held out my hands. The rice was very hot and I burned myself. The food fell on the ground as I sat down quickly, making all the Bhutanese laugh.

This Head Monk had, as I was told, discovered a Hidden Treasure as follows. One day shortly after sunrise, wearing his best clothes, he proceeded 200 steps into a field surrounded by brooks and trees. His servants and eight monks with their wind instruments, bells, drums and flags accompanied him. Having drawn a circle on the ground with his ritual dagger, he placed a white flag in the east, a yellow one in the south, a red one in the west, a green one in the north and a blue one in the middle. All the deities were called upon in prayers and honoured by means of offerings. The Head Monk's servants who tried to dig a hole, of course, complained because it was winter and because the ground as hard as stone. Finally, at a depth of two and a half feet the Hidden Treasure was found. From that day onwards everyone regarded this Head Monk as an emanation of Gu-ru Rin-po-che. All his offering cups were of silver, his clothes of the best brocades and his hat was decorated with golden ornaments.

I copied holy texts for him for about one month and then wanted to take leave. After he had told me to stay, I replied, 'I could not live here for ever, I like to go wherever I wish. And, if I stay here I must obey you.' The Head Monk then said, 'All right, I will allow you to leave.' When I came to say farewell,



he gave me a white cloth, a piece of Bhutanese flowered brocade, some rice, butter, tea and half a trang-ka.

The next year I spent copying religious texts for Bhutanese laymen. Having sold my woollen clothes in order to buy food for the journey, I set off for rDo-rje-gling and walked along the same road I had come.

## ❀ ten ❀

Together with a some tradesmen I travelled through the Chumbi Valley. One very cold night, I fell asleep too close to the fire – luckily I woke up before my clothing started burning. We reached the town of sGang-tog (Gangtok) five days after leaving Phag-ri. Some Tibetan porridge sellers here told me a large crowd would gather in front of the King of Sikkim's palace on the fifteenth of the seventh month. It was then that helmed dancers carrying an axe in their right and a dagger in their left hand proceeded around the building three times. On this occasion all the scribes, cutters of wooden printing-blocks, painters and carpenters enjoyed fine food and barley-beer as they sat in marquees.

Some two days earlier monks from the monastery of Padma-yang-rtse had paid respect to the gods inhabiting Mt Gangs-can mDzod-lnga and to the protectors of Sikkim. For this reason Rai Bahadur and his wife had come from Ka-spungs. I visited these friends of mine as soon as possible to give them some dried fruit and cheese. They kindly recommended me as a scribe to the Queen of Sikkim. She invited me to her palace after the quality of the paper I had made was approved of. Before entering her chambers, a servant told me to fold my hands first, then bring them to my forehead and from there in front of my face. After this, I had to kneel to touch the ground with my forehead. I felt shame when the Queen herself said I need not prostrate myself. She, of course, knew that people from lHa-sa do this before monks only.

While working each day between eight and five until almost 100 pages were copied. I received fifteen rupees a

month, food, drink and a room to stay in. Soon afterwards several scribes including myself wrote down *The History of the Nine Kings of Sikkim* as ordered by the British government. For this it paid us 1,000 rupees. The Tibetan scholar called Zla-ba bSam-grup later translated our words into English. The text titled *The History of the Nine Kings of Sikkim* was reconstructed by reading old books written during the lives of former kings and by asking old people in Sikkim what their fathers and grandfathers had told them. The text first written down by the Queen had to be copied without mistakes into running script. I helped transcribe these words into block-letters. On the first day of our work (which lasted about one year) each scribe received a ceremonial scarf, a small amount of money and some barley-beer for good luck.

You could hear the Queen of Sikkim each morning at seven rattling a hand-drum or ringing a hand-bell while meditating. Breakfast was taken in the company of her husband and mother. Not much later the ministers and servants came to greet them. During the daytime the Queen studied history, performed religious ceremonies or looked after a school she had founded for girls to learn how to weave Tibetan carpets. The King would play cards or go hunting wild pigs and deer in the nearby woods. In addition, he officiated as a judge several hours each day in the court room on the first floor of the palace. In the early morning of New Year's day he would sit on his throne flanked by his wife and ministers together with their wives and children. Important men from the villages of Sikkim had arrived to salute their King and to present him with ceremonial scarves. When the servants handed out food and drinks in the evening, everybody enjoyed themselves singing happy songs.

The son of this royal couple had been schooled in rDor-je-gling as well as in Calcutta. I was asked to teach their fourteen year old daughter to read and write. The King and his former wife had a son who was the General Inspector of the Monasteries in Sikkim. The regulations I copied in block-letters were framed behind glass and then sent to all the monasteries. For educational reasons a learned monk was now appointed.

He had proven to be the only one capable of answering questions on Tibetan Buddhism asked by Mrs. A. David-Néel.

During my stay at sGang-tog a man called bKra-shis became the King and Queen's favourite servant. After appointing him Chief Steward, they gave him a piece of land. This led to the General Inspector of Monasteries feeling jealous. His relationship with the British was good because he had taken a degree in London. Once bKra-shis had built a fence around his property, the General Inspector sent a letter to the British authorities. This resulted in bKra-shis's arrest and deportation to rDo-rje-gling. In addition, he was fined 600 rupees and all his belongings were confiscated. When allowed to return to Sikkim, he had to live in a very small room.

In the town of sGang-tog there lived a monk who was well acquainted with religious texts. For this reason some Sikkimese ministers liked him very much. Having met him one evening, we talked and drank barley-beer together in a tavern. However, when a layman, his wife and their twenty year old daughter joined us, the monk tried to come very near the young woman who was hurt as she escaped from his arms. That night he had to be kept behind closed doors. The next morning I said to him, 'You did a very shameful thing. Therefore you must pay that woman one rupee.' This he refused and added, 'Let her go to court.' When she did, the monk was found guilty and jailed for twenty days. Like all prisoners he received blue clothes to wear and then sent to work. Not much later I saw him carrying wood on his back. The guard would beat me if I spoke to him. After several ministers had asked the General Inspector of Sikkimese Monasteries to pardon the monk, this was refused. However, when a minister's wife lay on her death-bed she told her husband, 'That monk must perform the transfer-of-the-soul ceremony for me!' Her wish was granted but not before the General Inspector had received 100 rupees. This story shows how knowledge of religious ceremonies can get you out of prison!

On request of the Queen of Sikkim a friend of mine set off to collect a golden image looked after by a minister of the Ta-

la'i bLa-ma (who was at that time staying in rDo-rje-gling). Soon after my friend's return, she asked him to go to Ka-spungs but, in spite of my warning him about the hot and humid weather, he did so. Having fallen ill along the way, he returned empty-handed and could not be cured by Tibetan doctors or in an English hospital. He then hung himself on the branch of a tree with his belt.

The desire to visit the Kathmandu Valley now returned to my mind. Having asked leave from the Queen's mother, she spoke to her daughter who at first did not wish to let me go. As soon as she did allow me to leave, I made preparations for the journey. A monk from the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po joined me. On the day of departure all our Tibetan friends gave us food and sang songs. The Queen presented us with a ceremonial scarf and some butter-tea. From her mother we received barley-flour and a piece of meat.

## ❁ eleven ❁

Shortly after leaving sGang-tog we met a monk who was also from the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po. We travelled on together and reached the village of Ghoom seven days later. At that time the Bhutanese Head monk who had found a Hidden Treasure (see Chapter 9) was staying here in order to have made a large image of sPyan-ras-gzigs, the Lord of Mercy. In spite of his asking me to become one of his servants, I did not. Soon afterwards people told me this Head Monk had used a passport with a false seal of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. When His officers arrested him, he was taken to lHa-sa and his hands cut off. This caused me to think the story about that Hidden Treasure may not be true. You can deceive your fellow men easily, but doing so in front of God is very shameful.

Now a woman whose husband had died asked me to say prayers for him. In addition, she gave me some of his bones which I hammered to powder before mixing it with clay to make votive tablets. I promised to take these to a Tibetan Buddhist temple in the Kathmandu Valley. While preparing

for the journey to Nepal, needles, wax and herbs were purchased in the market place of rDo-rje-gling to trade for food along the way. Starting off each day at sunrise, we pilgrims would rest at ten a.m. to take our meal seated on a river bank. I was used to eating meat with vegetables and rice in the District of rDo-rje-gling, but now ate boiled maize flour to which spices were added. The people in the villages we passed through would sometimes give us tasty boiled beans. At about halfway between rDo-rje-gling and Kathmandu we reached a group of caves located in tree-covered hills. The old monk who showed us around said that long ago Gu-ru Rin-po-che had lived here. Outside again, we prayed to become free of sins and then bowed respectfully.

When the walking stick decorated with brass belonging to one of my companion's was fancied by a Nepalese soldier guarding a bridge a quarrel began. I put it to an end by fighting with that guard. Then, having taken hold of the stick I broke it in two and threw it into the water below. Needless to say, such trouble does not take place in British countries.

Having arrived at the shrine of sTags-mo-lus-byin we bought a clay cup from the Nepalese caretaker and burned a little oil in it. As the speaking goddess called Kumari could not be visited, we went on to worship at the Bya-rung kha-shor. In our lodgings near this holy place I met several friends from rDo-rje-gling. They were present the following day when I performed a ceremony called gcod (see Chapter 24). Before leaving Kathmandu we also paid a visit to the temple of Phags-pa-shing-kun.

## ❁ twelve ❁

Together with a monk called rGyal-ba, his wife and two monks from rGyal-rtse, I walked through the town of Pokhara towards a village called Chu-mig rGya-tsa. Some people we now met were Nepalese who followed Tibetan customs: after winter had begun they arrived at the village of Tuk-che to trade salt (carried by many pack animals) for grains, cloth and

coral. The Nepalese officials collected taxes from them. Village women sold good barley-beer for a living. Between the first and fourth month of the Tibetan calendar all house-keepers invited monks to read the Tibetan Buddhist canon. This was done with more care than in the District of rDo-rje-gling.

If someone died, his or her friends gathered, their hair untidy, to sing sad songs. A dead body was kept inside the house for several days while ceremonies were performed. Monks some sounding their cymbals, drums and trumpets then took the corpse to a funeral pyre. From the following day on, the Head Monk visited the mourning family's house once a week. Moreover, he wrote the deceased's name on a piece of paper and put it amongst his or her clothes and ornaments. Exactly forty-nine days after someone had died, a wooden life-size image of the dead person was dressed in these clothes and ornaments. In front of it, delicacies were placed under an umbrella. After the monks and nuns had read prayers, they proceeded towards the graveyard to the sound of their musical instruments. Next, the wooden image was set on fire, but not before its clothes and ornaments had been removed. These were given to the Head Monk for showing the path leading to the world beyond. He was also presented with a horse and saddle as well as some money.

One day I entered a large cave using a torch consisting of bamboo and a piece of oily cloth. It had once been inhabited by Gu-ru Rin-po-che and was located at the foot of a snow-covered mountain. Above a nearby waterfall you can see a rainbow. Looking back towards the entrance, it seemed to me only a bird could fly through such a small hole. Many gods, goddesses and holy men had been painted on the walls. As soon as the light of my torch began to fade, I returned to the entrance. Once outside, my friends and I lit sacrificial butter-lamps. We prayed here till sunset.

Because rGyal-ba wanted to build a shrine near this cave he started asking people for alms. He also borrowed some money to pay carpenters and masons. Shortly after the building was finished, we lit sacrificial butter-lamps. Later that same day we sang, danced and drank barley-beer. However, heavy rains

soon caused the walls of this temple to collapse. Having asked me to help him collect money and goods rGyal-ba was able to return the money he had borrowed.

Once prepared, we set off in a northerly direction, passing the King of Mon-thang's palace. His country had once belonged to Tibet but was now Nepalese territory. Here, in ancient times, a queen had reached perfect enlightenment by doing good work such as reading religious books and praying earnestly. She had been very kind, never punishing or fining her subjects. Wrong-doers were ordered to inscribe 'om mani padme hum' (i.e., the Tibetan Buddhist creed) on stones placed along the side of the road.

Travelling to the west we came across several followers of the Bon doctrine. One of them, a man who lived alone on a mountain, gave us a cup of butter-tea and five trang-kas. During our visit we witnessed how he prayed for rain to fall after filling a large copper pot with water and covering it with a piece of cloth on which some wool was placed. Having arrived at a small village, we asked an old monk for money. His elder wife kept the house clean while his younger wife spun wool. The latter who was ill at that time wore many charms around her neck. When I asked her, 'Are those charms not too heavy for you to carry?' she replied, 'If I don't, I will die.' These words made me laugh. For, she was ill due to the things she had done in her former life. Even if you wear a hundred charms, it would be of no use in this life. Before we left, the old monk gave us a copper pot filled with rice.

When we pitched our tent in a large plain, the local people gave us a warm welcome. Because the ground on which grass and grain grew had become very dry, they asked a monk from eastern Tibet (Khams) who had joined us to pray for rain. He then told them to bring him some milk produced by a white goat and by a white cow. Next, we burned incense and offered barley beer as well as butter-tea to the deities of the nearby springs while the monk from Khams blew his thigh-bone trumpet. These gods were, of course, pleased by this ritual – that night thunder sounded and rain fell. The next morning everyone came to thank the monk for his kindness. In

addition, they gave the three of us food, drinks and some coins. Continuing our journey, many people came to worship us. Having heard how their crops had been saved, we received money from them.

Walking to the north, we reached a place where men, women and children lived in tents made of yak hides. Needless to say, they invited us men of religion to share their meals with them. Inside their homes they store salt, mutton, cheese, butter and milk. During our visit to some other families, one of the tent-dwellers accompanied us in order to keep their dogs (which were as fierce as lions) off with a whip. Not much later an old monk who lived in a house at the foot of a hill blessed us. In return, we bowed to gave him a ceremonial scarf and ask for alms. After he had talked about the fruit of one's sins and virtues and on the punishments for faults, we received a necklace of turquoises and coral which was worth about sixty to eighty trang-kas.

As water now turned to ice, we set off for the south. After paying our debts only a small amount of money was left. With it we purchased two sheep (costing ten trang-kas each). Having arrived at a tavern in Tuk-che, I stayed outside while rGyal-ba drank barley-beer and enjoyed himself. However, when he spoke of his plans to kill these sheep and eat their meat, I lost my temper and told him, 'You are an empty-headed man! Who can do such a sinful thing?' He now threatened me and if the innkeeper had not come between us we would have started to fight.

Feeling sad because a monk wanted to kill animals, I left Tuk-che and walked towards Chu-mig rGya-tsa. Here you could find 108 water spouts. If you were able to stand underneath each of them, one after the other, your sins were washed off. However, at that time, the water was as cold as ice – I could not stand under more than four spouts. Inside a nearby shrine you can see water, earth and stones burn. Here I honoured the image of the Lord of Mercy.

Once back in Tuk-che, I stayed there a number of months reading religious texts. Having collected enough money, I travelled to rDo-rje-gling.



**❀ thirteen ❀**

I changed my Nepalese for Indian rupees at the town of Raxaul and bought a train ticket to reach Siliguri. From here I walked through Kurseong to arrive at Jorebungalow, just south of Ghoom. Having told my friends all about my pilgrimage in Nepal, I rented a place to stay and once again found a livelihood copying religious texts.

At that time the Ta-la'i bLa-ma resided at Ka-spungs. It was through His Receiver of Guests (who was a relative of mine) I was asked to copy a book consisting of seventy-five pages. It contained questions as well as answers on the subject 'mind' and was presented to Mrs Alexandra David-Néel. When this task was completed, He paid me fifteen rupees and added ten rupees as a gift. Every day large numbers of Tibetan, Sikkimese and Bhutanese men, women and children came to visit their Saviour. During their private visits (lasting about ten minutes) these devotees were served tea and rice. Shortly before the Ta-la'i bLa-ma, His ministers, officials and servants returned to lHa-sa on horse back, I gave my kinsman some clothing, soap and a box of biscuits.

Soon afterwards a monk, whom all Tibetans in rDo-rje-gling revered, allowed me to perform ceremonies. He was often asked to sprinkle water on the heads of rich people and to tell them about their futures. In return he and his servants received delicacies and barley-beer. If this monk was not able to go out in the morning, I would read religious texts in his place. On such occasions the devotees would give me one or two rupees.

Together with a fellow servant I then performed rituals for some Bhutanese who lived not far from rDo-rje-gling. As we walked towards their houses leeches crawled up our legs because of the hot weather. A woman whose eight year old son had died asked us to pray for him. Afterwards she said, 'I have one daughter, my sister is dead and my relatives do not care for me. I earn only a small amount of money selling cow-milk. The dead boy's father has left me to live with another woman!' My companion then gave me the advice to marry

her as this would be much better than living on your own. Having told me her relatives would not cause any trouble, I spoke the words, 'I am a man of religion. So whatever the future may bring, either good or bad things, I will not leave you for someone else!'

## ❀ fourteen ❀

After hearing that a teacher at the monastic school of Ghoom had left, I sent a letter without much hope to the Head Monk. Having spoken with him about my school days at lHa-sa, the copying work I had done for the Ta-la'i bLa-ma, my time spent at the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po and at the court of the King of Sikkim, I was, however, given this post. My class counted seven pupils, the school twenty. In its rooms there were books, seats, blackboards, a clock, pens, ink, pictures of the Governor of Bengal, and the King and Queen of England.

My wife and I now moved from rDo-rje-gling to a room not far from the monastery of Ghoom. Soon afterwards the cows she kept died when they were about to give birth. In order to bury these dead animals I had to pay six rupees to some men, who without me knowing this, cut meat from the corpses. On their way home these men met two policemen whom they told I owned the beef. As it was the first time I had been caught trying to sell meat from animals that had died due to a disease, the police did not fine or punish me. Needless to say, this false accusation made me feel very sad.

We then moved from Ghoom to nearby Jorebungalow. Not much later I wrote a letter to the School Inspector at Kurseong asking him to pay me on time: during the first three months of working as a teacher at Ghoom, I had received fifteen rupees only. As soon as my superior saw my letter, he scolded me for not 'climbing the ladder to reach the roof.' However, he allowed me to continue working for him.

A monthly report on my pupils had to be written in English. Having asked the learned sKar-ma Babu to help me,

we became friends. At that time he was teaching the Tibetan language to a Dutch Sahib called Mr van Manen. Not much later sKar-ma Babu asked me to explain the meaning of some sentences in a text he and his Sahib were translating together. Not much later the Sahib said he was willing to pay me twenty-five rupees a month for copying Tibetan Buddhist texts for him. I now went to my superior at the monastic school at Ghoom to tell him about my wish to resign. The following day I began to work for the honourable Mr van Manen at the Balaclava Hotel in Jorebungalow.

## ❁ fifteen ❁

Each evening Mr van Manen, sKar-ma Babu and I would read or write the Tibetan language together. After six months my Dutch Sahib could express himself in my native language. Difficulties were solved by looking into dictionaries or into the grammar written by C.A. Bell<sup>1</sup>. The hand-written and printed books my Sahib had bought originated from rDo-rje-gling, Ghoom and Sikkim. They were used by the Sa-skya, rNying-ma, dGe-lugs and bKa'-brgyud denominations, each describing religious ceremonies or historic events. If the running script had been used, I would transcribe it into blockletters. We worked in this manner for about two years.

When my Sahib said to me, 'I am going to Madras in the south of India. If you wish to see things you have never seen before, I will pay your expenses.', my reply was, 'Many thanks. I feel a great desire to come with you!' After buying light clothes, my Sahib and I travelled from Ghoom to Calcutta and then to Madras. (see Appendix I)

In January 1919 my Sahib visited Calcutta again, leaving me behind in Jorebungalow to copy texts. Needless to say, I

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1 Sir Charles Alfred Bell KCIE, CMG, CIE, ICS. (1870–1945). Born in India and educated at Winchester and Oxford, C.A. Bell served as a Political Officer in Sikkim on charge of the British in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet between 1908–20. He spent 1920–1 in lHa-sa at the invitation of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. Author of four books on Tibet as well as a Tibetan dictionary and grammar.

joined him as soon as he asked me to. On arrival, his Tibetan domestic servant rNyi-ma welcomed me at Howrah Station. We took a horse cart to the Ongsing Hotel where our Sahib was staying. I went to his office at the Imperial Library and continued working for him the following day.

My Sahib's question if I knew a monk learned enough to teach both the Tibetan language and culture at the University of Calcutta, resulted in a letter to a friend of mine called Padmachandra. He was willing to leave Ghoom if his wages consisted of 100 rupees a month with three months off in the summer. Not much later he was appointed by Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, the Vice-Chancellor of the University. From then on Zla-ba bSam-grub, who was at that time head of the University's Tibetan section, no longer wished to speak with me – he had wanted somebody else to be given that post.

As the weather now became hotter and hotter, I felt very glad when my Sahib asked me to travel to the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po and collect Tibetan books printed there. (see Appendix II)

Shortly after my return my Sahib and I helped the monks from the monastery of Ghoom perform their sacred dances at Calcutta in the presence of the Prince of Wales. (see Appendix III)

## ❁ sixteen ❁

Nowadays many Indian soldiers are serving the British in the Chumbi Valley. At the town of rGyal-rtse there was a telegraph office. The inhabitants of lHa-sa became friendly with the English after C.A. Bell sold them guns. Even Tibetan officers and soldiers were trained in India. I think my country will slowly become British territory. Some people say that as soon as this happens, troops will come from China. When British soldiers fought against Tibetans, the Ta-la'i bLa-ma fled to the Chinese capital. However, little damage was done after the Chinese visited the representatives of the British government. Not much later He returned to the Potala. When the

Chinese killed many inhabitants of lHa-sa during a revolution, He found a safe place to live in India.

I myself do not think badly of the English – their government improves roads, builds water-works and market-places to increase its inhabitants. In my homeland we can only live pleasantly near water. People in Tibet had told me the heat in India would kill me. This proved untrue – many countrymen of mine live in the Chinatown of Calcutta permanently. Their wives work as child's nurses for Europeans. Tibetan pilgrims passed through Calcutta during the winter on their way to Bodh Gaya, where Sakyamuni Buddha reached Enlightenment.

In the past many traders from Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan and rDo-rje-gling were not allowed to enter the shops of Calcutta because the heat and humidity caused their clothes to smell badly. However, if they had many rupees in their pockets, the Indian merchants would hurry to say, 'Please do come in!.' At present most Tibetan traders in Calcutta are clean and neatly dressed. Moreover, they can speak Hindi. All go to the house of a fellow countryman who they pay for selling their goods (woollen carpets, horns and musk of deer, yak-tails, wax, skins of tigers, leopards, foxes, otters, and sheep). These merchants returned home with sugar, soap, various kinds of cloth, shoes, hats, coral, gold, iron, Chinaware and silk. Tradesmen travelled from Sikkim to Calcutta to sell religious books and old images of Tibetan Buddhist gods. Bhutanese bring rough silk which they trade for goods made in India. Merchants from rDo-rje-gling buy second-hand coats, trousers, shirts and hats which they sell to the people living in the hills near their home town.

It is, of course, very difficult for the Tibetan Buddhists living in Calcutta to find a monk who can perform religious ceremonies and read prayers for their sick or dead. Luckily, my Sahib who is a Buddhist himself gave me leave to do so whenever necessary.

## ❁ seventeen ❁

Meat-eating demons inhabited my home country in very early times when nobody had ever heard of Buddhism. Tibetan shamanism was abolished shortly after a Tibetan king called Khri-srong lDe-brtsan had invited Gu-ru Rin-po-che to come from India where Sakyamuni Buddha had lived and died without ever visiting Tibet. Tibetan Buddhists regard India as a very precious and holy land. In the course of time Japan, China, Burma, Ceylon, Mongolia and Tibet became Buddhist countries. Many centuries later, Christian foreigners came to India from the outermost parts of the ocean. By studying Sanskrit a number of European scholars could understand the meaning of Buddhism. Nowadays Tibetan texts have been translated and printed in English. At my Sahib's house I saw many such books.

Tibetans say it is a great sin to sell religious texts to an Englishman for fear he will sit down or put his feet on it. However, Europeans I met at the University of Calcutta, at the Asiatic Society of Bengal and at the library of the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Madras studied Tibetan books carefully in order to fully understand the meaning of each and every word. That is why I laugh at my ignorant countrymen – if Sanskrit texts had not been translated into Tibetan, my people would not have had any religion at all. So how can it be a sin to bring Buddhism back to India? I think that if a wise monk explains his knowledge to European scholars, many will become Buddhists. Foreign arts and sciences can then be studied by Tibetans.

Some years ago the government of Tibet made a mistake causing great harm. When Sarat Chandra Das visited Tibet, a monk from the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po explained to him the meaning of several Tibetan Buddhist texts. In return, S.C. Das taught this monk to read and write Sanskrit. As soon as this was discovered, the Tibetan noblemen and officials ordered the monk to be brought to death by drowning. This sin took place because S.C. Das was considered a demon from India. When non-Buddhist foreign-

ers arrive in lHa-sa nowadays the government of Tibet acts more friendly. However, many Tibetans still say the religion of Europe is an evil one.

Being a Tibetan scribe, I copied religious texts for a Dutch Sahib and taught him to speak my language. He told me that many Europeans were acquainted with the importance of religion and that many were not. Those who discover the true meaning of Tibetan Buddhism will become believers. Those who do not, will say that Christianity is the best religion. I myself think a wise Tibetan Buddhist monk will win when arguing with a Christian. Those who know nothing at all about Buddhism can easily be made to believe in Christianity. European missionaries want to open schools in Tibet soon. Our precious Buddhism will then slowly disappear.

Thousands of monks inhabited the monasteries of Se-ra, 'Bras-spung, dGa'-ldan and bKra-shis-lhun-po. Most of them were not acquainted with the facts of Buddhism, others could not read or write. Some monks taught others without knowing much themselves. They were like donkeys clad in tiger skins. I have seen how men looking like Buddhists on the outside drank barley-beer, smoked tobacco, took snuff, gambled and sometimes even traded. I also witnessed wicked monks fight each other wanting to do bad things with a young boy who looked like a pretty girl. These men are worse than worldly sinners!

In gZhis-kha-rtse I once saw a group of monks in a tavern. Answering my question, 'Why are you drinking, smoking and singing in the company of women?', they said, 'Lord Buddha led 500 impure lives and 500 pure ones. In a tavern we behave badly, inside a monastery we are pious!' At that time I could not convince them of the fact their words were foolish. I now know it is written in Gu-ru Rin-po-che's *Book of Revelations*: 'In the future, the Head Monks will have to act as military officers, because the religious rules are not obeyed.' This truth has, no doubt, come in sight. There were, of course, many monks who studied religious texts earnestly in order to learn all about Tibetan Buddhism. They practised it to the benefit of their next lives.

A Tibetan who knows only a little about literature and grammar is already very proud of himself. However, he will become a scholar only after much more studying. Nobody in lHa-sa was interested in learning. For only the rich have power. Those who wished to be in an important position must own money. The more you were able to pay, the higher the rank you were offered. Knowledge or experience were of no use. At the beginning of the Great Prayer Meeting a man was appointed Chief Officer by ministers of the Tibetan government only if he paid them thousands of trang-kas. He then fined the wealthy as well as the poor people of lHa-sa in order to become rich again.

In Europe much money was spent on education. Well-trained people were able to pass examinations in all kinds of subjects to then receive the rank of an official. Tibetans who could read and write made mistakes in grammar and in spelling. The Tibetan books Europeans published were often the only ones without such mistakes. Please excuse me for writing this! I hope everybody will study the Tibetan language and culture with the same perserverance as my Sahib and I do!

## ❁ eighteen ❁

It was said that Mahatma Gandhi was born into a poor family and that he had been a domestic servant when young. However, through the fruit of the good deeds in his previous life, his desire to study seriously grew. Having worked hard during the day time, he read books under the streetlamps at night. In this way he taught himself English, Hindi and law. Several years later he gave up his job as a lawyer in spite of the very high earnings.

From that moment on Gandhi lived as poor man. He adressed all Indian scholars as follows, 'I see that many countrymen of mine have no food or clothing. Because I pity them, I lead a simple life. My brothers and sisters should buy the products of India instead of sending them to England. We must cultivate our ground, eat its crops and weave cotton



clothes for ourselves. There shall be enough for everybody. The learned of India are never given high posts, not even if they work harder than the British. Don't be a slave of the English government. Help our people by way of trade and labour!' These words were received with loud applause by both Hindus and Moslims.

Strikes for higher wages were at first succesful. The British then raised the prices of tickets for trains and trams. Soon afterwards you had to pay shopkeepers more. All this caused trouble in the streets of India. Gandhi as well as several other people were put in prison. The people of India now said, 'When the English first arrived in our country, they came to power by deceiving us. Now we must take possession of India again and force them to go.' I myself think this is not possible at present due to the fact that many Indians work for the British. If the people of India follow Mahatma Gandhi, they will not earn as much. Everyone will grow poorer. In a fight against British troops, Indian soldiers shall certainly loose. As soon as the white man is thrown out, Hindus will go after Moslims and one caste after the other.

British rule in India is, I think, not bad because the laws are good. In Tibet thieves as well as murderers are flogged and then set free. I can remember when in lHa-sa a certain official was favoured by the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. Jealous men arrested that officer, accused him of causing Him to dislike them and then sent him to the western border of Tibet. Not much later monks of the monastery of Se-ra rose demanding that this officer must return to his post or else they would put the expellers to death. He was allowed to return! If you break the English law in India, you go to prison and stay there!

## ❁ nineteen ❁

During the years Mr van Manen and I worked together a number of Tibetan Buddhist texts were translated into English. My Sahib worked in a very persistant way, studying a dictionary in order to understand the exact meaning of

Tibetan words. I myself had copied many texts in the past without fully understanding them. This has changed now!

The Honourable van Manen has many Tibetan, Chinese, Indian and English books at his house. He never drank wine. When asked if his not eating meat was due to fear for illness, he answered, 'No, I understand the meaning of Buddhism.' All Tibetans are Buddhists but who can give up eating meat? My Sahib is one of the true Buddhists from Europe!

## ❁ twenty ❁

A certain monk from the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po had lived from alms until he was asked by his patrons to go to Bodh Gaya. After performing ceremonies here Tibetan pilgrims gave him twenty rupees. Having met this monk in Calcutta, the fact he was dressed in the clothes of a religious man and spoke true words caused me to think he was a pious Buddhist. So I asked him to buy interesting block-prints and objects in Tibet for my Sahib who at that time worked at the Indian Museum. The monk, having agreed to do so, received 300 rupees before setting off for the monastery bKra-shis-lhun po. During the following months we sent him 400 rupees so that he could purchase goods and take care of their transport to Calcutta. When he no longer answered my letters it was said he spent his time drinking, singing songs and living with a woman in the Chumbi Valley.

Shortly after he finally arrived back in Calcutta I learned he had paid Tibetan tradesmen the amount of 433 rupees for transporting the goods. When my Sahib and I first saw what he had bought, it turned out they were only worth about 500 rupees. I wished to talk with this monk the following evening about his deceiving me but he was drunk. How could such a man behave like a poisonous snake? Have mercy on him! May he be blessed and see his mistakes! Thanks to my compassionate Sahib, I did not have to remain in debt for the rest of my life and could step into the light again.

In order to escape the hot and humid weather of Calcutta, I now returned to Ghoom and continued my copying work.

At that time the monastery here was being built to resemble the Jo-khang of lHa-sa. This work seemed to make the image of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma look smaller and the monks to be less in number. Speaking with a brother of the Head Monk at Ghoom, I said, 'In India the weather is hot, house rents are high and the food expensive. It is difficult to find work if you can not speak, read and write English. My meeting van Manen Sahib happened through the deeds of my former life.'

Not much later I visited my friend sKar-ma Babu who was, of course, very glad to see me again. After presenting him with several pieces of soap and a towel, I gave his children some sweetmeats. He then spoke of his thoughts about leaving for rGyal-rtse to teach English there. He is a former Christian but now honours an image of Tsong-kha-pa and lights sacrificial butter-lamps on the altar in his house again.

One morning I met the well-known Political Officer Mr Laden La near the monastery of Ghoom. He invited me to attend a meeting the next day (in the course of which the Governor of Bengal would be present) adding, 'Do not wear the clothes you have on now. For, dogs should mix with dogs and hogs with hogs!' Because he did not like to see me dressed as a Tibetan, I did not attend that meeting during which holy dances were performed. I answered the monks who asked me the reason of my absence, 'I had been ill but had felt a great desire to be there.'

Shortly before my return to Calcutta, my wife's aunt and uncle gave advised me to leave our two daughters behind with them – they would love them as their own children. Having received money from my Sahib, my wife, our baby boy and I left Ghoom on the mail train to Calcutta as soon as possible. The following day I gave my Sahib the texts I had copied for him and then continued working as his copyist.

## ❁ twenty-one ❁

Even the spring and autumn of Calcutta could sometimes be too hot for me. When this heat caused boils to cover my whole body, I said to my Sahib, 'I am a cold country dweller and might die if I stay here longer!' The medicine an English doctor had given me did not help much. Having asked my Sahib if I could return to rDo-rje-gling, he said I should find out first if a cooler place would indeed be better for me. Once sent to hospital I was cured three weeks later by British doctors and nurses. For this reason I say, 'Thank you!' to their King, to the caring workers in the hospital of Calcutta and to my beloved Sahib. In Tibet no such hospitals, doctors, nurses, servants, food, clothing beds or medicine can be found. I remember having fallen ill (I was about seventeen years old at that time) that it was difficult for poor people to pay a good doctor. It must hoped that the Tibetan government will soon build hospitals and dispensaries in the larger places of my home-land!

## ❁ twenty-two ❁

When I was suffering from a very painful diarrhoea, rNyi-ma told me that after he had fallen ill with dysentery he had been advised to put a little bit of opium in a lemon, cover the fruit with cow-dung and then heat it on a fire. As soon as the lemon had cooled, the dung was to be removed and the fruit juice taken. Having done so, my condition improved only for several days. Smoking opium in a Chinese house did not help me much either. I grew weaker and weaker. After informing my Sahib that a cure for me had not yet been found, he wrote a letter to a friend of his who was a doctor. I then went to an English hospital again.

In the course of my stay there I realised that Calcutta is very much like a hell where nobody thinks about god and death. Everyone will die like an animal because he or she did not do good things during their lives. You should try to lead a holy

life for the benefit of your next existence. It is, however, very difficult to escape from worldly matters.

My Sahib kindly continued to give me money although I was not able to work for him due to my illness. He also sent me a letter telling me not to leave the hospital until I had completely recovered. Once allowed me to go home I felt, of course, very glad. It was through the kindness of the British government that I had been cured. The following morning at ten when I continued copying texts, my Sahib said, 'You look like new!'

### ❀ **twenty-three** ❀

Thanks to the deeds of my former life I came from Tibet to India. My wife was born in Bhutan. We had three children: two girls and a boy. This world is, indeed, full of sorrow. For, when I told my wife all about religious customs she never listened to me. Sometimes we did not even talk to each other for days. I never beat my wife as other men sometimes do, knowing this would be of no use. I even gave her money as she did not want earn any herself. She refused to make clothing for our children and went out to drink instead.

On 17 June 1922 a telegram reached me in Calcutta saying my wife had died. After my Sahib had lent me money I could travel by train to Ghoom. Here a friend told me this telegram was sent on the day of her death. The fact it reached me too late to be on time for the ceremonies performed by Tibetan Buddhist monks was, of course, a result of my former life. I also learned that my wife had gone home due to a fever. When she was found, half a bottle of barley-beer lay next to the pillow. Nobody knew exactly when she died. All this caused me to think that because she had never been kind to her relatives and had even treated her husband as an enemy, never sending him a letter is the reason she died while nobody was there to pour a little water in her mouth.

Once reunited with our three children at the house where we had once lived, tears filled my eyes until I realised that

crying was, of course, useless. Four monks from Ghoom were asked to pray on the seventh day of the following weeks. For this they received twenty rupees worth of rice, meat, vegetables and barley-flour. I gave them a long piece of cloth, a garment of brocade, a pair of Tibetan boots, a girdle and twenty-four rupees for performing religious ceremonies. The Head Monk received some money, too. I also paid half a rupee to all the monks living at the monastery of Ghoom. They were served butter-tea on my expenses, too. After new clothes had been bought for our children, the money I had been lent by my Sahib was completely spent.

By selling my wife's ornaments, clothes and cooking-pots, I could earn only forty rupees. In my sorrow I now thought the following three groups of husbands and wives existed:

- 1 those who live together in good health,
- 2 those who are able to help each other when ill,
- 3 those who cannot help each other when ill.

Needless to say, I belonged to the last group because I had not seen my wife between the moment she fell ill and her death. However, the funeral rites were the best I could arrange. She did not die a dog's death!

### ❁ **twenty-four** ❁

On 12 July, I left Ghoom for Calcutta. Having told my Sahib (who was very glad to see me again) everything about my wife's death, he said, 'You must not feel sad. Between you and your wife there was no love in this life. Do not think too long about it. Follow God's will instead.' Thanks to my Sahib's words I was able to continue my copying work. Being the only monk in Calcutta with a Tibetan Buddhist almanac, I was able to explain the meaning of religious holidays to my gSher-pa, Bhutanese, Tibetan and Sikkimese friends (who generally speaking worked as servants or child's nurses for Europeans). I taught my friends that through burning incense, offering

flowers and water to God on festive occasions, we would be blessed more.

On the fourth day of the sixth month of the Tibetan calendar, I asked my Sahib for permission to perform a ritual called *gcod*. Being a Buddhist himself he even lent me a large hand-drum and a thigh-bone trumpet from his collection of Tibetan Buddhist musical instruments. I bought oil for the sacrificial lamps and barley-beer to offer. My friends brought fruit and flowers. The ceremony began at six in the morning. When completed nine hours later I said, 'Sinners will fall into Hell, the righteous go to Heaven.' I then told my friends a number of stories about Sakyamuni Buddha making everyone feel very glad. Afterwards we had drinks, while singing and dancing until one a.m.

During this ceremony the text must be read carefully, your voice must sound between high and low. At the same time you must shake a hand-bell and beat a hand-drum. When meditating on a goddess called *rDo-rje Phag-mo* you must take off the top of your skull, place it on a three-legged stand and then cut your body to pieces with her sword. Having said the spell, 'Ram, Yam, Kam', you cook the flesh of your body in your skull-cap so that it becomes nectar and then offer it to all the deities and to the good and evil spirits. If this is not done properly, *rDo-rje Phag-mo* will punish you by making an end to your life.

A friend of mine who had drunk too much barley-beer said the spell wrongly. After his wife and children had died one after the other, he poisoned himself. A monk once performed this ritual in a tent pitched near a graveyard. Having gone outside to pass water, he returned to see a human skull. When he threw a stone at it, he damaged his hand-drum and thigh-bone trumpet. He had seen a skull because he did not understand the meaning of this ceremony. Those who do, live long and in good health. All the deities bless you before you go to heaven in your next life!

## ❁ twenty-five ❁

At eight p.m. on 3 April 1925, I left Calcutta in a very crowded train to reach Siliguri eleven hours later. The train to rDo-rje-gling did not leave before half past seven in the morning. I arrived at the house of Ts'an-chih Chen (who also worked for my Sahib as a clerk) at two that afternoon. The next day I walked through Ka-spungs to reach the village of sPos-sdong where I was glad to see my family and friends again.

Four monks were called in order to perform ceremonies and chant prayers in honour of my late wife on the thirtieth day of the third month of the Tibetan calendar. The village of sPos-sdong is a good place to think about religion – due to the many Buddhists here the monks can hardly find time to rest. The market-place (open each Friday) was frequented by many Sikkimese, Bhutanese and Tibetans who trade rice, fruit or barley-flour. A State, a Catholic and a Protestant School as well as a dispensary have been founded at sPos-sdong.

One day my elder daughter saw a young woman along the side of the road with her feet in a lock. She then told me this woman was mad because the gods and the evil spirits disliked her. I now remembered an Englishman telling me that people went mad because their brains were damaged. My daughter also said me that when a monk, while visiting this woman's house to perform ceremonies, had gone out to pass water, she sat on his seat, rang his hand-bell and laughed instead of reading religious texts. This scared the monk so much he fled and returned to finish his ceremonies only after her feet had been locked and chained.

When a man travelling from sPos-sdong to Ka-spungs on horse back suddenly died, one monk said he seen the spirit of a blacksmith, who had died recently, sitting on the same horse. It was then believed that the blacksmith had taken this man's life. I do not think this is true. During the following three days monks read religious books and sounded their musical instruments. After the dead man's body had been set a light on a nearby hill top, his wife received one or two rupees and was comforted with the words, 'Do not feel sad for



your dead husband. All worldly beings must once die.' Because she had no children her sisters and the dead husband's relatives argued about his belongings saying, 'Give us some of his money so that we can pay the monks to perform ceremonies.' It is written that rich people are sinners and that, although their money was divided after they died, their sins remained with them. I wondered why the members of the dead man's family talked about how everything he had left behind was to be divided!

I paid three rupees to travel from sPos-sdong to Ka-spung on horse back. A coolie who carried my luggage from sPos-sdong to Ghoom received the same amount. Once at Ghoom I heard my younger daughter had died from smallpox. This made me feel very sad but nothing could be done about it. Everything came about through your former life and is the will of God. Needless to say, I asked monks to pray for her. Flowers were offered and sacrificial butter-lamps lit. For performing these ceremonies the monks received ten rupees. During a visit to my little son who was living with his grandparents I saw the vaccination mark on his arm. If my son was asked, 'Where is your father?' his finger would point at me. When he added, 'That man who lives in Calcutta is my father', I felt very sorry for him.

Having returned to Calcutta I was welcomed again by rNyi-ma at the train station. My Dutch Sahib was very happy to see me again. Not much later he asked me to accompany him to Kathmandu.<sup>1</sup> However, feeling this journey would now be too tiring for me, I stayed in Calcutta.

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1 This journey took place in May 1925.

# Appendix A

On 2 April 1919 I travelled in the service of my Dutch Sahib to the powerful, wealthy and holy land of India. Having left Ghoom for Calcutta on a mail-train at half past two in the afternoon we reached the town of Siliguri at eight in the evening. The carriages here were surprisingly large when compared with those of rDo-rje-gling. It seemed to me the ground moved like waves each time the thundering engine gained speed as it left the station. I could not fall asleep before midnight. At five in the morning we had to change trains and reached Calcutta five hours later.

From Howrah Station we flew like a bird to the house of Sir John Woodroffe<sup>1</sup> in a motor car. The meal a servant had prepared for us was taken in a room kept cool by an electric fan. When Sir John came home towards the end of the afternoon, he and my Sahib greeted each other as if they were brothers. My explaining what the Tibetan Buddhist images in Sir John's house meant was translated into English by my Sahib. For the first time ever I stayed in a room with electric lamps and taps. Buildings in Tibet do not have waterpipes even if they are built near a river or a stream. Needless to say, it took some time for me to get used to the many mosquitoes and the high temperatures in Calcutta. Because of the electric trams, motorcars, horse carts and many people I had to pay full attention when crossing roads in the town centre.

On each of the following days my Sahib showed me things I had never seen or heard of: the Government House, its gardens and images of famous British officials who had done so much good work in India. When visiting the harbour located to the east of this building, the size of the ships here, both coming and going, surprised me. Tibetan boats could never carry that many passengers. In a park near the centre of Calcutta men, woman

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1 Writer on Hinduism under the pen-name Arthur Avalon.

and children of India and of England listened to soldiers who the government paid to play music. You could buy coloured balloons here which, as my Sahib told me, would be lost for ever if you let them go. We also saw children row boats on a small nearby lake and a long iron post through which you could listen to news from all over the world.

One of the many creatures in the Zoological Gardens was as large as a donkey. Its roars, however, seemed to make the ground tremble. When my Sahib bought leaves for me to feed the elephants, I was at first afraid to be bitten. Instead they waved their trunks to greet me. There were also deer, tigers, leopards, bears, large and strong monkeys. At certain times alligators were given frogs to eat. Many snakes (some poisonous) lived in glass cages. Besides parrots, eagles, peacocks we walked past many sweetly singing birds. One bird had a long neck and legs. It was as tall as a human being. I also saw rhinoceroses, waterbuffaloes, different kinds of goats, tapirs, zebras, jackals, wolves, rabbits and two very large turtles. One creature looked very strange to me. Her skin was deer-like, her fore legs were short but her hind legs large. In a bag on her stomach she carried her young which sometimes showed its head.

During a visit to the Asiatic Society of Bengal I looked at copies of the Tibetan Buddhist canon and of its commentaries. My Sahib also showed me the image of a man holding in his right hand a pen and in his left hand a Tibetan book. It represented Alexander Csoma de Körös. This European scholar studied the Tibetan language and lived in Ladakh for many years. At the Indian Museum I liked very much the scenes from the life of Sakyamuni Buddha and His footprint in stone. Upstairs we saw many skeletons and stuffed animals.

In Calcutta you can go everywhere only if you have enough money to pay for transport. If not, you must walk. It is then as if a fire burns inside you. Luckily my Sahib paid all my fares and bought cold water to quench my thirst. In Tibet you can not get any ice in the summertime, not even if you are able to pay 100 rupees. How can it be made in the hell of Calcutta? Probably by some clever man from Europe!

The railroad bridge across the wide, deep Hoogli river reminded me of the time I was about fourteen years old when the ground behind the Potala had been flooded due to heavy rains. Many men and boys of lHa-sa were now ordered to carry stones on their backs and build a wall to hold back the water. For one stone each worker would receive a stamp on his face. As we were to be paid according to their number, I took great care to keep my face dry. The dam, however, collapsed after a short time. If only Tibetans could conquer the waters!

The Anglo-Indian government made plans to build market places, roads and houses with running water. Taxes are collected to pay workers. When the authorities of Tibet receive money, they put it in leather bags. For this reason many Tibetans leave their homeland. A gifted Englishman writes a book after talking about its subject with others. In Tibet, clever monks are very proud of themselves and do not work together. They make many mistakes in spelling and grammar, too.

One day my Sahib and I went to a building housing boxes to put letters in to send to China or Europe. We also entered a very large shop which had an elevator. Everything here was kept very clean. On another occasion we saw a magician with several puppets on a carpet in front of him. Whenever he told them to fight or jump, they did so. When he sang, the puppets danced. Some onlookers gave him a coin or a cigarette. One evening I went to a picture theatre to see people move and speak on a very large white hanging. What a wonderful amusement!

At five past ten in the afternoon of 14 April my Sahib and I left Calcutta on a train to Madras. At that time the noise the passengers and coolies of Howrah Station made was very loud. All First Class passengers were registered and paid for their tickets at the office before departing. Shortly after a train arrived a name card was placed on their seats. My Sahib travelled in a First Class carriage with electric fans, good beds and a water closet. I sat in a nearby compartment together with other servants of the First Class passengers. The Third

Class carriages were crowded with people, looking like cattle in too small a pen. Meals could be bought either along the way or at the stations. A cup of tea cost me as much as two annas. Due to my thirst I was not able to save much money.

The train journey from Calcutta to Madras took us four nights and four days. I think that walking that distance would take about two years. Looking out through a carriage window, I felt sorry for the men working in such hot weather. They were thin and as black as coal. Their clothing covered only the lower part of their bodies. Once near Madras I was surprised to see how salt was made from ocean water. In rDo-rje-gling several people had told me that in India salt consisted of human and animal bones. This is not true: Europeans do not eat unclean food.

An Indian servant of my Sahib's English friend Mr P.S. Jackson<sup>1</sup> welcomed us at the station. We were then driven to a house built next to a factory where electric fans were made. The noise here did not allow the workers to think about their next life or pray to God. In addition, they were only interested in earning money. When death came, it would be too late for them. As Mr and Mrs Jackson were soon going to England, their friends, servants and the workers at the factory said good-bye to them. Everyone clapped their hands when garlands of flowers were laid around their necks. Needless to say, my Sahib saw Mr and Mrs Jackson off.

The women of India wear brightly coloured clothing and have long black hair. Having asked my Sahib, 'Are the women with short hair nuns?', he told me they were widows. At the end of my first day in Madras I wrote the following verse,

*I, a man from Tibet, have come to the south of India.  
When people look at me, they see a strange man.  
Everyone looks strange to me, too.  
Looking strange to one and other, we laughed.  
May this strange looking day be an auspicious one!*

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1 Author of an article titled 'Electricity in Lhasa, Tibet', *Magnet Magazine*, Vol. XVII (1931), pp 283-289.

As I had only read about the sea in Tibetan books, my Sahib took me to a beach one afternoon. As soon as we arrived here a number of boys asked us for money to show off how long they could swim under water. The ocean waves which scared me, did not hurt them at all. I was very glad when my Sahib bought some shells for me. While visiting his friends at tea time, he asked them if we were allowed to touch the cups with our mouths. This was then permitted. The grandfather of that family spoke Sanskrit very well. The fact I could not understand his words made me feel like an insect in a small bottle or like a donkey standing alone in the rain. I now remembered how a Tibetan had once walked towards a fortress without being able to speak the language of the Chinese soldiers inside. He was killed because he could not answer their questions.

My Sahib and I also visited a shop selling watches, jewels and gold or silver ornaments. They were all much too expensive for me. One day we went to a wonderful aquarium housing all kinds of fish I had never seen before. When an elephant with silver tusks and a brightly coloured cover walked past us, it brought the coin my Sahib put in its trunk up to the man seated on its neck. This reminded me of the following Tibetan proverb, 'The privilege of a human existence is as rare as a star shining in the daytime.' This is very true: although man is much smaller, he can ride on an elephant's back and teach it to obey him with the use of an iron hook. This shows the difference between animals and human beings.

Due to some trouble with my eyes I had not been able to do any copying work at Ghoom for short time. Here in Madras my Sahib kindly helped me by seeing to it my eyes were fully examined in an English hospital. The spectacles I needed costed thirteen rupees and eight annas, equal to about fifty trang-kas: the monthly earnings of a poor Tibetan. That is the reason why government officials are the only ones in lHa-sa who can buy a pair of spectacles.

When we paid a visit to the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar near Madras, a stout

lady<sup>1</sup> showed me several fine Burmese and Japanese images of Sakyamuni Buddha. After my Sahib had told her I was born in Tibet, she gave me a glass of lemonade. We then walked towards a red building where my Sahib had worked for seven years. The people here were very glad to see him again and said I was the first man from lHa-sa they had ever seen. An English lady to whom I was introduced asked me if I had met a Japanese Buddhist monk called Ekai Kawaguchi.<sup>2</sup> My answer was, 'Yes, in Nepal!'

The International Headquarters at Adyar housed the complete Tibetan Buddhist canon together with its commentaries, countless English, Indian and Chinese books as well as religious images from India, Tibet, Japan, China and Europe. While looking into the palm-leaf manuscripts I noticed they were written not with the use of ink but with a needle. Some kind of oil had been rubbed into the needle marks.

Once the time had come for us to leave Madras, I felt very sad and wrote a song about this great town.

*In the clear ocean water golden fish swim.  
Cool sea breezes make life pleasant here.  
For our friends and us, it was now time to part.  
Because we liked each other very much,  
my Sahib and I did not wish to go so soon.  
when the train arrived, we said good-bye.  
'If we are alive this time next year',  
I prayed, 'may we see you all again!'*

On 11 May my Sahib and I arrived at Howrah Station, Calcutta where Sir John Woodroffe welcomed us. My mind was now wide again because everyone could understand my Hindi. I now saw how much money you need to live pleasantly in India: your house must be kept free of mosquitoes, blood-sucking fleas and ants. If not, life is very difficult. Having spent a week in Calcutta, we returned to the district of rDo-rje-gling. I was, of course, very glad to see my

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1 Presumably Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society.

2 Author of *Three Years in Tibet*, Benares/London, 1909.

family and friends at Ghoom again. My Sahib returned to the Balaclava Hotel at Jorebungalow. After a day off, I continued copying for him there.





# Appendix B

On 25 April 1921 my Sahib and his friend Sir Asutosh Mookerjee asked me to buy Buddhist books in my homeland. Having agreed to do so, I set off for Ghoom where I at first did not feel well due to the difference in temperature between Calcutta and the hills of rDo-rje-gling. The journey on horseback to Ka-spungs cost eight rupees. I paid a coolie two rupees to carry my luggage. After showing Mrs MacDonald a letter written by my Sahib, she allowed me to become a member of her party which was travelling to the north, too. Three days later we met her husband. She saw to it his Tibetan clerk wrote a document which was sealed. Its text ran,

*All Headmen of the people living between the Chumbi Valley and rGyal-rtse must respect the Anglo-Tibetan agreements. Thus to Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs, who works for the Indian government, you must give a horse and saddle as well as food and water without delay. He shall pay you according to the rules of your country.*

These words were then signed by Mr MacDonald, the Anglo-Tibetan Trade Agent.

My thick coat was put to good use in the Chumbi Valley. A pair of snow-goggles helped me from going blind. Having arrived at a small village which had not long ago been destroyed by Chinese soldiers, I came across a learned monk called bsTan-'dzin Chos-dpal who had performed rituals at Bodh Gaya. Instead of spending his time singing songs in a tavern, he wanted to travel with me to the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po. After walking on a bad road for six days, we reached the town of rGyal-rtse. Here the changing of my 500 rupees into Tibetan coins took four days. Meanwhile I visited the fortress built to the southwest of rGyal-rtse and afterwards worshipped at a monastery called rTse-chen. In the market-

place (open from eight until twelve each morning) you could buy mutton, butter-tea, barley-flour and woollen clothes, but no precious things. The Tibetans here were not very clean when compared with the people of Calcutta.

The journey from rGyal-rtse to gZhis-kha-rtse on horseback took us two days and cost twelve rupees. Along the way we stopped at the monastery of Zha-lu which stood in a large garden and housed many holy images. Its roof was decorated with beautifully carved wooden beams. Here I offered some coins, a ceremonial scarf and prayers to have success.

About two months after leaving Calcutta, I reached gZhis-kha-rtse. The Chief Printing Officer at the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po (who had been a tutor of mine during my stay there long ago) informed me that more than 100 texts could be purchased. He promised me he would see to it personally that the best paper and ink were used. However, the monks first had to be given alms. After paying twenty trang-kas, I ordered them to print 300 volumes. For each of these they received three srangs and three shos. In order to see their daily work, I stayed not far from the printing office.

I told some people in the market-place of gZhis-kha-rtse I had come from Calcutta, a large town in the eastern part of India to worship the Pan-chen bLa-ma and the image of 'Jam-dpal. These people then asked me if I had ever heard of an Indian religious teacher who had ordered his fellow country men not to smoke, not to drink, not to wear leather shoes and not to read, speak or write the English language and not to follow the British customs. I also heard say that if the people of India followed this advice, they would be very happy. These people also said that due to these words this teacher had been arrested, that he could not be hurt by flames or be drowned. Once tied over the mouth of a cannon he was not hurt when it fired. When tied across a railway line, the train did not harm him. It was thought this teacher was indeed an emanation of Gu-ru Rin-po-che. I now said to them, 'You are talking about Mahatma Gandhi. He is a wise man who once worked as a lawyer in the British court but now showed great mercy towards the people of India.'

At the press of the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po you had to pay eight rupees for a single volume of the commentaries of the Tibetan Buddhist canon if it was to be printed clearly on good paper. After a week later all the volumes I wanted to buy were finished. Unfortunately they were printed badly in spite of paying the monks beforehand. This made me feel so sad I could not eat that day. Before ordering the pages to be printed a second time I paid for the wooden blocks to be washed. Soon afterwards several skins were purchased to wrap the books in and to keep them dry.

You often saw a naked man in the market-place of gZhis-kha-rtse. When you gave him a coin, he would throw it away. Innkeepers allowed him to drink barley-beer and eat barley-flour without paying. This poor man slept along the road side during the winter. I was told he had once owned a piece of iron. After losing it he knocked his head on the ground feeling very sorry for himself. Many Tibetans think he is an emanation of a wise monk because he had not been wounded when Chinese soldiers fired their guns at him.

I once witnessed a fight between several learned monks in the course of which one of them died. After his murderer had been flogged 300 times, his books were removed from the monastery. He was then given layman's clothes, a paper hat and then sent to a place which took three days to reach. For the law states, 'If an man kills a bird or steals some money, he must be expelled from the monastery. If he kills a man, he must be driven out of the country!' The other monks were fined forty trang-kas each.

On the twelfth day of the fifth month, I admired the Pan-chen bLa-ma's palace. His mother was not able to speak. I heard say this had come about because of her very bad temper in His former life. For that reason He had then prayed, 'I wish to have a dumb mother in my next life.' On the fourteenth a large marquee with a golden top was pitched. Inside it the Ta-la'i bLa-ma, noblemen, and monks gathered to drink butter-tea. On this occasion a large embroidered hanging depicting 'Od-dpag-med was unrolled. The following day a hanging representing Sakyamuni Buddha was shown and on the

sixteenth one of 'Jam-dpal. Of course, everybody present at gZhis-kha-rtse put on their best clothes to worship these gods. Boys dressed in brocade danced to the sound of drums and oboes as the Pan-chen bLa-ma looked on. They held a wooden axe in their hands. Small bells were tied around their ankles. On the twenty-second a group of laymen danced in His palace. Afterwards He gave each dancer a ceremonial silk scarf. The rich then threw scarfs and coins wrapped in paper towards the dancers who were presented with 1,500 trang-kas, meat, boxes filled with tea and sacks filled with barley-flour.

The people of gZhis-kha-rtse enjoyed these festive days either singing or playing card games. However, many men and women drank too much and started to quarrel. Monks from the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po were not allowed to visit a tavern. If caught, the elder monks would fine them. Whenever dances took place all monks had to be seated apart from the lay people. If they did not, they would be flogged.

On the twenty-fourth of the fifth month I saw monks proceed carrying an image of rDo-rje 'Jigs-byed. When the Pan-chen bLa-ma ordered some large copper vessels to be filled with water, He prayed before sprinkling some drops of water on those present. Clouds now gathered above our heads, rain fell and the crops were saved. Having asked, 'Why has it not rained for such a long time?', I received the answer, 'Many inhabitants of gZhis-kha-rtse are not pious Buddhists.' Tents were pitched in front of the Pan-chen bLa-ma's palace on the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth day of the seventh month. Many monks and laymen now came together to see a horse race. Later, officers competed in shooting arrows at a flag which stood at a distance of 300 paces. The man who hit this target first received a horse, a saddle and fine clothing.

In order to have all the books packed within three days I paid thirteen rupees. The needles used to sew the skins together were made by a blacksmith who received as much as three trang-kas to do this work on the same day as ordered. Yak drivers were willing to accompany me to Phag-ri. We left gZhis-kha-rtse on the fifteenth of the seventh month. During one of the following days the temperature was so low we

could sometimes hardly speak. I even thought my end had come. Luckily we soon found a tent and once inside we returned to life again after drinking some very hot butter-tea. Our clothes were warmed by sitting near a fire. I now realised you need good companions in places such as these. If you died travelling alone, it would never be known if you were killed by a thief or a wild animal.

Having arrived at Phag-ri I sent a telegram to my Sahib. His answer which reached me the next morning made me feel very glad: it was as if we had spoken to each other. Donkeys were hired to carry the books to Ka-spungs and then on to Ghoom. Here I thought it better to rest for a short time before returning to the heat of Calcutta.

On 19 October an official at Ghoom Railway Station told me that transporting the load to Calcutta would cost seventy rupees. I no longer had that much money and felt ashamed to ask my Sahib for more. The books sent by freight train after I had paid a sum of forty-three rupees. While waiting for the receipt, the official showed a great desire to receive a tip. I gave him one rupee only. Another official had to be paid to write names and addresses on each of the packings.

My Sahib and his Tibetan domestic servant rNyi-ma welcomed me with a ceremonial scarf at Howrah Station, Calcutta. I told them all about my journey while we drank tea together. The books arrived as many as six days after I had. This made me feel happy and sad at the the same time. It had taken only fifteen days to bring my load from Central Tibet to the border of India. However, a railway engine which is said to fly like a bird proved even slower than a donkey! After unpacking the books (a number of which were badly damaged) we divided them. One third was purchased by the University of Calcutta and another by the Imperial Library. My Sahib became the owner of the third portion.

A photograph of myself together with a number of these religious texts was taken a few days later and published in an English newspaper of Calcutta showing how faithfully I had served the British government. Indeed, thieves and wild animals could have taken my life in the course of the journey.

I do indeed hope the people of England and India will study Tibetan Buddhist books. Long ago Indian scholars introduced Buddhism to Tibet. Later Tibetan religious teachers travelled to India. After their return they saw to it Buddhism spread all over Tibet. May the books I bought back with me be of great use to everyone. May one and all learn through them not to commit sins but to be virtuous. If we do not put seeds in the ground, how can the number of Buddhists grow? How can we know how Buddhism tastes without eating it? How can you be a true Buddhist and not make your belief known to others?

# Appendix C

In December 1922 Mr van Manen, Sir John Woodroffe, Mr and Mrs Jackson, rNyi-ma and I left Calcutta for a short stay at Ka-spung. On our way back the Head Monk of the monastery at Ghoom asked my Sahib to organise a visit of Tibetan Buddhist monks to Calcutta. They had been asked to dance before the Prince of Wales. Because my Sahib knew many things about the Tibetan language and customs, he was asked for advice by Mr Payne, the Master of Ceremonies at Calcutta. Soon afterwards Mr Gole, Secretary to the Governor of Bengal, spoke with Sir John Woodroffe about the visit of the monks from Ghoom. They arrived, fifty in all, at Howrah Station on 15 December. My Sahib, rNyi-ma and I welcomed them in the Tibetan manner. That same evening they sounded their musical instruments and chanted prayers to honour the Prince of Wales – the British government paid each monk one anna a day. During a visit to the Indian Museum they were, of course, surprised by everything they saw.

The Tibetan Buddhist dances which normally went on for three days had to be made short and now lasted about a quarter of an hour. Daily rehearsals took place between 22–8 December. It was then we saw a Muslim king, several monks from Burma, dancing girls who threw red powder at each other, men with long hair ride horses and elephants pull carts decorated with flowers. Many people looked on as the monks from Ghoom practised. Everyone was very astonished to see an aeroplane in the sky above them. I heard say it would drop a bomb on those who planned to attack the Prince of Wales. On our way home we saw a very poor woman in childbirth. The ground she sat on was red with blood. I felt sorry for her. However, it could not be helped if it was the fruit of her former life.

The monks from Ghoom performed their dances on 30 December. Spectators were allowed to enter the ground only



if they paid five or ten rupees. That day many soldiers guarded the gates. When H.R.H. the Prince of Wales arrived at half past three in the afternoon, all the Englishmen took off their hats and shouted, 'Hip, Hip, Hurray!' First a Hindu priest placed a garland around His neck. Next, one Muslim and five Buddhist priests from Ceylon recited prayers. Soon afterwards H.R.H. saw soldiers march past dressed in white, yellow red and green. Musicians and singers now proceeded together a group of elephants and camels. Not much later the Tibetan Buddhist monks danced past H.R.H. accompanied by their musical instruments. He left the grounds at six p.m. but not before shaking my Sahib's hand. I could not hear the words they said to each other. It seemed to me that on this festive day even the ants had come out of their holes. In the evening the monks were very astonished to see a colourful fireworks in the sky.

It was now said that Mahatma Gandhi had ordered all the shops to close preventing the English from celebrating the beginning of the year 1923. However, the shopkeepers did their work. Even the public transport was as normal. British soldiers had silenced the followers of Gandhi in the streets as if a pail of water had been thrown on a fire.

Before the Tibetan Buddhist monks left Calcutta for Ghoom, they were happy to perform a second time and to earn some extra money. I hereby gratefully state that they danced very well and that my Sahib went about everything properly: in a perfect and peaceful manner.

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# Epilogue

The last entry in the autobiography of the Tibetan scribe Phun-tshogs Lung-rtogs was written by his Dutch Sahib Johan van Manen and signed at Calcutta. It runs:

*The good tutor died in the School of Tropical Medicine, in the afternoon of 22 February, a Monday, 1926, at about 3.30 p.m. He had been in hospital for about 2 months, in the beginning on account of undiagnosed constant fever. About 10 days before his death tubercular bacilli were reported in his sputum. I saw him last on Saturday, the 20th, and again half an hour before his death. The end was rapid, caused by haemorrhage in the lungs. When I was warned on Monday that his end was near, I came and found him far gone. He was semi-conscious but he regained his consciousness, recognized me and we had our last talk. After making the last worldly dispositions and being reassured on that account, which seemed to give him peace, he said: 'This human life is empty!' These were his last words. He died half an hour later, peacefully, a True Buddhist. A good and lovable man. Age about 44.*



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The Autobiography of  
**sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul**



PLATE 2 sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul *alias* sKar-ma Babu, c.1923

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## Editorial Note

This second autobiography with Inventory number RMV 2739: 190 was composed by sKar-ma Sum-dhon Paul, better known as sKar-ma Babu (Babu being the perhaps somewhat condescending but affectionate term for an English speaking Bengali clerk). The surname Paul was apparently added during his period as a Christian (1913–20). K.S. Paul completed his Preface A on 6 February 1918 at Ghoom. Here, too, he finished Preface B and Chapter 1 on 3 September 1918. Not much later the following thirteen chapters were written. Chapter 15 was completed on the tenth day of the tenth month of the Earth-Pony year (12 November 1918). The translation of these texts from Tibetan into English Paul completed at Calcutta on 23 February 1928. He wrote Chapters 16–19 in Tibetan on the auspicious fifth day of the first month of the Fire-Hare year (8 March 1927). His English translation was completed on the auspicious eighth day of the second month of the Earth-Dragon year (29 March 1928).



## ❁ Preface A ❁

Ye learned men who shine as bright as stars  
in India and in the Snowy Lands!  
I, sKar-ma Babu, have described  
where I have been and what I have seen,  
as purely as unmixed iron.

To do this the great van Manen Sahib  
who is as the first class tea leaves  
pressed me a humble soul again and again.

Finally I complied without presumption  
for the benefit of all mankind.  
Please do not forget to read my autobiography  
with an unwandering mind!  
If my statements on any matter whatsoever  
may seem quite out of place,  
O, multitude of scholars in all nations  
I beg you to pardon me.

May my work be approved of,  
blessed with wide acclaim  
and of use to all!



## ❀ Preface B ❀

I hereby draw the attention of all grammarians schooled in Tibet, wherever they may be. My life-story is written in colloquial Tibetan. Therefore it differs from literature written according to the rules of classical grammar as do tea and wine.

This was done for all to understand, not because I did not study the *rTags-kyi-'jug-pa* and *Sum-cu-pa*<sup>1</sup> when I was young. For, the meaning of countless ancient books written in an old fashioned way can not be understood as salt can be tasted.

May the learned, numbering as many as the hairs of a fox, enjoy this completely new way of writing as if it were a tasty meal. I pray they may feel the emotions of a blind man when he sees the light of day for the first time. May this book although written by a fool please all wise men as does the sun when its rays appear from behind a hilltop.

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1 The *rTags-kyi-'jug-pa* and *Sum-cu-pa* are both treatises of Thon-mi Sambhota, the great Tibetan grammarian. J. Bacot's eds of these texts are published in the *Annales du Musee Guimet, Bibliotheque d'Etudes*, vols 37 and 38. Two commentaries by Rol-p'ai-rdo-rje have been edited by J. Schubert, Leipzig, 1937, in *Artibus Asiae, Supplementum Primum*.

## ❁ one ❁

My grandfather, his wife and their three sons left their native country Nepal on a pilgrimage to Tibet. On their way back they travelled through India and chose to settle down permanently at Jorebungalow, a village to the southeast of Ghoom Railway Station near rDo-rje-gling (Darjeeling) in the District of West Bengal. My grandfather's eldest son had three boys and two girls. I, sKar-ma, am his youngest son.

My mother died when my twin sister and I were twelve months old. Our compassionate father now slept between us with small milk bottles tied to his chest. He would feed us their contents whenever we woke up in the middle of the night and started to cry. After our father remarried, his wife did not cause any trouble thanks to a prayer our mother had said on her deathbed. It ran, 'May my children not have step-parents who treat them badly!'

Having learned to read and write at a Hindi speaking school in Jorebungalow, I went to school at the Tibetan Buddhist monastery of Ghoom. During my first two years here I was a pupil of a pious old monk called Shes-rab rGya-mtsho, a robust man with many wrinkles and whiskers. His duty was to read the holy books or recite prayers. He would never visit rich devotees more often than poor ones and refrained from eating garlic or sharp spices. I never heard it said that he had done anything bad which was larger than a needle's point. Every dog in the marketplace of Ghoom wagged their tails when they saw him. Sadly, there is no such Tibetan Buddhist monk nowadays.

Shes-rab rGya-mtsho taught us to write the Tibetan alphabet using a blackboard on which lines were drawn as follows. First, a pouch filled with white chalk or ashes was pierced on two places opposite each other. Through these holes a string was pulled using a needle. Small pieces of wood were then attached to both ends of this string preventing it

from slipping through. Once the pouch had been placed on the side of the blackboard the string was pulled through the bag and then plucked leaving behind a neat line. We also learned to read and chant the *Taking of Refuge* (*sKyabs-'gro*) as well as prayers in honour of the female deity *sGrol-ma*.

Sometimes men and women from Europe would come and visit us in the classroom. I remember how their tidy clothing and reddish faces astonished me thinking I could perhaps speak with them in my next worldly incarnation. In about my eighth year I left this school to help my father, a shopkeeper, during the daytime. In the evenings Mr. David MacDonald of the Missionary School at Ghoom gave me my first English lesson. The main reason of my attendance there was, however, that I had heard that children received delicacies and toys at Christmas.

My father expressed his religious feelings by supplying building material for the repair of the monastery of Ghoom. Whenever he felt ill, a shaman would be invited to perform ceremonies. Tibetan Buddhist monks who drank and gambled were kept out of our house. Even I was severely punished after my father caught me gambling with some friends. His love of animals was undisputed: he once patiently fed a pony grass and boiled grain until it died of old age. I can also remember how an religious image in our house scared me so much I hardly dared to approach it alone: it reminded me of the masks representing *dPal-ldan lHa-mo* and graveyard ghouls kept at the monastery of Ghoom. It was said they would bite us if we did not say our prayers properly. Fear for them forced us infants to turn in early!

One day my father went on a business to Sukhiapokhri, a village west of Ghoom Railway Station. Only after I had wept bitter tears and had rolled on the ground, did he take me with him. The fact I was traveling on a pony's back for the first time made me feel very pleased. Along the way we took our hats in our hands to salute a large rock on the right side of the road. My father told me that long ago criminals, when sentenced to death, were thrown off this rock that a demoness was said to inhabit. Continuing our journey, we greeted Mount Gangs-

can mDzod-lnga. Here a deity resided whom Tibetan Buddhists living nearby regarded as their divine parent. To bring about the health of their beloved or success in business affairs, Tibetans flew a red flag, burned incense, and served either butter tea or barley beer by way of a celestial beverage before prostrating three times.

Merchants would travel to Sukhiapokhri from far and near each Friday. In the market place here they traded livestock, vegetables, tobacco, red millet from which beer was brewed. Local people found a livelihood selling wood or working for shop keepers. Many simply spent their time gambling. Strangers arriving at Sukhiapokhri would often be taken to a tavern and forced to buy drinks for everyone. You would most certainly be knocked down if you refused to pay. The police, generally speaking, took no action to prevent criminal conduct. The inhabitants of Sukhiapokhri, therefore, placed empty tins on and around their houses to warn against thieves at night. Dogs were kept for the same reason.

## ❁ two ❁

Perhaps the most vivid memory of my youth is the following. One morning we children played a game, throwing coins at a crack in a rock. Trying to retrieve a coin, my left hand did not come free due to my silver bangles. My friends and relatives could not help me. After it had been suggested this rock was inhabited by a serpent, prayers and incense were offered. Thanks to God's grace I was able to remove my arm several hours later and before it was considered necessary to cut it off.

I helped my father and step mother in their shops until my I twelfth year. Then, while attending the British Highschool at rDo-rje-gling, I was taught by a pious Tibetan Buddhist called Phyag-'bal. Each day after the third crow of the cock his pupils rose to honour him by offering a vessel filled with water from a spring. His strictness and the fact I was teased by older boys sometimes made me think I would have been much happier without knowing what the word 'school' meant.

When I was sixteen years of age my family visited an old monk named mKhas-spyod dPal-ri. The journey to his house in Sikkim led us through the town of Ka-spungs (Kalimpong), flowering tea gardens and across shaky bridges. This my first pilgrimage, was very strenuous for me. Passing a stone encaged in the roots of a tree, we were told this was the tree's way of punishing the rock for not settling a debt in its former life. 'What a good example for mankind!', I now thought.

Having arrived at his house, we bowed before mKhas-spyod dPal-ri as he accepted our golden and silver coins. He then blessed us with a long and prosperous life, with name and fame, with the power of salvation when death comes and with full understanding of the prayers we read and wrote. From that moment on I meditated on him because he was the first monk I paid homage to during my first pilgrimage.

My father's death a few months later forced me to give up any further studies. I then worked as a petty clerk at the court of rDo-rje-gling and later earned fifteen rupees a month for this varied but low standard work. At the age of eighteen I was appointed clerk to Mr J.H.E. Garrett, the Deputy Commissioner of rDo-rje-gling. Not much later the Pan-chen bLa-ma, Head of the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po, passed through rDo-rje-gling on his way to India as guest of the British Government represented by Captain W.F.T. O'Connor, Chief Officer of the British Trade Agency at rGyal-rtse (Gyantse) and the Medical Officer Captain R. Steen. Both men needed assistants who could speak Tibetan and English. I was chosen to serve Dr Steen.

Due to my excitement I could not sleep the night before we left. At ten a.m. the next day the party which included the Pan-chen bLa-ma, His younger brother, His two tutors, Captain O'Connor, Dr Steen, their staff (including myself) and servants travelled from rDo-rje-gling to Ghoom on a special train. Here my friends and next-of-kin came to say good-bye. They gave me some tea, pocket-money and a ceremonial scarf. Through his tears my uncle said, 'You must go to a foreign country, not because you are forced to, but to

reap the fruits of the education your deceased parents, whom we represent, enabled you to follow!’

Needless to say, I felt extremely proud and happy for, through God’s mercy, being able to become acquainted with the Pan-chen bLa-ma. This meant I could accumulate great virtue free of charge, contrary to those willing to pay 1,000 rupees or more for a mere glimpse of Him.

### ❁ three ❁

During the train journey through India, the important guests were seated in the First Class compartments. The servants, who received eight annas a day from the British government, occupied the Second Class carriages. The Tibetans were, of course, surprised to see so many trains, swift as lightning, stations and iron bridges in an ever changing scenery. At the end of a two day long journey we reached Rawalpindi. Here cavalrists escorted us to a hotel while the menials were lodged in nearby tents. Our hosts paid all expenses. To my great disappointment I could not take part in a visit to Taxila on the third day of our stay – all my money had been stolen, probably by tentguards.

The Prince and Princess of Wales officially welcomed us on five days after our arrival at Rawalpindi. On this occasion innumerable Europeans, Indian and Nepalese foot-soldiers paraded, the cavalry rode on camels and elephants. As they passed, the Pan-chen bLa-ma stood up to wave with His upper garment. His Royal Highness took off His hat while Her Royal Highness bowed Her head. When, three hours later, this ceremonial salutation came to an end, cheers rose sounding like an earthquake.

That evening we saw a colourful fire-work display followed by a concert. The music seemed to crack the sky. The flood-lights used during this event were so strong, you could easily spot an insect on the ground. You could hardly tell day from night! All festivities were concluded when the British National Anthem sounded. These new impressions brought the

following Tibetan proverb to my mind, 'If you live long enough, you shall behold the corpses of demons!'

Having travelled through Delhi we reached Agra, a town as densely populated as is the sky with stars. Our lodgings were at Hotel Metropolis. On the first morning of our four day long stay here, Captain O'Connor and Dr Steen took us to the Taj Mahal. When seeing this impressive building I could not help shaking my head. Even the senior Tibetan officers were very astonished. Some of us who were allowed to climb up the eastern tower later said that, while looking down from the top, the men on the ground seemed to be dwarfs. Feeling very dizzy myself, I thought it better to look up towards the four quarters in the sky. If not carefull while descending, you would slide down the stairs and tear your clothes. The next day we visited the fortress and the marketplace of Agra.

While walking on my own along the river Yamuna I came across some boys catching turtles. I then recalled the fact that Tibetans would never eat hare or turtle meat. For, according to the *mDo-mang* (i.e., a text explaining to the laity of Tibet how to avoid disease), a hare is thought to have the following evil elements: a cat's head, a donkey's ears, a lion's nose, a rat's teeth, a pig's mouth, a dog's fore-legs, a pony's hind-legs, a human being's eyes and a sheep's tail. The *mDo-mang* also states: a turtle has three evils: a house on its back, a camel's neck and a rat's legs.

Not much later I met an ascetic seated near a fire. His almost naked body was covered with ashes. On his forehead I saw a mark in red and white. All this scared me at first. He was bewildered, too, because of my Tibetan clothing. Later on he said he could not see whether I was a man or a woman. After standing opposite each other for as long as it takes a cup of tea to cool (i.e., for a short moment), I asked him in Hindi, 'Why do you live in a cave warmed by a fire in a country as hot as India?', he replied, 'In order to achieve salvation in my next life. For this reason I pray and meditate on God.' He also told me he received food from the people who came to visit him. When asked, 'Will you achieve salvation by undergoing such hardships?', he answered, 'If you do not wish to suffer the

sorrows and damnations of hell during your next life, you should give up evil works and thoughts in this life in order to reach a glorious celestial world in your next life.' I then told him I was from a cold place called rDo-rje-gling situated near mountains and that my family was Buddhist.

Having returned to our hotel, my friends and I did our final shopping. The party left Agra for Benares that evening.

## ❁ four ❁

On our first morning in Benares we walked through the market-place which was very crowded in spite of the heat. Having crossed the river Ganges, Captain O'Connor thought it would be amusing to throw coins towards the many ascetics, both young and old, who had gathered to welcome us. The fact they jumped up eagerly in order to catch as many coins as possible brought a Tibetan proverb to my mind: 'There is no human who does not like money, there is no dog that does not love meat!' We returned to our lodgings (Hotel de Paris) by boat and on the back of an elephant. This means of transport I shall never forget: it felt like flying.

A number of Tibetans asked me to interpret for them during their shopping activities. That afternoon they spent 3,000 rupees, mainly on brocade: a cloth used all over Tibet to make upper garments. My not putting the Tibetans to shame for paying too much resulted in more people asking my master Dr Steen to allow me to accompany them when they went shopping.

The following day we visited the stupa at Sarnath. To the east of this sacred building, the Pan-chen bLa-ma performed a religious ceremony flanked by his tutors and Prime Minister. The Tibetans now recited this prayer, 'As the end of the 724 year long era nears, Pan-chen bLa-ma in a terrifying incarnation will subdue the army of savages. From this moment on religion will flourish in the stable Kingdom of Tibet!'

On the day of departure the Raja of Benares invited the party to his pleasure grove where tigers, leopards, dancing



bears, monkeys and many other animals were kept. Having left Benares by train at ten p.m., we reached Bodh Gaya about nine hours later. Once lodged in tents, all the Tibetans changed into their religious robes. Because Buddhism had originated from Bodh Gaya, four days were spent here lighting sacrificial lamps using clarified butter or coconut oil as a fuel. We collected leaves of the Bodhi tree underneath which Sakyamuni Buddha had meditated in ancient times to take back with us to Tibet. In addition, to present to friends and relatives we printed His footprint which was engraved in a stone on pieces of cloth. In the course of a ceremony the Pan-chen bLa-ma received 1,000 rupees from the Maharaja of Sikkim for teaching him about religious matters. During our entire stay at Bodh Gaya He blessed all the Tibetans again and again.

Dr Steen and I were then asked to set off for Calcutta as soon as possible in order to establish if all arrangements for the British Government had been carried out properly or not. Unfortunately we had to spend the night at Bodh Gaya Railway Station, a very inconvenient place to sleep due to the countless mosquitoes. The train to Howrah Street Station, Calcutta arrived early in the morning. After my master's servants and I had missed this seven a.m. train to Calcutta because we were having breakfast, we had to wait nine hours before continuing the journey. Once at Calcutta, we did not know where to go and roamed about for hours in a horse drawn carriage. Keeping the proverb in mind, 'A thief will never return to the right path, a merchant will never speak the truth', we did not pay the driver until we were sure we had arrived at my master's place. I was finally reunited with him around midnight. The Pan-chen bLa-ma who reached Calcutta two days later stayed at Hastings House in Alipore.

## ❀ five ❀

Soon after the Maharaja of Sikkim's son and the Maharaja of Bhutan had arrived at Calcutta, they were officially intro-

duced to the Prince and Princess of Wales in the Vice-Regal Lodge at Belvedere. His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India Lord Minto also attended this reception. The Tibetans were saluted by way of twenty-five gunshots. After trumpets and drums had sounded, ceremony took place in the course of which His Royal Highness presented a sword with an ivory grip and a golden sheath to Captain O'Connor. It was an award accompanying his promotion for bringing about the first official visit of a Tibetan leader to British territory. Not much later each Tibetan received thirty and their servants ten rupees to let us share in the recognition of Captain O'Connor's services. As we left the British soldiers again fired twenty-five guns. They shot fifteen times to welcome the Maharaja of Bhutan, a strong and heavily built man who wore no shoes. His mouth was red – he liked to chew betel. The Maharaja of Sikkim's son was welcomed with ten shots.

As it was my first visit to Calcutta, I was very impressed by the many trams, motorcycles and bicycles. One evening at half past eight we attended a theatre show organised in our honour. Although the Prince and Princess of Wales were present, many people had come especially to see the Tibetans. This meant at least 1,000 rupees extra for the theatre company. Afterwards even the Tibetan officials said they had seen many extraordinary things, but never something as magical as this.

When the Pan-chen bLa-ma went shopping together with His Prime Minister, He asked me to buy diamonds, silk, sapphires, guns and pistols for Him. In one shop He purchased 4,000 rupees worth of gems and brocade. The 125 rupees I received from this shopkeeper as a commission, my master Dr Steen let me keep.

Shortly after a serious outbreak of smallpox was reported Dr Steen requested the Pan-chen bLa-ma to order all members of His party to be vaccinated so as not to put the mighty British government to shame. At first He was afraid of an injection, placed His hands on my forehead and then asked me about my experiences regarding this matter. Having shown Him the marks on my arm (dating from my school-

days), I was injected before His very eyes. Now no longer reluctant He sat down in the very chair I had just risen from. This was, of course, only possible because there were only a few people present. Not much later, His Prime Minister, both His tutors and all the other Tibetans were vaccinated against smallpox, so that nobody could fall victim to this disease.

Before leaving Calcutta for Tibet, I was officially ordered not to return to rDo-rje-gling, but to accompany my master Dr Steen to rGyal-rtse. After Captain O'Connor had left us to return to England, his post was handed over to the future Lieutenant-Colonel F.M. Bailey, Political Officer in Sikkim. Having returned to Jorebungalow, I was very glad to see my friends and relatives again. However, my feelings became mixed after realising I would have to travel to cold Tibet without them. On the other hand, the chance to serve the Pan-chen bLa-ma as well as the British government was second to none. Dr Steen now comforted me with the words, 'You need not feel sorry for yourself, we are here with you!'

As we approached sGang-tog (Gangtok), the capital of Sikkim, local musicians came to greet us. Not much later the Pan-chen bLa-ma moved into the Maharaja's palace. The two Sahibs found a temporary residence in the Political Officers' quarters. The servants camped in tents. No festivities to welcome our party were held due to the bad health of one of the Pan-chen bLa-ma's maternal uncles. In spite of the medicine my Sahib gave him, he died a few days later causing copious tears to be shed. His death caused us to stay at sGang-tog for five instead of the planned two days. Needless to say, we accompanied the funeral procession. According to tradition, the corpse was cremated on a hill top – no vultures live near sGang-tog. Seeing the smoke rise from the pyre made us feel very sad.

The journey to the north proved extremely difficult: it was the twelfth month of the Tibetan calendar. Having passed through the villages called Rin-chen sGang and Bi-bi-thang we arrived at the town of Chumbi. Here many people came to worship the Pan-chen bLa-ma. The two huge guards at the

entrance of His tent would strike out at those too eager to see Him at random. To my surprise, He took no measures to prevent such cruelty. I myself fell in behind a patroness who presented Him with an image of rTse-dpag-med to prevent Him from falling ill, with a volume of a holy text so that nothing should come against His word and a stupa to keep His mind pure. In the course of this ceremony lay people were given a srung-mdud (i.e., a piece of string knotted once to safeguard against mental and physical diseases), tea and rice. Although I was not a patron, He gave me a srung-mdud to send to my family in the district of rDo-rje-gling. It may be added here that unmarried men, women and children receive a red or a yellow srung-mdud, while married people receive a white one.

## ❁ six ❁

Having passed a village called mChod-rten dKar-po and a small Chinese fortress nearby, we travelled on through Dro-mo-stod. Once across the tableland called gLud-ma, we stopped at a British hostel for the night. Half of the twenty-four mile journey from Chumbi to Phag-ri (Phari) was now completed. While climbing several high hills the following day, the temperature dropped and the number of trees grew less and less. I was told the small holes in the ground were nests made by ratlike animals with short tails. We reached Phag-ri at four p.m. The people here found a livelihood trading with merchants from Bhutan and Tibet.

Both His mother and His youngest brother were reunited with the Pan-chen bLa-ma at Dro-mo. His mother dressed like a nun, her head was shaven. When I took off my hat to salute her, she nodded without saying a word. People later told me she could not speak. Because His brother was too young to ride a pony, a servant carried him on his back all the way to gZhis-kha-rtse (Shigatse) I heard say the boy was an incarnate monk and that he lived in a monastery of lHa-sa (Lhasa) known as Khri-rtse mChog-gling.

After walking through a village named Chu-rgya we ascended towards to a pass called Phag-ri-drang. The distance between its summit and bDud-sna measured eleven miles and the journey to Phag-ri about ten. In order to reach bDud-sna, the sPun-gsum-thang must be crossed. I was now told that three sisters had long ago tried to traverse this table-land. The youngest sister died from cold and fatigue after reaching the first dry river-bed. The first born sister died at the third dry river-bed. The second born sister had passed away at the second river-bed All this shows how difficult travelling in Tibet can be.

At long last we arrived at bDud-sna. Here in a court-yard noblemen (the only ones allowed to touch it) pitched the the Pan-chen bLa-ma's private marquee. It resembled an open umbrella and counted several medium-sized rooms. Servants were not allowed to enter it. However, I was permitted to accompany the Englishmen whenever they visited Him.

We reached a small village called rDo-chen the following day. It was located twelve miles from bDud-sna. From this moment on the Tibetan government was responsible for our well being. Not far from rDo-chen lies the sRam-mtsho, a big lake where many geese and cranes lived. On a large tableland called Chu-mig-sheng-sgo the British fought the Tibetans during Colonel Younghusband's expedition in 1903-4. We then traversed the gLang-po-ngu-thang, a vast tableland given its name after the low temperatures had caused an elephant to cry.

We halted for the night at a distance of twelve miles from rDo-chen near a large lake. The local people hardly ever washed themselves. They only used the water in a river to grind their mills. Fish were eaten only after they were dried and their intestines removed. I was very scared to see the women living north of Phag-ri until a companion told me it was fashionable for them to dress their hair using a wheel made of cane which was not removed for the night.

The following day we travelled fourteen miles to reach a village called Sa-dmar-mdags. The fourteen miles long walk from here to Khang-dmar was the fifth leg of the journey

from Phag-ri to rGyal-rtse. Having left Khang-dmar behind us, no monasteries or shrines whatsoever could be seen on the high hills. Along the road leading to rGyal-rtse flows the river Nyangs. The sixth stage of our journey consisted of a fourteen mile long walk from Khang-dmar to San-sgang. It was here I heard the following story. A rich family called sBa-ma gSo-pa had owned a mare expecting a young. Shortly after it was born the land-lady who had left the house heard her name called outside and saw that the upper body of the young animal was that of a human being. Needless to say, the woman immediately paid homage to this extra ordinary creature. It died not much later but not before saying, 'I am here to show you a good and an evil sign. Build a stupa over my buried body!' This building still stands next to the door of this family's large house. The servants told me that the evil sign mentioned by the pony was: finding dead dogs and dirt in cooking pots. The good sign consisted of the family acquiring large plots of land.

Walking towards the north we arrived at a very large monastery called gNas-rnying. Here I heard that a king called Ri-nang dPon-po sDra-chen had placed a three pointed arrow decorated with vulture feathers, fine silk streamers of different colours and a mirror made of silver or bell metal on the shoulder of a lady called A-phyi sNang-sa. They were now officially married. Another way of marrying equally respected amongst Tibetans consists of a man presenting his wife with a ceremonial scarf. Only if these two customs are not followed husband and wife could separate whenever they wish.

At a distance of one and a half miles from the monastery of gNas-rnying the servants and muleteers all shouted 'ki ki lHa-rgyal-lo' ('Hurray! Hurray! Victory to the gods!') as soon as they saw the fortress built on a distant hill. Some men took off their hats to pray before shedding tears of joy. When I asked them the reason for this, they said, 'Many months have passed since we last saw our homes and loved ones. That is why we feel so glad!' For these men an inauspicious time had come to an end. It may be added here that the dangerous

periods in a Tibetan's life are his or her eighth, thirteenth, twenty-fifth, thirty-seventh, forty-ninth, sixty-first, seventy-third etc. year. The thirteenth is considered to be worst for children, the twenty-fifth year the worst for women and the thirty-seventh the worst for men. You must then take great care, not travel or do any important work because no goals will be reached.

Walking towards the fortress of rGyal-rtse, we saw a number of grass covered hills which refreshed our mind and eyes. At a distance of four miles from rGyal-rtse lies a village called dPe-su Byang-pa. Here both laymen and monks welcomed us playing their musical instruments. The representative of Nepal and his soldiers were present, too. At rGyal-rtse I saw houses as many as there are stars in the sky, resembling European buildings but not from a hygienic point of view. We stayed at the British Trade Agency Office for three days instead of two. When the English mounted soldiers welcomed us I heard people in the crowd say, 'The British government is very righteous both in speech and mind. It loves its subjects while dealing with them honestly.' Nevertheless, I still felt far away from my dear ones in rDo-rje-gling.

Having reached the monastery of rGyal-rtse called dPal-'khor mChod-rten (housing monks of the Sa-skya, dGe-lugs and rNying-ma schools), I was told that the Pan-chen bLa-ma would reside here. A number of long prayer flags flew in the paved courtyard. Our party accompanied Him to the very door of His room before returning to our own lodgings. The next day I spent with some friends from rDo-rje-gling in the market place (opened between seven a.m. and noon). Here goods such as matches, tobacco leaves and clothing could be purchased but, of course, for more money than in India. Apparently the majority of laymen and monks at rGyal-rtse were fond of drinking and gambling. Parents feel no desire to see to it their children were educated and there was no governmental school: a disgrace when compared with other countries. I think the King of Tibet should be ashamed of himself.

❁ seven ❁

Having left rGyal-rtse we proceeded towards the west to pass through Phyag-'tshal sTong and a hamlet called Ma-ra. Once a bridge over the river Nyangs was crossed we reached the monastery of rTse-chen. It was built on a hill and inhabited by more than 100 monks. Some of their dwellings had, as I was told, been destroyed by the British in 1904. After completing the six mile long walk between rTse-chen and 'Brong-rtse (the first stage of the journey from rGyal-rtse to gZhis-kha-rtse), we made camp at bLa-brang rGyal-mtshan.

The following day we set off for Pad-nang. Here I learned that the nearby people and properties were controlled by the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po and that A-phyi sNang-sa, the wife of Ri-nang dPon po sDra-chen, had taken her religious vows not far from a nearby nunnery called Se-ra sGrub-thabs (located on the other side of the river Nyangs). After leaving Pad-nang behind, we arrived at Nor-bu mBhong-rtse to complete the third stage of the journey. Next, mChong-'du (some seven miles from gZhis-kha-rtse) was reached.

Continuing our journey at about seven the next morning, we soon saw five golden roofs in the distance. Having asked a Tibetan official if this was the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po (inhabited by 3,800 monks) or the Pan-chen bLa-ma 's palace, he answered to me that they were buildings housing the bones of a deceased Pan-chen bLa-ma kept in a small golden vessel. Before approaching His monastery, the Pan-chen bLa-ma took His place in a palanquin followed by His two tutors, His younger brother, the Prime Minister, the two Sahibs and two lay officials. They were preceded by British cavalrists one of whom carried the Union Jack. It might be added here that in Tibet nobody is allowed to ride a black horse or pony in a procession, the reason being that such animals are considered demonic.

The number of Chinese, Nepalese, Ladakhi and Tibetans – as many as there are stars in the sky – eager to see Him grew as we came near the monastery. Because He had returned from India in good health the old people bowed before Him



with tears of joy in their eyes. I was proud of myself – the Tibetans spoke very highly of the British government which I served. They sang the following song,

*The sun has risen from the east.*

*The Buddha has come back from India.*

*The Sahib has taken good care of Him,  
safeguarding Him against diseases.*

We entered the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po at two p.m. on the twenty-third day of the twelfth month of the Wood-Snake year (1905). After a fine meal the British officials and their staff were shown their quarters in the lower section of the monastery. Two days later several ceremonial dances took place after which the monastic authorities presented each dancer with a brick of tea and a ceremonial scarf. People came from far and near to attend the hoisting of the Flags of Good Tidings (gTam-snyen Dar-'phyar). On this occasion about thirty-five policemen dressed in white and wearing a yellow hat cracked their whips in the direction of those pushing too much. Needless to say, this practice looked very strange to me. Seeing the Pan-chen bLa-ma look down from a window without speaking did not please me at all. The next day while inaugurating a new palace named sKyid-nags-kha Pho-brang, His officials presented Him with a ceremonial scarf. Our party did so, too.

On the twenty-ninth of the twelfth month of the Tibetan year monks belonging to the sNags-pa school performed a sacrificial dance. In all provinces of Tibet this ceremony took place on the same day. At bKra-shis-lhun-po the Pan-chen bLa-ma sat inside a three storey high building situated on the eastern side of the courtyard. Our party sat opposite Him. After a vessel filled with oil was heated over a fire, a monk held a piece of paper above it. Next, the leading dancer wearing a black hat poured drops of liquor into the vessel. Because the paper burned everybody took off their hats to pray with folded hands. Later I heard that if this piece of paper went up in flames completely no trouble would come to the Pan-chen bLa-ma the coming year. Fortunately this proved to be the case.

The Sahibs and I would often be invited to have dinner with Him. Tibetan officials would now give me a handkerchief to collect a little of His food for them. I could only do so, of course, without Him noticing. As His food was regarded as a religious blessing, I was advised to carry some of it with me as a safeguard against disease. If given to a dying person, he or she would be saved from damnation in hell. In addition, Tibetans have faith in blessings they receive from a monk who placed his hand over their foreheads. At the same time incense consisting of, for instance, a piece of the Pan-chen bLa-ma's clothing, some of His hair, old offerings cakes or barley must be inhaled not only by the seriously ill in order to be cured but also by a dying person in order to remain safe from damnation.

Two days later was the first day of the Fire-Horse year (1906). The two Sahibs and I went to the large Assembly Hall to present the Pan-chen bLa-ma with a ceremonial scarf. He was seated in the northern part of the buildings. To His left seats had been arranged for the Chinese. The British were seated on His right. Nepalese officers were present, too. We all now ate roasted sheep (without its skin, head and entrails), various kinds of fruit and rectangular breads boiled in oil.

As soon as the officials and monks (some 1,500 in all) were present, two men each carrying a whip entered through the western door and shouted, 'Stand up, please!' Needless to say, everyone did so immediately. The Pan-chen bLa-ma then proceeded followed by His senior tutor and His junior tutor. His younger brother held to His right while the Prime Minister held to His left. It was rumoured the Tibetan government had dismissed His senior tutor because He had stammered when the Ta-la'i bLa-ma ordained Him. Once a new tutor named bLo-chen Rin-po-che had been appointed, the Pan-chen bLa-ma accepted him, stating He could not officiate at bKra-shis-lhun-po without His senior tutor. That is why He now had two teachers.

The Domestic Chaplain (mChod-dpon mKhan-po) sat on His right while the Chamberlain Chaplain (gZim-dpon mKhan-po) sat to His left. The former then removed the lid

from His cup, the latter helped him drape His clothing. The steward in charge of His meals now served tea in a cup covered with a silk cloth to prevent the aroma from escaping. According to tradition, His cup is half full. Not much later, two monks wearing a pointed yellow hat approached Him and started to talk loudly. I was told these men were scholarly monks and compared each others knowledge. They spent half an hour in this religious discussion, sometimes even clapping their hands, stamping their feet and shouting 'i-u!'

Soon afterwards six boys entered the Assembly Hall dancing to the sound of drums and wind instruments. They wore turbans and carried a small wooden knife in their hands. Small bells were tied to their feet. The tallest boy led the group while the shortest one danced at the end of the row. The former received a large lump of sugar from an official. Having put it in his pocket, the boy bowed three times to the Pan-chen bLa-ma in thanks. This dance which lasted for about twenty minutes was performed only in the presence of the Pan-chen bLa-ma or the Ta-la'i bLa-ma.

A flute was heard shortly after the last boy had left the hall. All its doors now opened. Many young men rushed in, moving towards the bread, mutton and fruit. The officials flogging them brought blood to their faces and hands. At any rate the food must have been worth an injury. It was indeed an extraordinary sight to see all this happen in the Pan-chen bLa-ma's presence. This festivity came to an end when He retired. Everyone now stood up in order to receive His blessings. The Sahibs presented Him with a ceremonial scarf.

The second day of the year we spent visiting the most important chambers of the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po. They housed clay, bronze and gilt images of various sizes. A monk told me that five years ago the Pan-chen bLa-ma had personally helped make the very large statue of the future Buddha called Byams-pa (Skt. Maitreya). I did not feel at ease in front of huge images. However, I bowed to offer a humble prayer as is customary for Tibetan Buddhists. Turquoises and coral decorated the floors of several shrines. It was said there had been more precious stones before an old lady had

removed them as she bowed before an image pretending to pray.

A caretaker told me the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po counted seven gates. Two named Phyag-'tshal sGang were located at the front, two others faced the northeast. The one facing the east was called gSher-chen-grangs-khang. The sixth gate's name was sReg-pa'i sGo-chung. The northern gate was situated at the rear of the monastery. Its name was sGo-sku rGya-sgo because it was covered with a very large painting during the prayer meeting held on the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth day of the fifth month of the Tibetan calendar. On the fourteenth day the image of 'Od-dpag-med (Skt. Amitabha) was unrolled. On the fifteenth Sakyamuni Buddha and on the sixteenth day images of both this Buddha and Byams-pa were shown.

When Lieutenant-Colonel F.M. Bailey had to leave gZhis-kha-rtse for rGyal-rtse he and his party, of course, did not depart without paying respect to the Pan-chen bLa-ma, His two tutors and Prime Minister. I stayed behind to serve Dr Steen, explaining Tibetan officials how to use the medicine, camera's and bicycles, all imported from India.

Not much later a Chinese official invited us to his quarters. A fire work display now took place to greet us. It may be added here that even in and around rDo-rje-gling the following Chinese customs were popular: lighting fireworks on the last day of the year, pasting pieces of red paper on doors and dancing through the nights of the second, third and fourth day of the Tibetan year. The Chinese official's residence was near the fortress of gZhis-kha-rtse where, as I was told, Tibetan woman from rGyal-rtse had been imprisoned by their government during the Wood-Dragon year (1904). These sweethearts of British, Nepalese or Indian soldiers were cruelly punished for allegedly betraying their country's secrets.

My sojourn at the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po lasted from the twenty-fifth of the twelfth month of the Wood-Snake year (1905) until the twentieth of the third month of the Fire-Horse year (1906). During this period my Sahib and I

were once even allowed to visit the Pan-chen bLa-ma's private chambers. Apart from His winter and summer palace, He owned a third palace called bDe-chen-brang and built about half a mile to the southwest of the monastery. Here He resided during the rainy season while being instructed by His tutors.

One week before our departure the Pan-chen bLa-ma invited Dr Steen and me, being his interpreter, to dinner. For my Sahib a table and a chair was provided. I sat on a small Tibetan carpet while He was seated on a thick silk-covered cushion. First tea was served, then boiled rice mixed with clarified butter, sugar and raisins topped with sweet curds. We carefully took a cup in our left hand while trying with our right thumb to collect a little rice. When some of it fell on the ground our host first remarked that the Sahib was not a Tibetan, then laughed at me for not knowing how to eat Tibetan food before adding, 'sKar-ma, please help yourself until you are no longer hungry!' I now ate without spilling. Most Tibetans felt shy when eating or drinking so their patrons urge them to do so. You can imagine my joy when He did!

The monks who served Him told me they had to pay a single gold coin if He came across a white hair in His meal and two golden coins for a black hair. Whenever we dined with Him, He never showed any disapproval. His face was always as bright as the full moon, His heart as white as milk. On one occasion my cap had disappeared from the table. After my Sahib and I had looked for it without success, He said, 'Here it is!' and placed it on my head with His own hands. Being an insignificant soul I did not take this as a joke, but as an immense blessing.

On the day of our departure He presented us with copper tea-pots, tea-cups, cup-holders, 150 rupees as well as many ceremonial scarfs. Seeing my copious tears, He consoled me with the words, 'Please don't be sad. You served me to the best of your power. For this I thank you. Perhaps we will meet again in the future. If not, it is alright, I shall not forget you!' Of course, these precious words rang in my ears.

Having arrived at rGyal-rtse on the twenty-third of the third month, I soon continued working for the British government.

## ❁ eight ❁

Having reached at rGyal-rtse, I rested for several days before starting to work at the Civic Hospital built in a small village called rDzong-mdun, near the fortress. The eight staff members of the hospital were supervised by Dr Steen. The patients received medicine, food and blankets free of charge until they had recovered. Thanks to the virtuous British government many Tibetans who had been wounded during the Young-husband Expedition were cured leaving local doctors 'with dry mouths' (i.e., without any income). The foreigners did no damage to any properties of the helpless Tibetans and even paid two or three trang-kas for goods worth only one. In addition, the Tibetan workers received high wages.

During my two year long interpreting work for Dr Steen I saw many men, woman and children with syphilis. On one occasion a Tibetan who had a bullet wound in his hip came to us for help. In order to remove it, Lieutenant F.H. Stewart IMS decided to operate with the help of 'dying medicine' (i.e., chloroform). I was very surprised not only to hear this patient sing, laugh and cry while fast asleep but also to learn that this medicine was given to patients with empty stomachs. Tibetans believe that a medicine only works when your stomach is full. The fact a woman called sKyid-'dzom had her goitre removed by Dr Steen with the help of 'dying medicine' caused Tibetans to sing,

*The British government is very gracious,  
The hospital is very generous,  
Kindly let us know,  
Where has sKyid-'dzom's goitre gone?*

To vaccinate Tibetans against smallpox Dr Steen and I set off with our servants for rDo-chung rDzong, a small village where

milk curds and butter were produced. Completing a fifteen mile journey we reached dBang-ldan rDzong the next day. The inhabitants of this village made woollen carpets. After his daily work my Sahib would hunt deer and wild sheep. Many hare but no musk deer were shot. It may be added here that Tibetans believe that he who kills a male musk deer must immediately touch its testicles for good luck. Once the intestines of a hare were removed the meat was dried in the sun and then taken back to rGyal-rtse in bags. I was told the local people did not eat pigeons thinking the meat was bad for their eyes. Nevertheless, I killed and ate these tasty birds then but now know this was a sin.

A European once told me he had read that Tibetans never killed animals. He added that, if any meat was needed, they would drive one or two yaks up a mountain side, shout at them from behind. Because this frightened the animals they fell, meeting their death in an abyss. The yaks could now be eaten – no sin was committed because they had killed themselves. However, I never came across this practice and never met a Tibetan who had. Another incorrect statement on Tibetans can be found in L.A. Waddell, *Lhasa and its Mysteries* (London, 1905). We read here that British troops were ‘. . . heartily received by the Tibetans at Lhasa clapping their hands.’ It may be that applause is the best way Europeans welcome visitors. Tibetans, however, clap their hands when evil spirits have to be expelled.

Buddhism does not allow you to kill animals. On the other hand, it is very difficult for Tibetans not to eat meat, even though a tax on meat has to be paid to their government. Each winter animals were killed and their meat frozen for future consumption. Tibetans eat boiled intestines filled with blood and barley-flower. They present this delicacy to their guests, relatives or private servants. It is considered bad if you don't give meat to Tibetan Buddhist monks.

Having dined with the Pan-chen bLa-ma on numerous occasions, I can say He never ate meat. However, people told me that one sheep a day was presented both to the Pan-chen bLa-ma and the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. The animal meant for the

latter was slaughtered at a place called 'Dam-sbag and then taken to His palace. For the Pan-chen bLa-ma a fat sheep was bought in the market-place of gZhis-kha-rtse. In spite of being Buddhists, there were at the most five per cent vegetarians in Tibet. At lHa-sa I once saw a butcher kill a sheep as follows. Having laid it on the ground, he cut open its stomach and removed its heart. The animal did not die instantly. I also saw how a yak's nose and mouth was covered with a piece of cloth and then killed as described above. In the province of gTsang pigs are put in boiling water. In rDo-rje-gling the butchers let them bleed to death.

Leaving dBang-ldan rDzong, we travelled for ten miles to reach a place called sKyid-dga'-chu-tshan. After a two day rest here the journey was continued towards the north. We then passed a shrine inside the sKyid-dga'-brag-phug, a cave dedicated to Gu-ru Rin-po-che (Skt. Padmasambhava) and inhabited by a care-taker and his mother. Once inside I saw a ladder made of wood and a long rope. The care-taker told me that if I climbed up the ladder and the rope I would pass through a small cave to arrive at a waterfall. However, if you were a sinner it would not be possible for you go through the cave. Needless to say, I was very eager to find out if I was a sinless young man or not.

Once inside the small cave, the care-taker explained to me what the wall-paintings meant with the help of a lamp. We later washed our faces and drank a little at the waterfall. Dr Steen took great interest in my story and wished to enter the cave himself. I visited sKyid-dga'-chu-tshan again in the company of Mr Kennedy (the third medical officer at rGyal-rtse to serve after Lieutenant F.H. Stewart and Capt R. Steen IMS) and Lieutenant-Colonel F.M. Bailey, the present Political Officer in Sikkim, who acting in the place of W.F.T O'Connor as the British Trade Agent at rGyal-rtse, published a report on his journey in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 1 (1912), pp 334-47. Unfortunately Dr Steen could not visit sKyid-dga'-chu-tshan as he had to return to India.



 **nine** 

I will now deal with the customs of the Tibetans, Chinese and Nepalese living in and around rGyal-rtse. Having worked here as an interpreter under three successive medical officers during about three years, I was then employed as the Tibetan clerk in the British Trade Agency. I beg your pardon for writing nothing but the truth. The town of rGyal-rtse was built on a plain, its fortress and monastery stood on hills. Two officials governed the town, a monk and a layman, both appointed from the ranks of ordinary government officials. In 1904 the Anglo-Indian troops made the fortress 'look like a nun's head' (i.e., destroyed it thoroughly).

The local farmers grew wheat, peas, barley, radishes and turnips. In the market place you could buy goods imported from India (rice, pears, matches, clothing, scissors, buttons, spices, iron spoons, oranges, black and white raisins). During my stay in rGyal-rtse, the representative of the Chinese government at lHa-sa issued a notice stating,

*Henceforth Chinese money has the same value as the Indian rupee and must be accepted by everyone without excuse or else one will be punished or fined.*

When I asked a group of traders which coin they preferred their answer was, 'There is no money equivalent to the Indian rupee – it is accepted everywhere!'

An extraordinary custom in the provinces of dBus and gTsang was that four brothers had to marry the same bride. The reason for this in my eyes quite shameless practice was: having only one daughter-in-law meant that a family's possessions stayed together. Another reason was that one or two sons were free to work for others making their family richer. I was also surprised to see cattle dung used as a fuel instead of wood and at first could not eat the barley flour or meat cooked in this manner due to the food's nauseating smell.

On the twenty-ninth day of the second month, monks performed ritual dances having spent the three previous days

in meditation. Soon afterwards a man who found a livelihood in cutting corpses and feeding them to the vultures acted as a scapegoat. He wore a small waist-cloth, a mask made of a black bullock's paunch and two small inflated pieces of intestines on his ears. Inflated intestines also covered his shoulders. Having counted the number of spectators a third time, the scapegoat threw the lungs of a bullock into the crowd. Whoever was hit by these lungs would surely die. Needless to say, the crowd dispersed as he approached. After throwing the lungs away, the scapegoat lay face down upon the skin of a black ox in a corner of the dancing ground, as if he was dead. The Head Monk then pretended to kill him with a sword.

Not much later the scapegoat pulled a blanket over his head because he was not allowed to look back. If he did, the evil which had to be expelled, may return. When he ran downhill the spectators whistled, clapped their hands or threw useless coins at him in the hope all their misfortune would disappear. If the scapegoat was stoned to death, nobody cared. If he was lucky enough to save his life, he could collect useless money which the shop-keepers must accept whenever he bought something. As I witnessed this cruel event the first time at the age of only twenty-one I was thunderstruck by it all. However, according to monastic authorities, this festivity kept Tibet safe from cattle disease, epidemics, famine and war.

A religious festival called rGyal-rtse dGe-tshal which began on the twenty-ninth of the third month lasted until the twenty-fifth of the fourth month. On the eighth day of the latter month monks gathered at the dPal-'khor mChod-rten to draw a symbolic representation of the universe and to place sacrificial butter cakes around the holy lamps. Many people came to present their own offerings and to worship this symbolic representation. Some five days later monks performed a dance called sGon-nyal in the stone paved courtyard. The sNga-'cham was performed here the following day.

In the early morning of the ninth day of the fourth month a gun was fired from a distance of about three miles east of rGyal-rtse. This shot marked the start of a pony race during

which unmounted animals galloped towards a village called La-rtse. It consisted of some 300 houses and stood on a small hill to the southwest of rGyal-rtse. People said that some men received money to beat the leading ponies if they were owned by rivals. Officials determined which pony came first, second and third. The results written on small pieces of wood were given to boys who acted on behalf of each pony's owners. The three fastest animals were taken to the officials to receive their respective prizes. I was told that all three were given the same reward: a ceremonial scarf and a brick of tea. I also heard say the pony I saw winning had done so in four successive years.

At eleven a.m. that same day a competition was held at Ma-ra, an empty piece of land situated between the monasteries of rGyal-rtse and rTse-chen. Here men holding a bow in their left hand, arrows in their right hand and carrying a gun on their back rode ponies in full gallop on a 500 yard long course. They shot a bullet at the first target and an arrow at the second target which stood some fifteen yards further on. As most men failed to hit both targets, the spectators laughed at them. In the course of this event called Ma-ra rTa-sgangs the government officials entertained their guests in tents. Dr Steen, Lieutenant Bailey and myself left after it had come to an end at three p.m.

The inhabitants of rGyal-rtse spent the twentieth day of the fourth month eating, drinking, dancing and singing. Especially during the feast called gZim-skyid sins such as, for instance, fighting and stealing were committed. All this took place on a large field not far from the British Trade Agency. Before the arrival of British troops, it was held on the lCang-lo rGya-thang which they used for military parades or to play football, hockey and polo on.

When a festival was held on the fourth day of the sixth month in honour of the highest Healer called sMan-bla (Skt. Bhaisajyaguru), men called ma-ni-pas went from door to door using scroll paintings to explain the lives of holy kings, of monks or the genealogies of Buddhas. Devotees during their religious circumambulation of rGyal-rtse (measuring some three miles) gave these men a little money or barley flour in

order to achieve the remission of their sins and to avoid damnation after death. On this day the ma-ni-pas gathered in the large ground behind the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po. The Head Monk seated on a high stone chair listened to the ma-ni-pas chant the Tibetan Buddhist credo in a secret melody. Not much later several laymen received a piece of paper (srung-ba) on which the image of a deity was printed and which was tied together by various coloured threads. This they put into a small bag made of cloth to wear around the neck on a string to keep them free of disease and famine. The money presented to the Head Monk he was allowed to keep. The barley-flour and drinks served on this occasion were equally divided. After the Head Monk had blessed everyone this ceremony in honour of sMan-bla came to an end.

On the twenty-ninth day of the ninth month of the Tibetan year a festival called lHa-babs-dus-chen commemorated Buddha's descending from Heaven to enter His mother's womb. During the following month a festival named Chos-klong-ston-mchod was held. At the rNying-ma monastery of rGyal-rtse a monk now performed a short dance called Ma-he sKad-gtong. I was told that large quantities of tea were served on this festive occasion and that, before going home that evening, everyone enjoyed light refreshments.

A festival called dGa'-ston-lnga-mchod took place on the twenty-fifth day of the tenth month. (The date given in Sarat Chandra Das's Tibetan Dictionary on page 370A is indeed incorrect). During the daytime Tibetans ate delicious food, in the evening they enjoyed porridge and drinks. That night holy lamps were lit inside and outside every house. This feast was linked with the death of Tsong-kha-pa: founder of the great Se-ra, 'Bras-spungs and dGa'-ldan monasteries. In actual fact, Tsong-kha-pa died on the twenty-fifth of the eleventh month. As a rule his passing away was commemorated a month earlier.

People said that on the seventh day of the eleventh month all sorts of evil came together. For this reason nobody does anything at all out of fear everything will turn out bad. Indeed, laymen do not work and monks do not read their holy

books. On the twenty-ninth day of the last month of the Tibetan year sacrificial pastries were offered during a festival called dGu-gtor.

I will now deal with the laws of Tibet which, as everyone knows, are barbarious and heartless. If you are offended by my frank words, I beg your pardon. Government officials in rGyal-rtse could do whatever they liked with those accused of committing a crime. You could expect mercy and help only if the official was a good man. Otherwise you would have to leave your dear ones, parents and country for safety reasons. In my opinion at least one out of six minor offenders in and around rDo-rje-gling belonged to Tibetan noble families or were Buddhist monks who had broken their vows.

Government officials throughout Tibet collected a personal tax called mi-phogs. Those who did not wish to pay it left their homeland. The highest mi-phogs consisted of five or six dngul-srangs a year per person. The lowest, amounting to one trang-ka, was to be paid by the crippled, the poor or the elderly. If rich people succeeded in pleasing an official, they may also be allowed to pay him only a single trang-ka. Those who accumulated wealth by working hard were imposed an almost unbearable tax. I was told that in order to avoid this plight, men did not wear fine clothes and women did not wear their ornaments, however rich they might be. Only then would officials not 'polish them with oil' (i.e., tax them heavily).

If a married couple with different landlords had seven children their daughters must pay a mi-phogs to their mother's landlord, the sons to their father's landlord. If parents had one and the same landlord, he would collect a tax amounting to nine times five dngul-srangs from this family. Its members suffered a great deal and, in fact, were legal slaves under their landlord. The Tibetan government was too weak to help its needy subjects. For this reason you could find young men in rGyal-rtse willing to work for a clerk such as me or a Sahib for only two trang-kas a month, plus a little extra money.

Once a theft was reported to government officials the suspects were arrested. Then, an 'enquiry cane' ('dri-lcag)

would be used at least fifty to 100 times even if you were innocent. Soon afterwards you would be thrown into prison, questioned a few days later, flogged and again questioned. Innocent souls would be set free in the long run. But what is the good of all this if the culprit had yet to be punished. For committing a petty crime, you were sent to a nearby exile. In the case of a major crime, you would be sent to a faraway place. Those exiled were seated on a red ox: a very bad treatment. A thief could be punished by placing a rectangular piece of wood (rtse-sgo-tshe-lcags) on which the crime and length of exile were written around his neck and locking it after he had been beaten 100 times. He was then shown in the market place for all to see. Only after completing his exile was this piece of wood removed. He had to wear the iron shackles for the rest of his life.

Another punishment given to a thief consisted of the word 'khyi', (meaning 'dog') burned into his forehead. After drinking a good deal of liquor in order not feel any pain, he would be told to lie down face upward. Next, a little oil and barley flour was put in the middle of his forehead where the word 'khyi' was to be printed. Other inhumane punishments inflicted by the Tibetan government were: removing muscles from behind the shins, scooping out eyes and cutting off limbs. However, the criminals did not decrease in number. I heard say that in Tibet people were never hung as in Europe. However, a criminal Tibetan could be punished by being wrapped inside the fresh skin of a yak or a bullock which was then sewn together tightly, leaving the man's head uncovered. In great pain as the skin dried and shrank, he was thrown in a river to drown. I am grateful to God I never witnessed this kind of punishment. It is not my nature to cope with such events.

The British government dealt with thieves and murderers in a very different manner. It allowed you to defend yourself whether you were guilty or not, saying whatever you wished without fear. In a British court you were judged and punished according to your crime. The government of Tibet, however, immediately saw to it a cane or whip was used. If a poor

Tibetan took a rich man to court, the former would always lose the case even if he was innocent. On the other hand, many criminals left Tibet and, having settled down near rDo-rje-gling, regarded the British dominion as their motherland. A Tibetan proverb runs, 'Whoever loves me is my parent. In what ever country I stay, I am happy because it is my native country!' Needless to say, I considered myself very fortunate to have been born on British territory thereby not falling under Tibetan laws.

Having taken a liking to a young lady, I sent two friends to ask her parents for permission to marry their daughter. Her family was now presented with ceremonial scarves and an enquiry drink (dris-chang). Having accepted these gifts, the girl's parents told the two matchmakers to return after a few days. Meanwhile my background and character were looked into. Not much later the parents of my future wife wanted to know when I would visit them. Having learned from an astrologer which day was most auspicious to do so, I visited my future parents-in-law to present them with a 'begging drink' (slong-chang) and forty rupees, a sum called 'milk price' ('o-rin) and paid for being fed from her mother's breast. This money was included in the bride's dowry when we married on the seventh day of the sixth month of the Fire-Horse year (1908).

When the Chinese government appointed Mr Chang (whom the Tibetan authorities called Tang Darin) as its representative at lHa-sa, he asked while at rDo-rje-gling for a number of English speaking Tibetans to serve him in lHa-sa. Their activities included the introduction in Tibet of a new postal system and new Chinese coins. However, shortly after Tang Darin's return to China these improvements began to disappear.

One of the English speaking Tibetans was my paternal uncle called bKra-shis dBang-'dus. I posted his letters to rDo-rje-gling at the post office of rGyal-rtse and saw to it the letters sent to him reached his private servants. My dealing with my uncle's mail and working as a confidential clerk for Lieutenant F.M. Bailey, the then officiating British Trade Agency at rGyal-

rtse, continued without difficulty for about ten months until, on 13 September 1908, my superior accused me of forwarding secret papers regarding Tibet to my uncle. Needless to say, after all my personal belongings were inspected, no confidential matters were found. I soon discovered this false accusation had been made by those eager to see my downfall. They included Sergeant Johnson, a telegraph signaller who was later appointed Head Clerk in the British Trade Agency. Having committed a breach of trust by misappropriating government cash, he later shot himself.

In spite of my innocence, Lieutenant Bailey dismissed me on 14 November. I then stated to him I would never work for the government of Tibet or China. Having been educated during nine years free of charge at the government High School of rDo-rje-gling, having been employed by several British magistrates and by Captain J.H.E. Garrett, the Deputy Commissioner in rDo-rje-gling, having served the hospital and the British Trade Agency at rGyal-rtse, I wished to work for the British government only.

Once dismissed my wife and I returned to rDo-rje-gling. Not much later my brother rTa-mdrin dBang-rgyal (who was on a year long leave from his work under the Deputy Commissioner of rDo-rje-gling) told me he wanted to go on a pilgrimage to lHa-sa. Having left my wife behind in my parent's house, I accompanied my brother to rGyal-rtse. Here, on 29 November, I presented my case unsuccessfully to Lieutenant Bailey again.

Eager to see Tibet and its monasteries, my brother kept in mind the Tibetan proverb, 'He who has not visited lHa-sa is supposed to be half a man, however much he boasts!' Shortly after our arrival in lHa-sa, a clever and very careful Tibetan government official named Sa-dbang rTsa-rong asked me without success to work for him. It was his great ambition to improve life in Tibet. However, his colleagues opposed this and sought to do away with him for good. Indeed, in 1913, monks murdered him and his very promising son at Zhol, a village at the foot of the Potala.



 **ten** 

My brother and I left rGyal-rtse for lHa-sa on the eighth of the eleventh month of the Earth-Monkey year (31 December 1908). We first reached a small village known as Phra-ring, about seven miles from rGyal-rtse where the eldest son of the late Maharaja of Sikkim resided. Having arrived at a small village called sGo-bzhi, the first twelve to fourteen mile long stage of our journey was completed. Having found new pack animals, we set off for Rwa-lung. All our means of transport, food and lodgings had to be seen to by the Tibetan government without any excuses, as was stated in my brother's passport. After crossing a small bridge at sGo-bzhi, we saw on the hillside two small monasteries inhabited by monks and nuns.

Travelling we reached a place called Chu-'dus. Here a river flowing from the interior part of Rwa-lung met a river from lHa-sa. To the left of this spot, we saw a long chain of monasteries built on mountains, the highest of which was called gNod-sbyi sGang-bzang. This peak looked like a human nose. An old man I met along the way told me that in days of old the gNod-sbyin sGang-bzang and the mountain called Phag-ri Jo-mo lHa-ri were married. When they met at night, the latter would dress in white and ride a white pony. Not able to recognise him during the daytime she marked his nose black.' This mark was indeed clearly visible. Most Tibetans believe such stories contrary to scholars.

At a place called Rwa-lung mDzo-mo-nags-kha, I learned to my great surprise that monks and nuns inhabited the rNying-ma monastery here. They practiced their religion living together as husband and wife. Both their female and male off-spring were dressed in religious clothing. The monks and nuns would come to rGyal-rtse very early in the morning in groups of six or seven going from door to door asking if they could perform rituals. I think that for this reason Tibetans looked down on them. They told me they had received instructions from their Saviour to recite the following verse:

*Half the earth is full of Bhutanese and half of them are poor; so we have an authorised document permitting us to go as far away as eagle can fly during eighteen days and nights (i.e., far and near) in search of a livelihood.*

Due the cold only mushrooms and moss grew in Rwa-lung. The rNying-ma monks and nuns were, therefore, instructed as follows, 'It is better to beg in the Valley of Nirvana for your bliss, than to cultivate plants where nothing will grow.' It may be added here that just opposite a village called 'Brong-rtse built on the right bank of the river Nyangs stood a rNying-ma monastery called sKyid-phug. Because it was possible to grow many crops here the local people gave alms without complaining.

If a monk belonged to the dGe-lugs denomination, he would never go begging from door to door. However, monks living south of the Jelap pass did, although they were true followers of Tibetan Buddhism. In rDo-rje-gling some men shaved their heads, carried a hand drum and asked for alms pretending to be real monks. Others lived in monasteries in order to lead an easy life. They may even be illiterate. Once a monk in rDo-rje-gling eloped with his patroness, causing her Nepalese neighbours to say, 'Do not foster a Tibetan Buddhist monk, he may steal your mother!'

My brother and I left Rwa-lung for rNam-dkar-rtse travelling through a pass called sNa-mtho. As it was very dangerous to walk along the winding road on your own, we were lucky to travel together with some fifteen men including the muleteers. Thanks to God's mercy nothing happened to us. After the one and a half our long walk through the Kha-ru pass, we rested near a cave. Local people told us that in 1904 the Tibetan soldiers had unsuccessfully resisted the British troops on their way to lHa-sa. Dogs ate the bodies of those killed. Since then these animals had been very ferocious. I also heard say the British government was very powerful and that it had first class weapons.

Because there was no snowfall, our journey could be continued comfortably. The good road here had, as local

people told me, been constructed during the British expedition to lHa-sa. I was urged never to mention this fact to anyone – the Tibetan government could cut off the tongues of those who praised foreigners. We spent the night at a village called rNam-dkar-rtse where the first fortress on the road between rGyal-rtse and lHa-sa stood. As our pack animals had to return to rGyal-rtse, we acquired fresh ones before continuing the journey. The inhabitants of rNam-dkar-rtse grew good crops. Nearby a first class breed of donkey called rGya-bong could be found.

On the road to lHa-sa you could see on a faraway hill to the right a monastery called Yar-'brog bSam-lding rDo-rje Phag-mo. I heard say the Head Nun was an incarnation of the dakini called rDo-rje Phag-mo and that long ago a man who paid homage to this monastery saw a very big sow sleeping on the Head Nun's chair. Scared by this sight, he ran off to return to see a real person sitting on that chair.

Having left rNam-dkar-rtse we walked about two miles to see a lake on the far right in the middle of which stood a high hill. Local people told us it would take us about two months to walk around this lake. They also said that a monastery known as bSam-lding rDo-rje Phag-mo was built on this hill. We reached the fortress of dPal-sde shortly before nine a.m. in terrible weather.

The journey from sPal-sde onwards was very tedious and trying. For, it counted eighteen gorges where thieves and murderers lived who threw their victims into the nearby lake or cut off hands. As this made me scared, I prayed to God for help. Just before we left dPal-sde, the muleteer sang a sad song about the difficult journey, the dangerous thieves, the strong winds that sounded as if a railway engine rode past my ears. Needless to say, I now longed to see my loved ones again.

We reached our destination, a very small village called Dro-ma-lung, at half past six in the evening. It counted some 100 inhabitants all together. The products available here were fine quality blankets, dried fish, milk, butter and dried mutton. Suffering immense difficulties we had walked about fifteen miles to circumambulate a lake local herdsmen called Yar-

'brog-g'yu associating it with blue turquoise. I heard this huge lake was frozen over from the twelfth until the second month of the Tibetan calendar. By crossing it, you can shorten the distance between dPal-sde and Dro-ma-lung with some ten miles.

Having spent the night at Dro-ma-lung, we continued our journey still using the pack animals from dPal-sde. We walked uphill for about three miles to reach a pass which the muleteers called Gam-pa. It may be added here that Ekai Kawaguchi's remark in his *Three Years in Tibet*<sup>1</sup> about seeing the Ta-la'i bLa-ma's palace at lHa-sa from here must be completely fictional.

At the banks of the river gTsang (i.e., the Brahmaputra) we showed our passport the Tibetan government had given us to one of the all in all twelve boatmen. I heard there were no ferry services in the summer due to the high water. Without great trouble, our entire group including the pack animals was now ferried to the opposite shore in about six minutes. Having disembarked, we set off for a medium-sized village known as Chu-zur because it stood near the junction of the gTsang and sKyid rivers. The people in this village bought and sold ponies, turquoise, coral and onyx, all of bad quality.

Having set off for bKra-shis-rtse, we halted at the village of gTsang-stod. A number of farmers approached us with small quantities of this year's first harvest singing and asking for alms. Some even followed us for a mile. Indeed Tibetans do not feel ashamed to beg, no matter their sex, age or health. Many people come to rDo-rje-gling from Tibet, Sikkim and the border region with Nepal during the ninth and tenth month of the Tibetan calendar (October and November), at the start of winter. They did not earn their bread by working hard, but visited our houses waking us up early in the morning to beg and then pass the day drinking or fighting. I hope this custom will soon come to an end.

After spending the night at gTsang-stod, we set off for sNye-thang travelling along the banks of the sGrol-ma-ri-chu. Once the river was crossed, we looked to the right in front of us and

1 E. Kawaguchi, *Three Years in Tibet* (Madras, 1913), pp 281-2.

saw a large building in the distance. The muleteers told me it was indeed the Potala. Needless to say, we now immediately dismounted from our ponies to pay due respect – Tibetans regarded the Potala in the city of lHa-sa as the most holy place of pilgrimage in their country.

That night, after a ten mile journey, we made camp at a small place called Cing-dgon-dkar. According to local people it was possible to travel from the banks of the sGrol-ma-ri-chu to lHa-sa in a single day. It took us three days. At about half way between Cing-dgon-dkar and lHa-sa you could see a large number of buildings on the left side of the road. The muleteers told me it was the 'Bras-spungs dGon-pa, a monastery housing about 7,000 monks. The top of a high nearby tree was said to always give light at night. This helped travellers to come and go after dark.

Not far from the 'Bras-spungs dGon-pa lies the Kyang-thang-nags-kha. The muleteers sang the following story about this tableland.

*Donkeys are faster than ponies,  
when crossing the Kyang-thang-nags-kha.  
Of course, the donkeys are not faster.  
But their backs are burning due to pain.*

The essence of this song is that due to the vastness of the Khang-thang-nags-ka, the pack animals get very tired and suffer from painful backs.

After crossing this tableland, you will reach two hills. On the one on the right (named lCags-po-ri) stood, I was told, a large school for Tibetan doctors. On the other hill the Potala was built. The nearby stupa, which Tibetans called Bar-sgo Ka-ni, marked the real boundary of lHa-sa. Leaving the village at the foot of the Potala called Zhol behind us, we reached the g.Yu-mdog-zam-pa, a wooden bridge painted turquoise green. Our party arrived at lHa-sa thanks to the ineffable mercy of God at half past one in the afternoon of Tuesday, the fourteenth of the eleventh month of the Earth-Monkey year (15 December 1908). The following chapters contain a description of my ten months and seven day long stay in lHa-sa.

## ❀ eleven ❀

Having paid a landlord the sum of eight *trang-ka's*, my brother and I rented two rooms for a month. Eager to enter the *Jo-khang*, we felt very disappointed we could not see everything properly due to the large crowd. Permission to visit His Excellency the *rTsa-rong Zhabs-pad* was difficult to get if you did not bring a present. Having done so, we spoke with him for some fifteen minutes about our journey to *lHa-sa*. He stretched out his arm as we left to shake hands like Europeans do. The next day we visited a Nepalese officer called *Jit Bahadur Kheti Chetri*. As it was our first meeting, we gave him three *trang-kas* and left after half an hour.

At *lHa-sa* the morning market took place from seven to eleven, the evening one between three and six o'clock. Most tradesmen were Tibetan, but there were also Chinese, Nepalese, Ladakhi and Muslims. To the east of the *Bar-bkor*, two more than 150 yard high flagpoles had been erected which Tibetans regard as 'Life Woods of the Doctrine' (*bsTan-pa'i-srog-cing*). The northern flagpole was called *dGa'-ldan-thang-smyon*, to its south stood the *Shar-rgyal*. The government of Tibet must look after these poles and change the flags once a year.

I witnessed between fifty and sixty men remove the *Shar-rgyal* at four o'clock in the morning of the eighth day of the twelfth month. If they did not do this with great care, their superiors would be severely punished. This flagpole was then placed along the side of a road and erected again a week later in the early hours of the fifteenth, a full moon day. The northern pole which they also laid down along the side of the road was erected again in the early morning of the third day of the year, during the Annual Prayer Meeting called *sMon-lam Chen-mo*.

I will now describe the main Tibetan Buddhist festivals. In the early morning of the first day of the year many government officials entered the *Potala* to attend a festivity called *sYon-chen-dga'-spro*. Afterwards, the lower officials paid tribute to their superiors. In return they would receive

delicacies. At ten o'clock the following morning a long leather strap was unrolled from the southeastern part of the Potala and then firmly attached to the inscribed stone called rDo-ring-nang-ma, located at the foot of the Potala.

Not much later three men in turn slid face down along this strap holding an auspicious substance consisting of flour and butter as well as an arrow decorated with a silk streamer. These objects had to change hands along the way. Before descending, the men invoked their family deities and God. They then threw some 'worshipping grain' (mchod-'bru) into the air and shouted, 'ki-ki lHa-rgyal-lo' to thank the gods for helping them and threw the 'worshipping grain' up in the air. All this surprised me very much. I was later told these three men received land and housing from the government and that they did not have to pay any taxes. However, if they died during this ceremony nobody was to blame.

Near the rDo-ring-spyi-ma my friends and I came across a large group of men whose leaders shouted, 'Get out of the way and take your hats off!' Everybody saluted the two huge officials in the middle of this procession. I was told they were the two zhal-ngos from the monastery of 'Bras-spungs who from the third day of the year onwards gave orders which everybody in lHa-sa must obey save one and a half person (i.e., the Ta-la'i bLa-ma and the Regent of Tibet).

Having paid the government a large sum of money to be appointed to this post, each zhal-ngo fined monks and laymen indiscriminately in order to get as much money back as possible. On the third morning of 1909 I witnessed how the government officials were not able to erect the flagpole called dGa'-ldan-thang-smyon in front of the Jo-khang before the fixed time, nine o'clock. If this, their chief duty, was delayed it meant they would be severely punished – if unlucky even put to death.

After the two zhal-ngos had consulted rTse Ma-ra (i.e., the Regent of Tibet's female tutelary deity) at the large monastery of bsTan-rgyas-gling my friends told me she had spoken as follows, 'Government officials destroyed my monastery called bsTan-rgyas-gling, killed my monks and could not even put

up the flag! Who has more power, the government or I?' The zhal-ngos wept bitter tears as they bowed down before her and said, 'We never killed your monks or acted against your monastery. When this happened, we were not serving the government. Please have mercy on us, help us erect the flagpole or else we will be punished.' At long last rTse Ma-ra said, 'All right, I will see to it you can put up the flag easily!' This indeed proved to be the case.

After bDe-mo Rin-po-che from the monastery of the bsTan-rgyas-gling had served as the King of Tibet for a long time, the government dismissed him for an unknown reason. Not much later a layman named Nor-bu Tshe-ring and an abbot from the monastery of dPal-'khor Chos-sde, both brothers of bDe-mo Rin-po-che, presented the Ta-la'i bLa-ma with an extraordinary pair of boots. They were made of first class silk by a monk from the monastery of bsTan-rgyas-gling. Their soles contained a small painting of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma showing his feet in chains and an evil spell: 'May He die as quickly as possible!', made effective by the Head Monk of the monastery of Sa-skya. In order to bring about the remission of their irreligious deeds 100 gilt images of Tshe-dpag-med (Skt. Amitayus) were made.

The monk from the monastery of bsTan-rgyas-gling was poisoned soon after preparing the boots. The reason being he might disclose this secret to the authorities. During their visit to a man called Zla-ba rGyal-po, Nor-bu Tshe-ring and the abbot from dPal-'khor Chos-sde said, 'We do not know if our plan will be a success or not. Please help us to achieve our goal!' Zla-ba rGyal-po replied, 'Let me take leave from the Tibetan government whom I serve first and there will be no trouble!' Not much later, however, Zla-ba rGyal-po was considered unreliable and poisoned, too. The reason being his refusal to help the bsTan-rgyas-gling monastery immediately.

When, on the thirteenth day of the third month, the Ta-la'i bLa-ma put these beautiful boots on blood suddenly poured from His nose. The spirit god of the Tibetan government called gNas-chung Chos-skyong said that they contained an evil spell aimed against His life. This indeed proved the case. After



Nor-bu Tshe-ring and the abbot of dPal-'khor Chos-sde had been invited to the Potala, they were arrested, flogged and imprisoned. Not much later they told the authorities that this evil spell was the work of a man called nYag-rong sPrul-ku and of the Head Monk of the Sa-skya monastery. They too were now detained, flogged and thrown in prison. The authorities then decided to confiscate the monastery of bsTan-rgyas-gling's property. Soon afterwards bDe-mo Rin-po-che, the former Regent of Tibet, himself was invited to the Potala to perform a ritual called rtse-sdrub so that the Ta-la'i bLa-ma may have a long life. Having completed this ritual, bDe-mo Rin-po-che was also questioned about the evil spell. He said he knew nothing about it, was nevertheless imprisoned and died several months later.

Once the Head Monk of the Sa-skya monastery who had performed a special ritual to activate the spell died his belongings were removed to lHa-sa, stored in a building called dGa'-ldan-khang-gsar and protected by some 250 soldiers. Here, too, Nor-bu Tshe-ring and the abbot from dPal-'khor Chos-sde received daily floggings. They stayed in prison for several months fed with either porridge or meat dumplings. I also heard say they were flogged and kept inside a pit measuring 1 cubit until they died.

The above mentioned Head Monk's partner in crime nYag-rong sPrul-ku was flogged and questioned daily. Seeing that the Tibetan soldiers were not very careful, he thought about getting hold of one of their knives to kill himself. Once allowed to unchain his hands in order to pass water, nYag-rong sPrul-ku went for one of the soldier's knives. Only slightly wounded, the soldier could report the attack to his superiors. When reinforcements arrived, nYag-rong sPrul-ku was trying to push the knife into his heart with the help of a wall. It was, however, possible to take him to the authorities alive. Having been addressed as follows, 'Now you will surely die, so tell us which evil did the monks from the monastery of bsTen-rgyes-gling do against the Ta-la'i bLa-ma?' he answered, 'I will never speak a word about this. You are welcome to do whatever you wish!' Soon afterwards nYag-

rong sPrul-ku was brought to death. I heard say the Tibetan authorities saw to it salt was put on the corpse. It was then dried and stored in a place where parts of human bodies were kept for use in special ceremonies.

The former Regent of Tibet's brother Nor-bu Tshe-ring had married Phyag-na rDo-rje rNam-pa rGyal-wa, a daughter of the rDo-ring family. During her husband's detention at lHa-sa the Tibetan government did not act against her. However, when she sent him some food, she was flogged and locked up, too. After her husband died, she was sent into exile in a fortress called Zla-ba at Lho-brag (i.e., southern Tibet). Being a sister of the late Queen of Sikkim, she received permission to return to her home in lHa-sa after an appeal had been made to the Ta-la'i bLa-ma who was at that time (between 1910–14) staying in rDo-rje-gling.

After this serious trouble concerning the monastery of bsTan-rgyas-gling, the annual performance of the bDe-mo dGu-'cham on the twenty-ninth of the eighth month did not take place for many years. Rumour now had it that the Tibetan government issued a notice stating nobody should recognise the future incarnation of bDe-mo Rin-po-che, else they would be beheaded. However, when the wife of a brother of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma gave birth to bDe-mo Rin-po-che incarnate, no beheading took place. I saw him with my own eyes in the Earth-Bird year (1909).

The sMon-lam Chen-mo took place between the third and twenty-fifth day of the first month of the Tibetan calendar. During this period about 2,000 monks gathered three times daily in the Jo-khang. Here, too, innumerable people from all parts of Tibet came to offer holy lights and pray for their families. Some wrote the names of their deceased next-of-kin on a piece of paper, tied it to a scarf and then threw it in the direction of the monks performing rituals. Once passed on to the 'prayer leader' (dwa-mdsed), he then read the words on the paper out loud, keeping the scarf as his income. The prayer leader was served by a monk titled 'water master' (chab-bdag-ma) who supervised twenty-one lay 'pious servants' (sger-gyog).

Patrons would give the monks small quantities of tea or butter so that any anger in their lives disappeared. His or her sins were forgiven keeping them from damnation in Hell. Indeed, pious deeds would be rewarded. In this respect Jesus' teaching (see St. Matthew's Gospel, 31–4) tallies with Buddhism.

While visiting the Jo-khang during the sMon-lam Chen-mo, I saw the vessels (with a diameter of at least twenty feet) used for making tea. The old bronze ones had been replaced by iron ones imported from India. I heard say that at least 500 laymen worked as cooks supplying the monks with tea three times and porridge once daily. The Tibetan government met all these expenses. It also gave each and every monk one kha (i.e., a Tibetan coin equal to one anna). Lay visitors presented every sixth monk who entered the Assembly Hall one trang-ka. I was told that if a bad monk did not wish to share this income, the others would throw a little flour on his back forcing him to divide the money later.

The zhal-ngos went out three times daily to inspect the streets, houses and parks of lHa-sa. If someone was caught passing water near your house, you would either be punished with 200–300 floggings or forced to pay a large amount of money even though you were innocent. The zhal-ngos punished merry-making outdoors, too. I heard the following story about their power. Shortly after arriving at lHa-sa and still unacquainted with customs held to during the sMon-lam Chen-mo a young government official called sPen-pa Tshe-ring had some strife with his wife. When the assistants of the zhal-ngos (who knew every crack and creek of lHa-sa and received rewards in cash or foodstuffs for their faithful services) reported this to their superiors, sPen-pa Tshe-ring was arrested. Not knowing how to bribe the zhal-ngos satisfactorily, he was lashed mercilessly fifty times from the right and fifty times from the left. It took him several months to recover physically. He never recovered emotionally or mentally, lost his mind and died later. Although the zhal-ngos had no right to flog those serving the government, in this case no steps were taken to avoid this.

Whenever a zhal-ngo went out on inspection, they were preceded by several assistants carrying a bundle of thin sticks under their arms. A magistrate who decided on petty cases called thab-gyog-'pha followed them. A monk called cing-gnyer and senior to a thab-gyog-'pha followed him. They were joined by twenty-one lay 'pious servants' who each served a zhal-ngo in their private quarters and coloured their cheeks black so that everybody feared them. The zhal-ngos both carried a club made of shining iron and inlaid with coral and semi-precious stones. They wore a yellow cap shaped like a parrot's beak.

During such inspections the men leading the party shouted at the men, women and children in the market place to get up and take care of their mourning hats. Needless to say, they all stood up, bent forwards and held their hats in their hands until the procession had passed. Butchers, smiths, carriers of corpses, beggars and servants were, according to tradition, not allowed to see the faces of the zhal-ngos. The only way to keep their assistants from beating you with their sticks was to bribe the zhal-ngos or else leave lHa-sa during their time in office.

When a learned monk staying at our neighbour's house went out on the roof to admire the view, he was questioned by a zhal-ngo and not much later forced to pay a large fine. I beg any Tibetan laymen or monks to pardon me if they feel offended by my words. This cruel treatment of innocent people in the name of Buddhism ended west of lHa-sa at the g.Yu-thog bridge, to the east at the sMin-sgrol bridge, to the north at the Ra-mo-che, to the south at Gling-bskor (i.e., the outer pilgrimage route) near the banks of the river sKyid.

Between the third and the fourteenth day of the year no Tibetan Buddhist religious ceremonies took place. However, on the evening of the fifteenth (a full moon day), many large offerings made of butter were taken to the Bar-bskor (i.e., the inner pilgrimage route) and the Jo-khang. I was told that the Tibetan government together with the monks had paid for these butter offerings and that they were kept indoors for a period of ten to fifteen days. To those string puppets shaped

like ponies and elephants, bells were attached. Their sound surprised nomads who had never seen such toys.

After six p.m. when the holy and other lamps around the Bar-b Skor were lit, many men, woman and children walked around freely enjoying this wonderful sight. I heard say that not a single monk was allowed to go outdoors that evening – this would make the crowd too large. After an hour the Chinese representative at lHa-sa arrived in his palanquin accompanied by soldiers armed with rifles and swords. Not much later all the Tibetan ministers walked around the bar-b Skor wearing an extra-ordinary yellow silk hat. On this festive day the people of lHa-sa said the following proverb to a coward, 'If the fifteenth day full moon offerings are brave, let them come out in the middle of the day' meaning: 'If you are a man, then approach me face to face.'

The first to make butter offerings was the monk named Tsong-kha-pa. He did so to honour the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. I was told that up to the days of the fifth Ta-la'i bLa-ma the butter offerings were placed alongside the Gling-b Skor. Since then they were placed alongside the Bar-b Skor. At Tsong-kha-pa's birthplace, the town of sKu-'bum in eastern Tibet, more elaborate offerings were made in comparison with those of lHa-sa.

All the Tibetan ministers and their subordinate officials met three days later on a small piece of ground to the east of a shrine called kLu. Members of the latter group showed their superiors how skilled they were at shooting arrows. Each time an archer hit the target the ministers had to drink from a silver cup filled with liquor. However, when a subordinate official missed the target he had to drink from the cup in honour of the ministers' health. Needless to say, each subordinate official did his best to see his superior drink too much. As a rule during dinner parties Tibetans must empty a silver cup containing one and a half bottle of liquor three times for all to see. This drink is called 'shab-rag' (meaning 'all empty'). When leaving you must drink a 'tig-chang' and are fined when doing so properly. If a teetotaller you must drink the same amount or tea.

On the twenty-second day of the year about 1,000 men in full dress and armed gathered to pitch their tents near a small forest situated near the lower part of the kLu. Together with their ponies these men formed a tax to be paid by the government officials. Their helmets were decorated with peacock feathers. They wore coats of mail consisting of pieces of thin iron with nine holes, made on the solar or lunar eclipse and used as a protector against evil spirits as well as several garments with broad sleeves, coral beads around their wrists and guns on their backs. In this way they showed their grandeur to the spectators.

The important officials had selected a horseman called Ya-sor Khri-pa to lead the party. On the day the tents were pitched, this horseman said,

*Ye riders who represent the high ranked families, from today until the end of the sMon-lam Chen-mo, you are not allowed to misbehave. Whenever a official gun shot was fired, you must all be present. If not, you will be punished and dismissed. So act accordingly.*

I will now describe a festivity which took place on a field called Dra-phyi located to the northeast of lHa-sa, about 1 mile from the market place. Here, on the twenty-third, tents were pitched for the ministers to stay in. A young subordinate official-to-be now read a paper stating the number of horsemen, their family names and when, seated on their ponies, they must pass the officials' tents. On this festive occasion the animals were saddled beautifully and their jockeys splendidly dressed. My questions about the meaning of this feast were answered unsatisfactorily. Perhaps it formed a governmental tax to be paid by the families of subordinate officials.

The following day a high pile of dry grass was constructed on a piece of ground to the west of the Jo-khang near the residence of the Chinese representative in lHa-sa. The monks from the Se-ra, 'Bras-spung, dGa'-ldan and rNam-rgyal monasteries now gathered to offer sacrificial dough cakes. The renowned monk called Khri Rin-po-che from the dGa'-

Idan monastery accompanied the party while drums, cymbals and conches sounded. When a fire was lit for all the Head Monks to throw their dough cakes on, everybody clapped their hands and whistled in order to expel evil spirits. When about 500 men appeared, they stood in a row and fired their rifles one by one.

A tent was pitched across the river on a hill called Bya-skya-dkar located to the south of rTse-drung-gling-ga. It housed a goat and a religious book titled *brGyad-stong-pa* which Tibetans highly honour. A cannonball fired towards this hill took two minutes to reach its goal. I was told that if the tent was hit, this meant very bad luck. If not, the demons residing on this hill were subdued. The Tibetans would much appreciate it if the guns fired on this day hit all sides of the hill hindering the enemies of the four quarters to appear.

I heard say the remnants of a king called gLang-dar-ma lay on top of this hill about whom the following story was told.<sup>1</sup> In ancient times an old poultrywoman, having accumulated a large amount of money from her wages, approached the King of Nepal to ask him for a piece of land as large as an elephant's skin. When he granted her wish, she cut the skin making a very long string. A Buddhist temple was then built with a circumference equal to the length of the string. The king's ministers now realised that her building of such a large shrine had put gLang-dar-ma to shame. The king, however, who spoke only once on a certain matter, could not be asked again. The temple bears the name Bya-rung Kha-shor until the present day.

The poultry woman had four sons: Bya-roq-ming-can, Phag-rdsi-ming-can, sNags-pa-ming-can and gLang-gi-ming-can. Soon after the shrine was finished gLang-gi-ming-can prayed: 'May I be born again to subdue Sakyamuni Buddha's doctrine.' Bya-roq-ming-can then prayed, 'If you are to be born as an enemy of Buddhism, I wish to be born as your conquerer.' This caused sNags-pa-ming-can to say, 'If you are

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<sup>1</sup> For an extensive version of this myth, see *The Legend of the Great Stupa*, Dharma Publishing, 1973.

to be born as his subduer, I wish to be born as a powerful king.'

Indeed there once lived a king called gLang-dar-ma who saw to it beautiful women served liquor to monks so that they forgot their vows. This king had a pair of horns on his head. Each young woman who washed and plaited his hair, was beheaded afterwards. One of them, having almost finished her task, shed tears which fell on the king's neck. When he asked the reason why she cried, her answer was, 'I must die shortly.' The king then said, 'I will let you live if you promise not to tell anyone about my horns.' After the young woman had promised to do so, she was allowed to go. However, keeping a secret proved difficult for her. Not much later it became widely known that gLang-dar-ma had horns on his head. It may be added here that ever since gLang-dar-ma's days high-ranked officers are allowed to wear plaited hair (spa-lchog) above the forehead. Sons of noble families wear a golden ornament inlaid with a small turquoise on their spa-lchog.

The poultry woman's eldest son Bya-rog-ming-can was born again as the incarnation of a Tibetan monk called dPal-gyi rDo-rje. He killed enemies of Buddhism in 842 A.D. fulfilling the prayers said long ago in Nepal. After performing secret rituals dPal-gyi rDo-rje invited gLang-dar-ma to attend a religious dance inside the Jo-khang and shot him through the forehead with a bow and arrow as he sat on his throne. The monk then took refuge inside a monastery in Yer-pa, a small village some ten miles east of lHa-sa. The government officers failed to catch him. When an old woman visiting a holy cave at Yer-pa saw dPal-gyi rDo-rje, she left quietly thinking, 'For the good of Tibet, I will not tell anyone you are here.'

Demons inhabiting the hills around lHa-sa sent all sorts of diseases to those families whose hosedoors face these hills. In order to avoid these misfortunes, the rich and noble families of lHa-sa observe a beastly custom which had nothing to do with Buddhism. Pieces of wood were attached to the hide of a yak so that it looked like a penis. This was then placed above the main door to keep out evil spirits. Passers-by spat at it and



clapped their hands so that those living inside would enjoy good health. I did not see any proof of this custom in any monasteries. I was, however, told that a hill called nYa-ra sTu-mo-che located to the west of the Se-ra monastery looked like a large vulva. This caused many monks to break their celibacy vows. In order to oppose this temptation a very large wooden penis was made to point towards this hill. I will close the subject here – it is indeed a very low custom.

On the twenty-fifth day of the year, monks from the monasteries of rMe-ru and bZhi-sde (both built near Zhol at the foot of the Potala) performed a ceremony to welcome Byams-pa, the future Buddha. I heard say that when the present era of Sakyamuni Buddha has come to an end, an inauspicious age will commence during which the longest lifespan will be ten years only. Byams-pa's era will follow afterwards. At about six a.m. a large image of this Buddha was removed from the Jo-khang, placed on a vehicle and taken towards the Bar-bskor. After a full round, the image was kept waiting just on the corner of Dung-rtse. Later that same day unmounted ponies ran from sPyi-ri (near the monastery of 'Bras-spungs) towards lHa-sa. The winner was the first to pass the image of Byams-pa. Once this race had come to an end a very large stone standing near the Jo-khang was lifted. This feat was performed by a man from rGya-cog-pa on one side and a Tibetan on the other side. Not much later a number of naked men covered in oil wrestled while the Tibetan ministers, the representative of China at lHa-sa, many officials and countless spectators of all classes looked on. Later on the wrestler and the stone lifters received a scarf. When the image of Byams-pa returned to the Jo-khang, the people of lHa-sa said, 'The satisfaction of sMon-lam Chen-mo consists of welcoming Byams-pa heartily.'

On the twenty-sixth day of the year a pony race took place at rDzong-rgyab, behind the Potala. This day was supposed to be the start of the picnic season. All the officials gathered not far from lHa-sa two days later to attend an archery competition in which noblemen only competed. The archer's skill was determined by shooting arrows at targets.

I hereby finish the chapter on festivals held during the first month of the Tibetan calendar.

## ❁ twelve ❁

From the sixteenth day of the second month of the Tibetan year onwards monks from the monasteries of Se-ra, 'Bras-spungs and dGa'-ldan flock to lHa-sa in order to attend a ten day long festival called Tshogs-mchod which began on the twenty-first and lasted until the thirtieth. There was no other special event except one on the twenty-second during which Nepalese carried images of their gods around the bar-bskor.

On the twenty-fourth of the second month my friends and I visited a temple dedicated to the legendary king called Ge-sar. He reigned in the seventh century A.D. and was considered a great hero by the natives of eastern Tibet. This shrine stood on a small hill called Bar-ma, to the southwest of the Potala and the Nor-bu-gling-ga. Once inside you can bow either in the Chinese or the Tibetan fashion before the very large image of King Ge-sar. We Tibetans first brought our folded hands to the crown of our heads, then placed them against the forehead and the chest. Next, we touched the ground with our forehead leaning on our hands and knees. This we repeated twice. The Chinese knelt down stretching their hands to touch the ground with their forehead three times. While leaving they must look at the image until reaching the door. Here they had to kneel and bow their head three times.

To the south of this temple stood a small shrine also built to honour King Ge-sar. While visiting one or both these temples it was compulsory to offer to the gods a 'golden drink' (gser-skyims) consisting of first class wine, tea or milk. Near the doors stood a box containing numbered chopsticks. When I asked a temple guard the reason for this, he replied, 'If you want to know your fortune, please cast these sticks.' I then took the box containing the chopsticks and knelt down before the image of Ge-sar to consult the gods through prayers. If

two or more sticks fell out of the box, you had to try again. Only after one chopstick had come free, would the books be consulted according to its number. The fee for this was almost three and a half annas plus a ceremonial scarf. I learned that the large number of mainly white cocks at this temple had been set free so that the ill would not die. These birds served as life-savers in the name of King Ge-sar. It may be added here that Tibetans did likewise at a temple in rGyal-rtse.

On the twenty-ninth of the second month a religious festival called gLud-kong was observed. On this occasion the authorities sent off a man as a ransom who begged for and received useless coins from shopkeepers in the market place of lHa-sa. According to tradition, this human ransom must go to the monastery of bSam-yas once the local demons were subdued.

The following day all the monks from the Se-ra, 'Bras-pungs and dGa'-ldan monasteries participated in a religious ceremony called Tshogs-mchod Ser-sbrenng. At six a.m. they formed a row and proceeded in great pomp carrying the Eight Auspicious Emblems towards the foot of the Potala. Here at a house called gNas-khang-thog-kha, they performed a dance called gar. Soon afterwards a very large silk hanging (gos-sku) was suspended from the Potala.

The Protectors of the Doctrine were invited to a temple called Dar-po-gling and located to the north of lHa-sa on the fourth day of the third month. During my visit then and there a man dressed as a monk titled Chos-rje-lags sat on a high chair while religious musical instruments sounded on his right. Although married he could act as an intermediary and had been selected to do so by the spirits, not by human beings. The 'golden drinks' were offered as the ceremony continued. Next, two monks arrived with an unusual hat which they placed on the intermediary's head. He wore it for some time until a spirit appeared. When it entered the man, he shivered for a while as if he had a very high fever. First of all the spirit said, 'Fu, tu' and then cried out a reply to those consulting him. To be honest some prophesies did not come to the point – I too consulted this oracle several times. The mediator's real

name was not known to most members of the society who owned the Dar-po-gling. Behind this shrine stood a temple called dBang-ldan dPal-'bar which belonged to the same society, as I was told. It housed a female intermediary whom I consulted a number of times. Some of her remarks were correct, some false.

On the fourteenth of the fifth month of this Tibetan year (24 March 1908), my Chinese friend and I visited the renowned monk called A-rgyal-lags who lived on the first floor of the dBang-ldan dPal-'bar. He was so fat he could hardly stand up. His food consisted of porridge only – he had no teeth and was looked after by a faithful servant. Tibetans said he was 105 years old and that he was the incarnation of Dsam-bha-la, the God of Wealth. At first I was afraid of him. However, after my friend had received a 'blessing by hand' (phyag-dbang), I approached him. As my questions annoyed him, he almost struck me with his string of beads. I consulted him about ten times, several replies were not to the point. Oral responses were given immediately and written ones after one or two days. Each consult must be rewarded with a ceremonial scarf and a trang-ka.

On the twenty-fifth of the third month (15 May 1908), the kind-hearted rTsa-rong Zhabs-pad advised me to take up a job under the Tibetan government adding he would help me with regards to a salary and very stable position with good prospects for the future. Of course, I explained to him I could not serve the Tibetan government due to my promise to Lieutenant Bailey. Although I did not yield to his persuasions the H.E. the rTsa-rong Zhabs-pad treated me very kindly, sometimes inviting us to dinner or tea. Important ministers such as he would go to the council house in a procession at the head of which an officer walked carrying a whip to show his rank. He was followed by an officer titled 'house master' (gzim-dpon). Behind the minister seated on a pony, two rows of either three or four 'house masters' proceeded. Onlookers must stand up and take off their hats in a proper fashion. Each morning at ten the ministers arrived at the council chamber called bka'-cag to return between three and four

p.m. If possible each minister engaged his own son as 'order pleader' (bka'-mdron): a personal assistant who received petitions and, having looked into their importance, submitted them to the council. It may be added here that H.E. the rTsa-rong Zhabs-pad and his son were murdered by monks near the Potala while the Ta-la'i bLa-ma was at rDo-rje-gling (1913–14).

On the fifteenth of the fourth month a festivity called Sa-ga Zla-ba took place. Tibetans now commemorated Sakyamuni Buddha's birthday as well as the day He passed away. On this occasion all the temples of lHa-sa welcomed pilgrims. We paid a humble visit to the Potala and honoured the relics of past Ta-la'i bLa-mas. The Potala is also called Pho-brang dMar-po (meaning Red Palace) about which local people sang the following song,

*The Red Palace stands on the top of a hill,  
It houses the great incarnated King Srong-btsan sGam-po,  
His unchangeable body resembles that of Avalokitesvara,  
His words resemble the everlasting 'six lettered formula'.<sup>1</sup>  
I humbly bow to the Buddha's body, voice and mind.*

The Potala housed the image of the Bodhisattva sPyan-ras-gzigs (Skt. Avalokitesvara) which was self made, highly honoured and dated from the reign of Srong-brtsan sGam-po. Besides this miraculous image there were relics containing the embalmed bodies of past Ta-la'i bLa-mas. The temple minder told me these relics were made of solid gold and inlaid with precious stones.

In the early morning of the fifteenth day of the fourth month the ministers gathered at the court of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma to drink tea. Soon afterwards they all visited the rDzong rGyal-klu-khang, a temple built just to the north of the Potala. It was surrounded by water and dedicated to the water deities and could be reached by boat. Once my brothers and I had visited this shrine, we circumambulated it three times as is customary when visiting holy buildings. We then walked

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1 This refers to 'om mani padme hum', the Tibetan Buddhist creed.

along the seven mile long Gling-bskor of lHa-sa along with many other people.

A ceremony called Khri-rtse mChog-gling-bzang was held on the twenty-sixth of the fourth month at a small monastery named Khri-rtse mChog-gling built on the other side of the river sKyid. To my regret, I was not able to see the monks dance here. During my stay in lHa-sa the new Head Monk of this monastery arrived from the gTsang province. I was told he was the youngest brother of the Pan-chen bLa-ma with whom I travelled in Tibet and India.

At five a.m. on the fifteenth of the fifth month (Saturday, 3 July 1908) a festival began when the Protectors of the Doctrine entered the temple called Dar-po-gling. In the courtyard of the Jo-khang I saw a number of these Protectors as well as a terrifying spirit called rTse Ma-ra. It chased after the many people waiting to consult him. People said the Tibetan government would take no action today. Looking on from a safe distance for one hour, I returned home visiting the Dar-po-gling along the way. At noon I went to a grove called sKar-ma Shar-gyi-gling-ga where people held picnics between the fifteenth until the seventeenth. Now all shops are closed. Other popular gardens at lHa-sa were called rTse-drung-gling-ga and Sha-tra-gling-ga.

I witnessed Tibetan troops parade four days later before the ministers on the large piece of ground located between lHa-sa and the monastery of Se-ra. During this ceremony the ordinary lay officials had to serve their superiors. At about half past seven in the morning some 1,000 soldiers gathered here with their musical instruments and rifles. I also saw four small guns and four cannons. The nearby temple housed an image of Drab-phyi (Skt. Kali Devi). We honoured her with a 'golden drink' costing a ceremonial scarf and a phyi-brgyad (i.e., a coin equal to one sixth of a rupee).

On the fourth day of the sixth month a festivity called Drung-pa rTse-bshi took place [see also Chapter 9]. A large feast was held eleven days later at the monastery of dGa'-ldan which I could not attend because it was too far away from lHa-sa and because I had nobody to guide me. People

told me that the scroll-painting unrolled in front of this monastery was called a gSer-thang for the following reason. In ancient times this painting had been presented to a monk called A-gu sTon-pa (*alias* 'Brug-pa-kun-legs or Kun-bstan-legs-pa) who after passing water on it, said to roll it up. Needless to say, the monks thought their scroll painting was ruined. The following morning, however, when unrolled, it had turned to gold.

Once A-gu sTon-pa had received permission from the monastic authorities to offer tea to them, he brought a nut shell filled with tea and a rat skin filled with butter. Having put these in the large 'congregation pot' (tshogs-khro), he asked the monks not to open its lid until the tea had boiled. It was then served to the 370 monks. When A-gu sTon-pa was allowed to perform a ceremony called spos-skor (during which the patron walks around the congregated monks with a bundle of incense giving each of them a sweet smell), he lifted up his clothes and passed wind. Now all the young monks laughed, while all the old ones kept their mouths shut. Because of this even to the present day young novices and monks have a natural scent which fades away as they grow old. These and many other miracles were said to be performed by A-gu sTon-pa [see also the Appendix to this Chapter] whom Tibetans consider to be an incarnation of a being whose aim it is to make them clever.

Between the twenty-ninth of the sixth month and the first of the seventh month a festival called Zho-ston and a dance called A-che lHa-mo took place in the monastery of 'Bras-spungs. Having seen a number of such dances in rDo-rje-gling I did not attend this one. The festival of lHa-sa called Zho-ston takes place from the second to the eighth of the seventh month. As is customary on its first day all the actors of different groups first performed for a few minutes at the Potala and Nor-bu-gling-ga, both palaces of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. Only afterwards was the A-che lHa-mo allowed to be performed elsewhere. During the Zho-ston everyone in lHa-sa was as busy as porridge boiling in a pot and as noisy as bees humming around flowers in spring. If caught singing or

playing musical instruments after this festival had come to an end the authorities would punished you.

A ceremony called 'coming inspection' (hong-skor) took place on the seventeenth of the eighth month. Several men dressed in splendid costumes now accompanied the officers in charge of lHa-sa. They rode through the fields inspecting this year's crops and returned with a small quantity of the first harvest. Eleven days later a religious dance called bDe-mo dGu was held inside the monastery of bsTan-rgyas-gling. I heard say that since the assassination of this monastery's Chief Abbot, the Tibetan government had forbidden any religious dances to take place there. I attended the first time it took place again. The young monk now seated on a high chair was the incarnation of this monastery's Chief Abbot [see also Chapter 11]. Although a small boy, you felt very happy when looking at him.

On the eleventh of the ninth month I went to the monastery of Phrong-kha, some two or three miles from lHa-sa. Nearby was a highly honoured plot of ground where the important people of lHa-sa were taken after they had died. If the deceased was from a well to do family, relatives carried the body. A son would do so in the province of dBus and corpse disposers in the province of gTsang. The body was cut into pieces on the cremation ground where during the previous night a man had performed a ritual called spyod. The next morning he performed a second ritual which served to invite vultures and then placed the body in the corpse disposer's care.

I was told that, in ancient times, there had lived a female semi-divine being called Ma-gcig La-phyi sGron-ma and a saint called Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyes (Skt. Buddha Heruka). I also heard that to the present day a large image of the former could be found in Lho-Brag (south Tibet) and one of the latter at the town of Ding-ri. A man who followed this couple's teachings had no desire in worldly matters. According to tradition he carried a large drum, a hand bell and a thigh bone trumpet. Moreover, he wore various kinds of clothing and was allowed to marry. When performing rituals he used a piece of



bear skin as a veil so that the invoked evil spirits were not scared by the dazzling light which shines out from a human being's forehead.

The corpse disposers kept a dead body face down, cut it with their large knives and then gave it to the vultures. Trumpets, conch shells and drums sounded up to the last moment. Relatives were allowed to have a last look unless the astrologer objected. Those present would say, 'The deceased is very fortunate. If not, we would hardly see any vultures.' I was told that the brain of the deceased was given last of all. If not, the vultures would not care to eat the flesh at all. In rGyal-rtse I witnessed this practice for the first time and was very shocked by it all. It may be added here that, apart from monks, everybody must be given to the vultures. However, in rDo-rje-gling corpses were either thrown into a river or buried. Tibetans regard both as very bad. Only if a person died from a contagious disease such as smallpox would the corpse be buried because smoke from the pyre would contaminate those standing by.

In spite of my brothers warning me of its animosity against the British government and its subjects, I set off for the famous monastery of 'Bras-spungs on the eighteenth of the ninth month. Indeed, Tibetan monks were dead against people from rDo-rje-gling especially those who spoke English. As it was not the third, eighth, fifteenth or thirtieth day of the month when women were not allowed to visit large monasteries, a young lady called sNyi-snyi-lags assisted me. She was able to enter the monastery without any objections because one of the zhal-ngos that year was her paternal uncle. It was thus possible for an old learned monk to show me the precious Buddhist xylographs written in golden ink.

I received the following extraordinary advice from sNyi-snyi-lags, 'If asked where you are from, please say you came from gZhis-kha-rtse and that you travelled to lHa-sa as a pilgrim.' When I objected against telling lies, she answered, 'Suspicious monks will catch and punish people from India. Even the Tibetan government can not help people who have been ill-treated by monastic authorities. Please act according

to my advice, enjoy yourself and there will be no danger at all.' When asked to come before the zhal-ngos I felt very scared. Having presented him with a scarf as is the Tibetan custom he asked to my great surprise, 'When did you come to lHa-sa? Which part of Tibet are you from? Have you seen lHa-sa before?' Needless to say, I replied as sNyi-snyi-lags had instructed me. We were later invited to dine with him.

Just below the monastery of 'Bras-spungs (which houses the large, highly revered image of Byams-pa) stands a small monastery called gNas-chung where a ceremony called gNas-chung Zho-ston and a very fine A-che lHa-mo took place on the second of the seventh month. The images here were made of gold mixed with copper and of clay. Both were equally honoured as they contained a gzungs-cugs (i.e., a piece of wood placed inside the statue by a monk) which is lacking in images sold in market places. Buddhism does not allow Tibetans to buy or sell sacred objects. If you do, you will suffer the dreadful difficulties clearly described in a book titled *The Golden Sword in the Mission of Sins* (sDig-lcags-gser-gyi-spu-dri). However, in Tibet and in rDo-rje-gling I have come across Buddhist monks who sell precious images containing a gzungs-cugs saying, 'I am not going to sell it to you, but if you give me a reward, I will hand it to you as a present.'

On the thirtieth day of the seventh month the deity of the Se-ra monastery called sKar-ma Shar-chos-skyong offered sacrificial cakes, especially invited by the monastic authorities to do so. A few hours earlier a group of people called Se-ra-spyi so had served a cup of curds instead of the traditional tea to each monk. This presenting of curds (instead of tea) bears the name zho-ston as several reliable monks told me. On this occasion everybody was allowed to visit the monastery of Se-ra without any restrictions. It housed the Tibetan Buddhist canon as well as its commentaries and counted three sections. The most important one was called Se-ra-byes, the second Se-ra-smed and the third Se-ra-sngags-pa. The first two belonged to the Philosophical Department (mTshan-nyid Grwa-tshang). This monastery's most important image was of rTa-mdrin, the horse-necked fiend of enemies of Tibetan Buddhism.

An old monk from the monastery of Se-ra told me a very ridiculous and wonderful story which other monks strongly endorsed. True or not, I learned that during the fifth Ta-la'i bLa-ma's reign a ritual dagger arrived from India through the air and descended on the top of a hill called Phur-bu-lcog, behind the monastery of Se-ra. Once inside the cave inhabited by a teacher to the fifth Ta-la'i bLa-ma, whose name was Byams-pa Rin-po-che, this dagger asked, 'Where is Se-ra-byes?' The caretaker answered, 'You will find it behind this hill.'

The Chief Abbot of the Se-ra-byes, having found out about the conversation between the ritual dagger and the caretaker through his magic power, then said to his monks, 'Tomorrow a visitor from a very far place will come to see us. Therefore you must be prepared to welcome him.' To their great surprise, the ritual dagger made of bell-metal and measuring about one cubit did indeed reach them through the air. Needless to say, the monks honoured and valued it very much.

People said that the Tibetan government soon took this ritual dagger from the monastery by force. Not much later, the Chief Abbot approached his personal tutelary deity and the image of rTa-mdrin of his monastery to address them as follows, 'I have always worshipped you and come for your advice. Please help me to get that ritual dagger back, otherwise I will never take refuge to you again.' The deities then replied, 'It is all right, we shall help you.' The following morning rTa-mdrin placed one foot on top of a hill called sPa-ri (behind the monastery) and the other on a hill called Bya-skyang dKar-po (on the other side of the river sKyid) causing the Pho-brang dMar-po to tremble severely.

The Tibetan government was now advised to return the ritual dagger or else evil events would take place. Soon afterwards the Chief Abbot was invited to come and collect the dagger. Having approached the deities for further instructions and advice, he dreamed that a golden fly would rest on the dagger that had flown all the way from India. The next day the Chief Abbot went to the Potala. Along the way he noticed a fly and realised it must be the one he had seen in

his dream. When the authorities asked him to point out the ritual dagger taken from his monastery, adding that if he could not he would lose it, the Chief Abbot then invoked his own as well as his monastery's tutelary deity and bowed three times. The golden fly he saw hovering about landed on the dagger which was then claimed to belong to the monastery of Se-ra.

From then onwards each year on the twenty-seventh of the twelfth month, the religious festival called Se-ra-phur-mjal was sanctioned by the Tibetan government. On this day the Chief Abbot was as powerful as the fifth Ta-la'i bLa-ma. In addition, all the visitors, especially illiterate Tibetans, think that if the ritual dagger touched their heads, they would achieve salvation. This dagger can still be admired in the monastery of Se-ra.

A festival called dGa'-ldan-ling-ga-mchod took place on the twenty-fifth of the tenth month. In the early morning all the staff officers gathered in the Potala to drink tea together with the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. On this day debtors must pay back the entire amount they owed the government otherwise an officer titled 'pay master' (phogs-mkhan) will place a seal on the door of your house. Besides being the anniversary of Tsong-kha-pa's passing away, it is the first day the Tibetans living in the provinces of gTsang and dBus wore their winter clothing. If you did so earlier you would be laughed at. Also from this day on a monk officer wore a warm cap (spu-khu), while a lay officer wore a skin cap (lcags-zhwa). They do so until the first day of next year. From then on until the twenty-fifth day of the tenth month summer clothing was worn. The ministers now wore a cap called lcags-mdah while the monk officers wear a cup called gser-thol. Generally speaking Tibetans wore caps called rnog-ril.

I hereby conclude whatever I saw and heard during my ten months and one week long stay at lHa-sa.

### **Appendix to twelve**

1. Dressed in a nun's clothing, A-gu had succeeded in entering a nunnery in the province of gTsang. After some

time several women became pregnant. Seeing their condition the Head Nun thought, 'How could this happen if these nuns say their husbands never entered the nunnery? The culprit must be living amongst them! I shall find out who it is by ordering everyone to jump up and down naked.' When A-gu heard of this, he put a cowrie shell between his legs but after passing wind the shell fell to the ground revealing his penis. He was now flogged and expelled from the nunnery. The pregnant nuns were fined.

Not much later A-gu found work at a shop which stood on the river banks opposite the nunnery. One day while visiting the nuns he asked them to perform ceremonies at his house. Having lent him a large bronze vessel to make tea and food in, they said they would visit him as soon as possible. The next morning A-gu shouted to the nuns already halfway across the river, 'Please return, I have not finished preparations for the ceremony. Come back tomorrow.'

The following day, seated in a row, the nuns began their ceremony. A-gu, however, did not serve them any tea or food. When dusk fell and time had come for the nuns to return to their nunnery A-gu brought a pot filled with curd, a spoonfull of which was poured over each nun's head. He also sounded a cymbal near their ears and said, 'Sorry, I am not going to serve you anything else.' The nuns now lost their temper and went home with an empty stomach. Before they left A-gu overheard them say, 'Although we performed ceremonies all day, he did not serve us a cup of tea. Instead we received a spoonful of curds on our head and a headache caused by the cymbals he sounded near our ear. For this we will let the dogs lose when he comes to return the bronze vessel tomorrow.'

A-gu entered his house and punched holes in the vessel making it useless. When the nuns saw him arrive the next morning they let lose their dogs. A-gu now hid himself inside the vessel remaining out of danger but crying out loud as if the dogs were biting him. After a while the nuns called the animals back and tied them down. Having approached A-gu, they said to him, 'We did not think the dogs would attack you. Are you badly hurt?' A-gu replied, 'Speaking for myself I am

unharméd, but the dogs have bitten the bronze vessel making it useless.' With these words he handed it over to the nuns.

2. Once when A-gu was stealing everywhere in the province of gTsang, nobody could prove it. Then one day a governmental officer said to him, 'I hear you are very clever. If you succeed in removing the golden ritual vessel from my altar table tonight I shall reward you by promoting you tomorrow.' This offer A-gu gladly accepted. The officer then posted his guards saying, 'Even if a dog comes here tonight, you must kill it.' He himself stayed up all night looking out for A-gu from a window of his house.

Meanwhile A-gu took a number of iron pegs and a thin long and hollow bamboo stick on the top of which he attached the bladder of an animal. Having arrived at the rear side of the officer's house, he hit the pegs into the wall in order to climb onto the roof. The hole here was located exactly above the altar table on which the golden vessel stood. A-gu now moved the end of the bamboo stick with the bladder inside the vessel. He then slowly blew air through the stick into the bladder so that it held the golden vessel, pulled the stick up and went off with it.

The following day A-gu returned the vessel to the officer who was quite astonished by his craft. He even said to A-gu, 'You are a first class thief, please teach me your trade.' A-gu agreed to help him as follows. Having asked the officer not to wear his official dress, they set off for a rich man's house around midnight. After seeing that this family was busy preparing drinks and the like for the marriage of a son, A-gu and the officer entered the house and started drinking. Once inebriated they began to sing. A member of this family then said, 'Well, well, we have thieves in our house.' and took action. Needless to say, A-gu saw chance to flee. The officer, however, was caught, charged with stealing and flogged.

Once outside the house, A-gu ran towards a pile of wood and quickly lit it. He then cried out loud, 'Fire, fire!' As soon as these words reached the men inside, they immediately bought a sack, put the officer in it and closed it with a rope. While they were busy extinguishing the fire with water, A-gu

quickly entered the house, freed the officer, put the head of the family inside it and fled. Once the fire was extinguished the men returned into the house and started beating the old man inside the sack without opening it for the second time. He was killed although he cried out loud, I am the father of this family, not the thief!

The following day A-gu instructed the officer to steal all this family's belongings on the following grounds. Firstly, to kill the head of their family was a terrible thing to do and secondly it was careless to allow a fire to burn unattended. This story made everyone familiar with the fact that the officer in charge had acted accordingly to A-gu's advice and confiscated all the family property.

3. Once upon a time A-gu was extremely hungry. He then saw a group of workers in a field enjoying food and drinks together. Walking towards a large boulder which lay in the middle of the field, he said, 'You fools, how much more ground can be cultivated here if only you cared to remove this large boulder!' They answered, 'We would have done so a long time ago if we could. Who can throw away such a large rock?' When A-gu replied, 'A clever man can do this easily. Come on let me do it!' The farmers answered him, 'If you can show us a way, please have a drink and meal first!'

A-gu who was very hungry first had good food and drink to his heart's content. He then asked for a long rope in order to tie that big boulder to his back and also he asked them to push it on his back. They answered, 'If we can do so, we would have done it a long time ago. You told us you would show us a means of disposing it.' With these words they did not care to push the boulder. A-gu having lost his temper replied, 'If all of you can not push this boulder, how do you think I can do so on my own? Well I could not care less anyhow.'

With these words he went off immediately, satisfied with their food and drinks. The workers in the field spoke to each other, 'He has consumed our food and drink, leaving us without a way of getting rid of that large stone.' They looked on desparately as A-gu set off.

4. When his wife Tshe-ring sKyid-pa fell ill and died, A-gu pretended to be very sorry and mourned her death in a much too exaggerated manner. The many friends who came to share his grief told him, 'O, A-gu, such is the worldly fate.' Having drunk too much, A-gu said, 'Well my situation will also change soon.' and wept bitter tears.

Having seen his wife's body taken out of the house to be given to the vultures, he said, 'My current position is quite uncertain. It seems to me I am not going to remain in this situation much longer.' as his eyes filled with tears. His friends now said, 'Do not say such evil things. Someone has just died, we suffer much if you speak in such a way. Please drink some wine and become peaceful.' When A-gu replied, 'It is very kind of you to comfort me with such sweet words. It is, nevertheless, certain I will not stay like this for a long time.' He began weeping for the third time.

The sight of many vultures hovering above his wife's corpse made A-gu sing the following lines:

*Vultures mass over over Tshe-ring sKyid-pa 's body,  
A large quantity has flown into my mouth,  
So tell me who is happier than I am.*

When A-gu sang this everyone was thunderstruck saying, 'How can you sing such a song while your wife's body has not yet been entirely devoured. This is very bad indeed!' To them A-gu replied, 'I told you from the beginning that my future was quite uncertain. By this I meant I am not going to mourn for long, not that I am going to die very soon!'

5. Once upon a time on the occasion of the festival called rGyal-rtse dGe-tshal nine nuns set off from the monastery of Se-ra for rGyal-rtse driving an ox. Along the way they said to themselves it would be a good idea to find a simple man to drive their pack animal. These words were overheard by A-gu who then dressed in ragged clothes and went ahead pretending he was dumb. When the nuns saw him they called him, 'You dumb-bell, please accompany us and drive our ox.' As the sun was shining strongly and the heat was



unbearable, the women took off their clothes and placed them on the ox's back. They then decorated the animal's horns with their strings of beads. A-gu now drove the ox in front of the nuns, hastened his step and left them behind.

Not much later when a heavy shower fell, the nuns cried out loud, 'Please wait for us. We need our clothes!' A-gu, however, paid very little attention to their words and hastily entered the dPal-'khor Chos-sde through the western gate. He then secretly commissioned all the nuns belongings to a monk. Next, he quickly killed the ox, dug a hole exactly in front of the monastery's main entrance. In this hole he placed one end of the animal's tail. The other he held in his hand. As soon as the nuns reached him, A-gu cried out to them, 'Come quickly, your ox is falling into a hole in the ground!' adding, 'I asked you to come soon, but you did not. Now look here, your pack animal has fallen in a hole.' With these words he threw the ox's tail on the ground in front of them saying, 'This is what is left of it.'

The nuns now had to return to their monastery without their belongings. A few days later A-gu, having received all their clothes from the monk, dressed himself as a nun to attend the rGyal-rtse dGe-tshal festival. When asked by a monk to come and drink some tea at his house, A-gu first refused but was persuaded to do so that evening. Having enjoyed the finest tea and food, both spent the night in the same bed. The monk was, of course, under the impression he was in the company of a nun. After discovering it was A-gu, the monk had to leave everything behind due to shame.

### ❀ thirteen ❀

I will now describe, as clearly as possible, the most renowned of all Tibetan Buddhist temples, the Jo-khang, which I enjoyed visiting as much as I did my parent's house. All information which seems to be accurate was given to me secretly by caretakers. If their superiors had found out about this, we would have been punished for defiling sacred objects.

King Srong-brtsan sGam-po built the Jo-khang after

marrying the daughter of a Chinese Emperor and the daughter of the Nepalese king. According to a popular story, all the building material (wood and stone) necessary to construct the Jo-khang found its right place on Srong-brtsan sGam-po's command. The material came from a hill called sPa located between the monasteries of 'Bras-spungs and Se-ra. I was told you were not allowed to dig into this hill and that it could produce a weeping sound: an omen of famine or war. At its foot lies a rock called Phags-pa that faces the east. People said it turned round gradually to face the south at the end of time. The hills named sPa and Chu will then fight each other. In addition, the river sKyid which lies between these two hills will stop flowing. Maybe fools believe this peculiar story!

The great Jo-khang has four storeys. Its western entrance is not far from a much revered willow tree called Jo-wo dWu-skra. Not far from the northern gate you will find a place called Ca-sa-sgang where meat is sold. By leaving through the southern gate you will reach the bSam-drub Pho-brang, the residence of a noble family. The western gate leads to the rMu-ru rNying-ma, a small monastery in lHa-sa. Having entered the Jo-khang through its western gate, you will on the right find the Tibetan government's Storage Room for Heavenly and Earthly Objects, housing for instance, a bag which immediately serves butter-tea if you pray to it and a whip which fulfills your wishes. These objects were brought to lHa-sa by Khe-ru Pad-ma-'od-'bar, the incarnation of Gu-ru Rin-po-che, and are shown to the public once a year. There is a second storage room in the Potala where, I was told, vast amounts of gold, silver and silk were kept.

Walking towards the inside of the Jo-khang, you see two mythical watersnakes. These creatures will remove the statue of the Sakyamuni Buddha from the Jo-khang when, at the end of time, lHa-sa will be completely swept away by a flood. A little further on and to your left, you find a shrine dedicated to the female deity called sGrol-ma. Tibetans regard the rats in this room as her lice. Therefore, these infectious animals were honoured and fed grain. Their droppings were used as incense to cure the ill.

If you walk towards the south of the temple of sGrol-ma and then to the north you arrive at the Ma-ni-lha-khang. A visit to this temple should be the beginning of your religious ceremonies. Having passed several other shrines you reach the temple dedicated to sPyan-ras-gzigs. It houses a gilt copper statue of this Bodhisattva as well as many golden sacrificial butter-lamps. To the east of this temple, you will see an image of Byams-pa, the future Buddha. People say it washes away your sins and ignorance.

I will now deal with two extraordinary images. The first has a very large stomach, the second stretches out his left hand and points towards the East. The caretaker here told me the pot-bellied statue had eaten 100 khels (one khel is a grain measure equal to about thirty lbs). and had drunk as much alcohol as possible. I also heard say that the second statue pointed at a place called Gung-thang. Here in ancient times a fire had started for which the statue warned the people of lHa-sa. It may be added here that in days of old all the images in the Jo-khang could speak.

East of the shrine dedicated to Byams-pa there is a temple which you can enter by going up a small staircase. I was told there was a door to the west of this staircase which led to the lake underneath the Jo-khang. Unfortunately the Tibetan government kept this door locked and sealed – so I could not check this. The shrine itself is dedicated to Tsong-kha-pa, the founder of the dGe-lugs school, and houses several golden sacrificial butter-lamps. The care-taker here who prays continuously, may bless you by giving you sacred water. In the first temple a little further eastwards, you will find images of naked female deities. Some kneel and some bend down while others stand up, their feet twisted. This was explained to me as follows. When King Srong-brtsan sGam-po visited the Jo-khang these deities were playing and that they took the poses, as described above, out of shame.

The Jo-khang must be visited in the morning, afternoon and night. Each visit should last about two hours. Everyone, rich or poor, must stay in line otherwise the caretakers will beat you. Many pick-pockets were active here. Especially in

the darkness near the temples dedicated to sPyan-ras-gzigs and Tsong-kha-pa, ladies were often robbed of their precious head ornaments. Some people came to see their sweethearts as this verse proves.

*In the morn of the full moon,  
I went to worship my personal deity, dPal-lha,  
When in the precious Jo-khang,  
The girl met her sweetheart there.*

The first time I paid tribute to the most blessed, holy and precious image of Sakyamuni Buddha it felt as if I beheld heaven. You can touch the Buddha's knee with your head to receive His blessing. When I did so, the chief caretaker gave me some holy water and a few grains of barley. Together with this water you should eat two or three grains as a blessing. The remaining grains are then thrown towards the image of the Buddha. The four caretakers in this shrine keep a piece of cloth in their mouths to prevent their breath from reaching the holy lights burning in the golden butter-lamps. Here I saw an iron chain (it was about half an inch thick) which stammerers licked in order to get rid of their handicap.

Near the image of the Buddha, which faces the west, there are eight statues each measuring about twenty feet high: 1. 'Jam-dbyangs (Skt. Manjusri), 2. Phyag-na rDo-rje (Skt. Vajrapani), 3. sPyan-ras-gzigs (Skt. Avalokitesvara), 4. Sa-hi sNying-po (Skt. Ksitigarva), 5. sGrib-pa rNam-sel (Skt. Sarvanivaranaviskambhin), 6. rNam-mkha' sNying-po (Skt. Akasagarbha), 7. Byams-pa (Skt. Maitreya) and 8. Kun-tu bZang-po (Skt. Samantabhadra). Standing before Sakyamuni Buddha, you should pour a drop or two of clarified butter into the large holy lamp. I now heard that offering a golden sacrificial butter-lamp is considered most virtuous, as the following story shows.

Long ago there lived a very pious monk called Lam-khong-brdol Rin-po-che who was honoured by one and all as a holy man. Having presented a golden butter-lamp to Sakyamuni Buddha, he prayed, 'May all those beings who pour even a

drop of clarified butter into this lamp not suffer the damnation of hell.' To fill this lamp, you must pay one trang-ka to the caretaker. He will then pour the butter from it into another lamp, place a wick and light it. The patron must then pray and bow three times.

I will now describe a ceremony called gSer-yig mJal-ba which ensures that the deceased does not suffer in hell. His or her name should be written with golden ink on red or green Chinese paper together with the following prayer, 'Before the eyes of Sakyamuni Buddha ..... (fill in the name of the deceased) who has left for the unknown world above.' If, on the other hand, this prayer is written to the benefit of a living person, it should read, 'Before the eyes of Sakyamuni Buddha may ..... obtain the eternal blessed life in the heaven above.' You must pay half a trang-ka for these prayers to be written. They will then be read out loud by the chief caretaker before the Buddha. The piece of paper is then burned in the golden butter-lamp mentioned above. I saw to it this ceremony was performed in honour of my beloved parents and grandfather.

The statue of the Buddha has two head ornaments. One was a gift from a Mongolian who had travelled to Tibet to learn if the images inside the renowned Jo-khang of lHa-sa could speak or not. Having found out that only the image of sLob-dpon could not speak, the Mongolian took it up the hill called Bya-skya dKar-po and threw it in the river sKyid. Not much later he presented the Tibetan government with 108 silver vessels and 108 copper teapots on the occasion of the Great Annual Prayer Meeting. I was told these utensils were used to the present day.

To the south of the shrine dedicated to Sakyamuni Buddha, you can find a shrine housing a small hearth which once belonged to Srong-brtsan sGam-po's Chinese wife. It is said that who ever puts their hand inside it, will always prepare delicious food. I myself did so more than 100 times. In a nearby shrine, you can see a tiger-skin hanging from the ceiling. It is said that walking underneath will save you from damnation after death.

Also on the southern part of the ground floor there is a shrine dedicated to Byams-pa. It houses a small image of a goat called Ra-mo-gdon-chen which, according to the general public, carried the earth and stones to construct the Jo-khang. The fact that illiterate Tibetans believe such nonsense showed the power of the clergy. As this image is kept in a dark room, you can see it only with the help of the caretaker's torch. The money you pay him for this he keeps for himself. It may be added here that all the care-takers at the Jo-khang are recruited from the rMu-ru and bZhi-sde monasteries of lHa-sa.

The first floor of the Jo-khang can be reached by going through the main gate in front of the willow tree called Jo-wo dWu-skra. After walking towards the north, I passed several shrines to arrive at a staircase at the top of which, when looking towards the east, I saw nuns turning the ma-ni wheel with its 100,000 prayers. Also to the east of these stairs, if my memory serves me well, you will find a shrine housing an image of mGon-po Phyang-drug. According to verbal tradition, it was made of the dirty and very smelly mud removed once a year from the drain around the Bar-bskor of lHa-sa. The simple Tibetans held the view that this six-armed image protects them against infectious diseases. He or she should approach the smelly drain to get rid of a headache or cold. Those born near the bar-bskor regard themselves to be very holy and pure thanks to the virtues of mGon-po Phyang-drug.

I then walked to the southwest and arrived at a shrine called Bya-khri mGon-po which I was told housed the real deity of the city of lHa-sa. To the north of this temple you will find the much revered image of King Srong-btsan sGam-po. In front of it stands an Indian watervessel which the Tibetan devotees filled with an alcoholic beverage to then take a small quantity of this nectar in the palm of the hand, sprinkle it three times with the ringfinger and drink the remainder. The following two ridiculous stories are told about this watervessel. Firstly that if two friends want to find out if they will be faithful and honest to each other or not, they pour some of this nectar into the vessel. Only if this this small quantity is

enough to fill it completely will they remain true to each other. Secondly, if a woman who earns a livelihood by selling liquor pours some of this nectar into this vessel, the alcohol will turn sour in the future. I myself examined this Indian watervessel, but did not find anything extraordinary.

The most revered place on the second floor of the Jo-khang is the dPal lHa mChod, a shrine dedicated to dPal-ldan lHa-mo. It is situated on the eastern part of the building and houses statues of the two daughters of Drag-mo, the Fearful Lady. Its door faces the west. A small door inside on the north leads to a dark room where a terrifying goddess looks towards the west. A piece of cloth covers her face. Both chambers are infested with mice, as many as stars in the sky. The animals enjoy the offered grain and water. Although the care-takers see this, they do them no harm because they are regarded as her lice. I have seen people collect mice dung which is used as incense to expel evil spirits. It was said that if a mouse dies, it is bought by pilgrims from Mongolia.

In the dPal lHa mChod you may offer a donation called gser-skyums which consists of barley beer, milk or Chinese tea. There are at least four shrines where this can be done: the dPal lHa mChog, the mGon-khang, the Tshe-ring-mChed-lnga and the mChod-rten mGon-khang. However, the care-taker gives you permission to do so only after you pay him a small amount of money. I heard say that used offerings were collected and later sold to other devotees. The reason for this profit making was that the care-takers had to pay their monastery a fee.

I will now deal with the images inside the dPal lHa mChod. The very beautiful one of dPal-ldan lHa-mo was made of clay and gold. Indeed, if a Tibetan woman had excellent teeth, they say she looked like dPal-ldan lHa-mo. This image seemed to live and the fact she did not speak greatly disappointed the visitors. The reason why she is so pretty when compared with her terrifying sister, is given in the following story.

In ancient times Drag-mo had two daughters. The elder daughter never obeyed her mother, the younger one served her mother faithfully. Therefore Drag-mo saw to it her

obedient daughter enjoyed a perfect next life and that the elder daughter met her husband once a year only: on the full moon day of the tenth Tibetan month during a festival called dPal lHa-ri-khrod. A monk from the rMe-ru monastery now carries the statue of the elder daughter around the Bar-bskor of lHa-sa. Her face was unveiled to meet the image of her husband called sKar-ma Shar-chos-rje. She is allowed to kiss and embrace him a short time before returning to in her dark temple again where her terrifying face was covered.

The temple dedicated to Drag-mo on the third floor of the Jo-khang faces the east. Here devotees give her offerings to prevent trouble in their families and epidemics. She held a lance as well as a noose and wore a silver mirror on her breast. I recall seeing two holes, one of which was in the eastern wall. If you held your nose very close to these holes you noticed a terrible smell which the care-taker said came from the monastery of bSam-yas. Here according to tradition all human souls come together. This monastery was situated a two-day journey from lHa-sa. Apparently the disgusting smell of dead bodies travelled this distance.

The temple in the western part of the third floor is dedicated to the Tshe-ring mChed-lnga, five sisters called: bKra-shis Tshe-ring-ma, mThing-gi Zhal-bzang-ma, bLo-bzang-ma, mGrin-bzang-ma and 'Gro-bzang-ma, all with a very long life. I was told that Mi-la-ras-pas himself had bound these sisters by means of a solemn vow. The roof of the Jo-khang consists of small stones plastered with smooth clay. There are four pinnacles supposedly made of gold but, in fact, gilded. The same goes for the pinnacles of the four bKa'-brgyud monasteries in Tibet: 'Bri-gung, rTags-lung-pa, 'Brug-pa and Kar-ma-pa.

I hereby complete my brief description of the most precious and renowned Jo-khang. I did my best to serve one and all. If I have failed in any way, I ask those who know better to correct me. I shall, of course, be ever grateful to them.



**❁ fourteen ❁**

If you go to the northern part of the Bar-bskor and then towards the monastery of Se-ra, you will arrive at a shrine called rGya-bum sGang. Here 100,000 Chinese had once been killed by spears. This temple housed various images and large wall paintings. Its entrance faced the south. For unknown reasons bells are attached to the roof's corners on the four cardinal points. I heard people sing the following song about this building.

*Grand but in a very dangerous position is the  
rGya-bum sGang.*

*It is surrounded by four hills,  
yet in need of the wind to share its sorrows.*

I was told that long ago in sDrung Pho-la (not far from rDo-chung to the southwest of rGyal-rtse), there lived a mighty hero named dPon-mi-dbang who belonged to the Pho-lha-rtse family. One day he and his orderly called bSod-nams dPal-rgyas (who belonged to the gNyer-khang family) set off for lHa-sa, responding to an invitation for a banquet with Chinese officers. As soon as dPon-mi-dbang entered the banquet hall, all the doors were closed. Behind his back a curtain concealed Chinese soldiers carrying sharp swords. Having seen them through a hole in the door, bSod-nams dPal-rgyas warned his master. However, dPon-mi-dbang's decapitation could not be avoided. The story goes that after bSod-nams dPal-rgyas had broken into the hall, he was able to kill 100,000 Chinese soldiers without receiving a single wound himself.

The Chinese authorities who were completely surprised by this feat wanted very much to find out where bSod-nams dPal-rgyas lived. Once Chinese troops had arrived at his house, they said to his wife bZang-bzang lHa-mo, 'Your husband who fought against the Chinese in lHa-sa is now seriously injured. However, he will not live much longer, nor is he able to die. Please tell us why he cannot die. We will give you the best Chinese food and silk after his death. In addition, we will take you to China where you shall live as a lady.'

Unfortunately, bZang-bzang lHa-mo believed their words and told them, 'My husband can only be killed by a sword or a spear after a golden image as large as a thumb has been removed from underneath his long hair.'

The soldiers then returned to lHa-sa travelling day and night. As soon as bSod-nams dPal-rgyas was arrested, they were able to murder him due to his wife's advice. Realizing she was the cause of his end, he sang this heartbreaking song,

*Betrayed by the one I would never suspect.*

*Yes, I am betrayed by my bZang-bzang lHa-mo,  
the mother of my three sons.*

*I now regret disclosing to her my secret.*

Apparently dPon-mi-dbang was an ancestor of the present noble family of lHa-sa called rDo-ring which I heard say owned all his properties located near the monastery of rTse-chen not far from rGyal-rtse. It was also said that two treasurers are sent to sDrung Pho-lha (dPon-mi-dbang's place of birth) from lHa-sa every third year to officiate on behalf of the rDo-ring family. This practice is observed even to the present day. However, dPon-mi-dbang's weapons were still carefully kept under governmental seal. I was lucky enough to meet a lady who was from sDrung Pho-lha. She told me this great hero was regarded to be an incarnation of Sakyamuni Buddha. It may be added here that the story about dPon-mi-dbang is often sung by violin playing beggars from Central Tibet.

Just behind the temple of rGya-'bum sGang, there was a medium-sized shrine named Zhi-khro. I was told it had not been built by the Tibetan government or by a monastery but by a lay group active in lHa-sa. Its members always helped each other – if someone died, the group saw to it the funeral took place in the proper manner. This showed that the lay people of lHa-sa indeed knew what the word 'love' meant. However, if you do not belong to a group, you are very much in need of love.

Leaving this temple behind and walking towards the Se-ra monastery we saw, to the west, a shrine built to honour rTse-

dpag-med, the celestial Buddha Amitayus. The reason the images inside were not extraordinary can be explained by the fact that Tibetans are not impressed by outward grandure and think only of spiritual blessing.

A temple called Ra-mo-che lies just behind the one dedicated to Tshe-dpag-med. Having entered this one-storey building you will see the image of Mi-bskyod-pa, the celestial Buddha Aksobhya. It was presented by the daughter of the Nepalese king Amsuvarman when she married King Srong-btsan sGam-po. To receive this Buddha's blessings, we must climb up a small ladder on the right. Having asked a temple guard if I was allowed to pray and touch this image on its left side, he replied, 'No, the Tibetan government does not permit this. If you do, your every wish will be fulfilled.' At that time I was thunderstruck by his words. Later, having become friendly with him, he let me touch this statue on fifteen occasions.

Tibetans, Chinese, Nepalese and Kashmiri inhabit the holy city of lHa-sa. Each group has their own officers to sort out trouble. The Tibetan shopkeepers sell butter and tea in large amounts, the Muslims sell products from India such as textile, soap and matches. The many Chinese own taverns or restaurants. Members of these groups can be found on the banks of the river sKyid, just to the south of lHa-sa. They will ask pilgrims on their religious circumambulation to buy fish from them to become free of sins. If trouble rises, not even a policeman will take action to prevent the pious from being mobbed. In lHa-sa you must pay a large sum of money before any civil servant will even think about taking up your case. It is said that Tibet is a religious kingdom. However, to be honest with you, the Tibetan government thinks, 'Might is right and not right is might.'

While walking along the Gling-bskor I came across many blind beggars with guide dogs and several men lying on the ground in a hut made of horn. They had no leg muscles. Their blindness and inability to walk were the results of penalties given to them by the Tibetan government for committing dreadful crimes. When compared with the British dominions,

there are a good number of thieves in lHa-sa. Indeed it is not wise for ladies to go out in the evening wearing ornaments.

Needless to say, I enjoyed visiting the temples of lHa-sa as if they were the house of my parents. My first religious circumambulation along the Gling-skor took place on the eighth day of the fifth month of the Earth-Bird year (Tuesday, 27 May 1909). For the benefit of this and my next life, I visited nearly every incarnate monk of lHa-sa and received from them corporal as well as spiritual blessings in order to avoid future damnation in hell. I worked hard for my salvation!

After spending ten months and one week at lHa-sa, my two brothers and I set off on the morning of Friday, the thirtieth day of the tenth month in the Earth-Bird year (12 November 1909). We then said the following verse,

*We bid you farewell, lHa-sa.  
lHa-sa replied, 'Good-bye friends.'  
Having said, 'We feel very sad today',  
lHa-sa comforted us with the words,  
'We will meet again in the near future.'*

We reached rDo-rje-gling safely through God's ineffable mercy without any difficulties at four p.m. on Thursday, 30 December 1909. My joy knew no limit: I would see my beloved wife, relatives and friends soon.

## ❁ fifteen ❁

My first occupation after arriving in rDo-rje-gling was to work as a clerk under the architect Mr R.M. Robertson. Not much later, Anna Kempes of the Free Church of Finland (formerly known as the Old Scandinavian Alliance Mission) asked me to become her private tutor in classical and colloquial Tibetan. She resided at Jorebungalow, a small village to the southeast of Ghoom Railway Station. I was appointed teacher at the Missionary School at Jorebungalow three months later. The number of boys in my class varied between seven and ten. In

the years to come a number of them including a son of mine were awarded with Middle School Scholarships by the British government. This enabled them to attend an English High School.

I studied the Holy Bible under supervision of Miss Kempes from 1909 until 1913. She and her friends, all non-Buddhists, despised the religious customs of Tibetans. When these missionaries pressed my family to become Christians. I prayed to God, 'How can I obtain salvation and be saved from damnation in hell? Should I accept Christ in order to find peace of mind, although my parents were not aware of His existence?'

My comparing Buddhism and Hinduism with Christianity resulted in openly confessing the latter religion on 21 September 1913. However, my wife and I were not baptised earlier than on November 5. Between these two dates my friends and relatives who regarded Christianity as the foe of Tibetan Buddhism continuously tried to force me to review my decision. I nevertheless felt eternally blessed by God's grace and prayed that the Gospel would reach each and every corner of the world bringing about salvation amongst the Tibetan people, too.

It is now 1918: eight years after my joining the Free Church of Finland and my fifth year as a Christian. My appointment to the post of headmaster at the Ghoom Middle English School came about through God's ineffable mercy. I therefore give my most humble and sincere thanks to the Unchangeable Master of Love and the Rock for all His help in time past. I again pray for His guidance throughout my future life.

## ❀ sixteen ❀

Once dismissed by the representative of the British government at rGyal-rtse in 1908, I promised that, come what may, never to again serve a Tibetan or Chinese superior. With the proverb in mind, 'There is no reason to have a dirty face, when you are not ill.' I continuously tried return to the ranks of

British Civil servants. Petitions adressed to Sir Charles Bell (the Political Officer at sGang-tog and also in charge of Yatung, rGyal-rtse and Bhutan) were of no avail.

On 3 November 1915 I explained my problem in person to the Governor of Bengal, His Excellency Lord Carmichael, during his visit to rDo-rje-gling. Having first comforted me like a father with the words, 'Every true cause bears fruit however long it may take.' Lord Carmichael promised that because this matter lay beyond his jurisdiction he would speak with Sir Charles about it. However, years passed without any reaction at all in spite of my many letters.

Then, my one-time superior at rGyal-rtse and now Lieutenant-Colonel F.M. Bailey succeeded Sir Charles Bell (who had never been popular among Tibetans). As soon as the former had heard of my situation from his personal assistant a meeting was arranged on 27 March 1922. Bailey Sahib was very glad to see me after so many years. After advising me to write a new petition, he introduced me to his wife with the words, 'This my friend sKar-ma Babu, whom I have not seen since 1908. He is an honest man with a strong character!'

Lieutenant-Colonel Bailey's official reply reached me on 1 May 1922. It ran as follows, 'sKar-ma Babu, you henceforth have the right to serve the British government in any department you wish to choose.' You can imagine how immense my joy was. For, after fourteen years, my innocence had been proven. Both A-chung Babu (the Special Agent at sPos-sdong and later Tibetan Sub-Deputy Collector of rDo-rje-gling) and Mr. Laden La, (the Assistant Superintendent of Police at rDo-rje-gling), were informed of the contents of this letter.

An Indian saying runs, 'The truth cannot be consumed by fire. The truth cannot be washed away by water. The truth cannot be cut down by a sword. In the end truth conquers all.' I therefore request my readers not to give up honesty. It is, after all, the best policy.

**❁ seventeen ❁**

During the seven years after my conversion to Christianity, I studied the Holy Bible with great zeal, considering it my supreme duty to attend Annual Conventions, Christian Endeavor Meetings and Open Air Preachings together with my Indian, Nepalese and European brothers and sisters. My work as Head Master at the Missionary School of Ghoom did not prevent me from achieving the second best result three times in the Annual Sunday School Examinations in the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Acts of the Apostles.

However, the feeling grew that my belief in an foreign religion may well have been a serious mistake. This doubt was intensified by the continuous hypocritical conduct of the missionaries towards me and my family. After realising that, 'Whatever religion you choose to follow, you shall achieve the desired salvation.' I gave up Christianity in 1920. From that moment on I studied Buddhism more than I would have ever done if I had not once been a Christian.

While slaving for Jesus, two of my sons had died. The fact that both were buried according to Christian rites meant I had to bid them farewell for ever. With tears in my eyes I stood at their graves and said, 'Goodbye dear sons, I am returning to Buddhism.' Who is to blame for such a thing?

My wife died several months later aged thirty. Unfortunately she did not see her mother since our arrival at rDo-rje-gling in 1908. Her death caused the following verses to come to my mind.

*My dearest beloved friend Mrs sKar-ma Yang-yom-la,  
your leaving us behind in mournful helplessness has made me  
realise in full that this world is an illusion.*

*I shall always remember your kind deeds and love, I pray you  
may have a perfect, precious life in the world beyond.*

It stands to reason that after my back-sliding, the missionaries of the Free Church of Finland no longer considered me suitable to act as Head Master of their school at Ghoom. In the

year 1923 I was officially dismissed but with false accusations. Indeed, we find white and black sheep amongst followers of every religion and under subjects of every nation.

## ❁ eighteen ❁

After leaving the District of Do-rje-gling for Calcutta in October 1923, I visited the Dutchman Mr Johan van Manen as soon as possible. Having explained to him my situation, he first shared my grief speaking words of comfort and then promised to do his best to find for me a suitable post with a good salary. Through his benevolence I was soon appointed Lecturer of the Tibetan language at the University of Calcutta.

Van Manen Sahib had been a pupil of mine during his stay at the Balaclava Hotel, Jorebungalow between 1916 and 1918. I contributed to his articles titled *Khacche Phalu, A Tibetan Moraliser*<sup>1</sup>, *The Song of the Eastern Snow mountain*<sup>2</sup> and *On Making Earthern Images, Repairing Old Images and Drawing Scroll-paintings in Tibet*<sup>3</sup> Moreover, van Manen Sahib requested my late wife to give him information resulting in an article titled *Three Tibetan Repartee Songs*<sup>4</sup> which is, to my knowledge, the first sound contribution by a Tibetan lady to western science. Mr. van Manen is indeed a very learned linguist: he can read and write numerous European languages, Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese. He left Jorebungalow to start work at the Imperial Library in Calcutta towards the end of 1918 and was appointed General Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1923. To this task he is dedicated heart and soul.

I can state the following about van Manen Sahib. He never drinks liquor or eats meat. Worldly matters such as horse races and picture shows do not interest him at all. Reading books is his only pleasure. He never speaks in offensive terms about

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1 The Sir Asutosh Mookerjee Silver Jubilee Volumes, Vol. III, Part II (Calcutta, 1925), pp 147–85.

2 *Bibliotheca Indica*, no. 1426 (New Series).

3 *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1933), pp 105–11.

4 *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XVI (1921), pp 287–318.



the people of India which, as we all know, nearly every Englishman does. Towards Tibetans he is more than friendly. He even regards me as a countryman of his and calls me Mr van sKar-ma! I regard him as my godfather. In my humble opinion you shall never find a more kind-hearted gentleman. As he always helps the needy it seems to me he is a true Bodhisattva. For this reason I wrote the following verses in his honour.

*When I felt alone and helpless in Calcutta,  
your mercy on me, van Manen was immense.  
Faith grows in me when I bring this to mind.  
Amidst the multitude of learned men, the great and merciful  
scholar van Manen always helps everyone.  
The knowledge of Sakyamuni Buddha is hereby kindled in  
them.  
O, Father, you gave me many deep and useful teachings.  
You helped me to stand up against enemies.  
For helping me, sKar-ma Babu bows humbly at your feet.  
These words I offer as a prayer to God, 'May you live long and  
prosperously to the benefit of others.'*

## ❀ nineteen ❀

On 1 January 1924 I studying at the, as I was told, oldest and largest of the fifteen universities in India. The University of Calcutta had, in fact, been founded on 24 January 1857. Nowadays English, French, German, Tibetan, Sanskrit and Arabic are taught there. You can study to become a doctor, engineer or lawyer. Students attend lectures between eight and half past six. Each year examinations take place.

Both the University of Calcutta and the Asiatic Society of Bengal have acquired copies of the Tibetan Buddhist canon, the *bKa'-'gyur* and the *bsTan-'gyur* respectively. Unfortunately the copy of the *bKa'-'gyur* owned by the university is badly printed on too thin a paper and therefore very difficult to read. The two copies of the *bsTan-'gyur* have been printed with

the use of printing blocks on an identical kind of paper. Through these precious block prints Buddhism is studied by the learned in a more serious manner than we Tibetans normally do!

On 25 May 1924 the University's Vice-Chancellor Sir Asutosh Mookerjee passed away at the age of sixty. I, too, felt completely heartbroken and shall not forget the fact that this great man never discriminated people of other casts or creeds although he was a Bengali. Sir Asutosh had been a true friend, father and patron towards all his subordinates. His death reminded me of this verse: 'Though we may live for many a year, you must know death will come in the end.' In my sorrow I humbly prayed, 'May you, because of your good deeds and the fruits thereof in this life, be reborn in heaven as a Bodhisattva. May you lead there a much more holy life than the one you had on earth!'





PLATE 3 Ts'an-chih Chen, c.1923

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## Editorial note

This third autobiography with Inventory number RMV 2739: 191 dates from 1928–9. Ts'an-chih Chen wrote it in Tibetan, Chinese and English adding ninety-nine drawings made at Calcutta two or three years earlier. A total of twenty-six, the most interesting, were selected for the present publication.



## ❀ one ❀

My father hailed from the province of China called Szechuan. My mother's father was a Chinese merchant. His wife was born in the Tibetan province called Khams. My grandparents left Khams when my mother was nine years of age and travelled to lHa-sa, the holy capital of Tibet. Here my grandfather opened a shop selling goods imported from China.

My mother married my father when she was seventeen years old. Their house stood in the Chinese quarters, in the southern part of lHa-sa. During the following years they had four children: three girls named Shu-chen, San-mei and Yün-ying respectively and then one boy (Plate 4). I, Ts'an-chih Chen, was born on the twenty-fourth day of the fourth month of the Water-Snake year (1893). Needless to say, my parents were very glad to have a son.

From the age of five onwards I attended a Chinese school for boys. Here we worshipped the God of Wisdom and Confucius, Having bowed before my teacher, we learned Chinese books by heart each morning between seven and nine o'clock before going home for breakfast. We returned at ten to learn to write Chinese (Plate 5) and to be read stories until three p.m. A private tutor taught my sisters at home.

My father was a very kind-hearted man with Tibetan and Chinese friends. He rose each morning at six to burn incense and pray before the image of God in our home. After breakfast he changed into his courtdress, put on his dignitary cap and went to work. As my father always did his best, he was appointed Chief Secretary to the Amban, the title of the Chinese government's representative at lHa-sa. Soon afterwards he received a special task (Plate 6): to travel to the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po and to present gifts to the Pan-chen bLa-ma on behalf of the Chinese Emperor. (Plate 7)

Having returned to lHa-sa after a month my father told me the following story. A scroll painting depicting Sakyamuni Buddha hung in the house where the Pan-chen bLa-ma's grandparents lived. After their daughter had fallen asleep she dreamt that Sakyamuni Buddha entered her womb. Nine months later, having given birth to a son, she could no longer speak. Her parents were, of course, eager to know who the boy's father was. However, after a flogging she merely nodded her head and pointed at that scroll painting.

When my sister Shu-chen was seventeen years of age a military officer called Lei sent a go-between to my parents asking for her hand. It was only after a soothsayer had looked into the couple's dates of birth and age that preparations for the marriage continued. Lei now sent servants who presented my parents with new shoes, clothes made of brocade, golden ornaments, scented water, furniture and house hold utensils. These servants were invited, as is the Chinese custom, to a very fine banquet. Soon afterwards Lei fixed an appropriate date for the wedding. My parents now purchased golden ornaments, pearls, coral and precious stones for their daughter to wear. She also received advice on how to live with a husband.

On the day of the wedding Lei's and Shu-chen's friends came to our house. Dressed in their best clothes, they congratulated the bride and prayed for her. Next, an excellent banquet was served. Before taking leave of her parents, Shu-chen lit sacrificial lamps and knelt before the image of God in our house. Tears came to her eyes as she bowed before her benevolent father and mother. Soon afterwards all the guests accompanied her and her gifts to Lei's house. Having arrived here, he helped her down from her horse to then pray inside our house before the altar (Plate 8). Two young men standing beside them now said auspicious words. When musical instruments sounded and crackers were lit all their Chinese friends wished the couple good luck while each Tibetan friend presented a silk scarf. That evening the best of foods were shared. On the third day of their marriage Lei and Shu-chen returned to the bride's home and bowed before her parents again.



When I was eight years of age my fifty-four year old, beloved father passed away in spite of taking Tibetan and Chinese medicine. His death plunged our whole family into profound sorrow. A Taoist priest came to our house and performed the funeral rites. A lamp was lit near his head. According to the Chinese custom, if a man dies his wife and children must kneel to touch the ground with their foreheads. My father's body was covered with scented oil, incense and sandal-wood powder and then dressed in his dignitary robes. Something precious such as a piece of gold or silver, a pearl or a jewel was put in his mouth. The priest prayed before closing the coffin. A table was placed in front of our house altar and covered with a yellow silk cloth on which my father's name had been written in red letters. The mourners dressed in white made as much noise as possible during the evening after his death to scare off evil spirits.

The following morning the corpse was taken to a cemetery (Plate 9). Being his only son, I walked in front of the large procession carrying my father's posthumous name in my hand. A priest read from a prayer-book before inspecting the burial site. Meanwhile our mourning family said prayers, touched the ground with their foreheads and burned paper money. A square white stone inscribed with my father's date and place of birth as well as his name, age and place of death was placed in front of the grave. Having returned to our house, my mother called eight Tibetan Buddhist monks in to chant prayers and perform ceremonies. They were asked to return every seventh day of the following forty-nine days.

The Chinese believe your soul leaves the room where you died during the third night after your passing away. For this reason the Taoist priest told us to spread ashes on the bed, chair, floor and table in my father's room. Its door was locked. Nobody spent that night in our house. If my father had been a sinful man we would find animal footprints in the ashes the following day. As he had led a good life, there were no such traces. However, a young woman belonging to another family died, words were written in the ashes forming a message for

her husband who had been absent when she died. Needless to say, the message was copied on paper and given to him soon after his return.

On the forty-ninth day after my father's death, all our friends presented money and silk ceremonial scarves to us. Prayers were said and sacrificial butter-lamps lit before the image of God in our house. As my mourning family bowed, a Tibetan Buddhist monk said,

*All human beings are mortal, everyone must die. The immortal soul leaves the body which returns to the earth. Sakyamuni Buddha taught everyone to do good and to give up sins, hatred and jealousy. He also instructed humanity to give alms to the helpless or poor. Those who follow these rules become holy as they go from life to life. The fruit of a sinner's deeds is a sorrowful next life. Everyone must try to do good, be kind-hearted and help the needy.*

During the three years after my father's death Tibetan Buddhist monks were often called in to perform religious ceremonies. Thus, my father's next life became a healthy, a wealthy and a happy one.

Having passed the final examination of the Primary School, I was chosen to attend a High School. The fifty boys here were between twelve and eighteen years old. We read Chinese texts every morning before returning home for lunch. Between eleven and one o'clock we learned to write the Tibetan running script. From one till three p.m. we studied the workings of the Chinese and the Tibetan government at the Amban's office. Here records had been kept of all Sino-Tibetan affairs ever since the Emperor of China started supporting the government of Tibet. They concerned:

- 1 the Sino-Tibetan Governmental Affairs Department,
- 2 the Sino-Tibetan Armies Affairs Department,
- 3 the Sino-Tibetan Army and Civil Officer's Awards Department,
- 4 the Chinese Official Public Laws and Financial Affairs Department,
- 5 the Sino-Tibetan Translation Department,

- 6 the Sino-Anglian Translation Department,
- 7 the Sino-Nepalese Translation Department,
- 8 the Education, Medical and Trade Affairs Department.

Each of these departments has one Chinese head clerk as well as four Chinese and three Tibetan clerks.

Having graduated from High School, the Amban appointed me to the post of translator at the Sino-Tibetan Translation Department. (Plate 10) Here I copied petitions, orders, notices as well as Chinese and Tibetan reports each morning beginning at eleven until three p.m. The Chinese government gave us money, rice and barley flour each month. From the Tibetan government we received money, butter and tea.

In the early morning of each first and fifteenth day of the month the Amban was carried in a palanquin to the Jokhang, the most sacred temple of Tibetan Buddhism. Having worshipped here (Plate 11), he returned to his court in the company of officials, soldiers (some dressed in the Manchurian fashion), flagbearers and drummers. (Plate 12) To welcome him back ten guns were fired. All Chinese high and low ranked officials must salute the Amban on New Year's Day. They lit lanterns in order to bring about peace in the Empire. Paper fish, dragons and lions were made. (Plate 13) From then on we enjoyed a month long holiday.

When my mother fell ill, she soon died because her disease could not be cured. Needless to say, our family and servants shed many tears. Tibetan Buddhist monks were called in to chant prayers. They saw to it all the funeral ceremonies took place in a perfect manner. As I was my parent's only son, our family's property now belonged to me. My elder sister took care of it – I was, of course, too young to do so.

❀ two ❀

Anglo-Indian troops entered Central Tibet in 1903–4. At about the same time an omen was reported: drops of water falling from a brass dragonhead on the southwestern corner of

the roof of the Jo-khang. It had, however, not rained that day. Tibetan officials who asked the oracle of lHa-sa (Plate 14) to explain this, were told an enemy was approaching from the green country in the southwest: the Kingdom of Sikkim.

Chinese and Tibetan civil servants informed their superiors at lHa-sa as soon as the foreign troops reached the Chumbi Valley. The Amban wanted to sign a treaty immediately while the Ta-la'i bLa-ma thought it better to consult an oracle possessed by the spirit of the War God. It advised Him to send Tibetan soldiers to force the British back to India. The Ta-la'i bLa-ma then sent two generals and their troops to the town of Phag-ri (Phari) against the will of the Chinese. He also ordered spells to be cast in order to destroy the foreign invaders. (Plate 15)

Having reached Phag-ri the Tibetan troops made a halt not far from the British. Soon afterwards the leaders of both parties came together in a tent pitched between both camps. It was then that a group of Tibetan soldiers saw an Englishman approach a horse owned by one of their generals. When the foreigner placed his hand in admiration on the horse's saddle a superstitious Tibetan lost his temper. During the turmoil that followed a Tibetan general and some of his men were killed by English guns. Needless to say, both parties accused each other of starting the fight. As this story was told to me, I cannot say if it is true.

The British troops passed through the town of rGyal-rtse (Gyantse) and could not be stopped from reaching lHa-sa. (Plate 16) Before their arrival there the Ta-la'i bLa-ma saw to it that the King of Tibet residing at the monastery of bsTan-rgyas-gling was murdered. He then fled to Peking in the company of His officers and servants. (Plate 17) When the British reached lHa-sa, they were welcomed by the Amban who soon signed a treaty allowing the foreigners to establish Trade Agencies, Post and Telegraph Offices in rGyal-rtse and in the Chumbi Valley.

During his sojourn at Peking the Ta-la'i bLa-ma visited the Emperor Kuang-hsü and the Dowager Empress. (Plate 18) He explained to them that Tibetans were very familiar with

Buddhism, that they did nothing but worship God in order to bring about a peaceful world and that the British had killed His countrymen due to lack of ammunition. Kuang-hsü then ordered his soldiers to assist the Tibetans in lHa-sa. Large sums of money were spent each month by the Chinese government for the well-being of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma: a special palace was built for Him outside the northern gate of the walls surrounding Peking.

The sixty year old Amban had served his country as a high-ranked civil servant for many years before beginning his work in Tibet. At that time I was studying Chinese and Tibetan daily between eight and ten a.m. After midday I copied or wrote Tibetan and Chinese letters by hand – no typewriters were available. When one of his stewards called me to his office, he said, 'The Amban needs a reliable clerk. I will recommend you.' After changing my clothes and putting on a hat, I went to the Amban's chambers. Having exchanged greetings, he spoke, 'From this day on you shall work in my private office.'

When it was proclaimed both in China and Tibet that the civil as well as military rules had changed, several thousands of Chinese soldiers travelled through Szechuan and Khams towards Central Tibet. In lHa-sa large barracks were built for these troops who carried quick-firing arms, not arrows, spears or shields. My superiors now ordered me to study modern Chinese books.

The newly appointed Amban while on his way to lHa-sa noticed that the very few laymen living in the region called Ba-tang paid high taxes to a large number of Tibetan Buddhist monks. His order to change this immediately caused these monks to lose their temper, saying, 'This Amban has not been approved of by the Chinese government. He is a Christian who hates Buddhism.' Having consulted in secret, the monks of Ba-tang then decided to murder the Amban and his party. Indeed they did! (Plate 19) As soon as this news reached Szechuan large numbers of Chinese troops were sent to Ba-tang. After a siege which lasted several months the monks set fire to their monastery and fled. From this moment the Chinese ruled over Khams.

On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of the Water-Hare year (1909) drops of water slowly fell from a brass dragon head on the northern side of the roof of the Jo-khang. While looking on, I heard people say, 'This must be a bad omen. Russia or China will now probably send troops to Tibet.' They, of course, remembered how water had dripped from a dragon's mouth on the southwestern side of the roof before the Anglo-Indian army reached lHa-sa.

That night the Amban received a telegram from Peking informing him that Emperor Kuang-hsü had passed away. From now on all Tibetan and Chinese officers wore white mourning dresses. During the following one hundred days no form of amusement was permitted in lHa-sa. The high and low ranked civil servants kneeled in prayer paying tribute to the Imperial Tablet. (Plate 20) Letters of condolence were read three times daily. The Dowager Empress died in the course of that same year. So did my grandmother who was 102 years old. My sisters and I called in many monks to pray and perform ceremonies.

When the enthronement of Kuang-hsü's successor named Hsüan T'ung was proclaimed flags (showing a dragon and a sun) flew from all official buildings in China. Houses were decorated with lanterns and paper flowers. Fire crackers could be heard everywhere. Everyone now dressed in their best clothes to enjoy themselves with songs and games. The Amban, all his military and civil officials saluted the Imperial Tablet. On this day we clerks enjoyed a festive banquet in our office.

### ❀ three ❀

After the Ta-la'i bLa-ma had left Peking for lHa-sa, He travelled through northeastern Tibet and was met by His officials along the way. Once informed of the planned arrival of the Imperial army in lHa-sa and of their destroying the monastery of Ba-tang, He foresaw by means of His superior wisdom that it would not at all be a good thing if the Chinese soldiers came. For, they had been all demons in their former lives.

As soon as Tibetan officials reached lHa-sa they asked the Amban to call off the arrival of troops from China. The Amban said that the Ta-la'i bLa-ma had requested the Emperor to send soldiers to lHa-sa. Not much later the Tibetan government sent troops to Khams to force the Chinese back. When the Ta-la'i bLa-ma arrived at lHa-sa the Tibetan and Chinese officials were dressed in their best clothes to welcome Him. They met in the plains situated just to the north of lHa-sa. A few days after His return, a number of officers were sent to the Amban stating the Chinese troops should return to Szechuan and that His government had enough soldiers to defend Tibet if necessary. In the meantime Tibetan soldiers fought against Chinese without much success. (Plate 21)

When the Amban refused to order the Imperial troops to leave Khams, the government of Tibet no longer saw to his needs. It was now said that Tibetans had enlisted soldiers to kill the Chinese who lived in lHa-sa. The Ta-la'i bLa-ma now left Tibet for India accompanied by His ministers and attendants. The reason for this was, of course, that Chinese troops had reached lHa-sa. The following day the Amban sent soldiers in pursuit of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma. They were held back by Tibetans, enabling Him to arrive safely the town of Phag-ri. Not much later He travelled through the Chumbi Valley and reached rDo-rje-gling.

To pay the many Chinese troops at lHa-sa their monthly wages mules and horses carried silver from the Financial Office at Szechuan to lHa-sa where it was minted. After a group of Po-pas had ambushed such a transport in Khams (Plate 22), the Amban sent troops to protect future transports. These Po-pas, although very warlike, were Buddhists. They lived near high mountains on which, at first, a safe retreat could be found. However, after the Chinese started using cannons and machine guns only seven Po-pas were able to escape. These seven heroes then sought revenge and told their fellow countrymen not to be afraid. Having hidden their cattle, they mocked at the Chinese who wanted to buy goods from them. When Chinese officials asked them, 'Why don't your kinsmen listen to us, although

we defeated you?', the Po-pas answered, 'In our country there are seven heroes. As long as they are alive, Po-pas will not take orders from Chinese.' The officials then sent the seven heroes gifts promising them high ranks in their regiments. The Po-pas were even invited to a feast in a nearby Chinese stronghold. After drinking too much liquor, they were chained and thrown into a prison from which no escape was possible. Their execution took place the next day. From then on the Po-pas had to obey the laws of China. When the written report of this success was reported in a letter to the Amban at lHa-sa, it was dispatched together with the chief Po-pa's head.

Early one morning a comet with a very long tail was seen. People said this was a bad omen: a war would bring trouble to all nations. Not much later a revolution broke out in China causing the Manchurian Emperor to give up his throne, leaving the country without an absolute monarch. After choosing a President members of the government made new laws. All Chinese men now had to cut their hair showing they were no longer slaves. As soon as the news of the revolution reached lHa-sa by telegram, the soldiers from China stationed here started an uprising. They arrested not only the Amban but also the other officials appointed by Peking. Even the Treasury House of the Chinese government in lHa-sa was looted. Many Tibetan, Nepalese, Muslim and Chinese shopkeepers were killed due to the lack of law and order.

The streets of lHa-sa were now filled with dead bodies. A large number of houses went up in flames. I had to stay indoors for a day and a night. The Chinese moved to the southern part of the city, the Tibetans remained in the north. Both groups fought each other almost without interruption for eight months. Good-willing peace lovers lost their homes and had difficulties finding food. At long last, the rebels fell silent. Not much later their leaders' heads were placed on a post for all to see.

The Amban now ordered us to write the following proclamation both in Chinese and Tibetan:



*The trouble between Chinese and Tibetan soldiers was caused by rebels, who destroyed many offices and killed innocent people of lHa-sa before looting their houses. To put an end to all this, the leaders of this rebellion were executed last night. All Chinese soldiers will be sent back to Peking. China and Tibet must stop shooting and sign a peace treaty.*

When the officials of both parties came together, the Tibetans demanded that all Chinese soldiers should be withdrawn from lHa-sa and that they were to leave Tibet through the Chumbi Valley. Once at Calcutta, they could return to China by boat. However, their weapons had to stay behind locked doors in lHa-sa under the supervision of Nepalese soldiers.

The Tibetans set fire to houses owned by Chinese after the Amban and his troops had left lHa-sa for Calcutta. One evening our house went up in flames, too. All the possessions brought together by my grandfather and father were lost. Needless to say, I felt completely heart-broken. How could such a thing happen to us? We had done no harm to Chinese or Tibetans! Why did they have to fight near my house? Now homeless, I moved in with my sister. Although all the Chinese living in lHa-sa had to leave Tibet, innocent and trustworthy people like myself were allowed to stay if this was their wish. The Ta-la'i bLa-ma sent a letter from rDo-rje-gling ordering Tibetans to treat those Chinese kindly who wanted to stay in lHa-sa. As soon as He returned flags were flown from each and every roof. At long last peace reigned in lHa-sa. The Chinese, however, had become subjects of the Tibetan government.

Not much later we heard that a President had been elected in Peking to replace the Emperor. A Vice-President, a Prime Minister and Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Justice, Communication, War, Agriculture, Industry, Commerce and Education were appointed to take care of all governmental matters once the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives had been consulted. The flag of the Chinese republic was now coloured red, yellow, blue, white and black symbolising the unity of the Chinese, Tibetans, Chinese

Turkestans, Mongolians and Manchurians. Needless to say, the news that President Yüan Shih-k'ai had sent troops to Tibet brought anxiety to my mind again. My brother-in-law and I now decided it would be safer for us to go to Calcutta and to return only after the Chinese soldiers had settled down quietly.

After receiving passports we set off on horseback towards the southwest. Due to heavy snowfall near the town of Phagri, we stayed here for ten days before travelling through the Chumbi Valley. The Tibetan traders who accompanied us told us it was not possible to cross the pass called Je-lap. Some six days later we paid some men to carry our bedding and food through the snow. It proved very difficult to find the right path. The cold winds cut off our breath. Having reached the town of sPos-sdong (Pedong), we walked on, first to Ka-spungs and then to rDo-rje-gling. From there Siliguri was reached by train. Once at Calcutta, we found a place to stay in the Chinatown. That evening we visited the New Market. In the many shops here European men and women purchased all kinds of goods. When I bought a felt hat the shopkeeper asked for twenty rupees – he had never seen me before. Having offered him ten rupees, he said he wanted fifteen. In the end I paid twelve.

The people of India have dark skins. Most men do not wear coats. Instead of trousers a piece of cloth was wrapped around the lower part of the body. Calcutta is inhabited by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Bengalis. At first they all looked very strange to us. As Calcutta proved too hot for us, we did not go out during the daytime and returned to rDo-rje-gling as soon as possible.

#### ❀ four ❀

Once back in rDo-rje-gling I realised it would be good to expand my knowledge of the English language. Mr Kelly was willing to give me daily lessons of one hour. When he had to return to England and serve his country in the war against Germany, I bade him farewell at the Railway Station. (Plate

23) Not much later I found work at a school run by the Tibetan Mission of rDo-rje-gling and teaching Tibetan children each day between ten and three o'clock. (Plate 24)

As my brother-in-law wanted to earn some money, he purchased 400 rupees worth of oranges hoping to sell them to the people in the plains. Soon afterwards I received a message from him saying he had lost all his money and needed more. My answer to him was, 'Return to rDo-rje-gling if the orange business is bad.' However, he did not listen to me. People said he lived with a Sikkimese woman whose husband had told her to stay with my brother-in-law because he was rich.

Not much later, I visited my brother-in-law to tell him he should not to stay with that woman any longer. In spite of my reminding him of his wife and daughter in lHa-sa, he said he did not wish to see his family again. Of course, these words made me feel very sad. Shortly after my return to rDo-rje-gling it became known that the government of China was willing to give money enabling those Chinese who had travelled to India from lHa-sa to buy tickets so that they could leave rDo-rje-gling by train for Calcutta and then return to their homeland by boat. Nevertheless, I decided to stay in rDo-rje-gling because all the properties and money left to me in lHa-sa by my parents had been lost.

When a sixty year old Christian missionary called Mr Shefflar asked me to teach him Tibetan, he offered to teach me English in return. As I was living on my own, he allowed me to occupy a room in his house. Whenever he preached to Tibetans in church I had to be present. Some of my friends told me not to do so – they regarded a foreign religion to be sinful. Taking great interest in things I had not heard of before, I thought their words were foolish. Indeed, in order to understand a foreign nation you must speak the language of its subjects and study their history and religion. In the Christian books translated into Chinese and Tibetan I read that Christianity had only one God. Christians are not allowed to worship images or monks. The Buddhist doctrine teaches that he who has the knowledge of emptiness need not worship and that human beings are either wise or ignorant.

Laymen need images of Sakyamuni Buddha to change their sinful minds to the better. I learned that two forms of Christianity existed. In the old form lamps were lit to honour God. However, Christ had taught that old religious ceremonies should no longer be performed. For, He had taken over all man's sins before dying on a cross. Those who believed in Him need not worship idols. I then realised that Christianity must be good and holy. If not, how could the nations in Europe believe in this religion?

While reading Christian books, however, I could not find any elegance in the text. Buddhist books were much more interesting to me because the words tasted very sweet. Of course, Christians do virtuous things: teach, provide clothes and food for orphans, open hospitals and give medicine to the ill. Those who preach Christianity say it must be the only religion in the world, because all the others are bad. This remark made me think that people can be righteous and give up their sins in order to lead a pure life everywhere. If you understand each religion completely you just cannot say, 'My religion is good, all others are bad.'

A Tibetan Buddhist monk says,

*All living creatures in this world transmute after death into a form according to their sins and good works done in former lives. If you did wrong, you must suffer in your next life. If you did good, you are born again to lead a happy life. All Buddhist beings live by the fruits of their actions.*

In Christianity nobody believes in transformation of the soul after death. It was, therefore, not known what will become of the soul in its next life on earth. This is the reason why I can not understand Christianity completely. Buddhism is easy for me to grasp because I have read Buddhist books since my childhood.

Still working for the Christians I often attended weekly lessons at the Missionary School in the village of Ghoom, not far from rDo-rje-gling. The headmaster here named sKar-ma Babu and a teacher called Thar-chin explained to me the meaning of English words. After receiving a letter from my

sister asking me to return to lHa-sa quickly, I was allowed to take leave after promising to return within three months. Needless to say, I was eager to learn more English.

Having left rDo-rje-gling for Ka-spungs I set off for the Chumbi Valley together with a number of Tibetan traders. We had to sleep in the cold night air near a fire, something I was not at all used to. The muleteers, nevertheless, sang happy songs and drank barley-beer. After walking through the Je-lap pass, we met Mr David McDonald (the British Trade Agent) and his party on their way to rDo-rje-gling. He was a Christian and very kind to everyone. Unfortunately we did not have much time to talk.

The following day I visited a nearby monastery in the company of a Tibetan merchant. While bowing before the monk here I offered him one rupee and a silk ceremonial scarf. He then asked us, 'Did you come from Ka-spungs?' After the Tibetan merchant had answered in the positive, he asked the monk, 'Is my business going to be a succes?' The monk recited prayers, threw two dice, looked at them and said, 'Your business will be succesful if you repeat prayers in honour of sGrol-ma, the Goddess of Mercy.'

Having passed through the towns of Phag-ri and Rwa-lung, we arrived at Na-ga-rtse. Here I met a Mongolian monk on his way to the monastery of 'Bres-spungs near lHa-sa. It was his second visit to Central Tibet. Together we crossed a pass to reach the banks of a river and boarded a boat to reach the other side. The monk now decided to travel on alone in order to reach lHa-sa before sunrise. When I set off in the middle of the night, riding a horse through the darkness made me feel as if I was blind. While crossing a frozen lake, the animal slipped and fell. My head hit the ground causing much pain. As soon as the horse started walking again, I held on to its tail until we reached a bridge made of wood from a willow tree. As it could only take one person at a time, I led the horse across very slowly. If the animal made a wrong step, both of us would have fallen to death. Having arrived at nine a.m., I soon looked up my youngest sister, my niece and my nephew. They first asked me, 'Who are you?' not realising I was their brother

and uncle. However, they felt very glad to see me again in spite of the fact that my second youngest sister had died one month earlier.

After a day's rest, I went out on the streets of lHa-sa. All the Tibetans were now in a festive mood, worshipping gods during the day and lighting sacrificial butter-lamps at night. In the market-place I came across ten Tibetan horsemen dressed as cavalrists, each carrying a whip. One of them suddenly walked in my direction and flogged me. I ran off in great pain, not knowing why he had done this. I was later told these men belonged the Ta-la'i bLa-ma's body-guard. As a rule, you must take off your hats and prostrate when He passed you. However, I was standing very far away from Him. If the English king went out in India, nobody was beaten. I think that a king should be kind to his subjects. He must be like the sun: shed light on one and all without any distinction whatsoever. Even low ranked officers and soldiers were allowed to use force on innocent subjects in Tibet. The next day I saw three Tibetans from the province of A-mdo lying by the roadside. They had bleeding head injuries and were unable to walk. Having travelled from far to be blessed by the Ta-la'i bLa-ma, they had been flogged by His soldiers instead. Needless to say, I felt very sorry for them.

I will now give a short description of the Jo-khang, the most sacred temple of Tibetan Buddhism. Having entered through its first door, I saw the Four Mighty Kings, two on either side. Inside the second doorway you reached a large hall where thousands of monks often performed rituals while the Ta-la'i bLa-ma sat on His throne. Above the third entrance I saw a tablet inscribed with golden Chinese letters stating, 'Shih-chu-chien-tsong' ('The holy, religious, western country'). After walking underneath this inscription, I saw a stone lying on the floor. It was said you should stand on it to see your wish come true. Many people did so. Next, I arrived at the image of sPyan-ras-gzigs, the God of Mercy (Plate 25), which was made of sandal-wood and had come from India a long time ago. While worshipping this bodhisattva, I poured some fuel into the golden butter-lamps. Inside the most

important room of the Jo-khang you find a golden statue of Sakyamuni Buddha. He was crowned and seated on a golden throne inlaid with many precious stones. You can climb up a ladder to touch His knee with your head if you wished to be blessed. I did so, first on the right and then on the left side (Plate 26).

Inside another holy chamber, I saw an image of Byams-pa, the Buddha to come, and a stone statue of a goat which was only half visible. People told me that if this animal came out of the ground completely great misfortune would strike the world. If you wished to see this holy image, you must give the temple guard some money or a small present. Only then did he remove the piece of cloth covering it. I heard say that the foundations of the Potala were built over a lake and that man had built it during the day, while divine powers had continued the work at night.

I then entered a holy chamber dedicated to King Srong-brtsan sGam-po, the incarnation of sPyan-ras-gzigs. (Plate 27) The Potala was constructed during his reign. This righteous ruler had married a Chinese and a Nepalese princess. One of his wives saw to it the Jo-khang was built, the other ordered the temple called Ra-mo-che to be built. The Chinese princess had taught Tibetans how to weave wool with a loom and how to grow crops. She had brought the golden image of Sakyamuni Buddha from China and placed it in the Jo-khang. It was a gift from her father, the Emperor. After her arrival in Tibet, everyone felt happy: Buddhism now began to spread.

Once on the third floor of the Jo-khang I worshipped the daughters of dPal-ldan lHa-mo, the female tutelary deity of lHa-sa. The youngest one wore a golden crown and many ornaments. As she had obeyed her mother, everyone honoured her. The image of one of dPal-ldan Lha-mo's elder daughters was kept in a dark room. Having disobeyed her mother, she was allowed to visit the image of her husband only once a year. On the top floor of the Jo-khang you can find dPal-ldan lHa-mo, the mother of all Tibetans, flanked by her servants: on her right a man with a crocodile's head, on her left a man with a lion's head. (Plate 28)

The following story is told about building the roof of the Jo-khang. King Srong-brtsan sGam-po ordered a clever minister to accompany the Chinese princess, his future wife, from China to Tibet. After it was discovered that this minister had misbehaved, the king lost his temper and punished him by scooping out his eyeballs. However, while the Jo-khang was under construction King Srong-brtsan sGam-po did not know exactly how to build the roof. So he sent a servant to the blind minister asking him about this problem. The minister who thought that the king had treated him very badly, told the servant that four golden rooves should be constructed on the cardinal points. The minister then prayed, 'May in future times many wars reach Tibet from the outside world.' His wish came true. If Srong-brtsan sGam-po had been advised to construct a single golden roof, Tibet would never have been in trouble.

Having returned to the first floor, I circumambulated the Jo-khang while turning the prayer wheels with my right hand. Along the way I saw many beautiful paintings depicting Sakyamuni Buddha's birth, His 500 pure and His 500 impure lives as well as many stories from the commentary on the Tibetan Buddhist canon. Explanations were given below each painting. Outside the main gate of the Jo-khang stood a willow tree called 'The Hair of Sakyamuni Buddha'. To its left there was a stone inscribed with Tibetan and Chinese letters. At the foot of the Potala were many shops owned by Tibetans, Chinese, Nepalese and Muslims. In each of the four corners of this market-place you will find a mast. They were placed in an upright position only once a year symbolising that the trees of religion never die.

The desire to return to rDo-rje-gling in order to improve my English now entered my mind. However, my two sisters advised me to stay with them – I would feel alone and helpless in a foreign country. Nevertheless, I went to the market place in search of Tibetan merchants planning to leave for India. Having hired two horses (each costing ten srangs) for the journey from lHa-sa to the Chumbi Valley I was ready to leave. On the day of my departure my sisters, nieces and



nephews bade me farewell. Tears filled their eyes. I felt very sad, too.

Back in rDo-rje-gling I visited Mrs Ferguson and Mrs Matthews at the Tibetan Mission as soon as possible. They were glad I had returned to work for them as a teacher again. In the course of the following year my knowledge of English grew and grew. Then one day a friend of mine told me I could easily find work in a Tibetan shop in Calcutta because I could speak, read and write Chinese, Tibetan as well as English. He introduced me to a Tibetan trader's son called nGa-dbang. Having promised to work for him and his father whose name was Tshe-ring, I took leave from Mrs Ferguson. Once in Calcutta, I kept the accounts for Tshe-ring's shops, sent Tibetan letters to lHa-sa and Chinese ones to Peking.

When some friends of mine in Ka-spungs thought it would be good for me to take a wife, I told them that a wedding was very expensive and that I could not pay for it. Nevertheless, they introduced me to a Chinese girl who was at that time staying with her parents in Ka-spungs. She would be a good wife for me, because she knew the Chinese language and religious customs very well. Next, a messenger was sent to a fortune teller. He looked into our age and date of birth in order to determine if everything would turn out good. He predicted we would have three children. Soon afterwards the girl's parents approved of the marriage. As they were eager to see me, I set left for Ka-spungs. Once introduced to them, they said, 'We are an old couple with only one daughter, you are the son of a nobleman. Everybody tells us you are a good man. We want you to marry her.' Before returning to Calcutta, I sent them money for the bethrothal.

## ❀ five ❀

Having worked for three years in Tshe-ring's shops, nGa-dbang and I were sent to China to take care of business there. On arrival at the docks near Eden Gardens in Calcutta, a British official inspected our luggage before we were allowed

to embark the steamship. Europeans occupying the First Class cabins were attended to by servants. The Second Class passengers such as ourselves could ask a Chinese boy to bring us meals and tea. The crew counted about 100 men, most of them from Canton. The ship's more than 500 cabins reminded me of the small rooms at a Tibetan Buddhist monastery.

The colour of the water became darker and darker once the boat had left the Hoogli river. Two days later no land or birds could be seen. Each morning I watched the sunrise sometimes looking out from the right and sometimes from the left side of our ship. We travelled at a speed of fourteen miles an hour, both day and night. Our course was determined by means of a compass, an instrument invented some 3,000 years ago in China. While passing one of the Andaman Islands people told me it was inhabited by thieves and murderers who were forced to work very hard for the rest of their lives.

Nearby the port of Penang men approached us in small boats eager to sell bottled soda water, matches, cigarettes or to change Indian rupees for Malayan coins. In the course of the next two days, the ship's load was removed. Meanwhile I looked around the market place of Penang. Luckily for us, most shop-keepers were Chinese. We could not understand a word the Malaysians said. Our next stop was Singapore with its market, streets full of trams, motorcars, horse drawn carriages and rickshaws. After two days we left Singapore and set off to the east.

After a nine day long journey we arrived at Hong Kong where a small boat guided us into the docks. Having found a hotel, nGa-dbang and I then cashed a cheque worth 6,000 dollars at the Hong Kong Bank. The following day we went inside a six story high Chinese department store. Here you could purchase golden and silver ornaments, diamonds, pearls, jade, ivory, China-ware, musical instruments, gramophones, furniture and clothing. Also during our four days in Hong Kong, I visited a very beautiful flower garden which reminded me of rDo-rje-gling. Hong Kong's centre is not very large, most buildings are quite high. The English and other foreigners reside on the nearby hills.

After four days at Hong Kong, nGa-dbang and I decided to leave for Shanghai. The tradesman from Peking we met shortly after our arrival here took us to a hall where we were entertained by, for instance, a juggler. Having made a mark on the ground and covering it with a piece of cloth, he then played a tune on a flute before revealing a small tree. After filling an empty pot with earth and a little water, the tree was planted in the pot and covered again. When the cloth was removed the tree had grown many leaves and even some fruit. The juggler now told a boy not to pick any fruit. He disobeyed this order and then disappeared immediately. After the juggler had covered the tree again, the boy's feet, his hands and the tree's leaves dropped to the ground. The feet and hands were now placed inside a large jar with a narrow neck. The juggler then explained, 'This boy has been punished by God, but I shall try to bring him back to life.' Having removed the cloth, he called out loud for the boy to reappear. When a sound rose from the jar, the juggler said, 'If you are inside, please show us your hand.' It indeed appeared. Needless to say, everyone was very surprised to see the boy had been able to climb into that jar without breaking it. After the cloth had covered the jar for only a short time, he reappeared.

The tradesman from Peking also took us to a Chinese restaurant. Many Europeans dined here while girls sang accompanied by musicians. After a fine meal our host took us to another restaurant where fresh fruits, cold drinks, ice cream or a pot of Chinese tea could be ordered. We returned to our hotel late that evening. The next morning I met an old schoolmate from lHa-sa. Together we visited the Shanghai flower gardens which were now in full bloom. After dinner we went to a place where Chinese girls dressed in fine clothing sang sweet songs. You could even choose one of them to sleep with. Of course, I left quickly because these women earned money in a sinful manner.

When the French Field Marshall arrived in Shanghai to thank the Chinese government for sending troops to fight the Germans in France, all the shopkeepers lit lanterns made of red

paper to welcome him. That evening I saw cavalrists, musicians and many onlookers. As the journey by train from Shanghai to Peking was now impossible – warlords were fighting Manchurian troops, I caught a bad cold while waiting at the Railway Station. The doctor who felt my pulse prescribed some medicine. Nevertheless, my condition worsened causing me to go to hospital. The first class patients here were given one servant and one room. They paid five dollars three times daily for good medicine. The Second Class patients stayed in a room together with two or three others. Third class patients need not pay for treatment but had to sleep in full rooms. They were visited twice daily by doctors (some of them English). I began to feel better six days after arriving at the hospital.

Once discharged, I began preparing for the journey by train to Peking. My companion nGa-dbang had already left. I caught a train at six a.m. to reach Nanking, the capital of Southern China, at noon. If you wish to travel to Tientsin, you must get off the train and take a steamer to P'u-k'ou. After reaching Tientsin towards the end of the following day, I spent the night in a hotel near the station before continuing my journey to Peking.

At Tshe-ring's shop I heard that nGa-dbang was wasting most of his money in brothels or gambling houses. Together with some old friends I chose to visit the Manchurian parks and palace situated inside a red wall. In front of the palace you can find two pillars decorated with dragons and two lions, all made of white stone. Each palace gate has three entrances. The middle one is opened only for the Emperor. His officers used the other gates. Having walked through the entrance on the right, we reached a marble staircase leading up to the Imperial Hall. Its roof consisted of shiny yellow tiles. Once inside we saw a ceiling decorated with fine painting, embroidered yellow silk curtains, fine carpets on the marble floor, the Royal Throne (encarved with dragons) and many other precious things. It was said the Emperor met his ministers here.

We then went to the summer palace called Pei-hai. One shrine here was built on top of a rock and could only be

reached by climbing a stone staircase. Next to the Imperial Temple stood a shrine called De-wa-chan. At each of its four doors was a heavenly king who protects the world. Once inside the De-wa-chan I saw a golden image of Sakyamuni Buddha facing the west and His eighteen pupils. Later, while passing a large temple (which had been destroyed during the revolution), I was told that the guards had stolen the precious objects before setting the shrine on fire. Not all the buildings were open to the public. Nevertheless, it would have taken us several days to inspect everything.

I began working in Tshe-ring's shop a few days later while nGa-dbang went on frequenting brothels and drinking. He sometimes even scolded at me without reason. After receiving a telegram informing us that Tshe-ring had been shot dead in lHa-sa, nGa-dbang behaved even worse. All this caused me to fall ill. Finally I decided to trust in God to show me a way out of these difficulties. Not much later a friend of mine needed someone who could write Chinese. Having earned some wages in this way I then prepared myself for the journey from Peking to Szechuan as a member of a money and arms transport. For this task I would be paid eighty dollars. In spite of this I backed out after realizing the danger.

Soon afterwards I thought it better to return to Ka-spungs and marry according to the Chinese customs. For, it is written that he who breaks a marriage vow must suffer God's punishment for the rest of his life. Unfortunately I did not have enough money to travel to India. After turning to a Chinese fortune teller in my distress, he gave me the advice, 'It is better to go back to Ka-spungs where you will be reunited with your wife. Together you shall have three children.' Needless to say, his words surprised me very much – I had never spoken to him about my marriage. In spite of the letters from my old father-in-law, I hesitated to return to India. At the same time I felt it was a sin not to be with my wife. All this was caused by lack of money for the boat-fare back.

Together with a friend of mine I visited the ancient temples and monasteries of Peking. In the first shrine we admired an

excellently cast bronze image of one of Sakyamuni Buddha's eighteen disciples. Inside a nearby meeting hall several Mongolian monks sat reading holy books. A large statue of Maitreya, the future Buddha, as well as many other smaller images were housed in another hall. We also entered a building which had, as was said, been built by the Manchurian Emperor Yung-cheng on his place of birth. The thirty monks here now did not receive as much money as they would have done if China had been an empire.

During our visit to the Confucian temple there were no monks, only a single temple guard. Inside the main hall, we saw a golden letter written on a tablet and a picture of Confucius. In front of it stood a table on which ceremonial vessels, incense burners, candlesticks and flowers were placed. Confucius was a wise man who had lived in the province of Shantung many years ago. As a young boy in lHa-sa I had learned about a yellow river. Its waters became clear on the very day Confucius was born, showing he was a godly incarnation. Confucius had not only instructed the Emperor how to govern his subjects properly but had also taught everyone to respect each other. Nowadays Chinese laws, customs and schools have been modernised.

We then went to the New Market of Peking inside the second city's walls. The fact that all the shops here were very clean reminded me of the New Market in Calcutta. Next, we took a tram around the walls of Peking passing nine gates along the way. In the quarters where the foreigners resided, I saw soldiers playing football not far from the American Embassy. The nearby British Embassy was guarded by troops from India while only one soldier stood at the French Embassy's gate. We also passed a very large iron post through which messages from all over the world could be received. Some buildings flew the Japanese, Russian, German or Belgian flags. You can also find here a number of hospitals built by the British and Americans as well as foreign churches, missions and schools.

One evening my friends and I talked about the Emperor Hsüan T'ung who had lost his power to the Republican leader

Li Yüan-hung, the future President. His supporters did not want an absolute monarchy and liked changing ancient customs. There was, however, no peace in China now and no central government. Warlords helped to rule the provinces while ordinary people were forced to pay high taxes. Having heard these stories I realised that the Chinese needed God's grace. It was said that two groups existed. The young who wanted to follow modern customs and the old who disliked foreign ways. I think that both groups have some foolish ideas. We must profit from good things only.

In days of old the Chinese people followed the doctrine of Confucius. They sought to have sincere thoughts, to rectify their minds, to cultivate their personalities, to organise their families properly seeing to it the Empire was a peaceful, happy place. In addition, Confucius had taught children to be filial towards their parents, to behave in the presence of older people and show compassion towards the needy. You should always keep faith, fraternity, righteousness, sincerity, propriety, shamefulness and respect in mind. Sakyamuni Buddha teaches us not to commit sins. To the young who think it is a foolish thing to pray I say, 'You have to understand old customs before judging them wrong.'

Now determined to return to India, nGa-dbang and I purchased tickets at the Eastern Railway Station of Peking for the morning train to Shanghai. If you set off from the western station, you could travel to Hankow. Trains from the third station of Peking went to Fengtai. As it was winter the train rode through snow covered fields. Once at Tianjan Station, we took a rickshaw to a part of the town conceded to the French. Later we saw the shops, offices and banks in the quarters conceded to Japan. I now learned there were concessions in Hangchow and Chen-chiang and that other ports had also opened to foreign countries.

Having embarked a ship heading for Shanghai, we travelled down the river at Ta-ku to reach the South China Sea. Two days later the boat first arrived at Chefu and from here sailed for Chiao-chou (also called Tsingtao), in the province of Shantung. The rough seas during the next part of the journey

caused many passengers to feel sick and lie down on their beds. The crew-members were the only people able to walk in a straight line. This bad weather continued for two days and two nights, until Amoy was reached. Once at Shanghai I received a letter from my future father-in-law. Because he and his wife were ill they wanted me to come back as soon as possible. However, I did not have enough money for the journey. Knowing God would help me I set off not much later.

At Hong Kong our boat had to wait for a guide to bring us into one of the docks. While walking around in the town I saw a tram which could drive up a steep hill by means of wheels, ropes and an electric motor. I realised how good it was that Great Britain owned Hong Kong. The British are very skilled at handling political affairs. In addition, they improve the living conditions in the countries they govern. I think that of all nations in the world, Great Britain must be the greatest.

The seas in the Bay of Bengal were almost motionless and as hardly any winds blew, everyone stayed on deck to take in the fresh air. Seeing the mouth of the river Hoogli, I felt very glad to be close to India again. After three days at Calcutta I left for Siliguri by train travelling together with a couple dressed in Muslim clothing. The woman's face was covered. They spoke to each other in Tibetan. When I asked, 'Where are you from and where are you going to now?', they answered, 'We left lHa-sa some years ago on a pilgrimage to Mecca.'

Having reached rDo-rje-gling by train, I went to Ka-spungs to look up my friends and tell them all about the journey to, in, and back from China. Soon afterwards my wife's parents sent a messenger to me with tea and cakes. A suitable date was then set for the marriage. On our wedding day my wife and I were, of course, dressed in new clothes. Standing before sacrificial butter-lamps, we bowed to God and said prayers. After I had saluted my parent's-in-law all our friends congratulated us and gave us presents. My wife and I had to offer them a feast which went on for four days. All in all it cost 600 rupees.



Having nothing to do in and around the house proved very difficult for me. Our daily expenses were five or six rupees. It was then a friend said to me, 'I know you are an honest man. Would you like to take some merchandise to Tibet? We will, of course, share the profits.' At about the same time my mother-in-law's cousin, himself a Tibetan trader, wanted to travel to gZhis-kha-rtse. We set off together from Ka-spungs and reached the town of sGang-tog after two days. Temperatures dropped as we travelled towards the north. Walking up the steep paths my horse slipped on some ice and pulled me downwards. Luckily I was not hurt badly: the stones were covered with snow.

The journey from Phag-ri to rGyal-rtse took us four days. The market place here is open each morning till noon. The fortress nearby houses English officers and many soldiers from India. Continuing the journey I saw large quantities of coal in the hills which have remained untouched because Tibetans do not know how to make use of coal. It was said that if they had done so Tibet's good fortune would have turned bad due to the angry gods. After arriving at the town of gZhis-kha-rtse with its fortress and the monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po, I looked up a friend who informed me of local trading customs.

## ❀ six ❀

At gZhis-kha-rtse I heard the Pan-chen bLa-ma had left for China. Needless to say, I soon went to the monastery of bKras-shis-lhun-po and visited a shrine built to honour the first Pan-chen bLa-ma. The pilgrims here worshipped the golden images and lit sacrificial butter-lamps. Inside the temple dedicated to the second Pan-chen bLa-ma, I prayed for all beings to have a peaceful life. This was repeated inside the shrines dedicated to the other Pan-chen bLa-mas. A five storey high building houses a golden statue of Byams-pa, the future Buddha. You must climb up steps in order to see his knees, waist, chest and face from nearby. This image is the largest in Tibet. The present Pan-chen bLa-ma ordered it to be

constructed not only to bring about the welfare and happiness of all living beings but also to save everybody from sin, war or famine.

While I was staying at gZhis-kha-rtse the Tibetans felt sad due to the fact that the Pan-chen bLa-ma had gone to China. His absence is to be explained as follows. First the government of Tibet fined the monastery of bKras-shis-lhun-po a sum of 100,000 gold srangs without reason. The monks then paid as much they could. Not much later they sent an official delegation to lHa-sa asking for forgiveness. Its members were arrested, flogged and thrown into prison. After the monastery was fined a second time, the Pan-chen bLa-ma and his attendants fled to China – they remembered that the King of Tibet had been tortured before dying in prison. Tibetan soldiers who pursued the Pan-chen bLa-ma lost their way because of heavy snowfall and returned to lHa-sa empty handed. Since that moment the monastery of bKras-shis-lhun-po was looked after by the government officials. The Pan-chen bLa-ma's garden was now unkept. Near His summer palace, an elephant presented to Him by the Maharaja of Nepal stayed.

Farmers living in the villages round gZhis-kha-rtse grew barley, beans, peas and mustard seed. They kept horses, mules, donkeys, oxen, cows, sheep, goats, pigs, cats, dogs, cocks and hen. The herdsmen lived in tents near their pastures. They used yaks and ponies as pack animals. Wool, beef, mutton, cheese and butter were transported to lHa-sa or gShis-kha-rtse and sold in market places. Here the tent-dwellers traded salt (costing them nothing) for grain or utensils. These people led an independent life although they had to pay taxes nowadays.

When the sixty-eight year old mother-in-law of a friend of mine died, a lamp was lit and placed near the corpse. A monk who had been called in to sit at her head and repeat prayers placed his hand on her forehead. He guided her spirit into the state between death and rebirth. After reading from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, five monks performed ceremonies. A layman then removed the clothes from the body, covered it

with a blanket and tied ropes around it. Soon afterwards the family and friends entered the room to pray. At the meals taken during the following forty-nine days, you must present a little food to the deceased. The monks burned a mixture of barley flour, butter, dried and ground fruits causing the fire to smoke. All the laymen, including myself, offered money and silk ceremonial scarfs by way of a farewell present. We then prayed to the benefit of the deceased's next life.

As soon as the indoor ceremonies were finished, four men carried the corpse up a nearby hill. The monks sounded their trumpets and conch shells. Their superior at the head of the procession held a hand-bell in his right and a silk ceremonial scarf in his left hand. The mourning family burned incense. At the top of the hill, the corpse was placed on a stone and then uncovered. After the monks had performed rites to honour the gods of the funeral ground, the body was cut to pieces and fed to the vultures. Such a terrifying custom is considered good because you earn merit by allowing your flesh to be eaten by hungry beings. In Tibet two other funeral ceremonies exist. The first consists of burning the dead by way of incense to the gods. The second custom consists of throwing bodies in a river to feed for the water beings.

On the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, thirty-fifth and forty-second day after the disposal of the dead body, monks visited the family of the deceased to perform rituals in the house. On the forty-ninth day prayers bring the funeral ceremony to an end. The members of the family now washed their hair and changed into clean clothes.

Having met a Tibetan tradesman who I had known in lHa-sa, I was invited to his farm-house some six miles outside gZhis-kha-rtse where he told me about his four sons. The eldest was in business, the second and third worked as farmers, the fourth lived in the monastery of bKras-shis-lhun po. While enjoying tea and a small meal, I saw a young woman at work in the house. My host told me she was married to his three elder sons and that she was a very good wife who had given birth to five children, I was, of course, very surprised to hear this. After asking him, 'Is that a Tibetan custom?', he

answered, 'Yes, families do not want their property to be divided. This would have happened if my three sons had married a different woman.' I wondered if her five children could tell who was their father and who were their uncles.

After selling all my belongings and exchanging my Tibetan money for Indian rupees, I prepared for the journey to Ka-spungs. A three month long stay at gZhis-kha-rtse had now come to an end. My servant and I set off one morning in the company of Tibetan traders on their way to India. As the weather was cold between the towns of rGyal-rtse and Phag-ri we were happy to find a house with a fire place to warm us. However, no fodder could be found for our two horses and we had to give them some of our grain. When we saw dead horses and mules I told my companions that the Tibetan government should build roads and purchase motorcars to make travelling and the transport of merchandise easier. They then said, 'If this would happen, all Tibet's good fortune would disappear. For, Tibet is a holy country and non-Buddhist ways of life are not good.' I considered their opinion to be quite stupid.

Leaving the 23,929 feet high Mount Jo-mo lHa-ri behind us, we began to descend towards Phag-ri. Seeing trees again made me feel very glad. A few days later a number of muleteers who had travelled from Ka-spungs to the Chumbi Valley told us that heavy snows had killed thirty-six of their pack animals. So we stayed in the valley until the snow stopped. Having set off towards the Je-lap pass we met an American gentleman touring the Kingdom of Sikkim and its border region with Tibet. The fact I could speak English surprised him. Not much later we came across a man who was very tired and unable to speak because of the severe cold. Only after wrapping him in a blanket to keep him from freezing to death, he slowly returned to life and was able to travel on with us. The poor man had left Tibet carrying incense on his back to sell in rDo-rje-gling.

Once in Ka-spungs I immediately went to my house. Because of my weathered face, the neighbours recognised me only after I had told them who I was. Needless to say, my wife

and family-in-law were very glad to see my safe return. A few days later I paid a visit to the owner of the goods I had sold in gZhis-kha-rtse My netto earnings after such a difficult journey amounted to 100 rupees only! After two weeks my mood improved when my wife gave birth to a boy. The fact many flowers were blooming on this day was considered a good sign.



PLATE 4 Ts'an-chih Chen's family portrayed in front of an altar decorated by way of auspicious texts. The author, still a young boy, stands to his father's left. His mother is flanked by her three daughters. The Chinese characters include the expression of the family's desire to uphold traditional virtues such as harmony, faith and honesty.

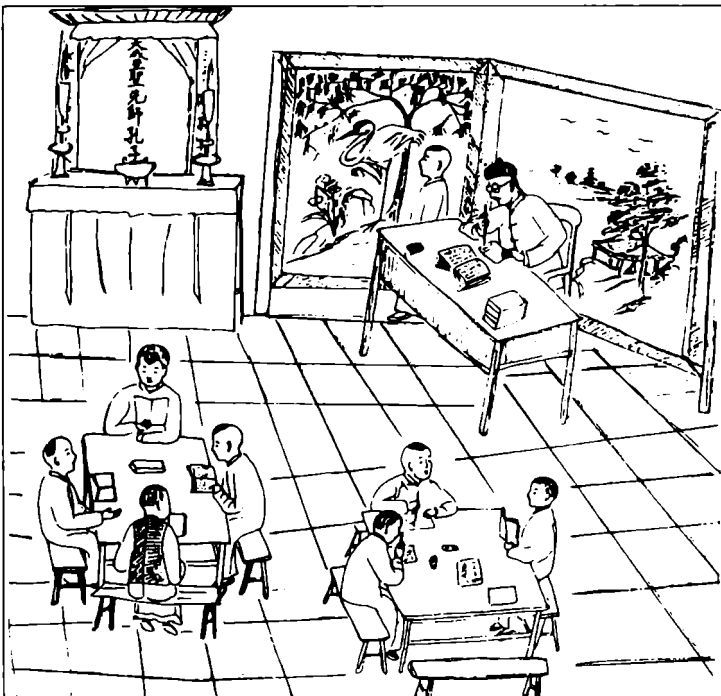
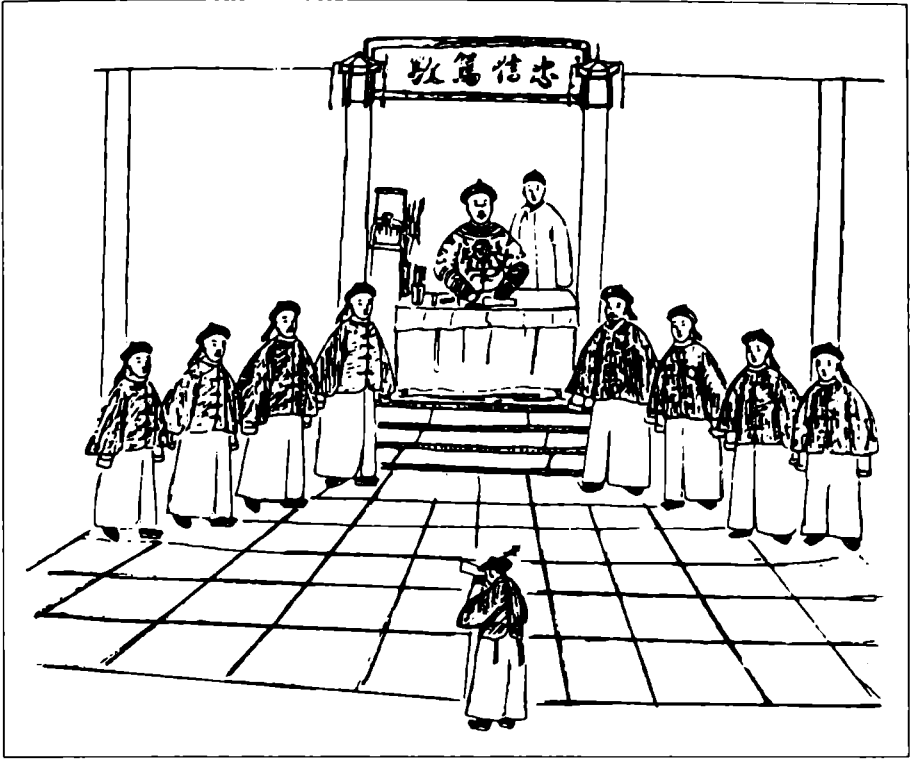
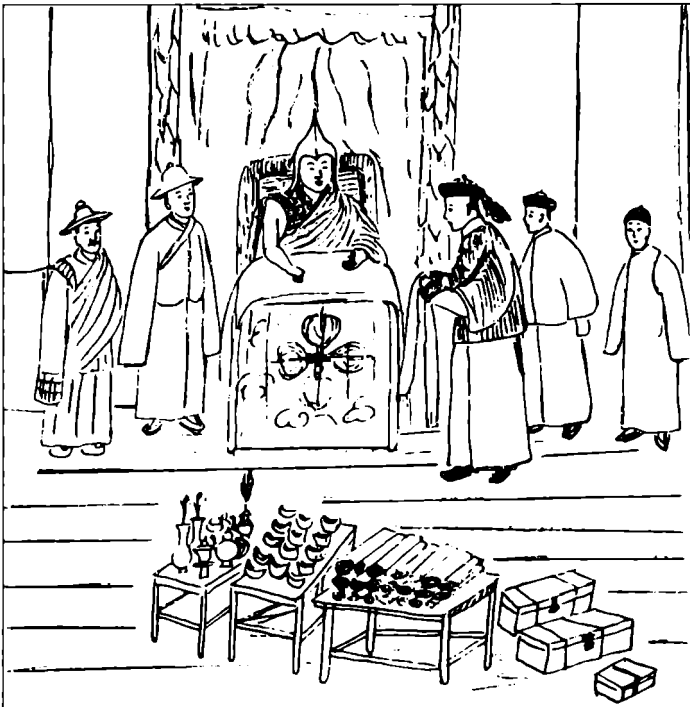


PLATE 5 Ts'an-chih Chen in the classroom learning to read and write. The text on the altar reads: 'The great, perfect saint and our tutor Confucius'.



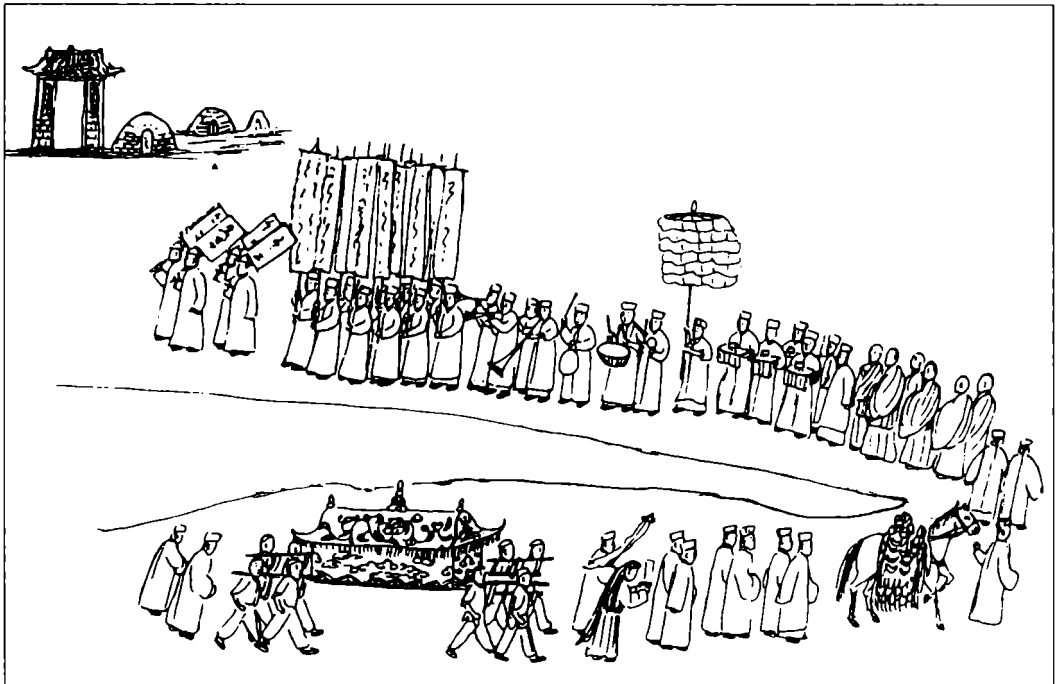
**PLATE 6** The Amban, the Chinese representative at lHa-sa, officially requests Ts'an-chih Chen's father to present gifts to the Pan-chen bLa-ma. The Chinese characters may be translated: 'Faith, reliability and deep respect'.



**PLATE 7** The Pan-chen bLa-ma receives Tibetan Buddhist ritual objects, silver and rolls of silk: all presents from the Chinese government.



**PLATE 8** The newly-wed Lei and Shu-chen stand in front of an altar dedicated to the ancestors. The inscriptions aim at invoking a happy marriage. Ts'an-chih Chen lights crackers to scare off any evil.

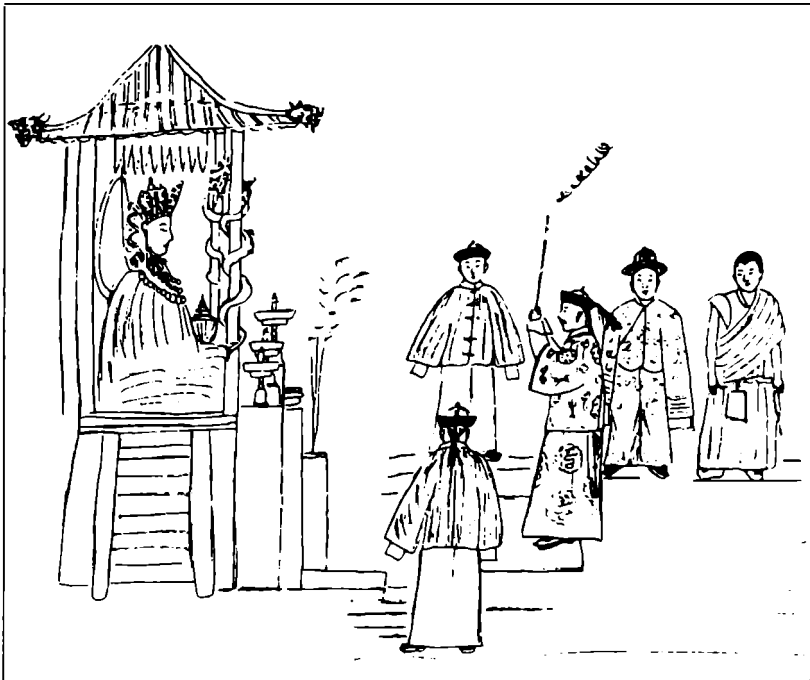


**PLATE 9** Ts'an-chih Chen's father is ceremoniously escorted to his last resting place, a Chinese cemetery.





**PLATE 10** Ts'an-chih Chen, kneeling in the Manchurian manner, is appointed to the post of translator at the Sino-Tibetan Translation Department.



**PLATE 11** The Amban offers incense to a Tibetan Buddhist deity in the Jo-khang.

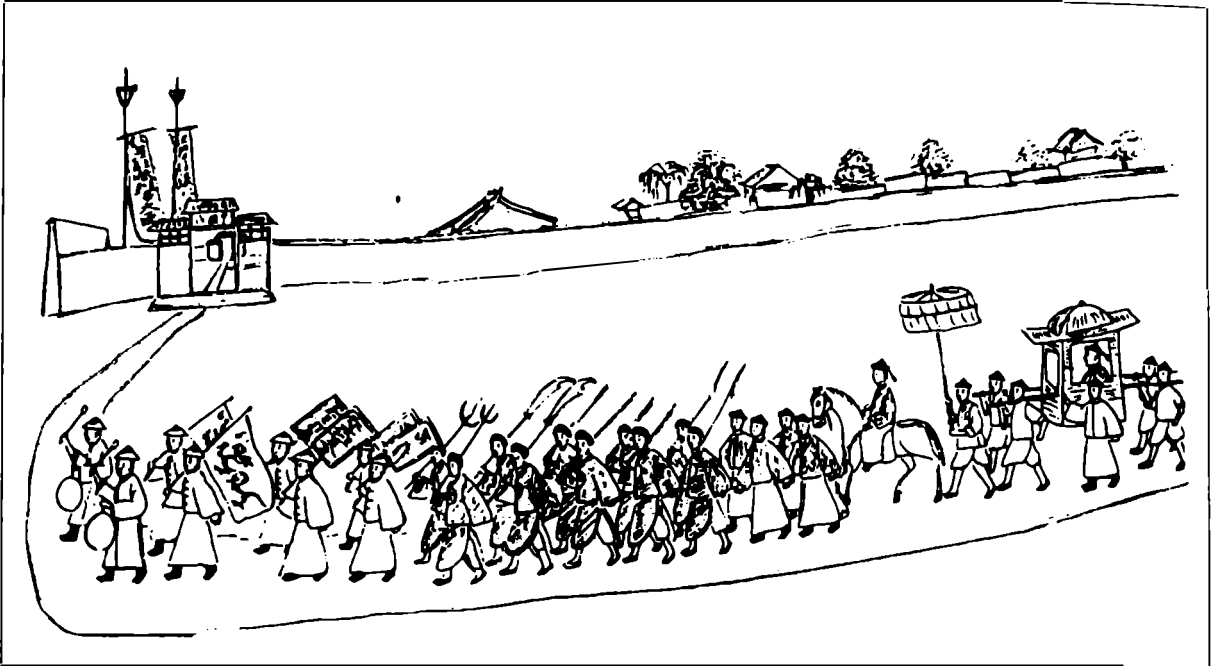


PLATE 12 The Amban returns to his quarters seated in a palanquin.



PLATE 13 Traditional Chinese festivities taking place on New Year's Day. The hand held sign reads 'Peace on earth'.



PLATE 14 Tibetan officials consult the oracle of lHa-sa.



PLATE 15 Tibetan officials cast spells in order to expel Anglo-Indian invaders.

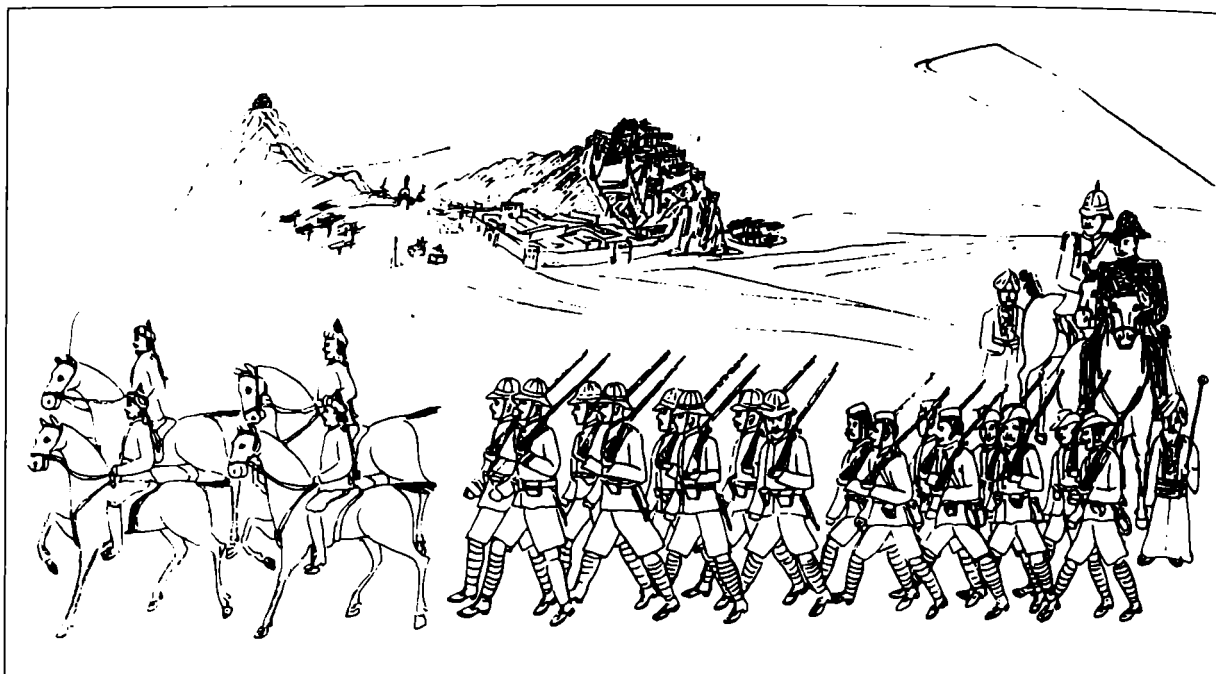


PLATE 16 Anglo-Indian troops parade before the Potala, lHa-sa.

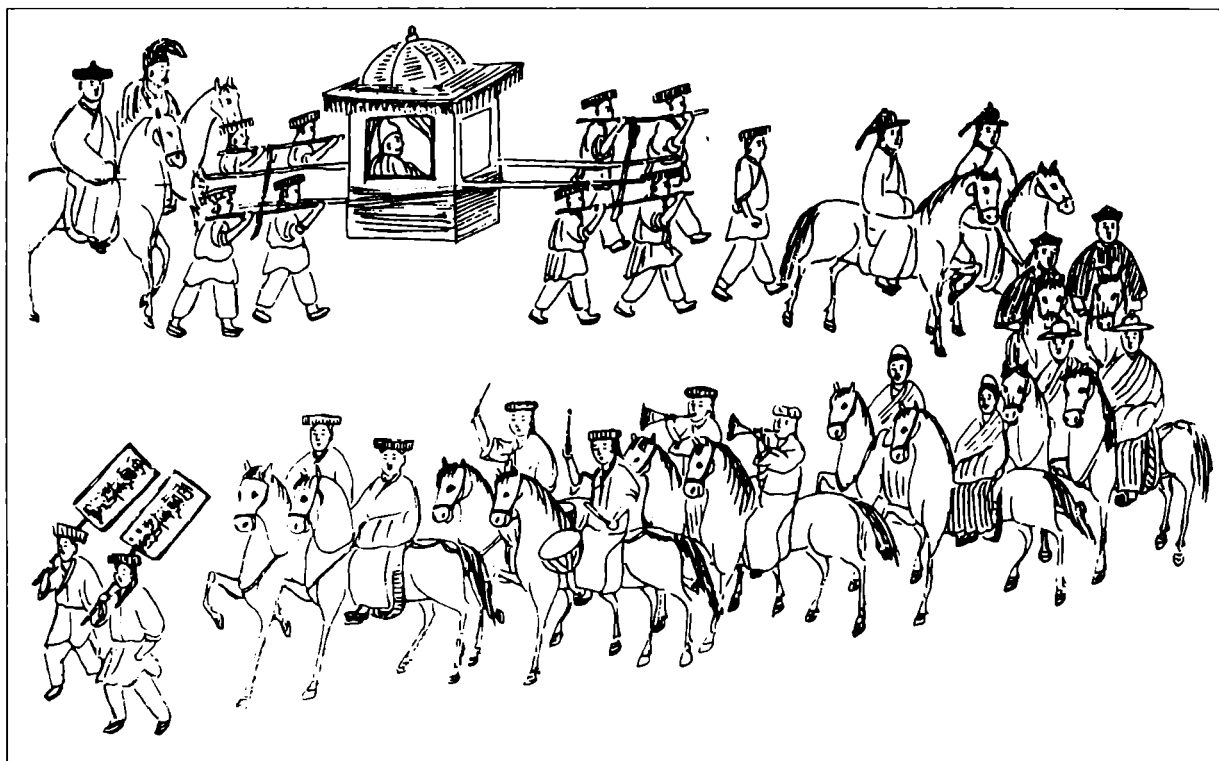


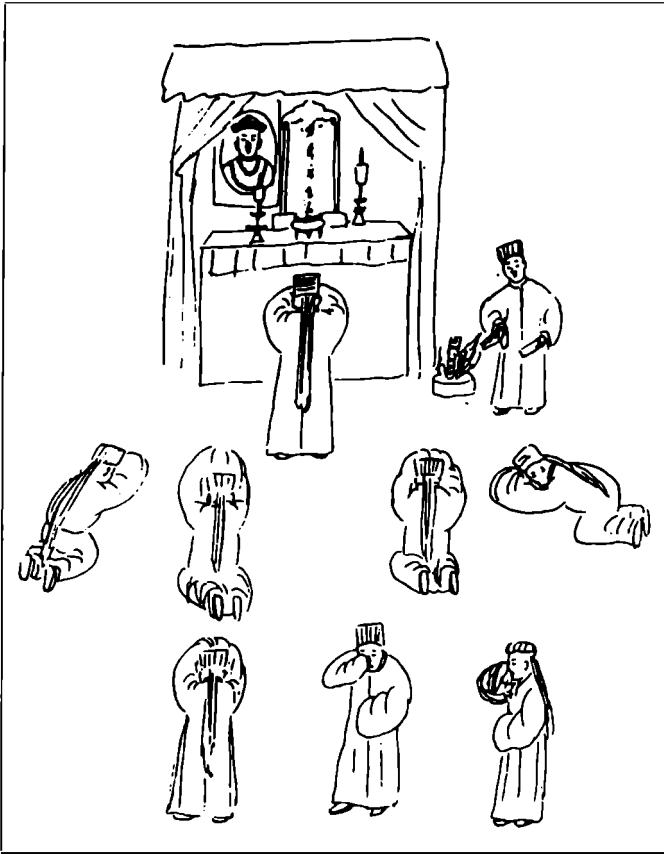
PLATE 17 Flight of the Ta-la'i bLa-ma to Peking.



PLATE 18 The Ta-la'i bLa-ma visits the Emperor and Dowager Empress of China.



PLATE 19 The monks from Ba-tang massacre Chinese officials.



**PLATE 20** Chinese officials pray before the Imperial Tablet.



**PLATE 21** Chinese troops in combat against Tibetan soldiers.



PLATE 22 Po-pa's ambushing a silver transport in the province of Khams.

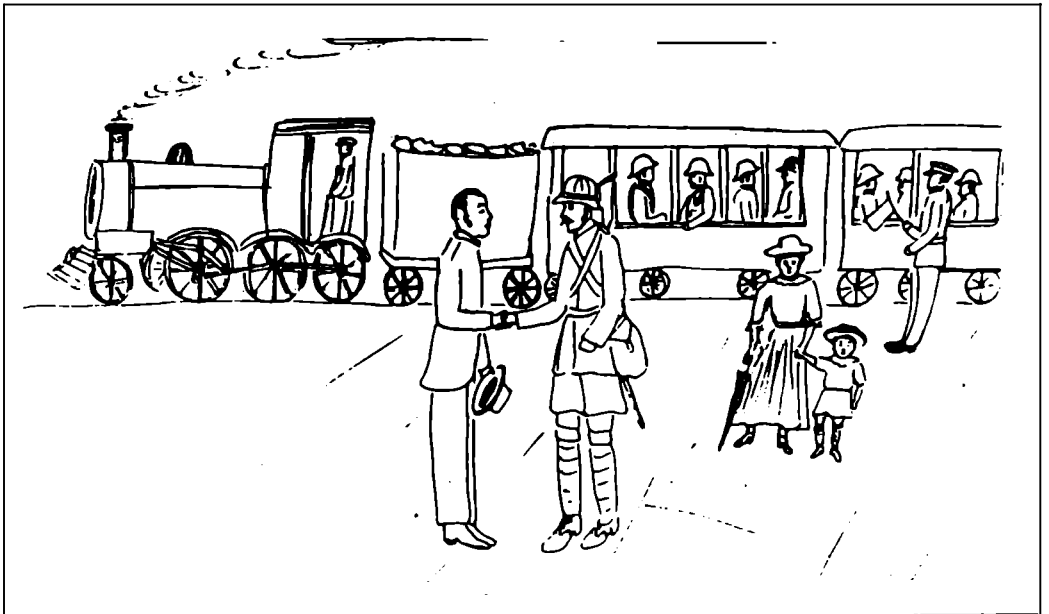


PLATE 23 Ts'an-chih Chen takes leave at the rDo-rje-gling Railway Station.

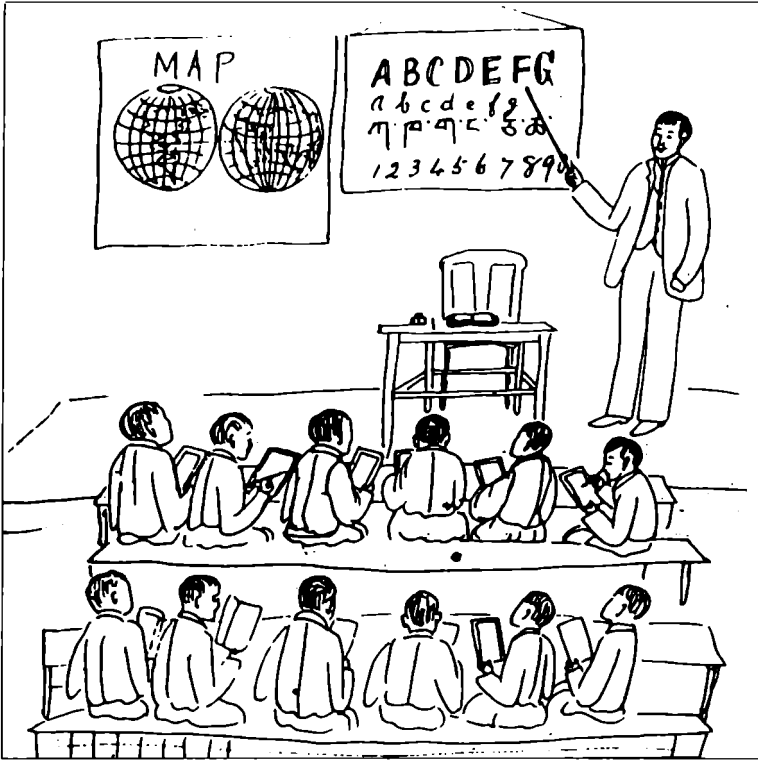


PLATE 24 Ts'an-chih Chen teaches at the Tibetan Mission, rDo-rje-gling.



PLATE 25 sPyan-ras-gzigs, the Eleven-headed God of Mercy.



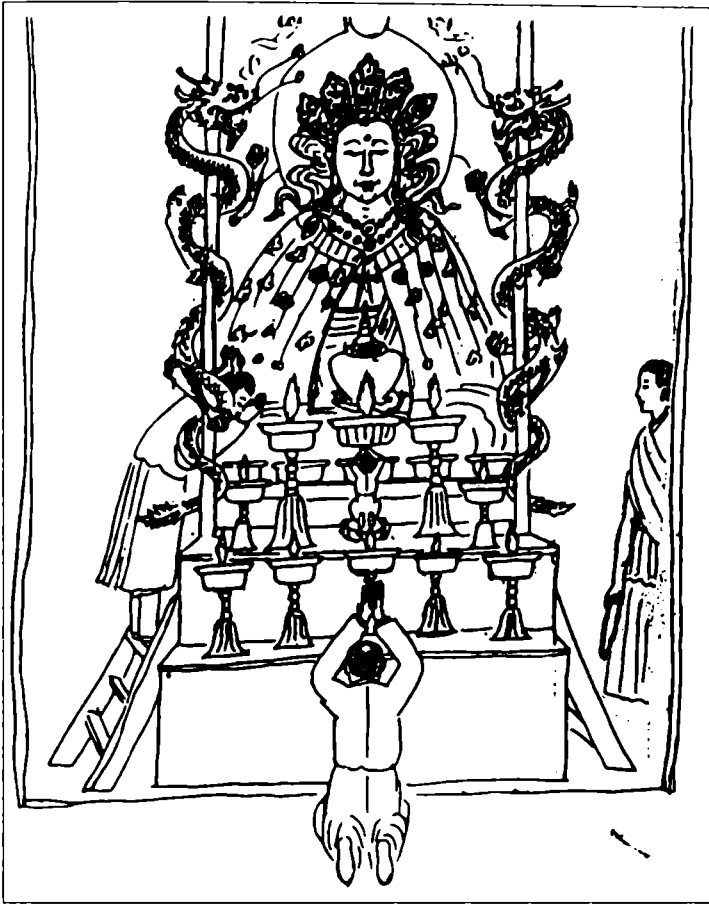


PLATE 26 Ts'an-chih Chen worshipping Sakyamuni Buddha at the Jo-khang.



PLATE 27 King Srong-brtan sGam-po, who introduced Buddhism to Tibet, in the company of his two wives.



**PLATE 28** dPal-ldan lHa-mo, the female tutelary deity of lHa-sa.

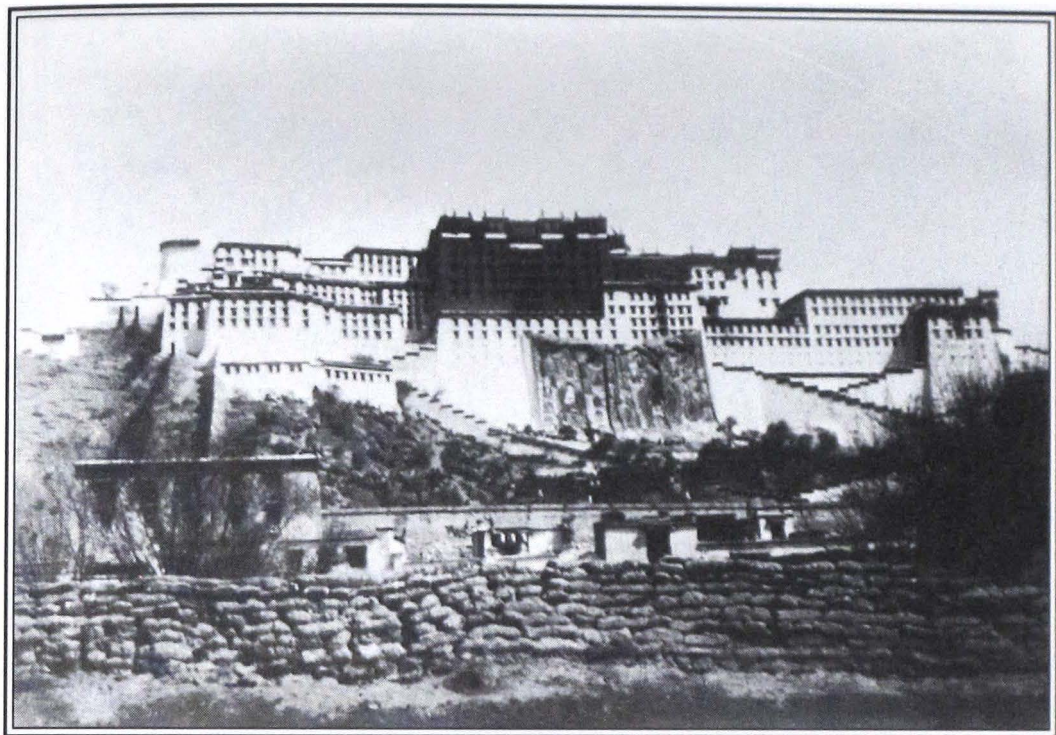
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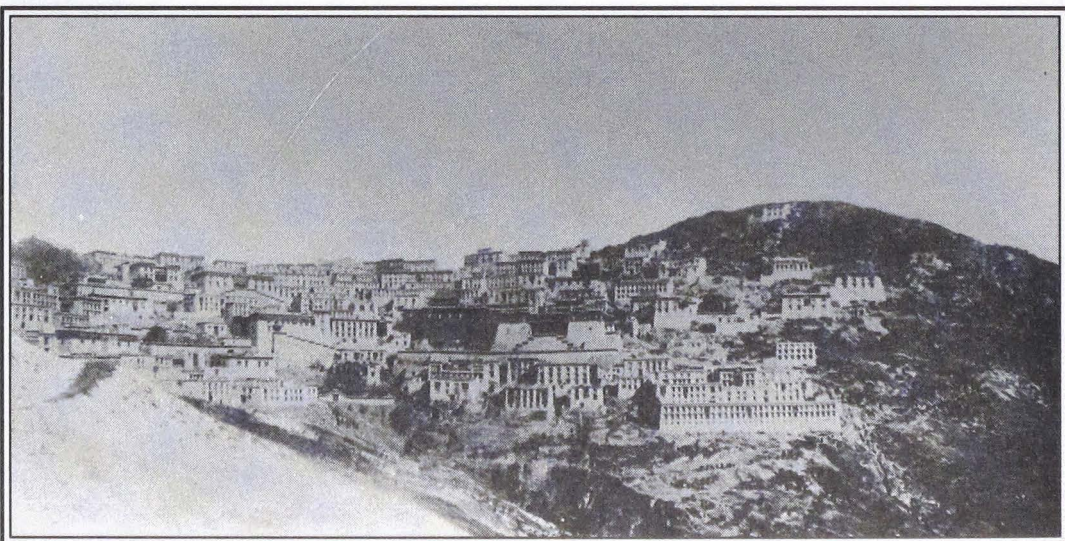
**PLATE 29** The Potala, LHa-sa with two large hangings unrolled between 5 and 18 April 1901.



**PLATE 30** The monastery of Se-ra, c.1900.



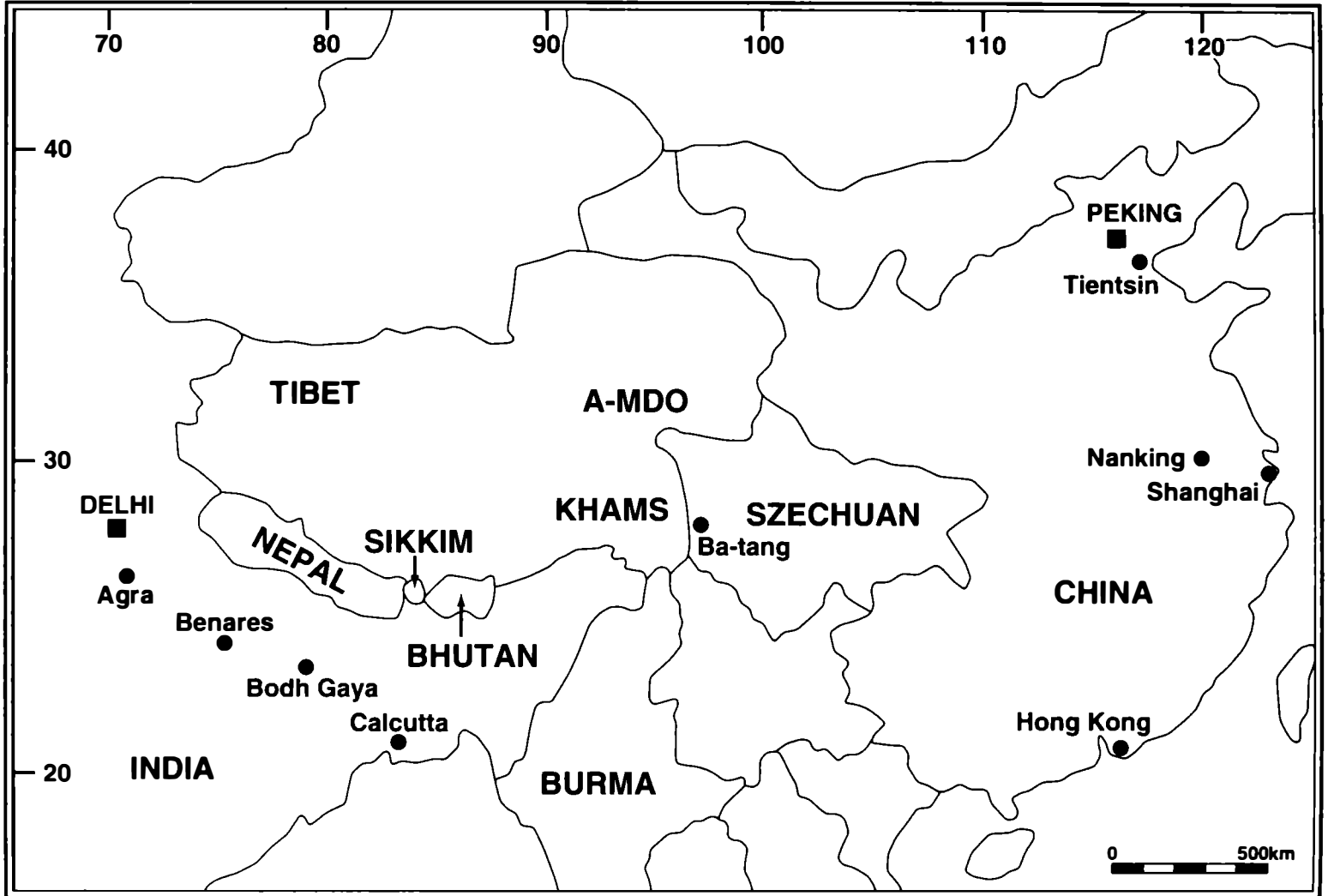
**PLATE 31** The monastery of 'Bras-spungs, c.1900.



**PLATE 32** The monastery of dGa'-ldan, c.1900.

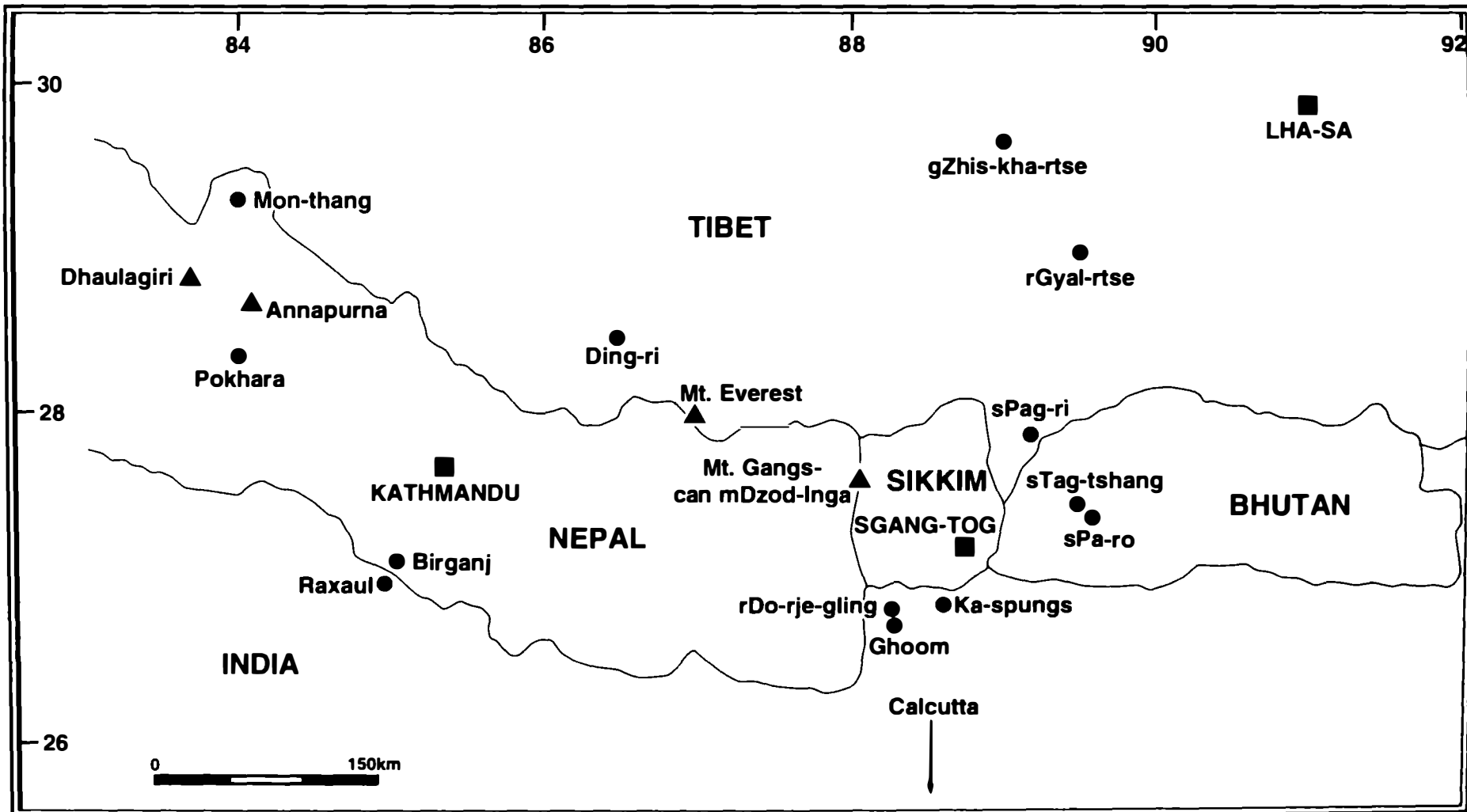


**PLATE 33** The monastery of bKra-shis-lhun-po, c.1900.



MAP I Central and East Asia





MAP 2 The Himalayan Region



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All entries have been listed in accordance with the English alphabet including Tibetan prefix letters but disregarding the Tibetan ' .  
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