

The Photographs of Betsy Cowles

Elizabeth (Betsy) Cowles Partridge (1902-1974) was an American mountaineer, traveller, photographer and writer from Colorado Springs, Colorado. In 1949 Betsy was invited to join as photographer an expedition to Nepal organized by her friend New York attorney Oscar Houston. The 1949 expedition never happened, but in October 1950 she visited Kathmandu in the company of Oscar Houston and his wife Nell. According to the register kept at the border they were the 75th, 76th and 77th Americans to be allowed into that recently-opened country. On Oct. 12, 1950 they witnessed the arrival of the very first commercial air flight into Kathmandu.

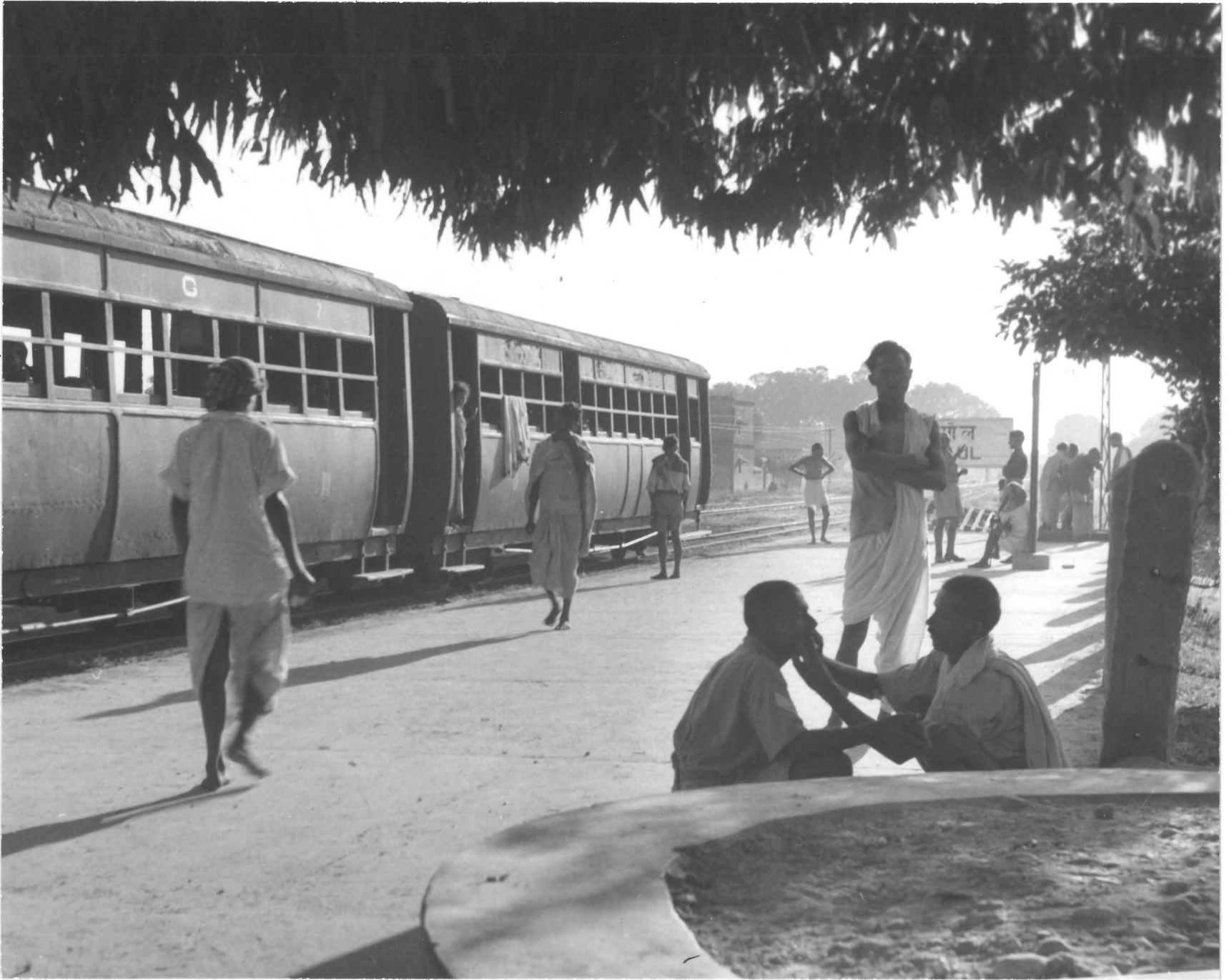
Following the Kathmandu visit Betsy and the Houstons returned to India, where they were joined by Oscar's medical doctor son Charles Houston, climber Bill Tilman, and Charles' friend Anderson Bakewell at the time living in Kuersong, near Darjeeling and studying to be a Jesuit priest. These five Americans, along with a group of Sherpas, then headed north from Jogbeni on foot, up through Dharan and Dhankuta to Namche Bazaar and Thyangboche monastery. While Oscar, Anderson and Betsy remained at Thyangboche, Tilman and Charles climbed up the Khumbu valley to explore possible routes to climb Mt. Everest from the Nepal side.

Bill Tilman and Charles Houston were unable to get up far enough to get a clear view of the Khumbu icefall and the Western Cwm. However, from what they were able to see they concluded that the south side of Everest "presented much greater climbing difficulties than the north side. The southern face is precipitous and broken by long and intricate ridges which would be technically difficult and dangerous. The south face may well be impossible and we could see no practicable climbing route." Of course, their overall conclusion was proved wrong three years later when Mt. Everest was climbed for the first time by a British expedition under the leadership of John Hunt, using the Khumbu route.

Janet Robertson has written a biography entitled *Betsy Cowles Partridge--Mountaineer*, University Press of Colorado, 1998. After Betsy's death in 1974 her slides and photos, diaries, round-robin letters, articles for various publications, scrapbooks and other archival material were deposited with the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, 2111 Willett Dr., Laramie, WY 82071 USA, where they still reside.

The attached .pdf file includes a selection of the b&w photos taken by Betsy Cowles plus a few photos by other members of the expedition, and a colour photo of the first commercial flight into Kathmandu on Oct. 12, 1950.

The red numbers in the lower right hand corner of these photos refer to the first two digits of the file name of the attached photos.



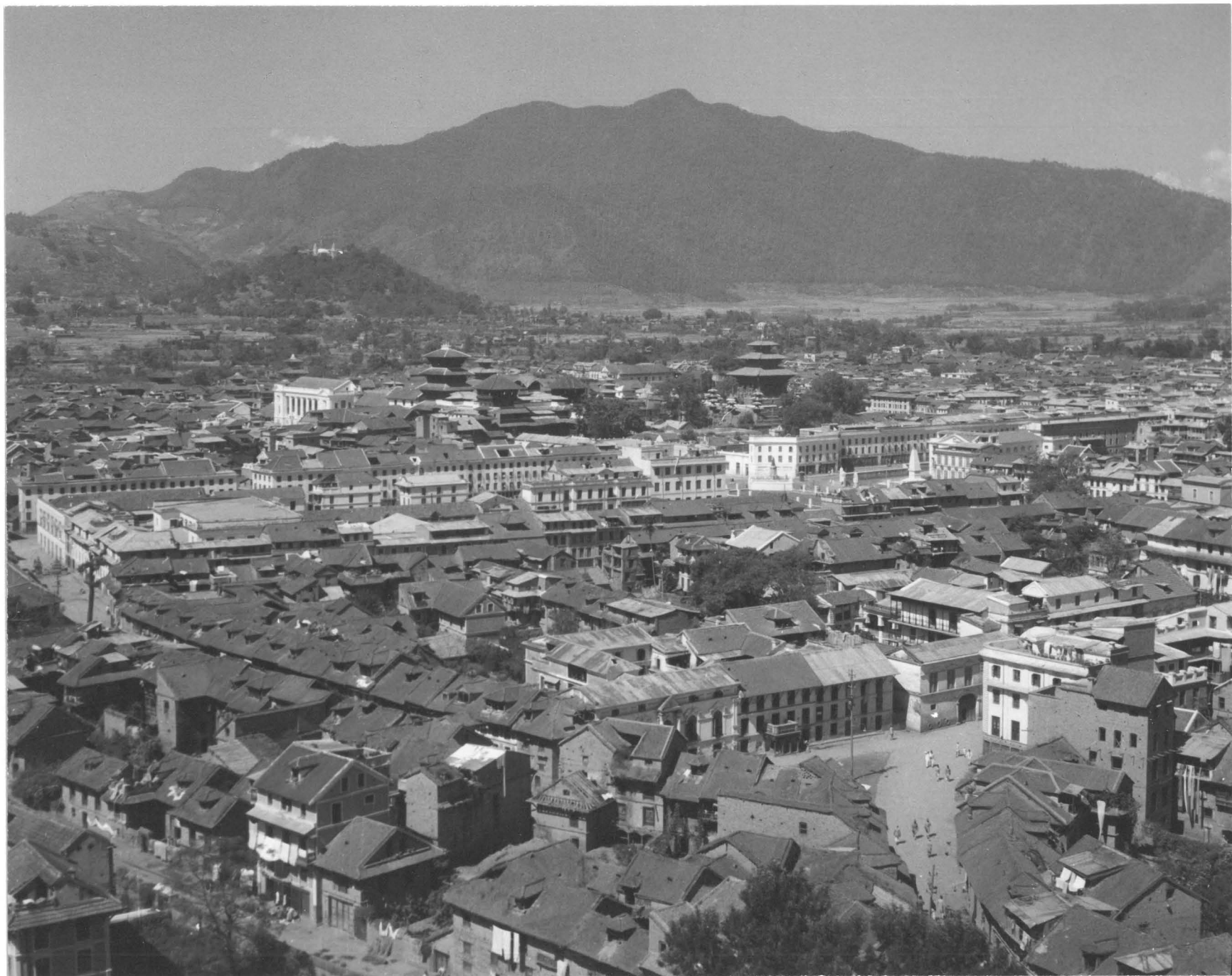
Raxaul Platform

Elizabeth Cowles



Nepalese Youngsters at Bhimphedi

Elizabeth Cowles



Looking West from Bim Sen's Tower

Elizabeth Cowles

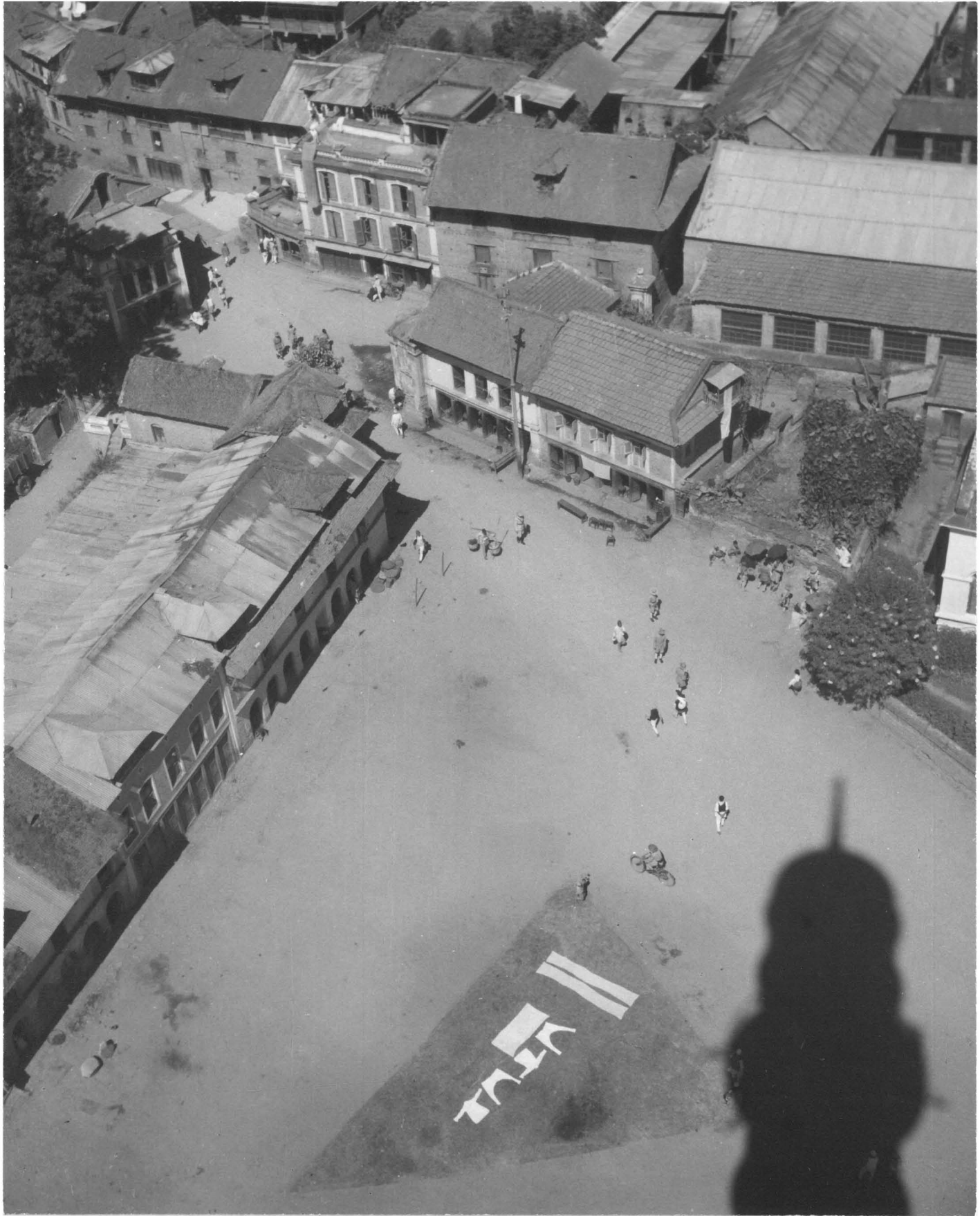
Katmandu



Maharajah's Palace, as seen
across the Maidan

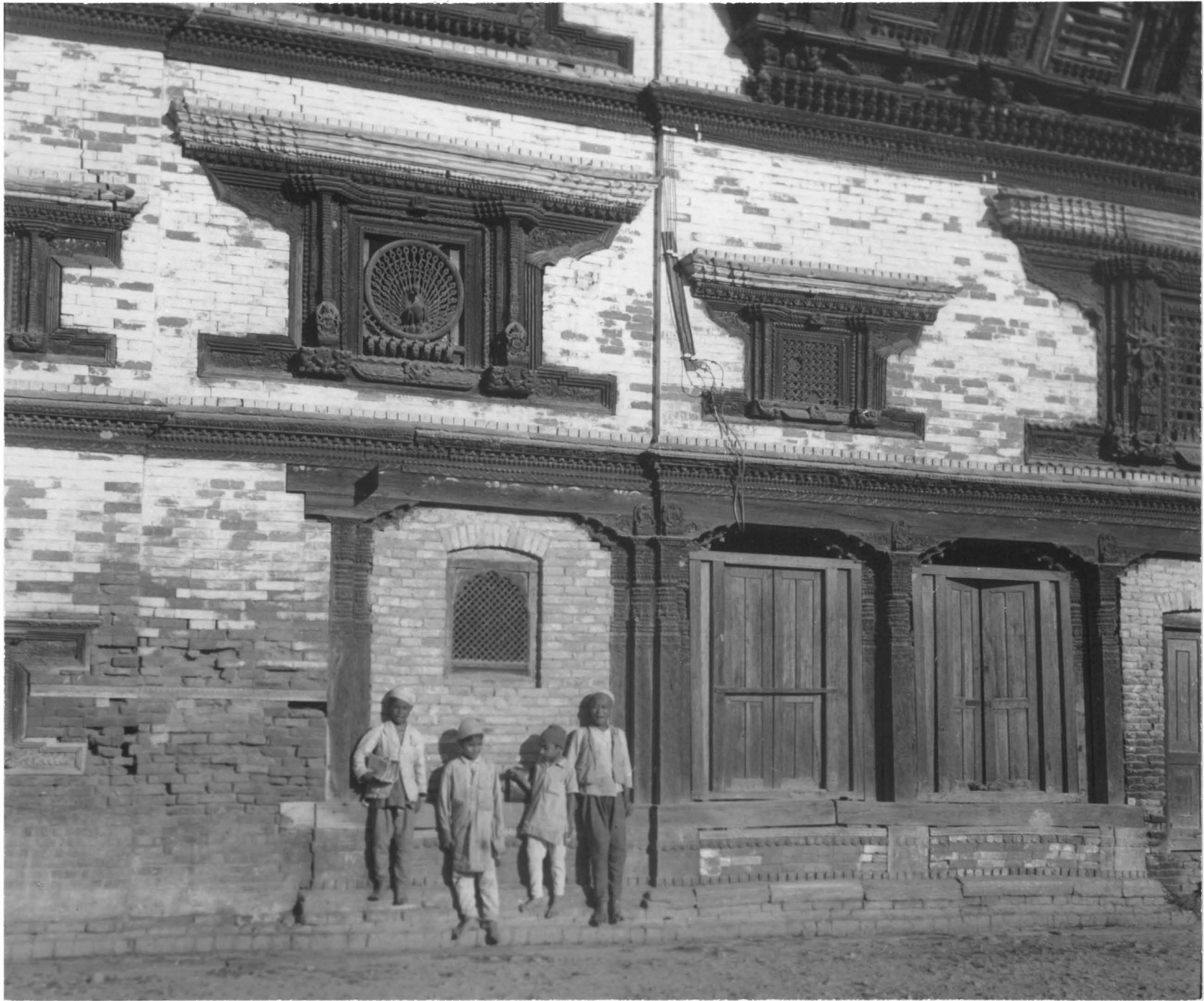
Katmandu

Elizabeth Cowles



Looking down from Bim Sen's Tower
Kathmandu

Elizabeth Cowles



Katmandu Carvings

Elizabeth Cowles



Hindu Shrine, Kathmandu

Elizabeth Cowles



Temple in Katmandu

Elizabeth Cowles



Buddhist Temple at Swayambhumath

Elizabeth Cowles



Bodhnath

Elizabeth Cowles



Prayer wheels at Swayambhunath

Elizabeth Cowles



Temples at Pashpati

Elizabeth Cowles



Balaji

Elizabeth Cowles



Tears in a Kotmandu street

Elizabeth Cowles



In Patan

Elipatred Cowles



Bhatgaon

Elizabeth Cowles



The Expedition

The Houston Expedition--1950 L to R: Anderson Bakewell, Oscar R. Houston,
Elizabeth S. Cowles, H.W. Tilman, Charles Houston



Our Sherpas

Elizabeth Cowles

L to R Back Row: Do-Kyi (Dickie), Sarki, Gyaljen Senior, Pa Norbu, Sonam Tsering (Foreign Sportsman)
Front Row: Da Namgyal, Gyaljen Junior, Dawa Norbu (Danu)



The Jemadar

Elizabeth Cowles

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This was the Lieutenant assigned to us by his Hon. the Governor of Dhankuta. He and 3 soldiers were instructed to deliver us to the next governor's men but we missed our rendezvous with these gentlemen and the Jemadar, not daring to leave us unescorted,--came along for the whole trip (and had a wonderful time!)



Dhankuta

Elizabeth Coules



House at Dhankuta.



The Governor of Dhankuta
welcomes Oscar Houston + us

1950



Grinding Linseed Oil
The Himalayas
In the Arun Valley

Elizabeth Cowles

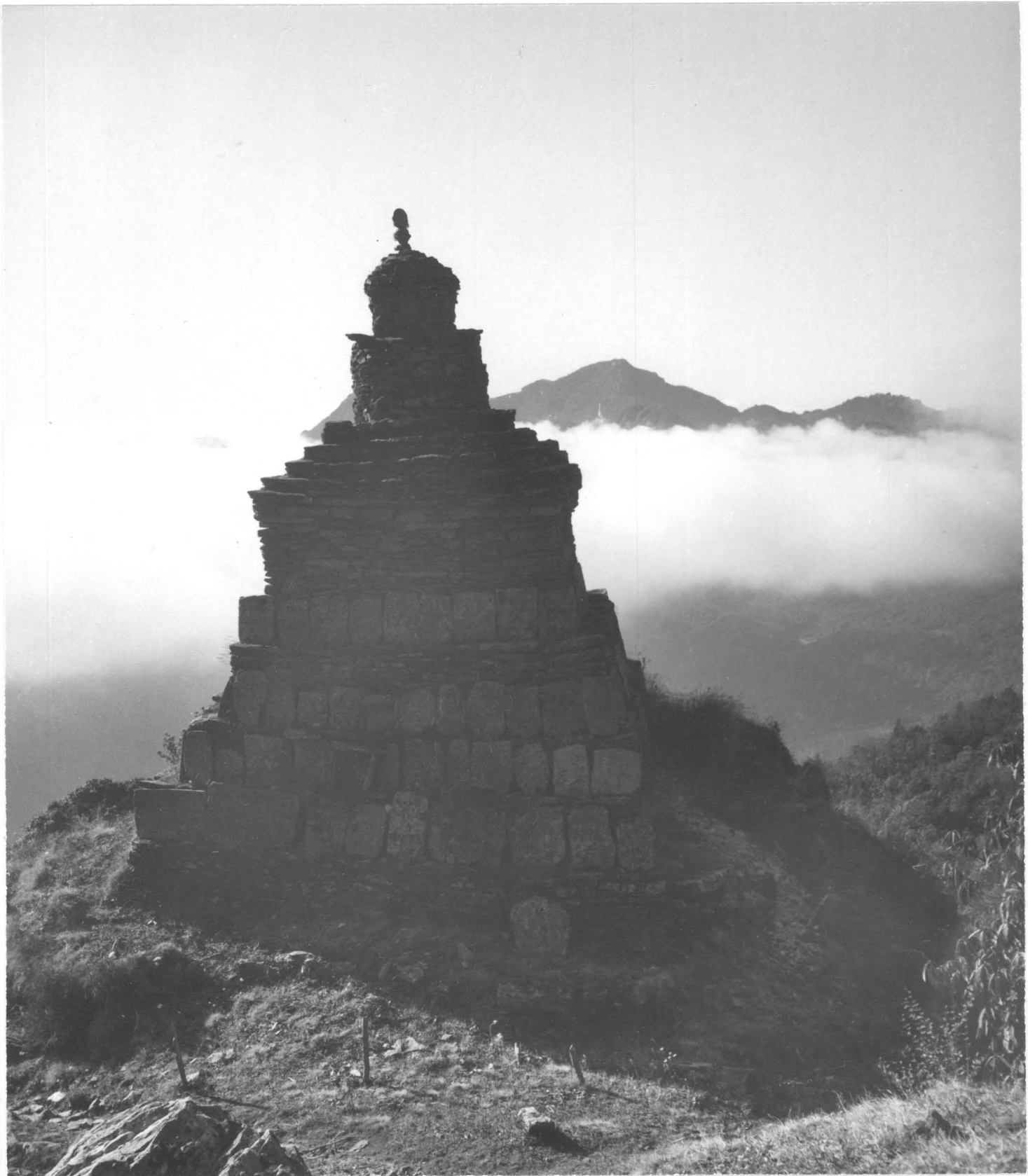


Nepalese Swing
with Gyaljen, my Sherpa, on board

Uyabrit Conus



Salpa Pass
Our caravan



a Chorten

Elizabeth Cowles



Gudel
on the route up to Everest

Elizabeth Cowles

25

The King of France and 40,000 men
Marched up the hill, and then marched down again....

We have just descended 4000 ft to Gudel from the
Salpa-La (11,000 ft). Have 2500 ft more to go to the
valley floor--and then another 11,000 ft pass ahead!

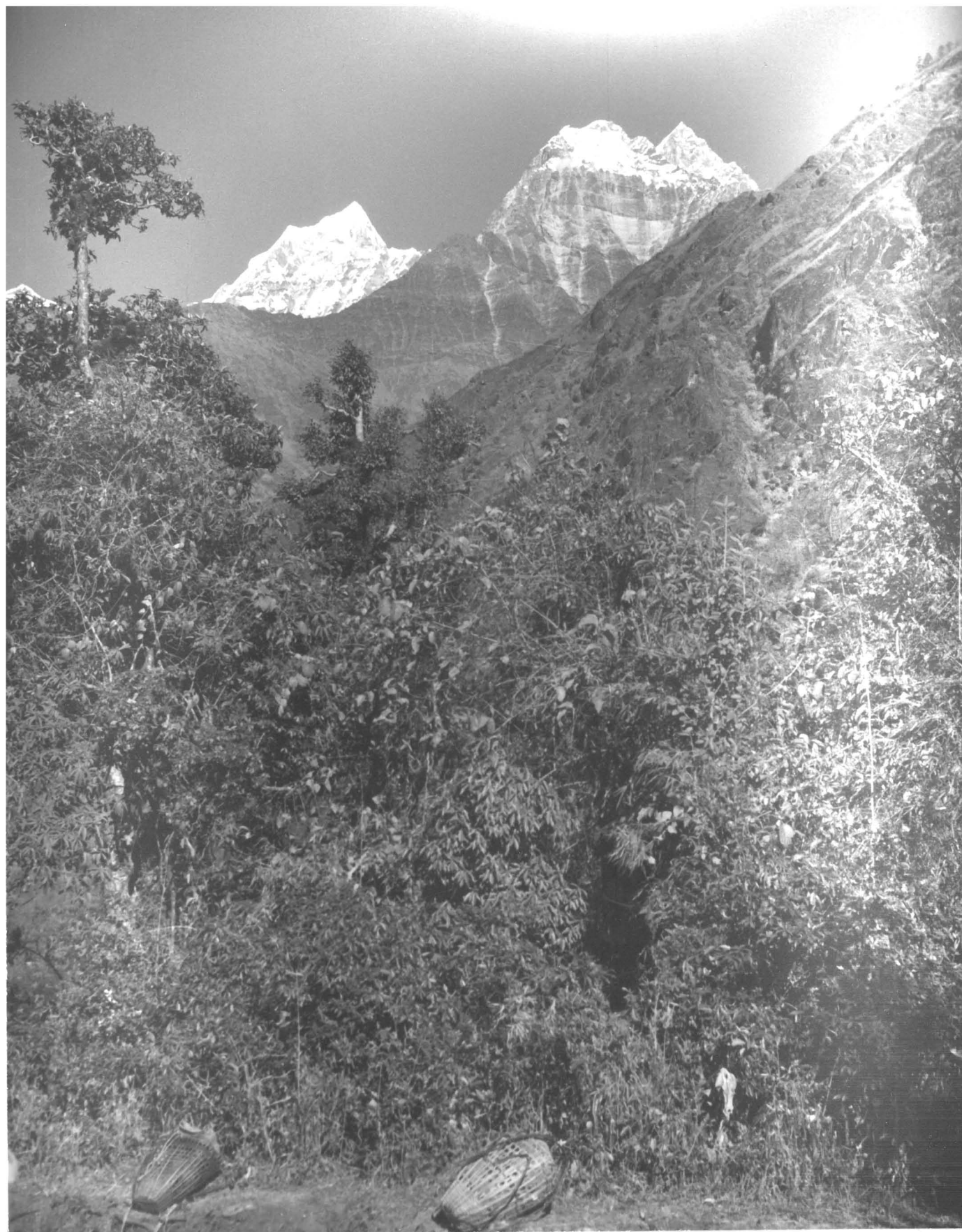
Tilman's Poem
In dreadfulness naught can excell
The view to Bung from Gudel
And words die away on the tongue
When we look back at Gudel from Bung



My Palace on
The trek in to Everest



Outside my tent
(the audience)

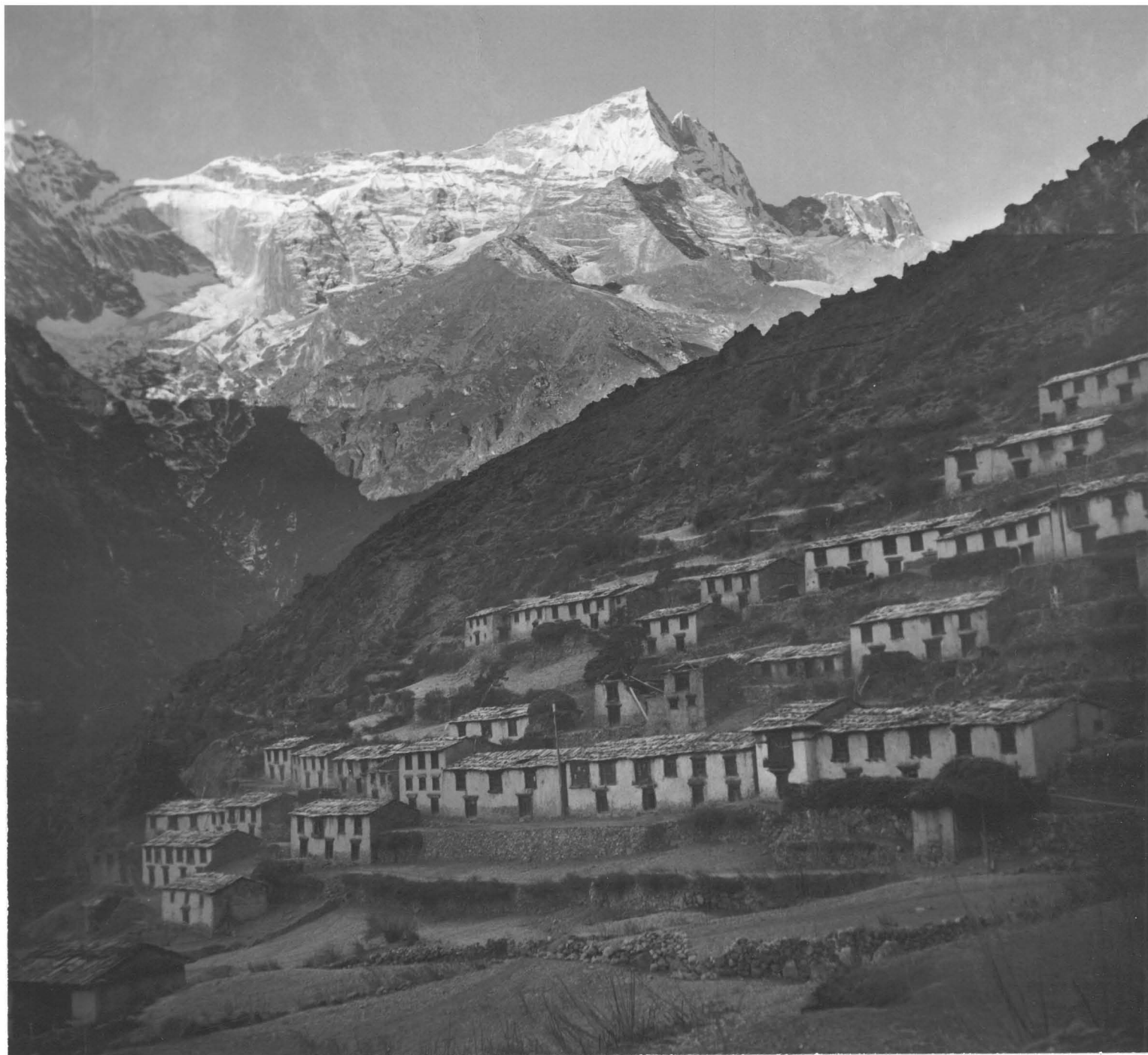


Just a couple of Himalayas
on the way in to Everest

Elizabeth Curtis

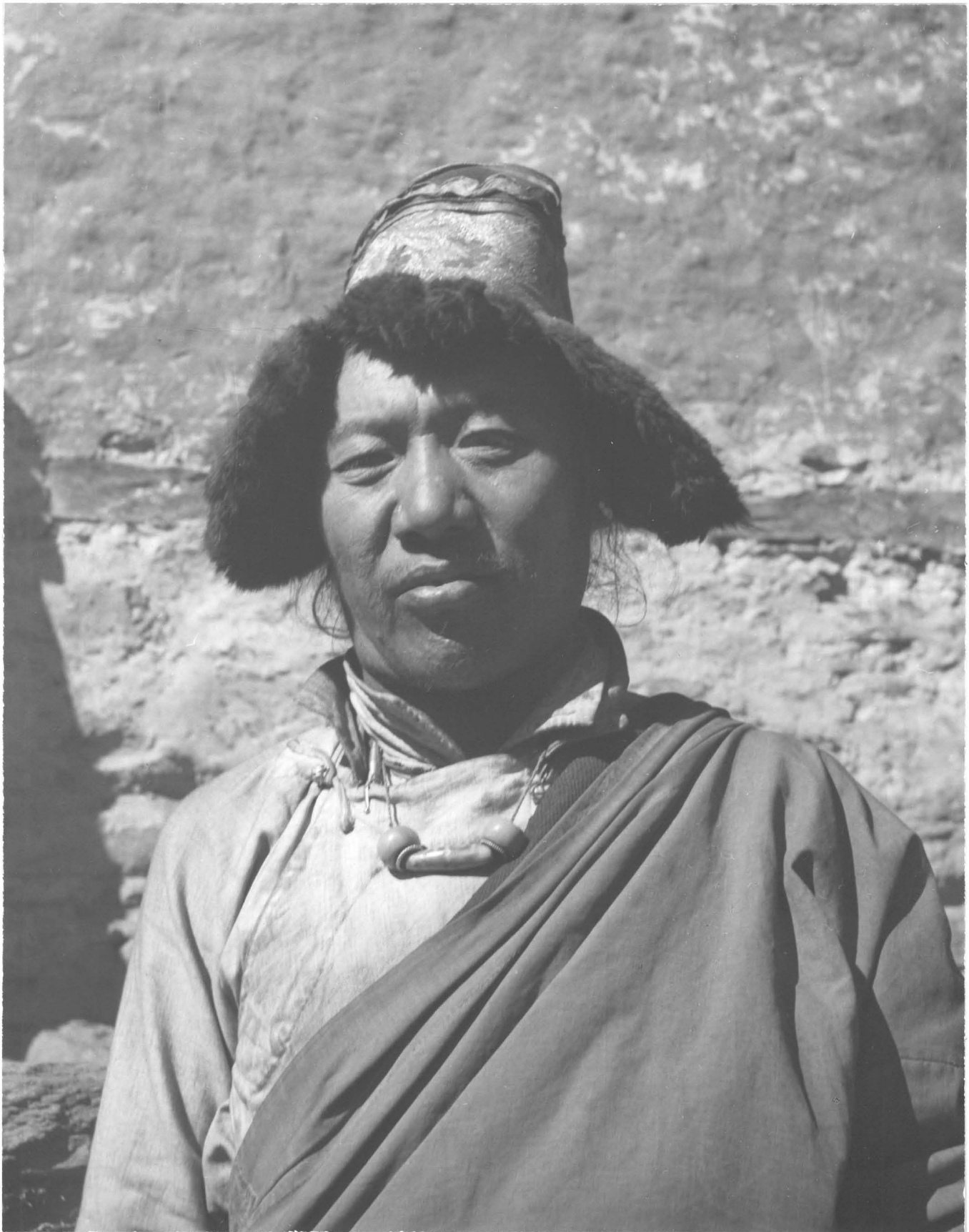


Circus has come to Town.



Namche Bazar

Elizabeth Cowles



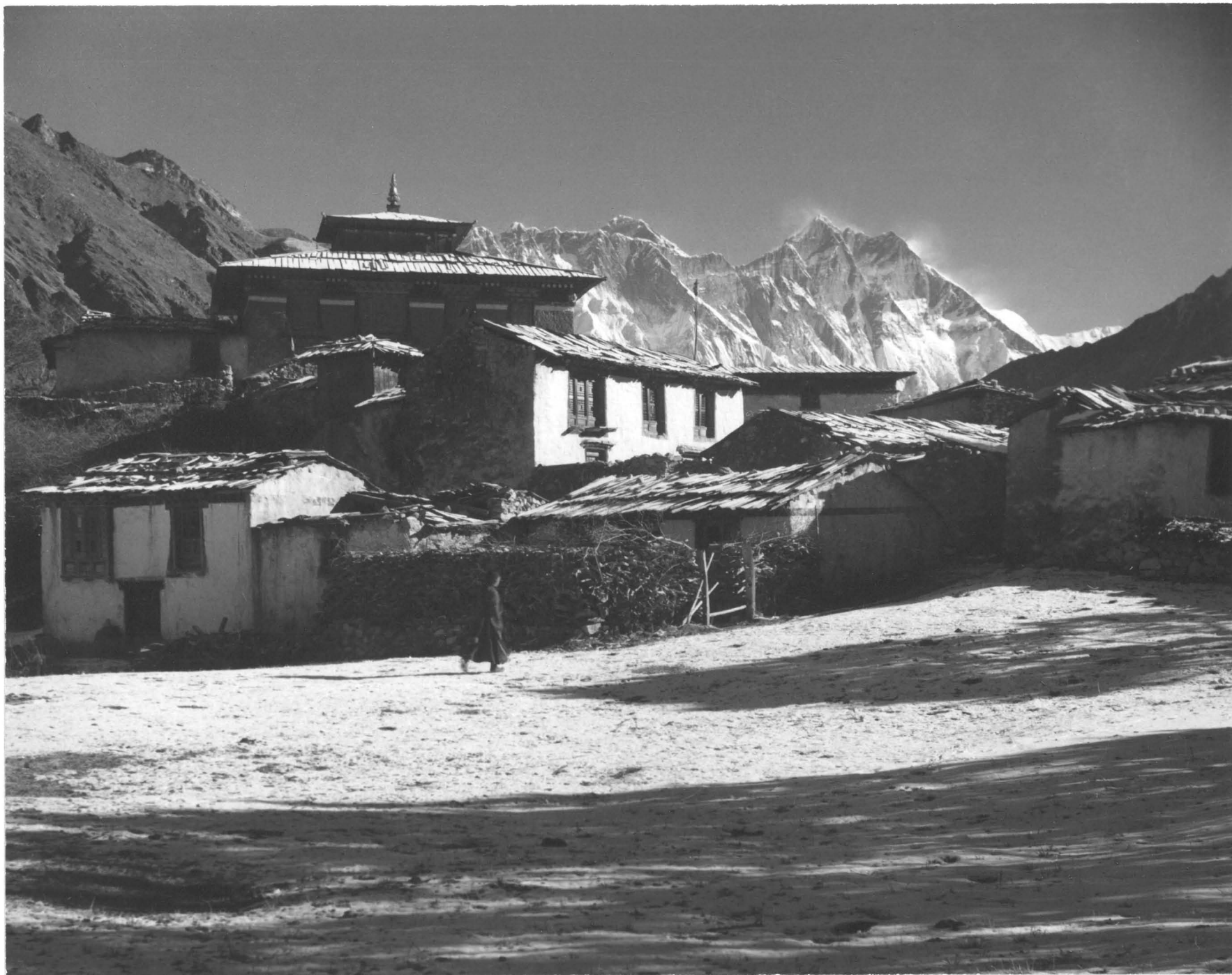
Head man of Namche Bazar

Elizabeth Cowles

Nga Wong Tchetem, Headman of Namche Bazar

31

Never seen without this Tibetan style hat except when Charley gave him his own NY felt model as a going-away present. Headman was completely transformed by the switch and entirely delighted!



The Gumpa with Mt Everest in background
The Himalayas, Jhyangboche, Nepal

Elyavrttl Cowles

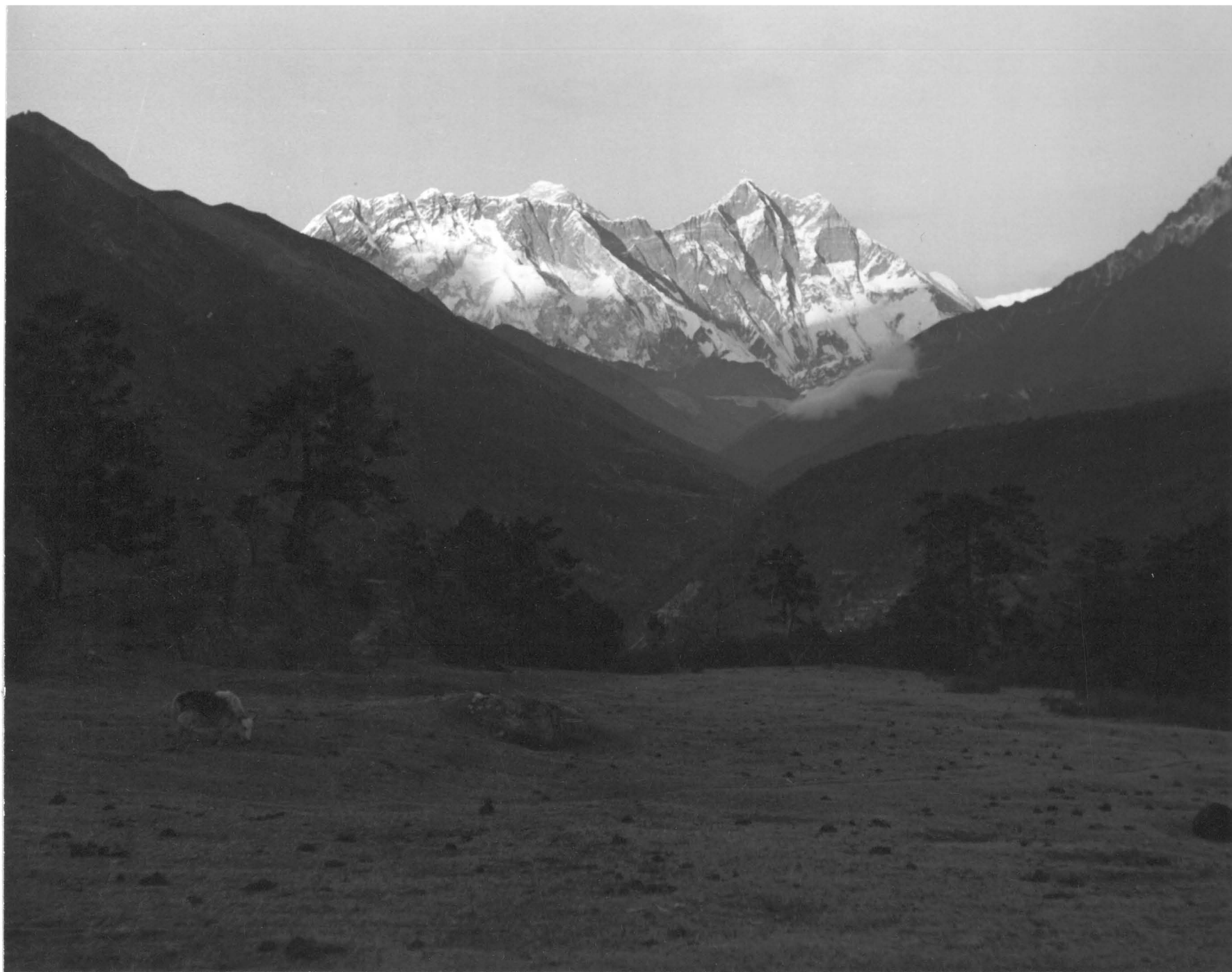


Thyangboche Lamasery
The Himalayas

Elizabeth Cowles



Everest & Lhotse



Sunset on Mt Everest (2)



The Gompa at Jhyangboche

Elizabeth Cowles



Kantega

Elizabeth Cowles



The Three Musketeers
whom we meet when most needed

Elyavrek S Cowles



SW from Jhyangboche

Elizabeth Cowles

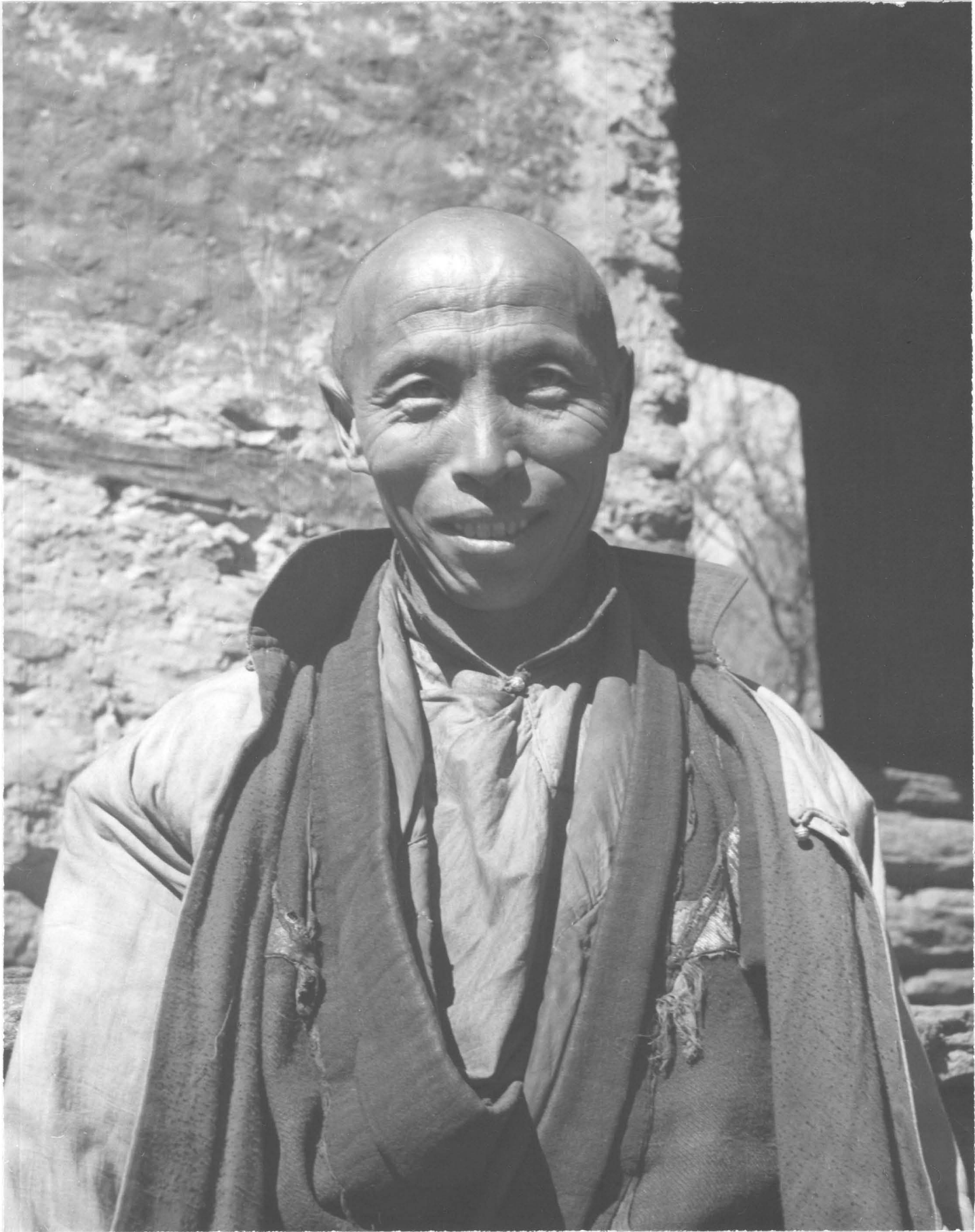


Tamusar mu
from Thangboche



A Lama

Elizabeth Cowles



Lama at Jhyangboche

Elizabeth Cowles



A Lama

Elizabeth Cowles



Lamas at Thyangboche

Elizabeth Cowles



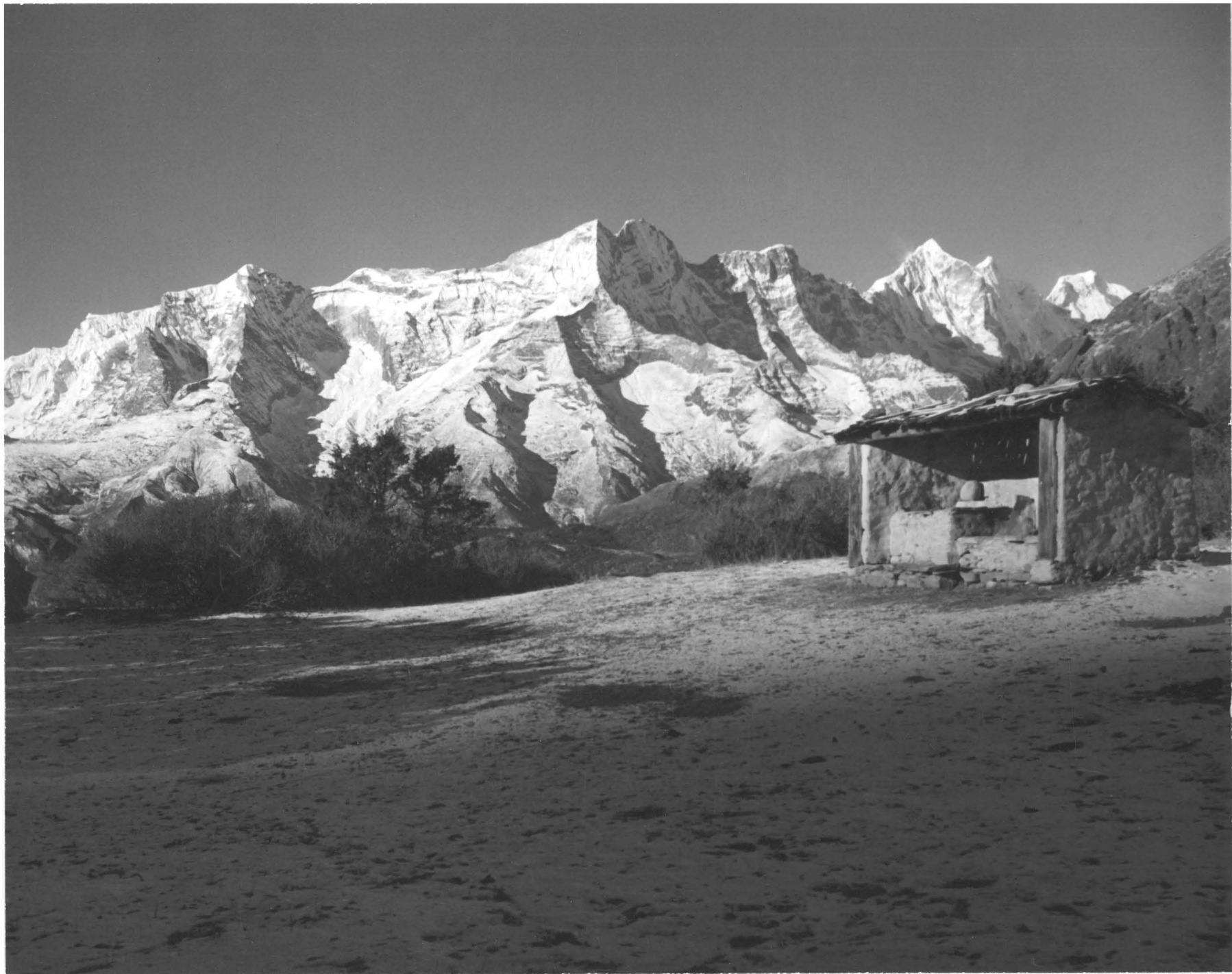
Lamas at Jhyangboche

Elizabeth Cowles



Head lama of Jhyangboche

Uyatrt Cowho



Looking S.W. from Jhyangboche
The Himalayas

Elizabeth Cowles



Everest, across Nuptse ridge
Lhotse to L.
(Gilman)



Everest (R)
Taken by Bill Tilman



All boys together

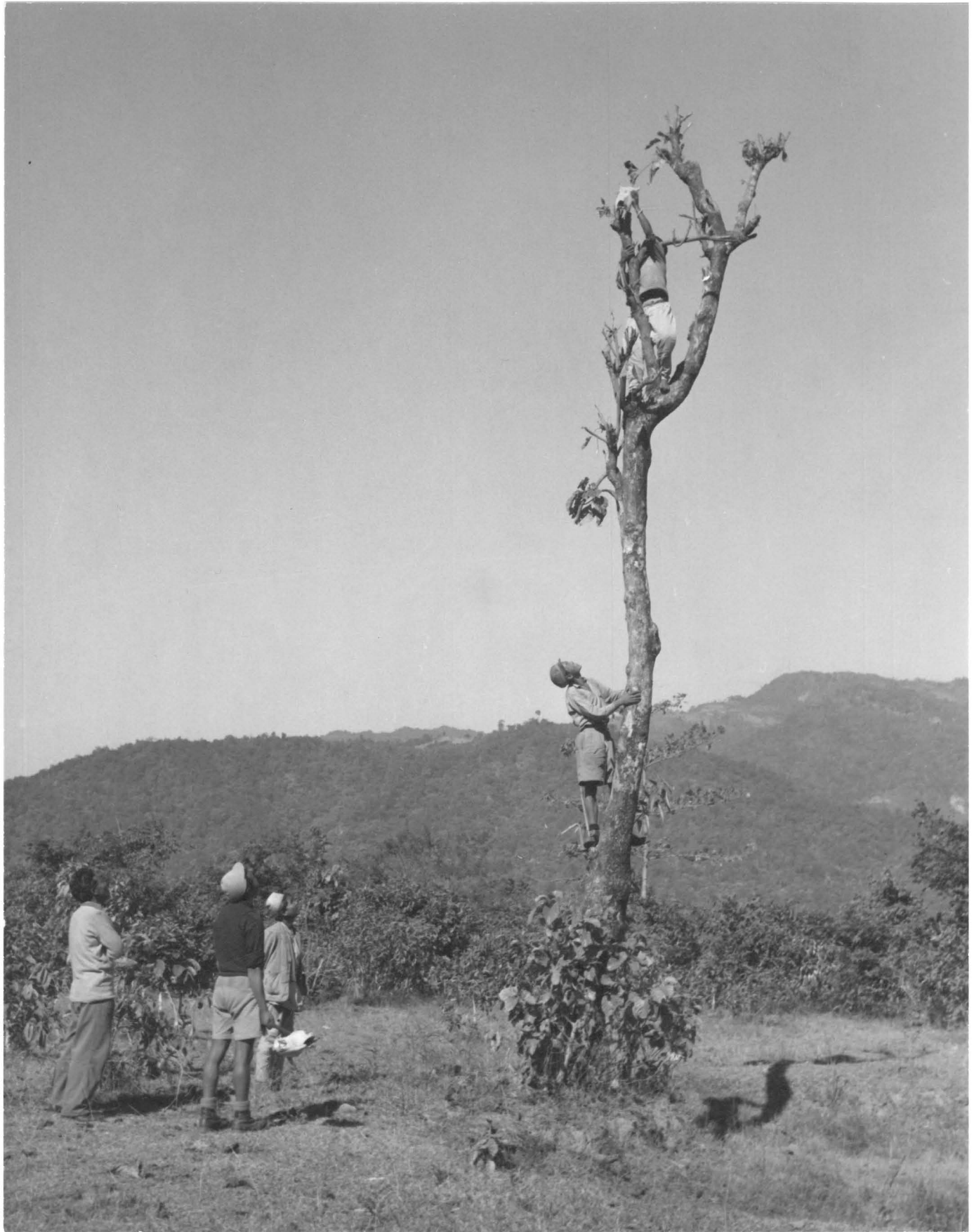


Decorating for Thanksgiving Dinner
on the way out

Anderson Bakewell



Roadside Hospitality
on the way out



Sherpa Antics



First commercial air flight to Kathmandu arrives on Oct. 12, 1950 from Patna