

# LHASA AND ITS MYSTERIES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### LHASA THE FORBIDDEN.

*"In the heart of Asia lasts to this day the one mystery which the nineteenth century has still left to the twentieth to explore—the Tibetan oracle of Lhasa."*—CURZON.

*"In the year of the Wood-Dragon [1904 A.D.] the first part of the year protects the young king; [then] there is a great coming forward of robbers, quarrelling and fighting, full many enemies, troublous grief by weapons and such-like will arise, the king, father and son will be fighting. At the end of the year a conciliatory speaker will vanquish the war."*—TIBETAN PROPHECY from Almanac for the Wood-Dragon Year [1904 A.D.].



WREATHED in the romance of centuries, LHASA, the secret citadel of the "undying" Grand Lama, has stood shrouded in impenetrable mystery on the Roof-of-the-World, alluring yet defying our most adventurous travellers to enter her closed gates. With all the fascination of an unsolved enigma, this mysterious city has held the imagination captive, as one of the last of the secret places of the earth, as the Mecca of East

Asia, the sacerdotal city where the "Living Buddha," enthroned as a god, reigns eternally over his empire of tonsured monks, weaving their ropes of sand like the schoolmen of old, or placidly twirling their prayer-wheels, droning their mystic spells and exorcising devils in the intervals of their dreamy meditations. But now, in the fateful Tibetan Year of the Wood-Dragon, the fairy Prince of "Civilisation" has roused her from her slumbers, her closed doors are broken down, her dark veil of mystery is lifted up, and the long-sealed shrine, with its grotesque cults and its idolised Grand Lama, shorn of his sham nimbus, have yielded up their secrets, and lie disenchanting before our Western eyes. Thus, alas! inevitably, do our cherished romances of the old pagan world crumble at the touch of our modern hands!

How the astrologers of Tibet were able to predict this distressful storm which was in store for their country, so long before it happened, and to specify that it should occur exactly in this very year, is amazing. Certain it is, that the prophetic words heading the foregoing page, and here reproduced from their original, were copied out by myself, about a year before our expedition was ever heard of, from a Tibetan manuscript almanac for this ill-starred year of the Wood-Dragon, of the fantastic calendar of the Lamas.<sup>1</sup> In view of this adverse prophecy staring them in the face, the poor Tibetans, so deeply influenced at all times by superstition, are much to be admired for their patriotism and fanatical loyalty to their priest-god, in desperately rushing headlong upon a conflict which, even in their ignorance

<sup>1</sup> This calendar, with its grotesque symbols and terms, is compounded of the twelve zodiacal beasts, mythological and other, coupled on to the five Chinese elemental bodies, all of which are implicitly believed by the Tibetans to exercise a powerful influence on man's destiny during the year. See Appendix I.

of our overwhelming strength, they knew was already doomed by their own oracles to be a hopeless contest, in which Tibetan exclusivism was fighting its death-struggle.

The inaccessibility of Lhasa has been due in part to the well-nigh unsurmountable natural barriers

॥ དཔང་ཐང་པ་རྒྱན་སྒྲིབ་གནོད་ལོག་པའི་འཕྲུག་

འཕྲིན་ལྷན་པ་ལ་མཁོན་ནའི་སྤྱོད་པ།

འཆོམ་ཀུན་ཐེན་ཆེ་ཆུང་དུ་བྱུག་ཏེང་།

༡ དག་རྒྱལ་ལ་མོག་ལ་འཆི་ར་ག་མང།

॥ अथैवमिदं प्रमाणं ॥

ཁུ་བའམ་མུ་ཀུལ་པ་བུ་འབྲུག་

ཁོ་སྒྲིང་གཤམ་རྒྱུ་སྒྲིང་ངག་མཐའ།

FACSIMILE OF THE PROPHECY.

which seclude that city behind the most stupendous mountains in the world, and to the extreme difficulty of journeying within the country of Tibet itself, owing to the enormous elevation, averaging 12,000 to 15,000 feet above the sea-level, and the absence of all facilities for travel. But the chief cause has been the political barriers raised by its monks, the Lamas, who are at the same time the rulers, the



priests, and the merchants of the country; and who, prompted by their own commercial and clerical self-interest, and their dread of losing their advantageous monopoly by the introduction of Europeans and their methods, have struggled and striven by every means in their power to preserve their isolation. Suspicious of all strangers, and ever on the alert, they blocked all avenues of approach to their country, and unflinchingly opposed all intruders, repelling them by armed force if necessary. In this way, such daring travellers as Colonel Prjevalsky in 1872-1879, Count Szechenyi in 1880, Mr Rockhill, the great Tibetan scholar, in 1889 and 1892, M. Bonvalot and Prince Henry of Orleans in 1889, Captain Bower in 1891, the ill-fated M. Dutreuil de Rhins in 1893, Mr and Mrs Littledale in 1895, and Dr Sven Hedin in 1901—all of these explorers, after braving unparalleled dangers in the attempt, had to confess to having failed to penetrate beyond the mere outskirts of the central province, and not within a week's journey of Lhasa. As a result of this forcible exclusion from the populous central tracts, the narratives of these travellers are mainly geographical, and contain, with the exception of Rockhill's, little information about the life and notions of the people.

Nor was the jealousy of the Lamas directed against Europeans only. All natives of India, whether Buddhists or not, except a few well-known merchants from Nepal and Ladak, were equally excluded and prevented from crossing the frontier, in accordance with the standing order of the Emperor of China, as conveyed to the missionary M. Huc half a century ago, which prescribed that "no Moghul, Hindostani (Indian), Pathan or Feringhi (European)" should be admitted into Tibet.

It resulted from this exclusive policy that when the British Government wished, in view of possible

contingencies, to get a trustworthy map of the great unknown territory of the Land of the Lamas which for so many hundreds of miles marched with the frontiers of India, it had to employ as its secret surveying spies, for the most part Tibetans, who had settled on our side of the Himalayas as naturalised British subjects, and whose Mongoloid features assisted in their disguise. Of this class were the famous surveying "Pundits"<sup>1</sup> Nain Sing and "A-K," trained and sent out into unknown Tibet by Colonel Montgomery of the Indian Survey in 1866 and subsequently; and to these survey spies we are indebted for most of our knowledge of the map of Tibet. These gallant exploring pundits, both of them naturalised Tibetans from the North-western Himalayas of Kumaon, after being thoroughly trained to survey-work—to the use of the prismatic compass, to plot out routes, understand maps, read the sextant, recognise the fixed stars, use the boiling-point thermometer for altitudes, etc.—they proceeded, in the guise of merchants, risking their lives in the event of detection, to traverse Tibet in all directions and map it out in secret. In this adventurous enterprise they displayed wonderful courage and resource in evading and overcoming suspicion.

The former pioneer explorer, Nain Sing, disguised as a merchant of Ladak, reached Lhasa through Nepal in 1866, and was the first to fix the latitude and longitude of the Forbidden City. Again, eight years later, in 1874, he revisited that place from Ladak by way of the great gold-mine region, in both cases making wide traverses and curves across the country. He did most of his surveying under cover of his prayer-wheel and rosary. When he saw anyone approaching he at once began to twirl his prayer-wheel, and as all good Buddhists whilst doing that are supposed to be absorbed in religious thoughts, he was very seldom disturbed.

<sup>1</sup> An Indian word meaning "learned men."



His prayer-wheel, instead of the usual prayer-scrolls, contained long slips of paper for recording the compass-bearings of places, and the number of paces between towns, etc. ; and afterwards, as it was always exempt from customs-house examination, it secreted a compass. His rosary, instead of the usual one hundred and eight beads, was made up of one hundred as counters for his paces—at every hundred paces he dropped a bead. On his visit to the Grand Lama, in a batch of pilgrims, he was much exercised lest His Holiness, who is credited with knowing the secrets of all hearts, should penetrate his disguise ; but the pundit put on a bold face and passed this ordeal successfully.

The latter explorer, Krishna, who is a well-educated gentleman and a personal friend of mine, is officially known as "A-K" by reversing the initials of his name. He did even better work, the best of all these native explorers. He, too, visited Lhasa twice, the second time in 1878, and cross-quartered Tibet, up to the borders of Mongolia, China, and Burma, with such remarkable accuracy that, when his figures were calculated out in Calcutta, they fitted in almost exactly with those of the Russian observer, Colonel Prjevalsky, at their points of contact in Mongolia, this agreement being the more surprising when we consider that their routes extended across many hundreds of miles of the most difficult country in the world. Captain Ryder of the Royal Engineers also informs me that he recently tested several of A-K's road-measurements in South-eastern Chinese Tibet by wheel-cyclometer and found that A-K's measurement by paces was marvellously accurate. The other most famous Tibetan surveying spies are Lama Ugyen Gyatsho and Küntûp, both naturalised British Tibetans of the Sikkim or Darjeeling border of Tibet.

Even such men were repeatedly stopped as suspects, and as they procured this geographical information at

the risk of their lives, they have mostly been rewarded with pensions and grants of land.

The geographical knowledge thus bravely procured by these Tibetan agents of the British Government, combined with the route-surveys across the outer ranges by Mr Rockhill and the few Europeans above-named, has already filled up most of the map of Tibet, the basis of which was the old "Lama Survey" of the Jesuits, under that most active of Chinese Emperors, Kangshi, in 1717.<sup>1</sup>

A very few Indians also have gained entry into Tibet, during the past century, and even into its sacred capital, in the guise of Tibetans, which their swarthy skin renders somewhat easy. Thus Babu Sarat Chandra Das of Bengal contrived to get into Tibet from our frontier town of Darjeeling, over a quarter of a century ago, in disguise as the Tibetan companion of the surveying Lama, Ugyen Gyatsho; and he was also smuggled into Lhasa for a few days as a feigned Tibetan monk by a Lama friend of Ugyen Gyatsho. The terrible penalty, however, paid by Ugyen's old Lama friend for being a party to the impersonation by which this Bengali procured entry into Lhasa is horrible to relate, and throws a lurid light on the savage inhumanity of Buddha's so called vice-regency on earth. I heard the story several years ago from eye-witnesses, and from the lips of my friend the Tibetan governor of Lhasa himself, who shed tears of emotion as he related it to me. This beloved old Lama

<sup>1</sup> This emperor having employed the Jesuit Fathers Regius and others in constructing a remarkably accurate map of China, more accurate than most of the maps of Europe in those days, asked them to make a map of Tibet. For this purpose two Lamas were trained as surveyors by the Fathers at Peking, and sent to Lhasa and the sources of the Ganges; and their results were plotted out by the Jesuits, and form the first map of Tibet, which was published by D'Anville in Du Halde's work of 1735. See Markham's *Narrative of the Mission of Bogle and Manning*, lxi., for details,



was one of the chief monks of the western capital of Tibet at Tashilhumpo, who have practically nothing whatever to do with the political government of the country, which is in the hands of the Lhasa Lamas. He bore the high title of "Minister" or *Seng-chen*. As he was anxious to learn the language of India, the native country of Buddha, he asked Ugyen Gyatsho, on the occasion of one of his visits to Tibet, to bring with him next time he returned an Indian to teach him this language, and he would arrange to have him passed secretly through from the Darjeeling frontier. In this way Sarat C. Das, who happened at that time to be at Darjeeling as a vernacular teacher in the school there, got to Tashilhumpo, and after a few months there he begged the Lama, in return for his services, to get him a sight of Lhasa. After much importunity the Lama consented, and persuaded his nephew, the governor of Gyantsé, to whom he disclosed the Babu's disguise, to take the Babu there for a few days in the retinue of his wife. When, over a year later, it leaked out at Darjeeling that this good-hearted old Lama had assisted an Indian to get into Lhasa, even for a few days, notwithstanding his high position, next in rank only to the Grand Lama himself, and of such sanctity that he was esteemed to be an incarnation of a divinity, and the bodies of his predecessors for three generations were all enshrined in gilded tombs in the Grand Lamasery, where they were objects of worship by swarming pilgrims—nevertheless, when it transpired that he had assisted Sarat Chandra to get into Lhasa, he was denounced from Lhasa as a traitor, he was dragged from his high office by the fanatical Lamas of Lhasa to that sacred city, and there beaten daily in the public market-place, and afterwards ignominiously murdered, with his hands tied behind his back. His body, denied its place amongst his predecessors,



was thrown into a river to the east of Lhasa,<sup>1</sup> and his reincarnation was abolished for ever by the Grand Lama, who exercises dominion over the soul as well as the body,<sup>2</sup> although, curious to relate, a child which was born immediately after the murder, and who is now an inmate of one of the monasteries, bears on his body the peculiar mark of being a reincarnation of this Lama, namely, the absence of a left knee-cap, which is an extraordinarily rare abnormality. The ruin thus brought about by the Babu's visit extended also to the unfortunate Lama's relatives, the governor of Gyantse (the Phala Dahpön) and his wife (Lha-cham), whom he had persuaded to befriend Sarat C. Das. These two were cast into prison for life, and their estates confiscated,<sup>3</sup> and several of their servants were barbarously mutilated, their hands and feet were cut off and their eyes gouged out, and they were then left to die a lingering death in agony, so bitterly cruel was the resentment of the Lamas against all who assisted the Babu in his attempt to spy into their sacred city, which resulted in practically no addition to our knowledge of that city beyond what was already recorded by the native survey explorers.

Of Asiatic outsiders, other than Indians, a few Russian survey spies, of late years, have added considerably to our knowledge of the Forbidden City. One of the best known of these is M. Tysbikoff, who brought back, in 1902, photographs of that city. The last of all these Asiatic foreigners who contrived to

<sup>1</sup> The Kongbu river at Shoka fort-prison.

<sup>2</sup> This case is not without precedent. In the *Peking Gazette* of 31st May 1877 a Tibetan incarnate Lama, who was denounced by the Chinese political resident at Lhasa for having carried off the seals of office, was declared by The Son of Heaven, under his celestial powers, that "his soul should not be allowed to transmigrate at his decease."

<sup>3</sup> They were imprisoned at Chukya fort to the south of Chetang where the Dahpön died.

enter Lhasa was the Japanese priest, Kawaguchi, and he had to flee for his life in May 1902, when his disguise and nationality were discovered. In revenge, several of his friends amongst the monks in the Sera monastery where he lodged in Lhasa have been imprisoned, and some, it is reported, had their eyes gouged out by order of His Holiness the Grand Lama.

Contrary to the general popular belief, quite a number of Europeans [succeeded in reaching Lhasa in former days during the past three centuries; and, though never welcomed, they were permitted to reside there for varying periods of months and years. Most of them were devoted Roman Catholic missionaries, and the meagre accounts they have left us, industriously collected by Sir Clements Markham merely served to whet our curiosity for more.<sup>1</sup>

The first European to set foot in Lhasa seems to have been Ffiar Odoric, who is believed to have reached that sacred city about the year 1330 A.D. on his way overland from China. Nearly three centuries elapsed before another European followed him, this time also from the China side. The Austrian Jesuit, Grueber, accompanied by the Belgian Count Dorville, made his way from China to Lhasa on foot in 1662, and remained there for two months and passed out by Nepal; the only extant sketch of the Grand Lama's palace, until a few years ago, was made by the former of these two travellers. They did not see the Grand Lama, as they refused to prostrate themselves before him. They were followed, in 1706, by the Capuchin Fathers Joseph de Asculi and Francisco de Tour, and, in 1716, by the two Jesuits Desideri and Freyre, who travelled from Delhi *via* Kashmir and Leh. Desideri undertook this daring journey and settled at Lhasa in the hope of converting the Tibetans to Christianity. He

<sup>1</sup> Published by Kircher; see my *Buddh.*, p. 229.



remained there thirteen years, when he was recalled by the Pope and prevented returning on account of complaints made against him by Capuchin monks who had found their way to Lhasa shortly after him from Patna in India *viâ* Nepal, and established there a rival mission. The chief of these Capuchins was Horace della Penna, with no less than twelve others, of whom at least four reached Lhasa *viâ* Nepal in 1719, and established there a mission<sup>1</sup> which lasted more or less continuously for *nearly half a century* in that city. They were, in 1724, allowed to build a chapel in Lhasa, which the Grand Lama, who held many friendly arguments with these fathers, himself visited, and was deeply impressed by what he saw there. Horace returned to Rome in 1735 for reinforcements, and the Pope sent out with him, in 1738, nine more, *also letters to the Dalai Lama*, the Grand Lama of Lhasa. They reached that city in 1740, and remained there for twenty years more,<sup>2</sup> when they were expelled through the influence of the Chinese political Resident, and were forced to retire with their converts to Nepal. From here, driven out a few years after by the barbarous Goorkhas at their cruel invasion of that country, they settled in British territory at Bettiah in Bengal on the borders of Nepal, where I visited this mission in 1880, and heard for the first time of its chequered and romantic history. Its Tibetan work was not abandoned, and thus has given rise

<sup>1</sup> At Sachen Naga. About 1730, whilst these missionaries were settled in Lhasa, a young Dutch traveller, Van de Putte, reached that city in disguise, and after "a long residence" there travelled to Peking in the guise of a Chinese mandarin, and finally returned to India through Lhasa, thus being the only European who has completed the journey from India through Lhasa to China up till now. See Markham, lvi. etc.

<sup>2</sup> One of them, Beligatti, has left a journal of which most of the information is incorporated in George's *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, Rome, 1762.

to the paradox that the "Vicar Apostolic of Tibet," who is still nominated at Rome up to the present day, unable to find a footing in Tibet, is forced to live on the borderland in China to the east, or in British territory in the Darjeeling district to the west of the closed land.

No Englishman ever saw Lhasa up till the present year, except one, about a century ago, if we do not admit the doubtful case of Moorcroft.<sup>1</sup> This one was Thomas Manning, of the Chinese branch of the old East India Company's Service. He was a friend of Charles Lamb, himself also of the same Company's office in London. Manning, fascinated by the romantic accounts of China and its mysterious dependency Tibet, determined to devote his life to exploring these regions. His friend Lamb tried to dissuade him from what he termed "foolish" purposes. "Believe me," writes Lamb, "'tis all poets' invention. Pray try and cure yourself. Take hellebore. Pray to avoid the fiend. Read no more books of voyages, they are nothing but lies." But Manning was resolved, and entered the Chinese branch of the Company's service to acquire the Chinese language and the knowledge of the customs of the people necessary for his plan of travel. After three years at Canton he proceeded to Calcutta, in 1811, for official assistance in his enterprise; but the red-tapeism of those early days, discouraging the employment of anyone outside its own clique, however specially fit, denied him help of any kind, and would not even grant him any credentials. Depressed by this official neglect, he nevertheless bravely set out alone; and in the guise of a Chinese physician, enduring endless hardships, made his way through Bhotan to Lhasa. He resided in that city some months, and had several friendly interviews with the Grand Lama there till he was finally arrested by

<sup>1</sup> See, for doubtful case of Moorcroft, p. 16-17.



the Chinese and deported back to India. Thence he returned to China by the way he came; but disgusted with his official treatment he withheld the report on his travels, and even related his experiences to no one, and left only a few jottings in a rough diary.<sup>1</sup>

Manning's first interview with the Grand Lama is recorded in some detail, and the glimpse thus obtained lent some colour to the popular belief in the supernatural character of this sacred personage, who just before Manning's visit had "transmigrated" into the body of a princely young child.

"This day (17th December 1811) I saluted the Grand Lama! Beautiful youth. Face poetically affecting; could have wept. Very happy to have seen him and his blessed smile. Hope often to see him again," and Manning goes on to relate:—

"The Lama's beautiful and interesting face and manner engrossed almost all my attention. He was at that time about seven years old, had the simple and unaffected manners of a well-educated, princely child. His face was, I thought, poetically and affectingly beautiful. He was of a gay and cheerful disposition, his beautiful mouth perpetually unbending into a graceful smile which illuminated his whole countenance. . . . He enquired whether I had not met with molestations and difficulties on the road, to which I promptly returned the proper answer. I said that I had had troubles, but now that I had the happiness of being in his presence they were amply compensated, I thought no more of them. I could see that this answer pleased both the Lama and his household peoples." On Manning being asked if he had any request to make: "I begged of the Grand Lama to give me books respecting his religion and ancient history, and to allow me one of his learned Lamas who understood Chinese to assist and instruct me." This request was only very partially complied with, a promise being made that copies would be prepared and delivered afterwards.

<sup>1</sup> These are published by Markham, *op. cit.* clix., etc.

This unfortunate child died a few years afterwards, assassinated, it is believed, by his regent<sup>1</sup> in his intrigues to retain the sovereign power for some time longer in his hands.

Previous to Manning, only two parties of Englishmen had ever set foot in Tibet, though neither of them reached Lhasa. They were the emissaries of Warren Hastings, the first and greatest of our governor-generals of British India. This far-sighted administrator, who did so much to transform the trading East India Company into a sovereign power and source of strength to England, had strong geographical instincts. In the same year in which he assumed office, he caused a survey of his territory to be made, resulting in the celebrated map of Rennel, the first fairly correct map of India. In the same year he tried to bring the Land of the Lamas into friendly and commercial intercourse with the plains of Bengal. For this purpose he established a great fair under the mountains at Rangpur, below Bhotan, and taking advantage of a letter he received from the Grand Lama of Western Tibet, interceding for Bhotanese raiders,<sup>2</sup> he despatched, in 1774, a mission to the Grand Lama, consisting of Mr Bogle, a magistrate, and Dr A. Hamilton of the Indian Medical Service, in the hope of opening up new trade. This mission was well received in Western Tibet, but was not allowed to go on to Lhasa; nor did it succeed in negotiating any commercial treaty. Still, it was a great thing to have opened up amicable relations with Western Tibet, and to cement the friendship

<sup>1</sup> Named Si-fan.

<sup>2</sup> The Bhotanese, in 1772, invaded Cooch Behar, a dependency of the East India Company, and carried off the Raja prisoner. The Company sent a force which retook Cooch Behar, and would have severely punished the Bhotanese, but Warren Hastings forgave them on the intervention of this Grand Lama.



still further, Warren Hastings established a Tibetan temple at Howrah in Calcutta,<sup>1</sup> and he seized the opportunity of the death of this friendly Lama of Tashilhumpo in Western Tibet to send another mission to congratulate the new Lama upon his "reincarnation" — for the Tibetans believe that their great Lamas never die, but on their apparent death merely transmigrate into the body of a newly-born child. This mission of congratulation was despatched in 1783, under Captain Turner, a relative of Warren Hastings, as Bogle had meanwhile died. Captain Turner seems to have been not a little impressed by the halo of supernatural dignity and decorum surrounding this infant, though one cannot help feeling that the irony of the following passage of diplomatic history is at least as remarkable as its official adroitness.

"On the morning of the 4th December (1783) the British envoy had his audience and found the child then *aged eighteen months* seated on a throne with his father and mother on his left hand. Having been informed that though unable to speak he could understand, Captain Turner said: 'The Governor-General on receiving the news of your decease in China was overwhelmed with grief and sorrow, and continued to lament your absence from the world until the cloud that had overcast the happiness of your nation was dispelled by your reappearance; and then, if possible, a greater degree of joy had taken place than he had experienced grief on receiving the first mournful news. The Governor anxiously wished that you might long continue to illumine the world by your presence, and was hopeful that the friendship which had formerly subsisted between

<sup>1</sup> The temple for the use of Tibetan traders visiting Calcutta was endowed by Bogle's friend, the Grand Lama of Tashilhumpo with Tibetan books and images. The building was rediscovered in 1887, with its books and some of its images, which latter are now worshipped as Hindu gods. It bears the name of the "Tibetan Garden" (*Bhat bagan*).

us would not be diminished, but rather that it might become still greater than before; and that by your continuing to show kindness to his fellow-countrymen there might be an extensive communication between your votaries and the dependents of the British nation.'

"The infant looked steadfastly at Captain Turner with the appearance of much attention, and nodded with repeated slow motions of the head as though he understood and approved every word. His whole attention was directed to the envoy, and he conducted himself with astonishing dignity and decorum. He was the handsomest child Captain Turner had ever seen."<sup>1</sup>

But this mission also failed to reach Lhasa, or to secure any commercial treaty, owing to the hostility of the Chinese Resident at Lhasa, who, it was alleged, caused the following letter to be sent by the Regent of Lhasa to the friendly Lama of Western Tibet. He had heard, he wrote,<sup>2</sup> "of two Feringhis [Europeans] having arrived in Tibet with a great retinue of servants; now the Feringhi were fond of war, and after insinuating themselves into a country raised disturbances and made themselves master of it; and as no Feringhis had ever been admitted into Tibet he advised the Tashilhumpo Lama to find some method of sending them back"; and the Emperor of China, he added, forbade the admittance of all Feringhis.

Another Englishman, Dr Moorcroft, is alleged to have reached Lhasa in 1826 and to have remained there for many years, although another account asserts that he died in 1826 before reaching Lhasa. Dr Moorcroft had a remarkable career. He devoted himself to the commercial exploitation of Ladak and North-Western Tibet, chiefly as a source of breeding horses for the Indian Government, but, as in the case of Manning, his request for official recognition in

<sup>1</sup> Turner's *Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama*, pp. 335-6.

<sup>2</sup> This referred to Mr Bogle.



dealing with these far-off countries, was rigorously refused. Even when, undeterred by his want of official standing, the chiefs of Ladak, whose confidence he had won through his unique intimacy with the people, made him their medium of an offer of their allegiance to the Indian Government, this offer was peremptorily refused, with the result that the Sikhs took over Ladak, and it afterwards passed with Kashmir to the Raja of the latter country and so was lost to us. Moorcroft disappeared soon after, and the story which M. Huc heard in Lhasa from the lips of Moorcroft's servant, and also from several Tibetan officials, of his master's long residence in that city in the disguise of a Kashmir merchant, is quite possible.

"The servant's story, which was confirmed by other people in Lhasa, was: Moorcroft arrived from Ladak at Lhasa in the year 1826 with his Ladak servant; he wore the Musulman dress and spoke the Persian language, expressing himself in that idiom with so much facility that the Kashmirians of Lhasa took him for one of their countrymen. He hired a house in the town, where he lived for twelve years with his servant Nishan, whom he had brought from Ladak, and who himself thought that his master was a Kashmirian. Moorcroft had purchased a few herds of goats and oxen, which he confided to the care of some Tibetan shepherds in the gorges of the mountains about Lhasa. Under the pretext of inspecting his herds, the feigned Musulman went freely about the country, making drawings and preparing his geographical charts. At last, having dwelt for twelve years at Lhasa, Moorcroft took his way back to Ladak, but whilst in the province of Nari (or Hundesh in North-Western Tibet) he was attacked by a troop of brigands, who assassinated him. The perpetrators of this murder were pursued and arrested by the Tibetan Government, who recovered a portion of the property of the English traveller, among which was a collection of geographical

designs and charts. It was only then, and upon the sight of those objects that the authorities of Lhasa found out that Moorcroft was an Englishman."<sup>1</sup>

The last Europeans to enter Lhasa were the two French Lazarist priests MM. Huc and Gabet. They went, in 1845, to inspect the new diocese of the Vicar Apostolic of Mongolia, which the Pope had just created. They arrived in the sacred city on 29th January 1846, and sojourned there about a month, when they, like the missionaries before them, were expelled by the Chinese resident Minister, who cunningly persuaded the Lama that their spiritual power would be overthrown by the rival creed of the Christian missionaries; though the real reason was believed to be retaliation for China's defeat at that time in the opium war.

There is, indeed, no doubt that China has all along persistently exercised her suzerainty over Tibet to encourage the Lamas to exclude Europeans from the country, lest her own commercial advantages and political prestige should suffer. China's suzerainty dates only from 1720 A.D., when she stepped in with an army, on the invitation of one of the rival factions of monks at Lhasa, to put down a civil and religious war there. On restoring order, the emperor Kangshi established at Lhasa for the first time two Chinese mandarins as political agents or *Ambans*<sup>2</sup>—of whom we have heard so much lately—with large powers<sup>3</sup> and a suitable force for their protection. Up to this time Tibet, though paying nominal tribute to China, was practically independent. As an indemnity,

<sup>1</sup> Huc's *Travels in Tartary*, etc., ii. 202. Huc fully discusses the conflicting statement of Moorcroft's prior death, which is suggestive of a possibility of mistake.

<sup>2</sup> It is a Manchu word, and all Ambans are Manchus and bear the title of "Imperial Associate Resident in Tibet and Military Deputy Lieutenant-Governor."

<sup>3</sup> See p. 34, footnote.



China also retained a large slice of the richest part of Eastern Tibet<sup>1</sup> (see map).

Still tighter did China draw her hold over Tibet to the express exclusion of Europeans, when the Emperor Chenlung (famous for his artistic porcelain) had to send an army to drive the Goorkhas out of Tibet in 1792. In that year the freebooting Goorkhas attracted by the reports of the immense riches of the great monastery of Western Tibet which Bogle and Turner had visited, sent an expedition to plunder it. The panic-struck monks appealed to the Chinese emperor, whose army routed the Goorkhas, drove them over the Kirong Pass (about 16,000 feet above the sea), and pursuing them into Nepal, inflicted on them a humiliating defeat near their capital (Kathmandu).<sup>2</sup> As the Chinese general reported that the Goorkhas had been assisted by British officers (which, however, was not a fact), China thereupon established the forts at Phari and other places along the Indian frontier to bar all ingress from that side.

Since our Sikhim-Tibet war of 1888, the Chinese have aided the Tibetans in making exclusion still more absolute.

My own private attempt to reach Lhasa from the Nepal side, in the summer of 1892, in the disguise of a Tibetan pilgrim, with surveying instruments secreted in prayer-wheels, hollow walking-sticks, and false-bottomed baskets, was frustrated by the unfortunate circumstance that the Raja of our protected Himalayan

<sup>1</sup> The districts of Dartsendo (Ta-t sien-lu), Lithang with its silver mines, Bathang and Amdo, all now incorporated in Sze-chuan province.

<sup>2</sup> An amusing reference to this Chinese army is made by the then Amban at Lhasa in a letter translated by Mr Rockhill:—"At present (1791) the wild Gorkhas have everywhere shown their deceitfulness; the Imperial forces are advancing against them, and they no more can escape than fish at the bottom of a cauldron, so easy will be the task of putting out the flames of revolt and restoring order"—(*Jour. Roy. As. Soc.* xxiii. 22). And the Amban proved to be quite correct.

state of Sikkim, to the east of Nepal, on his intrigues with the Tibetans having been discovered, escaped with all his valuables into Tibet, at the very time and by the very same track, *vid* Tashiraka, which I had selected. Thereupon that track, thus favoured by the Raja in his unplanned excursion, the only one at all promising for my purpose, was so rigorously watched by both Nepalese and Tibetans that my small party was detected. In the passes remote from the central province I found it was possible to evade the frontier guards so as to march for several days in the interior, always shifting camp after dark to circumvent spies and robbers. In this way on two occasions I penetrated to the source of the Sutlej river in North-Western Tibet, but when discovered and stopped I had of course to return to avoid political complications.

To escape detection was well-nigh impossible for a European, as every headman of every village in Central and Western Tibet has for many years been held responsible by the Lhasa Lamas, under penalty of death, that no foreigner should pass through or receive shelter in his village. The headman passed on this threat and responsibility to each villager. Thus every Tibetan watched and pryed so keenly into the personality of all travellers, that our Tibetan survey spies were constantly stopped on suspicion. Even the Mongolian-featured Kawaguchi was frequently suspected—"You are not what you pretend to be," said one of his inquisitive companions; "I am inclined to think you are an Englishman in disguise. If you are not actually English, I am sure you are a European of some sort." Nevertheless, as there was an off-chance of escaping detection, I was willing to take it, notwithstanding that my movements at Darjeeling were watched by resident Tibetan spies, and a description of my appearance sent to Lhasa. In this latter was the reference to blue eyes, which



puzzled Dr Sven Hedin as to why his Tibetan captors should search for this particular feature in his face.

The almost insuperable obstacles thus raised against entry to any part of Tibet proper, even far outside the charmed Lhasa, seems to have led many European travellers of late years to extend the limits of the magical term "Tibet" so far northward as to include the whole of that vast uninhabitable desert the "Changthang" (see map, p. 41), which lies between inhabited Tibet and the Kuen Lun wall of the lofty plateau overlooking the lowlands of Central Asia; although neither this no-man's-land itself nor its approaches are held by the Tibetans, nor by anyone to "forbid" the way for hundreds of miles. One result of this has been to convey the false impression to the public that Tibet is a vast desert plain, bleak, barren and treeless, which we shall see is widely different from the reality.

This isolation of Lhasa, maintained for so many centuries, has resulted in that city becoming the centre of the most extreme form of priest-government the world has ever seen, and has led its esoteric priest-king, in his luxurious, self-centred leisure, to arrogate to himself the position of a divinity. He is adored as a manifestation of the Divine Being who has taken an undying form upon the earth—a supernatural condition which has exercised over European minds a weird fascination.