

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-08181-8 - Lhasa and its Mysteries: With a Record of the Expedition of 1903–1904

L. Austine Waddell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

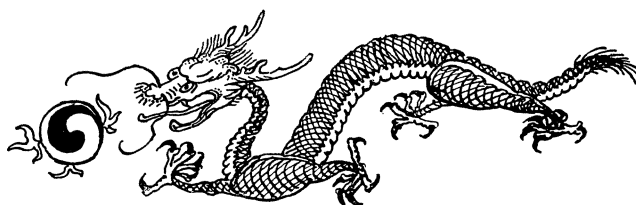
LHASA AND ITS MYSTERIES.

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

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-08181-8 - Lhasa and its Mysteries: With a Record of the Expedition of 1903–1904

L. Austine Waddell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

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.¹ 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

¹ 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.

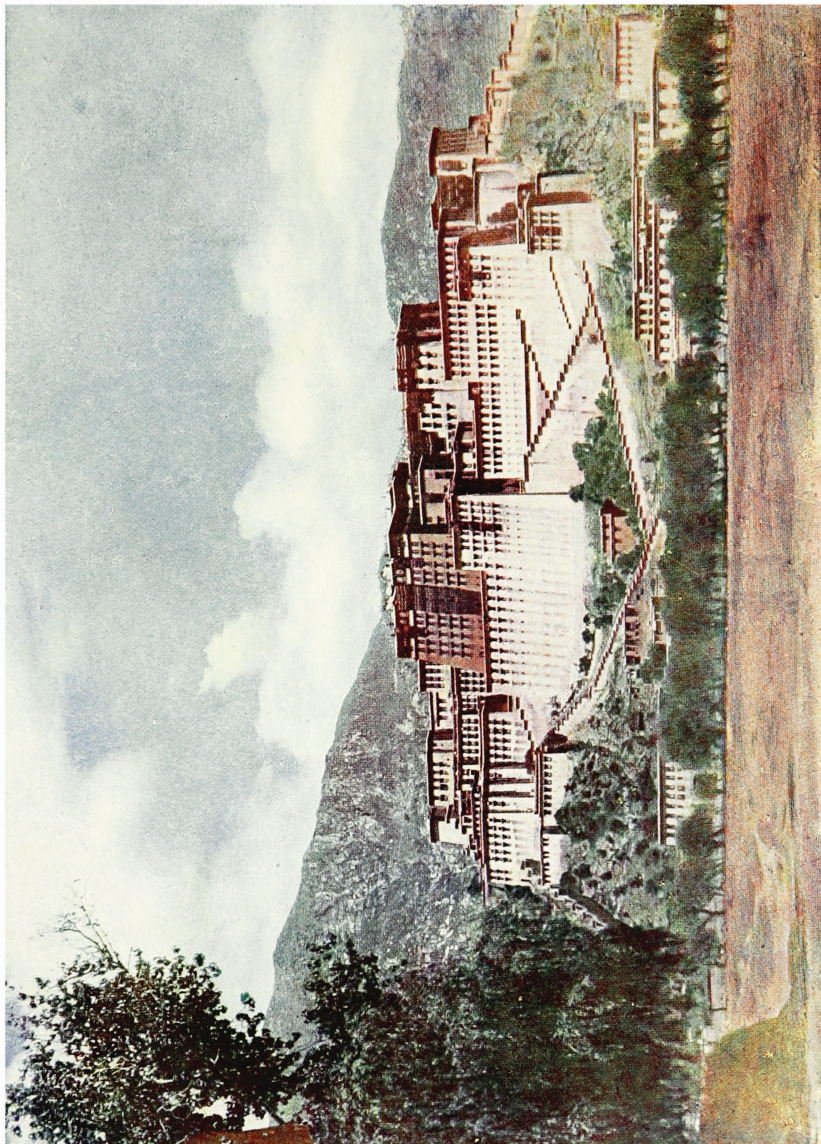
Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-08181-8 - Lhasa and its Mysteries: With a Record of the Expedition of 1903–1904

L. Austine Waddell

Excerpt

[More information](#)



Antré & Steigh, Ltd.

PALACE OF DALAI LAMA ON POTALA AT LHASA.

Reproduced from "Colour Photographs" taken from nature by the Author.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-08181-8 - Lhasa and its Mysteries: With a Record of the Expedition of 1903–1904

L. Austine Waddell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-08181-8 - Lhasa and its Mysteries: With a Record of the Expedition of 1903-1904

L. Austine Waddell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

1.] THE INACCESSIBILITY OF LHASA 3

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

། དབང་ཐང་བུ་ཕུན་སྐད་གནི་ལོ་གིང་པོ་ལྷུག།
 །ལོ་སྐྱོད་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཞོན་ནུ་ལི་ཕྱོད་།
 །ཚོམ་རྒྱན་ཐེན་ཚེ་རྩོད་ལྷུག་ལོང་།
 །དག་རྒྱན་ལ་སོགས་འཚོར་བ་མང་།
 །མཚོན་གྱི་ཕྱག་བཟུལ་ལྷ་ཚོགས་ལྷུང་།
 །ཆར་བབས་སྐྱ་རྒྱལ་པ་ལྷ་ལྷུག།
 །ལོ་སྐྱོད་གཡུལ་རྒྱལ་སྐྱན་ངག་མཁའ་།།

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

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-08181-8 - Lhasa and its Mysteries: With a Record of the Expedition of 1903–1904

L. Austine Waddell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

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

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-08181-8 - Lhasa and its Mysteries: With a Record of the Expedition of 1903–1904

L. Austine Waddell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

1.] SURVEYED BY TRAINED NATIVE SPIES 5

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”¹ 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.

¹ An Indian word meaning “learned men.”

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-08181-8 - Lhasa and its Mysteries: With a Record of the Expedition of 1903–1904

L. Austine Waddell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

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 Küntüp, both naturalised British Tibetans of the Sikhim or Darjeeling border of Tibet.

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

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-08181-8 - Lhasa and its Mysteries: With a Record of the Expedition of 1903–1904

L. Austine Waddell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

1.]

INDIAN SURVEY SPIES

7

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 1717.¹

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

¹ 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,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-08181-8 - Lhasa and its Mysteries: With a Record of the Expedition of 1903–1904

L. Austine Waddell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

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,