

# A HISTORY OF WESTERN TIBET

ONE OF THE UNKNOWN EMPIRES

A.H. FRANCKE

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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## Author's Preface

It is now a little over fifty years since General Sir Alexander Cunningham wrote the first outline of Western Tibetan history. It is found in his *Ladak*. Since then a great mass of material which is of historical interest has accumulated, and thus the time has arrived for the compilation of another popular history of that country. I do not say, "for a scientific history". That may be written when all the historical records of whose existence we know have been edited. There are such historical records, which it is extremely difficult for a European to get hold of, although there can be no doubt about their existence. Among them are the chronicles of several lines of vassal-princes. But, as the principal historical work, the *Ladvags rgyal rabs*, the "Book of the Kings of Ladakh," has been translated in a masterly manner by Dr Karl Marx, late Moravian missionary at Leh, we may now venture on a popular history of Western Tibet, without running the risk of making gross mistakes. Still, there can be no doubt that in another fifty years it will be possible to write a still more reliable book on the same topic. I am particularly glad that this history gives me an opportunity to place before a larger public the results of Dr Karl Marx's excellent historical studies, and thus to give expression to my gratitude to my beloved teacher.

As some knowledge of Buddhism is nowadays considered to form part of one's general education, I have not thought it necessary to explain every one of the many Buddhist mythological names occurring in the book. Only those which are of a purely local interest to Ladakh have been explained.

My thanks are due to Dr F.E. Shawe, of Leh, for kindly reading

the first rough copy of my MS, and for many suggestions, additions, and corrections, with regard to the subject-matter; to Major F.M. Peacock, the well-known military novelist, for many suggestions with regard to improving the style; and to the Rev. C.J. Klesel, Secretary of Moravian Missions, for kindly attending to the final revision.

The Tibetan names are spelt in a way to make them pronounceable for English readers. All the vowels should be pronounced as in German or Italian.

A.H. FRANCKE



PRESENT-DAY LADAKHIS

*A History of Western Tibet* is based on foreign and western Tibetan sources of information. The western Tibetan sources of information are records on stones and on paper. Records on stones cover the period 200 B.C. to 1900 A.D. Records on paper are the chronicles of the Kings of Leh (or Ladakh). Though these are edited ones, much remains to be done.

According to Francke it's not time for the compilation of a "scientific history". That may be written when all the historical records of whose existence we know have been edited. There are historical records, which it is extremely difficult for a European to get hold of, although there can be no doubt about their existence. Among them are the chronicles of several lines of Vassal-Princes. Basing his work on the Book of the "Kings of Ladakh". Masterly translated by Dr. Karl Marx, the author ventures on a popular history of the Western Tibet, without the risk of committing gross mistakes.

Francke's own pioneering researches into the dialects, customs, folk-lore, ethnology, and archaeology of Western Tibet are widely known. The credit for finding such a prolific and versatile scholar as Mr. Francke to take up this work goes to Moravian Mission.

The readers will find *A History of Western Tibet* interesting which is the outcome of scholarly enterprise and research as much as of familiarity with the country and the people.

The book is profusely illustrated, and illustrations and maps vis-a-vis the text make the readers move apace with the different phases of the history of the Western Tibet.

## RELIGION OF TIBET

This volume forms a sequel to the books *Tibet: Past and Present* and *The People of Tibet*. Like them, it is in part a historical account, in part a description of conditions in the earlier part of the twentieth century. Sir Charles Bell traces the history of the introduction of Buddhism, of the resistance and general decay of the older magic-worship of Ponism, and of the developments which have taken place within Tibetan Buddhism itself. The latter part of the book deals more particularly with the religious organization with life in the great monasteries, and with the religious customs and beliefs of the people. The illustrations are from author's own photographs taken in Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan.

## THE PEOPLE OF TIBET

The present book is an attempt to speak about the life of the Tibetan people in their own homes. The contents are based on the author's first-hand knowledge of Tibetan life during a residence of nearly twenty years from conversation with his Tibetan acquaintances in their own language, not through interpreters. In order to keep this volume within moderate limits he had to exclude from it many aspects of Tibetan life. Shut-off from the outer world by their immense mountain barriers Tibet still presented a virgin field of enquiry. There has been little change in the inner life of the people during the last thousand years. As the area is very large and the intercourse of one part with another is restricted, the manners and customs vary in different districts and provinces. This should be kept in mind when comparing accounts of different sojourners.

## TIBET: PAST AND PRESENT

The book deals with Tibetan history from earliest times, but especially with the aims and movements of the period witnessed by the author. Anecdotes, conversations with leading Tibetans, and quotations from poetry and proverbs illustrate the Tibetan points of view. Sir Charles Bell gives an inside view of the Tibetans; he served for eighteen years on the Indo-Tibetan frontier, spoke and wrote the Tibetan language, and was brought into close touch with all classes from the reigning Dalai Lama downwards.

Recent developments in Tibet have attracted worldwide attention and through this Indian edition, Sir Charles Bell's classic study will perhaps be more eagerly read now than ever before.