

Tibet at a Glance





Tibet at a Glance



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Foreword

By utilizing the photographic archives of The Tibet Museum, and compiling basic facts and statistics on Tibet, **Tibet at a Glance** has been conceived to inform readers and researchers of all ages about ‘The Roof of the World’ and the Tibetan now living in exile.

History, religion, geography, the human element and an illustrated map form the information framework, while Tibet’s unique landscape and the built environment are introduced in photos and factual text.

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Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Foreword | |
| Tibet: an Introduction | 7 |
| Tibet at a Glance | 8 |
| The Tibetan Diaspora | 10 |
| The National Flag | 12 |
| The National Anthem | 14 |
| The Religions of Tibet | 17 |
| The Three Great Kings | 22 |
| His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama | 24 |
| A Sketch Map of Tibet | 26 |
| Provinces of Tibet: | 28 |
| U-Tsang (<i>Central Tibet</i>) | |
| Kham (<i>Eastern Tibet</i>) | |
| Amdo (<i>North Eastern Tibet</i>) | |
| The Architecture | 32 |
| Mountains | 48 |
| Lakes | 52 |
| Rivers | 58 |
| Nomads | 62 |



Tibet *an Introduction*

Tibet lies at the centre of Asia, with an area of 2.5 million sq km. The earth's highest mountains, a vast elevated plateau and great river valleys make up the physical homeland of six million Tibetans. It has an average altitude of over 4,000 metres above sea level and is appropriately known as the 'Roof of the World'.

The landmass of Tibet is comprised of three provinces: U-Tsang (Central Tibet), Kham (Eastern Tibet) and Amdo (North Eastern Tibet).

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| TIBET AT A GLANCE | | |
| | SIZE | 2.5 million sq km |
| | CAPITAL | Lhasa |
| | POPULATION | six million Tibetans and an estimated 7.5 million Chinese, most of whom are in Kham and Amdo |
| | PROVINCES | U-Tsang (Central Tibet) Kham (Eastern Tibet) Amdo (North Eastern Tibet) |
| | LANGUAGE | Tibetan. The official language is Chinese (imposed under Beijing rule) |
| | NATIONAL FLAG | Snow lions with red and blue rays. It is banned in Tibet |
| | HEAD OF STATE | His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. |
| | RELIGION | Tibetan Buddhism and Bön |
| | STAPLE FOOD | Tsampa (roasted barley flour) |
| | NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES | India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and the People's Republic of China |
| | | 8 |

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| LEGAL STATUS | Occupied |
| AVERAGE ALTITUDE | above 4,000 metres |
| NATURAL RESOURCES | Borax, lithium, uranium, boron, iron, chromite, gold, oil, natural gas, timber, medicinal plants |
| ENDEMIC AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE | Snow leopard, Tibetan antelope, wild yak, wild ass, blue sheep, Black-necked Crane, Tragopan, giant panda |
| AVERAGE TEMPERATURE | July 58° F; January 24° F |
| AVERAGE RAINFALL | Varies widely. Western Tibet receives one mm in January and around 25 mm in July. Eastern Tibet records around 25-50 mm in January and 800 mm in July |
| MAJOR RIVERS | Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra), Machu (Yellow River), Dri Chu (Yangtze), Senge Khabab (Indus), Phungchu (Arun), Gyalmo Ngulchu (Salween) and Dzachu (Mekong) |
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| THE DIASPORA | POPULATION IN EXILE | 111,170 (India 85,000, Nepal 14,000, Bhutan 1,600, Switzerland 1,540, Rest of Europe 640, Scandinavia 110, USA and Canada 7,000, Japan 60, Taiwan 1,000, Australia and New Zealand 220) |
| | HEAD OF STATE | His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama |
| | CENTRAL TIBETAN ADMINISTRATION'S DEPARTMENTS | Religion and Culture, Home, Security, Education, Finance, Information and International Relations, Health |
| | AUTONOMOUS COMMISSIONS | Central Election Commission, Public Service Commission, and Audit Commission |
| | ELECTION SCHEDULE | Assembly and Cabinet elections every five years |
| THE DIASPORA | SEAT OF THE CENTRAL TIBETAN ADMINISTRATION | Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India |
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| OFFICES OF TIBET ABROAD | New Delhi, Kathmandu, New York, Geneva, Tokyo, London, Canberra, Paris, Moscow, Pretoria, Taiwan and Brussels |
| LITERACY | Estimated at 74.6 percent |
| INCOME OF THE ADMINISTRATION | Annual voluntary tax and donations |
| LIVELIHOOD | Agriculture, agro-industrial enterprises, carpet weaving, service sector and seasonal selling of woollen garments |
| EDUCATION | Total school enrolment is 85 to 90 percent of school-going age students |
| LEGAL STATUS | Refugees |
| | II |

The National Flag

An Explanation of the Symbolism of Tibet's National Flag



In the centre stands a triangular thickly snow-clad mountain which represents the great nation of Tibet, widely known as 'The Land Surrounded by Snow Mountains.'

Across the dark blue sky six red bands radiate representing the original ancestors of the Tibetan people: the six tribes called Se, Mu, Dong, Tong, Dru and Ra, from which the Tibetan race descended. The combination of six red bands (for the tribes) and six dark blue bands for the sky represents the unceasing enactment of the virtuous deeds of protection of the spiritual teachings and secular life by the black and red guardian protector deities with whom Tibet has been connected since time immemorial.



At the peak of the snow mountain the sun, with its rays brilliantly shining in all directions, represents the equal enjoyment of freedom, spiritual and material happiness and prosperity by all beings in the land of Tibet.

On the slopes of the mountain there proudly stand a pair of snow lions, their manes blazing with fearlessness, which represents the country's victorious accomplishment of a unified spiritual and secular life.



The beautiful and flaming three-coloured jewels held aloft represent the ever-present reverence respectfully held by the Tibetan people towards the Three Supreme Jewels (the Buddhist objects of refuge: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha).

The two-coloured swirling jewel held between the two lions symbolises that the people guard and cherish the self-discipline of correct ethical behaviour, principally embodied in the practice of the ten exalted virtues and the 16 humane modes of conduct.



Lastly, the framing with a yellow border symbolises that the teachings of the Buddha, which are like pure, refined gold and unbounded in space and time, are flourishing and spreading.

Historical Background

During the reign of the seventh century king, Songtsen Gampo, the Tibetan empire was one of the mightiest in Central Asia. Tibet then had an army of more than one hundred thousand men and each regiment had its own banner. The banner of Ya-ru-To regiment featured a pair of snow lions facing each other, that of Ya-ru-Ma a snow lion standing on its hind legs, springing upwards towards the sky, and that of U-ru-To a white flame against a red background. These military banners were used until the Thirteenth Dalai Lama created a new design in the early twentieth century and issued a proclamation that it be adopted by the entire Tibetan Army. This banner then became the present Tibetan national flag.

The National Anthem

Lyrics

Sishi pende dögu jungwi ter,
 Thubten samphel norbu önan̄g bar.
 Tendro nordzin gyache kyongwi gön
 Trinlê kyi rôlsto gyê;
 Dorje khamsu tenpê
 Chokün chamtse kyong.
 Namkö gawa gyaden u pang gungla reg.
 Puntso deshi nga-thang gyê.
 Pöjong chölka sumgyi khyönla dekyi dzogden sarpè
 khyap,
 Chösi kyi pel-yon dar.
 Thubten chochu gyepê dzamling yanpi kyegu shidi
 pela jor.
 Pöjong tendrö getzen nyi-ö kyi,
 Trashî-ö nang bumdu trowi zi,
 Nacho münpi yule gye-gyur chik.

English Translation

Let the radiant light shine of Buddha's wish-fulfilling
gem teachings,
the treasure mine of all hopes for happiness and benefit
in both worldly life and liberation.
O Protectors who hold the jewel of the teachings and
all beings,
nourishing them greatly,
may the sum of your virtuous deeds grow full.
Firmly enduring in a diamond-hard state, guard all
directions with compassion and love.
Above our heads may divinely appointed rule abide
endowed with a hundred benefits and let the power
increase
of four-fold auspiciousness,
may a new golden age of happiness and bliss spread
throughout the three provinces of Tibet
and the glory expand of religious-secular rule.
By the spread of Buddha's teachings in the
ten directions,
May everyone throughout the world
enjoy the glories of happiness and peace.
In the battle against dark negative forces,
may the auspicious sunshine of the teachings
and beings of Tibet and the brilliance of a myriad
radiant prosperities be ever triumphant.

Musical Notation of the Tibetan Anthem



The Religions of Tibet



Tonpa Sherab

Bön

Tibet's oldest spiritual tradition is Bön. It was founded by Tonpa Sherab Mewo and remained the dominant religion of Tibet until King Songtsen Gampo introduced Buddhism in the seventh century. Gradually, Buddhism became the pre-dominant religion of Tibet. However, the Bön religion continues to thrive today with a vibrant monastic community, whose discipline, dedication and scholarship are indeed exemplary among the exile Tibetans.

Tonpa Sherab is said to have been born in the mythical land of Olmo Lung Ring, whose location remains something of a mystery. The land is traditionally described as dominated by the holy Mount Yung-drung Gu-tzeg (Edifice of Nine Swastikas) in Western Tibet, which many scholars identify as Mount Kailash.

Due to the sacredness of Olmo Lung Ring and the mountain, both the counter-clockwise swastika and the number nine are of great significance in the Bön religion. The current head of the Bön tradition is Gyalwa Menri Trizin.

Tibetan Buddhism: The Four Schools

Tibetan Buddhism is broadly divided into Nyingma, Kagyud, Sakya and Gelug schools. Although each school has its respective head, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the ultimate spiritual leader of all.

The Nyingma School

The Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism traces its origin to the Indian adept, Guru Padmasambhava. He travelled to Tibet in the eighth century at the invitation of King Trisong Detsen and hid numerous secret doctrines in various places.

These were later discovered at appropriate times and became codified into the teachings of the Nyingma order. The instruction of the Nyingma School is Dzogchen (The Great Completion). Vimalamitra, another Indian master and contemporary of Padmasambhava, transmitted this teaching to Tibetan scholar Nyangting Ngezin. The Dzogchen precepts were later explained and elaborated by Longchenpa in the form of a text, which became known as Nying-thig (Heart's Drop).



Guru Padmasambhava

The Kagyud School

This school was founded in the eleventh century by the Great Translator Marpa. He travelled three times to India and studied under Naropa, one of the most accomplished Indian Vajrayana masters of all times. Marpa's principal disciple was the great yogi mediator, Milarepa, who is credited with obtaining enlightenment in one lifetime. The central practice of the Kagyud School is known as the Six Yogas of Naropa.

The Kagyud School gradually diversified into Four Greater Subsects and Eight Lesser Subsects.

The four Greater Subsects are :

Tselpa Kagyud
Phagdru Kagyud
Barom Kagyud
Kamtsang Kagyud

The Eight Lesser Subsects are :

Drigung Kagyud
Taklung Kagyud
Trophu Kagyud
Drukpa Kagyud
Marpa Kagyud
Yelpa Kagyud
Yasang Kagyud
8) *Shugseb Kagyud*



The Great Translator Marpa

The Sakya School

The Sakya School was founded in the eleventh century by Khon Kunchog Gyalpo. The central teaching of this school is the doctrine of Paths and Fruits, which is derived from the tradition of Drongmi, a great translator who studied in India. Sakya Kunga Gyaltsen (1182-1253), better known as Sakya Pandita, was the most illustrious of Sakya masters. He maintained diplomatic relations with the Mongols and saved Tibet from the onslaught of the Mongol army.

Sakya Pandita's nephew, Drogon Choegyal Phagpa, was also a legendary Buddhist scholar. His wisdom and dignity so impressed the Mongol emperor of China, Qublai Khan, that the emperor later accepted him as his spiritual master and gifted him rule over all Tibet. But the most precious gift, as Phagpa himself perceived it, was the Khan's promise to give up the annual drowning of Chinese subjects en masse in the Chinese region of the Mongol Empire.

This school consists of Three Subjects:

Tsarpa, Ngorpa, Sakya

The overall head of the Sakya School is Sakya Trizin.



The five Sakya founders

The Gelug School

This school was founded in the fourteenth century by Je Tsongkhapa, but had its roots in the earlier Kadampa tradition founded by the Bengali reformist scholar Atisha Dipankar. This school stressed the importance of strictly following monastic discipline and scholarship as a basis for pure religious practice.

In 1409 Tsongkhapa founded the monastic university of Gaden in Lhasa. Subsequently Drepung and Sera monastic universities were founded near the capital by his followers and in time they became the three biggest monasteries in Tibet. Over the centuries the Gelug grew to become the dominant religious school in Tibet.

The head of the Gelug school, known as the Gaden Throne Holder, is appointed on the basis of scholarship and seniority.



Je Tsongkhapa

The Three Great Kings

Songtsen Gampo (617-698 A.D.)

Songtsen Gampo ascended to the throne at the age of thirteen. During the reign of King Songtsen Gampo, Tibet emerged as a unified state and became a great military power, with her armies marching across Central Asia. Thus the King of Nepal and the Emperor of China offered their daughters in marriage to the Tibetan king. The marriages with the Nepalese and Chinese princesses have been given prominence in the religious history of Tibet because of their contributions to Buddhism.

He promoted Buddhism in Tibet and sent seventeen Tibetan students to India to master its languages and, through them, Buddhism. Thonmi Sambhota, the most famous of these students, mastered Sanskrit and was introduced to Buddhism. He then returned to Tibet and, on the basis of the Brahmi and Gupta scripts, devised the Tibetan alphabet and grammar. For the first time in the history of Tibet he was then able to translate several important Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan.

Songtsen Gampo was also Tibet's first lawmaker. He drew up ten moral principles and sixteen rules of public conduct.

Trisong Detsen (742-798 A.D.)

The second great ruler of the Yarlung dynasty, Trisong Detsen, was born to King Tridhe Tsugden. He ascended the throne at the age of fourteen. During the reign of King Trisong Detsen, the Tibetan Empire was at its peak and its armies invaded China and several Central Asian countries. In 763 the Tibetans seized the then Chinese capital at Chang'an (present day Xian). As the Chinese emperor had fled, the Tibetans appointed a new emperor. This significant victory has been recorded for posterity on the Shol Doring (stone pillar) in Lhasa.

He started a wide-scale restoration of Buddhist temples erected by King Songtsen Gampo and invited Indian pundits like Shantarakshita to Tibet, who together with Padmasambhava constructed Tibet's first monastery at Samye. He also declared Buddhism as the official religion of Tibet.



Trisong Detsen, Songtsen Gampo, and Tri Ralpachen

Tri Ralpachen (806-841 A.D.)

Tri Ralpachen came to power in 815. During his reign the Tibetan armies won many victories and in 821-2 a peace treaty was concluded with China. The inscription of the text of the treaty was inscribed, both in Tibetan and Chinese, on three stone pillars: one was erected in Gungu Meru to demarcate the border between the two nations, the second in Lhasa, and the third in the Chinese capital Chang'an (modern-day Xian). Eminent Tibetan scholars, Kawa Paltsek and Chogru Lui Gyaltzen, worked with Indian scholars who were invited to Tibet to prepare the first Sanskrit-Tibetan lexicon called the Mahavyutpatti. Tri Ralpachen also introduced a new system of weights and measures based on the Indian model.

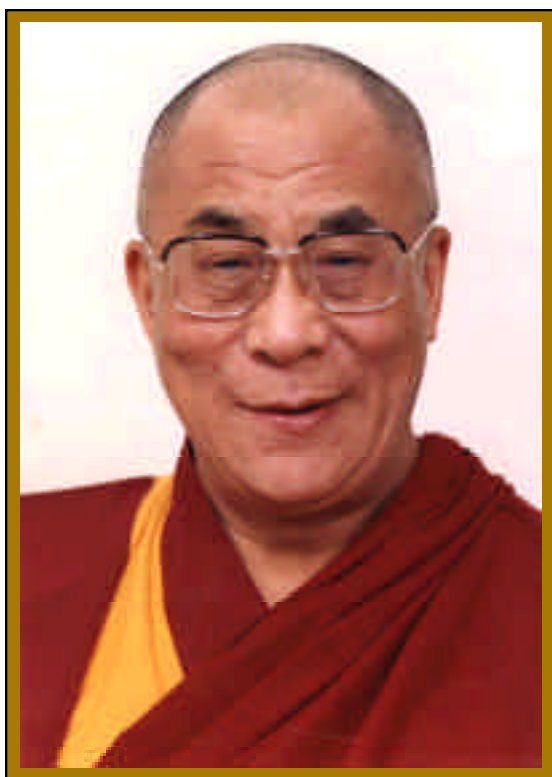
His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the head of state and spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. He was born on 6 July 1935 to a farming family in the hamlet of Taktser in North Eastern Tibet. At the age of two he was recognised as the incarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama was officially enthroned as Head of State on 17 November 1950 following China's invasion.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama escaped to India in the wake of the Tibetan National Uprising of 10 March 1959.

In 1989, His Holiness was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent struggle for the liberation of Tibet.



HIS HOLINESS

The Dalai Lamas

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Gendun Drup | 1391-1474 |
| 2. Gendun Gyatso | 1475-1542 |
| 3. Sonam Gyatso | 1543-1588 |
| 4. Yonten Gyatso | 1589-1616 |
| 5. Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso | 1617-1682 |
| 6. Tsangyang Gyatso | 1683-1706 |
| 7. Kalsang Gyatso | 1708-1757 |
| 8. Jamphel Gyatso | 1758-1804 |
| 9. Lungtog Gyatso | 1805-1815 |
| 10. Tsulrim Gyatso | 1816-1837 |
| 11. Khedrup Gyatso | 1838-1855 |
| 12. Trinley Gyatso | 1856-1875 |
| 13. Thubten Gyatso | 1876-1933 |
| 14. Tenzin Gyatso | 1935- |



His Holiness the 14th
Dalai Lama aged four



His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and his family. From left to right: His mother, the Gyalyum Chenmo, Tsering Dolma, Taktser Rinpoche, Gyalo Thondup, Lobsang Samten, the Dalai Lama, Jetsun Pema and Tenzin Choegyal

A SKETCH MAP OF TIBET



Provinces of Tibet



Tibet as one nation: The traditional costumes of U-Tsang, left, Kham, centre, and Amdo, right

U-Tsang (Central Tibet)

U-Tsang, with its mountainous landscape, is located between the Nyanchen Thanglha range in the north, and the Himalayas in the south. The vast and mostly uninhabited area of Chang Thang covers a large northern portion of this province. The western part of the region bordering India and Nepal is the vast arid region known as Ngari. The majestic sacred mountain Gangkar Tesi (Mount Kailash) and the region unusual terrain has created spectacular scenery. Towering snow-capped mountain peaks, glaciers, river rapids, cloud-shrouded ancient monasteries, holy mountains and lakes are common sights in this region.

The three largest cities, Lhasa, Gyantse and Shigatse are situated in the broad, fertile valleys of Yarlung Tsangpo river. Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, is located along the Kyichu River, and the massive Potala Palace rises from a mountain top, majestically dominating the surrounding countryside. This region includes most of the famous landmarks of early Tibetan history — the Yarlung valley of the imperial tombs, the first Buddhist monastery of Samye and the Jokhang cathedral in Lhasa.

Kham (Eastern Tibet)

Kham, the land of four rivers and six ranges, comprises the lustrous highlands of eastern Tibet with alpine forests, grassland, lakes and meadows. The four great rivers Ngulchu (Salween), Dzachu (Mekong), Drichu (Yangtze) and Machu (Yellow River), rush through deep valleys on their lengthy journey to South and Southeast Asia, flowing into the East China and South China Seas, and the Bay of Bengal. The six highland ranges, which form the watersheds for these river systems, are Tsawang range, Markham-gang range, The Zelmo-gang range, the Pobor-gang range, and the Minyak Rab-gang range.

Many famous monasteries and cultural landmarks such as Dzogchen Monastery of the Nyingma tradition, Derge printing house producing Tibetan Buddhist texts, Tse Dhuk Bön Gon, the biggest Bön monastery, are all scattered across this vast province. The climate is milder here than in Western and Central Tibet owing to the penetration of monsoon winds and precipitation from Southeast Asia, yet the great ruggedness of the terrain contributes to localised climatic diversity.

Amdo (North Eastern Tibet)

Amdo is the region in north eastern Tibet encompassing the grasslands and upper source of the Machu (Yellow River) and the Dri Chu (Yangtze) in the northeast, as well as the deep gorges of the Gyarong region further south. The mighty Kunlun Mountains cut through western Amdo, and an endless swamp and the large salt lake of the Tsaidam Basin stretches to the north. The sacred lake Tso-ngo (Kokonor) and mountain chain of the Amnye Machen are famous pilgrim destinations. To the east and south lay ancient, dense, evergreen forests, which the Chinese have largely clear-felled in recent decades.

As is the case in all Tibetan regions, the population of this province is also composed of peasants and itinerant herdsmen. Most of the arable land is concentrated in the eastern part. This is where the big monastic centres of the Gelug tradition developed, the major ones being the monastic universities of Kumbum Jampaling and Labrang Tashikyil.



Yumbu Lhakhang

The Yumbu Lhakhang is a 1982 reconstruction of what was reputed to be the oldest building in Tibet before it was completely destroyed during China's Cultural Revolution. It is situated about 12 km from Tsetang, on a ridge above the Yarlung Valley, home of the first king of Tibet, Nyatri Tsenpo.

Over 6,000 Tibetan monasteries and temples were destroyed by the Communist Chinese before and during the Cultural Revolution. Their renovated or rebuilt replacements are now as tourist attractions. During the Cultural Revolution sacred monasteries and temples were used as army barracks, animal pens or even public toilets. Precious scriptures, statues and paintings were destroyed or sold in international art markets. The Communist Chinese used scriptures as shoe soles and monks and nuns were forced to desecrate religious objects.



The Potala Palace

The Potala symbolises Tibet and it is an architectural landmark that can be seen from all directions for miles around the Lhasa valley. Little remains of the original 11-storey Potala Palace which King Songtsen Gampo began building on Mount Marpori in 637. Construction of the present palace began in 1645 during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama, preserving the original foundations of the seventh century; by 1648 the Podrang Karpo, or White Palace, was completed. 7,000 labourers and 1,500 artists and craftsman were employed on this construction, along with Manchu and Newar artists.

The Podrang Marpo, or Red Palace, was added between 1690-93, mostly attributed to the regent Desi Sangye Gyatso (1670-1703). He concealed the death of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama in order to complete the task without the distraction of political upheavals.

In 1922, the 13th Dalai Lama renovated many chapels and assembly halls in the White Palace and added two storeys to the Red Palace. Altogether the interior area of today's 13-storey Potala Palace is 130,000 sq m. There are 1,000 rooms.



The Jokhang

The Jokhang (Tsuglag Khang, or Central Cathedral) is the most sacred temple in Tibet. It was established in the capital in the seventh century by King Songtsen Gampo to house the image of Akshobhya (Mikyo Dorje) Buddha offered to him by his Nepalese queen, Trisun (Bhrikuti). At that time it was called the 'Rasa Trulnang' temple. Only later, when the Jowo Shakyamuni statue given to the king by Wencheng, his Chinese consort, was moved here from the Ramoche Temple, was it given its present name, 'Jokhang', or the 'Shrine of the Jowo'. The Jowo statue was originally given to Wencheng's father, T'ai-tsung, the second T'ang emperor, by a king from Bengal. The Tibetans believe that it was crafted by the celestial artist Vishvakarman at the time of the Shakyamuni Buddha. When Wencheng made the long journey to Tibet she was accompanied by many Chinese artisans who built Ramoche to house this statue. The Jokhang was originally designed by Nepalese craftsmen on behalf of Queen Trisun.

Ramoche Tsuglagkhang

The Ramoche temple is one of the oldest religious buildings in Lhasa. King Songtsen Gampo's Chinese consort, Wencheng, ordered its construction in the seventh century to house the statue of Jowo Shakyamuni which was part of her dowry.





Samye Monastery

Samye was the first monastery to be built in Tibet. It was probably founded during the 770s under the patronage of King Trisong Detsen, with the work being directed by Guru Padmasambhava and Shantarakshita, the two Indian masters invited to Tibet by the King to teach and establish Buddhism. The monastery is designed on the plan of Odantapuri monastic university in India (present-day Bihar), and mirrors the structure of the universe according to Buddhist cosmology. The central temple represents Mount Sumeru, the mythical mountain at the centre of the cosmos. Around it are four temples called 'ling', or continents, which represent the four continents situated in the vast ocean to the north, south, east and west of Sumeru. To the right and left of each of these are smaller temples, called 'ling-tren', representing sub-continents. Four great stupas, in four colours (white, red, blue and green) stand facing the south-east, south-west, north-west, and north-east corners of the main temple.



Yerpa

Yerpa was a village of hermits and recluses who lived on a site sanctified by Guru Padmasambhava, Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal, Atisha and many of the great mystics of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Since the seventh century it has always been considered as one of the most sacred sites in Central Tibet.



Ruins of the Guge Kingdom

Guge was a kingdom in Western Tibet, established in the 10th century by a descendant of King Lang Dharma who fled from Lhasa after the collapse of the Yarlung Dynasty. The ruins of Guge cover 180,000 sq m and stand on a hilltop near the Langchen Khabab River. They used to include a 300-room castle.



THE ARCHITECTURE

Tholing Monastery

The great translator Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo founded this monastery in Western Tibet in the 10th century. He studied Buddhism in India for more than 17 years and, upon his return to Ngari (Western Tibet), supervised the translation of all the Indian Buddhist sutras into Tibetan script. Tholing Monastery is famous for its temples and Lhakhang Karpo and Marpo.



Mural inside the ruins of Guge Kingdom

The ruins are famous for their murals, sculptures and stone inscriptions, which remain in the surviving structures. The themes of these murals, which are centuries old but still splendid, mainly tell stories of kings of Guge and their ministers.



Sakya Monastery

This monastery lies 130 km southwest of Shigatse in Central Tibet. The Northern Monastery was founded by Khon Konchog Gyalpo in 1073, from whom The Sakya lineage rose and once ruled Tibet. The fifth Sakya Throneholder, Drogon Chogyal Phakpa, known as Phakpa, built the Southern Monastery in 1268. Phakpa was the spiritual guide of Kublai Khan, a Mongolian emperor who granted Phakpa secular and religious authority over Tibet.



Tse Dhuk Bön Gon

Tse Dhuk Bön Gon is considered to be the biggest Bön monastery in Tibet. The Second Phur-gyal Mhu-tri Tsenpo founded it in 1074 and Trulku Lodhen later expanded it in 1382. It is located on the Hill of Tengchen Dzong in Kham province.



Tsurphu Monastery

Tsurphu Monastery has been the main seat of the successive incarnations of the Karmapas, as well as the Karma Kagyu lineage, since 1159, when it was established in the Tölung Valley in Central Tibet by the First Karmapa, Düsum Khyenpa. After its wholesale destruction during China's Cultural Revolution, restoration work began in the mid 1980s.



Rongpo Gonchen

Rongpo Gonchen is the principal monastery of the Rebkong region in central Amdo. The Sakya master Sangda Rinchen founded it in 1301. In the 16th century, Shar Kalden Gyatso reconstituted it as a Gelug monastery. There are 35 branch monasteries; most of them are in Rebkong itself.



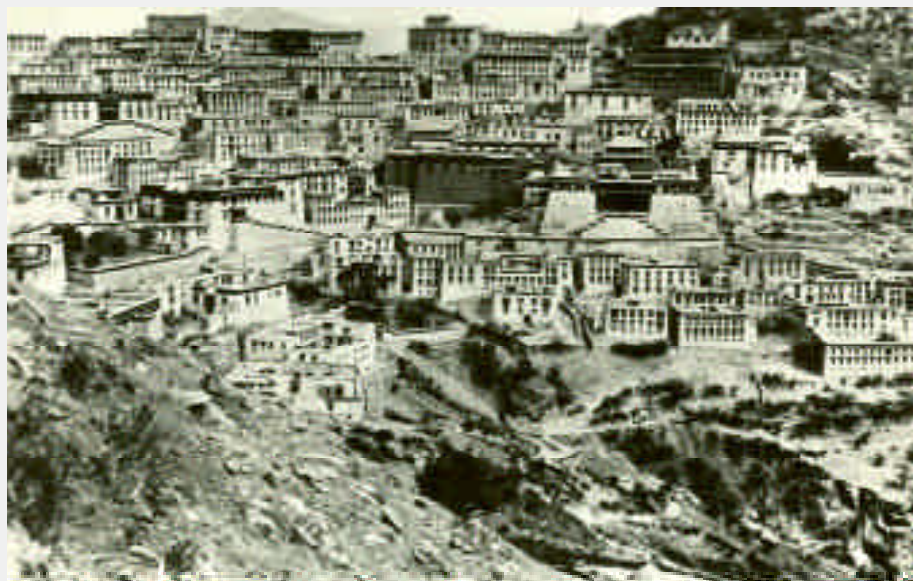
Kumbum Jampaling

In 1379, Je Tsongkhapa's mother, Shingza Acho, built a small temple with a stupa around a sandalwood tree which marks the actual birthplace of her son who founded the Gelug School. This was the first temple at Kumbum in north eastern Amdo. In 1481, the nobility and nomads of the Kokonor region built a larger temple in order to make offerings at the holy tree. In 1560, the meditator Rinchen Tsonдру Gyaltzen built a small monastery to commemorate the birthplace of Tsongkhapa called Gonpalung for intensive meditation practice. Then in 1583, the Third Dalai Lama, Sonam Gyatso, sojourned here and encouraged Rinchen Tsonдру Gyaltzen to construct a larger monastery at this site and appointed him as head lama. The monastery was completed in 1583. The new monastery was called Kumbum Jampaling. 'Kumbum' means 100,000 enlightening bodies of the Buddha. It is named after the 100,000 images of the Buddha Sihanada on the leaves of the holy sandalwood tree. 'Jampaling' means 'Maitreya Cloister.' This refers to the Maitreya temple built by Rinchen Tsonдру Gyaltzen to the right of the sacred tree. Kumbum has been sacked and rebuilt several times in its history.



Kyigudo Dhondupling

This monastery was established in 1398 by Dagchen Sherab Gyaltzen. It was finally completed by Dagchen Palden Chokyon of the Ngorpa order of the Sakya. The monastery consists of a very large blue-grey lodging house for the monks and a dark red temple. It is located in north west in the region of Kyigudo Kham, locally known as Gapa.



Gaden Monastery

Je Tsongkhapa founded this monastic university in 1409 on Drogri Mountain 40 km north east of Lhasa. Ever since its beginning, Gaden has been the seat of all the consecutive Gaden Tripas, the Heads of the Gelug tradition. Gaden Monastery is comprised of two colleges, Shartse and Jangtse, meaning Eastern Peak and Northern Peak. The sutras and tantras are taught, memorised and practiced in a combined programme at these two colleges. This contrasts with many other Gelug monasteries, where the studies of sutra and tantra are kept separate. So a speciality of Gaden Monastery is that its graduate monks have gained mastery in both the sutra and tantra practices. The monk population of Gaden Monastery before 1959 was over 5,000, but in 1966 the monastery was reduced to rubble by the People's Liberation Army. Today it is partially rebuilt and has a small body of monks.



Chokpori

This hill in Lhasa was the site of the Tibetan College of Medicine and Astrology. The Fifth Dalai Lama built it in 1413 for the study of Tibetan medicine and astrology, which is believed to be a combination of Indian ayurvedic, Tibetan, and Persian medical systems. The medical college was destroyed by shelling in 1959 during the Lhasa Uprising.



Drepung Monastery

Drepung was the largest monastery in Tibet before 1959. Founded in 1416 by Jamyang Choeje Palden (1397-1449), it is situated eight km west of Lhasa on Ghephel Utse ridge. In the early years of the 16th century, the Dalai Lama took possession of the Gaden Podrang at Drepung, which was later to become an important centre of political power in Tibet. When Fifth Dalai Lama assumed spiritual and temporal power in 1641, Drepung had over 10,000 monks in 321 different branch monasteries. After the Chinese invasion around 40 percent of the complex was destroyed and today it has the air of a monastic museum.



Sera Monastery

Sera Monastery is the third of the three great Gelug monastic universities in Tibet, situated north of Lhasa. Founded in 1419 by one of Je Tsongkhapa's disciples, Jamchen Choeje Shakya Yeshe of Tsel Gungtang (1355-1435), the complex comprises the Great Assembly Hall (Tsokchen), three colleges, and 30 residential units (Khangtsen). Before the Chinese invasion, Sera housed more than 6,000 monks. The complex was decimated during the Cultural Revolution.



Gyantse Kubum

The great octagonal stupa of Gyantse in Central Tibet, one of the country's outstanding architectural achievements, was built and decorated after 1418 by Prince Rabten Kunsang Phag in the style known as Tashi Gomang or Kubum, which combines a terraced stupa exterior with multi-layered interior chapels. The stupa is said to have 108 gates, nine levels and 75 chapels. Within the 75 chapels, the images form a progressive hierarchy of three dimensional mandalas, as outlined in the Sakya compilation known as the Drubtob Gyatsa, ensuring that the stupa encapsulates within it the entire spiritual path and gradation of the tantras.

Tashi Lhunpo

Tashi Lhunpo, main seat of the Panchen Lama lineage, lies to the west of Shigatse and it is one of the four greatest Gelug monasteries in Tibet, founded in 1447 by Je Tsongkhapa's youngest disciple, who became the First Dalai Lama, Gendun Drub. It was enlarged by the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Panchen Lamas. The monastery hosts the tallest statue of Jampa Chenmo (Maitreya Buddha) in all Tibet. The Chinese invasion reduced the extent of Tashi Lhunpo by two thirds.





Kanze Monastery

This massive Gelug monastery spreads out over the hill on the northern side of Kanze town in Kham province. The monastery was founded in 1662 by Hor Choeje Ngawang Phuntsok as a centre for learning Tibetan Buddhism in this region.



Mindroling Monastery

Mindroling is one of the largest and most important Nyingma monasteries in Central Tibet. It was founded by Tertön Terdak Lingpa, a renowned teacher who included among his disciples the Fifth Dalai Lama.



Gyalthang Sumtsenling

This monastery was originally constructed in 1681 on the advice of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso. It is located around eight km from Gyalthang city in southern Kham province.

Dzogchen Monastery

This monastery was founded at the end of the 17th century on the advice of the Fifth Dalai Lama by Dzogchen Pema Rigzin, the First Dzogchen Rinpoche, and Ponlop Namkha Ösel, the First Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche. Located in Kham province in the Rudam valley, it developed into one of the six major seats of the Nyingma lineage, with thousands of monks and hundreds of branch monasteries. Its Shri Singha monastic college and retreat centre are renowned throughout Tibet.



Lithang Gaden

Thubten Choeckorling

The Third Dalai Lama commissioned the building of the monastery in the 16th century and the site was expanded during the rule of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The famous Lithang version of Tibetan Buddhism was founded here. Both the Seventh and 10th Dalai Lamas were born in the Lithang area of Kham province.





Labrang Tashikyil Monastery

Labrang Tashikyil Monastery, or simply Labrang, was founded in Amdo in 1709 by the first Jamyang Shaypa, Ngawang Tsonдру (1648-1722). It is counted among the six major monasteries of the Gelug tradition. The First Jamyang Shaypa, also known as Kunkhen Jamyang Shaypa Dorje, a disciple of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, was from Amdo. He studied sutra at Gomang College of Drepung Monastery and tantra at Gyume Lower Tantric College and authored the Kunkyen textbooks later used at Gomang, Drepung Deyang College, and Labrang. There has always been a strong connection between Labrang Tashikyil and the Mongols.



Palpung Monastery

Palpung was founded by the Eighth Tai Situ Rinpoche, Chokyi Jungney, in 1727. This monastery was the largest and most influential Karma Kargyu monastic centre in Derge, Kham province. An important woodblock collection for the five anthologies of Rime Master, Jamgon Kongtrul the Great, including the Store of Precious Treasures (Rinchen Terdzo) was housed here but was damaged severely in 1960.



Derge Parkhang
Derge Parkhang in Kham province was a printing press for Tibetan Buddhist texts, which was founded in 1729 by the ruler of Derge, King Tenpa Tsering. The high quality Buddhist canon that were printed here

were delivered to monasteries all over Tibet. The Parkhang is a three storeyed building in which printing blocks are also made.

Norbulingka

The word norbulingka means 'jewel park'. Construction was first started at this site outside Lhasa by the Seventh Dalai Lama to benefit his frail health by bathing in a medicinal spring there. Later the parkland became the summer residence, retreat, and recreation area for successive Dalai Lamas. The Eighth Dalai Lama (1758-1804) expanded the complex, building the debating courtyard (chos-ra), the Tsokyl Podrang, the Lhu-khang Pavilion and the Druzing Podrang. The 13th Dalai Lama (1876-1933) later upgraded the gardens of the Kelsang and Chensel Palaces, developed the Tsok Podrang area, and in 1930 Chensel Lingka in the north west area of the park was constructed. Takten Migyur Podrang was constructed between (1954-56) under the instruction of the present 14th Dalai Lama.





Mountains



Gangkar Tesi (Mount Kailash)

Gangkar Tesi is the Tibetan name for Mount Kailash in Ngari (Western Tibet). At an altitude of 6,656 m and it is one of the highest mountains in Western Tibet. Mount Kailash is sacred to Bön, Buddhists, Jains and Hindus.



Chomolungma (Mount Everest)

The highest and most famous mountain in the world, Chomolungma, stands at 8,848m above sea level in south central Tibet bordering Nepal.



Mount Khawa Karpo

This mountain in Kham province stands at 6,740 m above sea level. It is also venerated as the second most sacred mountain in Tibetan Buddhism.



Mount Namcha Barwa

The Namcha Barwa range is located in south east Central Tibet, and stands 7,782 m above sea level.



Mount Minyak Gangkar

Minyak Gangkar (7,556 m) is located in Gyezil county of Kham province and it is the highest peak of the Minyak Rabgang range, which covers an area of 290 sq km. It is the eleventh highest mountain in the world.



Amnye Machen Range

Amnye Machen is located in the remote grasslands in central Amdo province, stretching almost 30 km in length. Its snows are the contributing source for both the Driчу (Yangtze) river and the Machu (Yellow River). The snowy peaks of the Amnye Machen (Magyel Pomra) range are held sacred by all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as Bön followers. Its main peak Machen Gangri (6,282 m) is believed to be the home of Machen Pomra, a very powerful worldly protector god and one of the most important deities in Amdo.



Yamdrok Yutso

Yamdrok Yutso means 'Lake of Turquoise'. Situated to the south of Lhasa, it covers an area of 754 sq km at a height of 4,408 m above sea level, and is one of the most sacred lakes in Tibet. Its turquoise waters are believed to be the resting place for many Tibetan deities. Yamdrok Yutso has nine islands, one of which houses a monastery and a Guru Padmasambhava footprint in stone. Tibetan pilgrims visit this lake to pay homage and express their devotion. However, China has built a hydropower complex at Yamdrok Yutso to provide electricity to Lhasa.



Lakes



Lhamoe Lhatso

Lhamoe Lhatso is one of the holiest lakes in Central Tibet. It is believed that the 'life spirit' of successive Dalai Lamas reside in its waters, and that mystical messages can appear on its surface. The discovery of the 14th Dalai Lama was aided by images appearing on this lake.



Tso-Mapham (Manasarovar)

Tso-Mapham, or Mapham Youtso, is situated 62 km south of Mount Kailash at 4,558 m above sea level. Pilgrims from India and Tibet circumambulate this holy lake in Western Tibet to express their devotion.



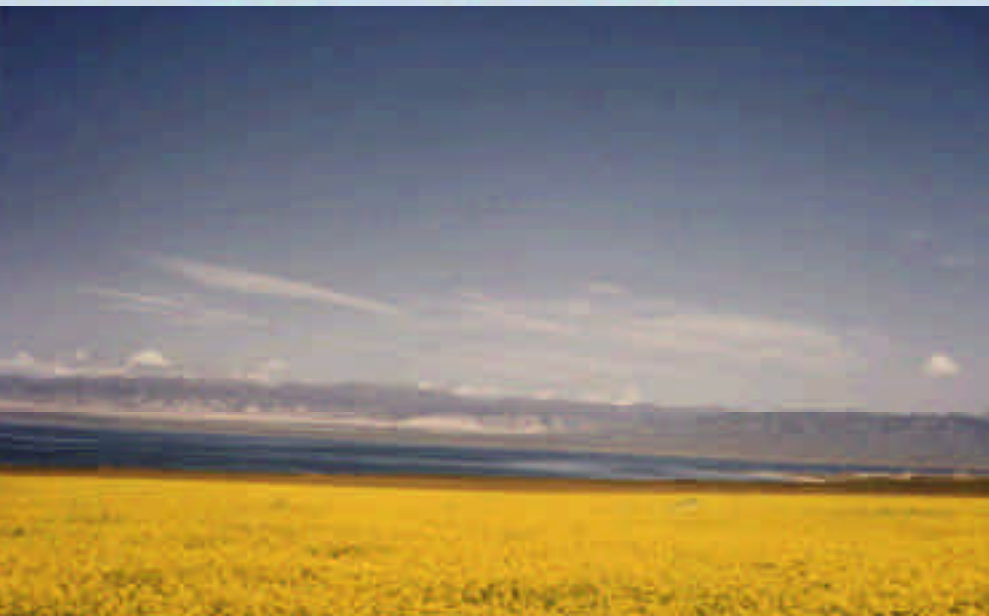
Namtso Lake

Namtso is another holy lake north of Lhasa in Central Tibet covering 1900 sq km. Its average altitude of 4718 m above sea level makes it the highest saltwater lake in the world and the second largest saltwater lake on the Tibetan plateau. The snow-capped Mount Nyenchen Thanglha range soars skyward beside Namtso.



Pangong Tso

Pangong Tso is located north of Ruthok in Western Tibet, straddling the Indo-Tibet border. It is said that the waters at the Tibetan end are fresh and potable while those at the Ladakh end are saline. Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet, Chinese fishermen can be seen paddling out from the shore on large inner tubes to net the fish that abound in the lake.



Tso-ngonpo (Kokonor Lake)

This lake in Amdo province is the largest in Tibet with an area of 4,460 sq km. Kokonor is its Mongolian name, meaning Blue Lake.




Tsakha (Salt Lake)

This lake lying near Tsakha town in Amdo, has an area of 105 sq km, storing 4,40 million tons of salt. It is believed to have been mined for 300 years.



Jadabling (Bird Island)

This 500 m long and 150 m wide island is a breeding ground for migratory birds, located at the western end of Tsongonpo (Kokonor Lake). The island, which teems with birdlife, is completely covered with birds in May and June. It also has a Guru Padmasambhava retreat centre.



*Tibet's vast landmass,
with its snow-covered mountains and glaciers,
is the main source of Asia's great river systems.
These rivers flow into many regions of Asia,
supplying fresh water and irrigation to a significant
proportion of the population living in many downstream
countries.*

Rivers



Tachok Khabab (Brahmaputra)

Tachok Khabab in Tibetan means 'mouth of the horse', but Tibetans call this river the Yarlung Tsangpo. Its source lies in the Mount Kailash range, east of Manasarovar Lake in Western Tibet. When it enters the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, and then Bangladesh, it becomes the Brahmaputra River.



Langchen Khabab (Sutlej)

Langchen Khabab in Tibetan means 'mouth of the elephant'. It rises west of Mount Kailash, crossing the Himalaya into Himachal Pradesh in north west India, passing through the Punjab region before joining the Indus in Pakistan.



Senge Khabab (Indus)

Senge Khabab in Tibetan means ‘mouth of the lion’, and its source lies in the north of Mount Kailash. It flows across the state of Jammu and Kashmir in north western India, passing between the western extremity of the Himalayas and northern extremity of the Hindu Kush mountain range. It then flows generally south through Pakistan to the Arabian Sea.

Macha Khabab (Karnali)

Macha Khabab in Tibetan means ‘mouth of the peacock’; it is also called the Karnali River, the source of which lies south of Lake Manasarovar in the Mount Kailash range in Western Tibet. The Macha Khabab runs for a total of 1,609 km.



Nomads



Tibetan Nomads

The nomads in Tibet live in large black yak hair tents. They graze their mixed herds of yak, sheep and horses in the fertile highlands.





Yak

Yaks are the most versatile domestic animals of Tibet. They provide wool and meat, are used as pack carriers and for riding, pull ploughs and the female produces milk. The female or a dri is cross-bred with cattle to produce dzo (male) and dzomo (female). Adult yak reach a length of up to 330 cm, and their shoulder height is about 200 cm. They can weigh about 1,000 kg, and have bushy tails and a long shaggy coat of coarse fibre. The females are much smaller.



Sheep

Their flocks of sheep are economically very important for Tibetan nomads. Sheep provide wool, meat, hides, and in many areas are also milked.

Before the Chinese invasion of Tibet, it was common for nomads to have herds of over a thousand sheep.



Nomad Tent

Tibetan nomad tents are made from the long, coarse hair of the yak that is woven into strips by nomad women on back-strap looms. Tents are ideal housing for the nomadic pastoral way of life. They can be easily taken down and packed on yaks when moving camp, keep out the rain, yet let in light. The design of Tibetan tents has been perfected over millennia so that they stand up to the fierce winds that rip across the Tibetan plains in winter.



Nomad Family

Hardy Tibetan nomad families roam the grasslands and higher pastures throughout the summer with their herds of yak, sheep and horses.

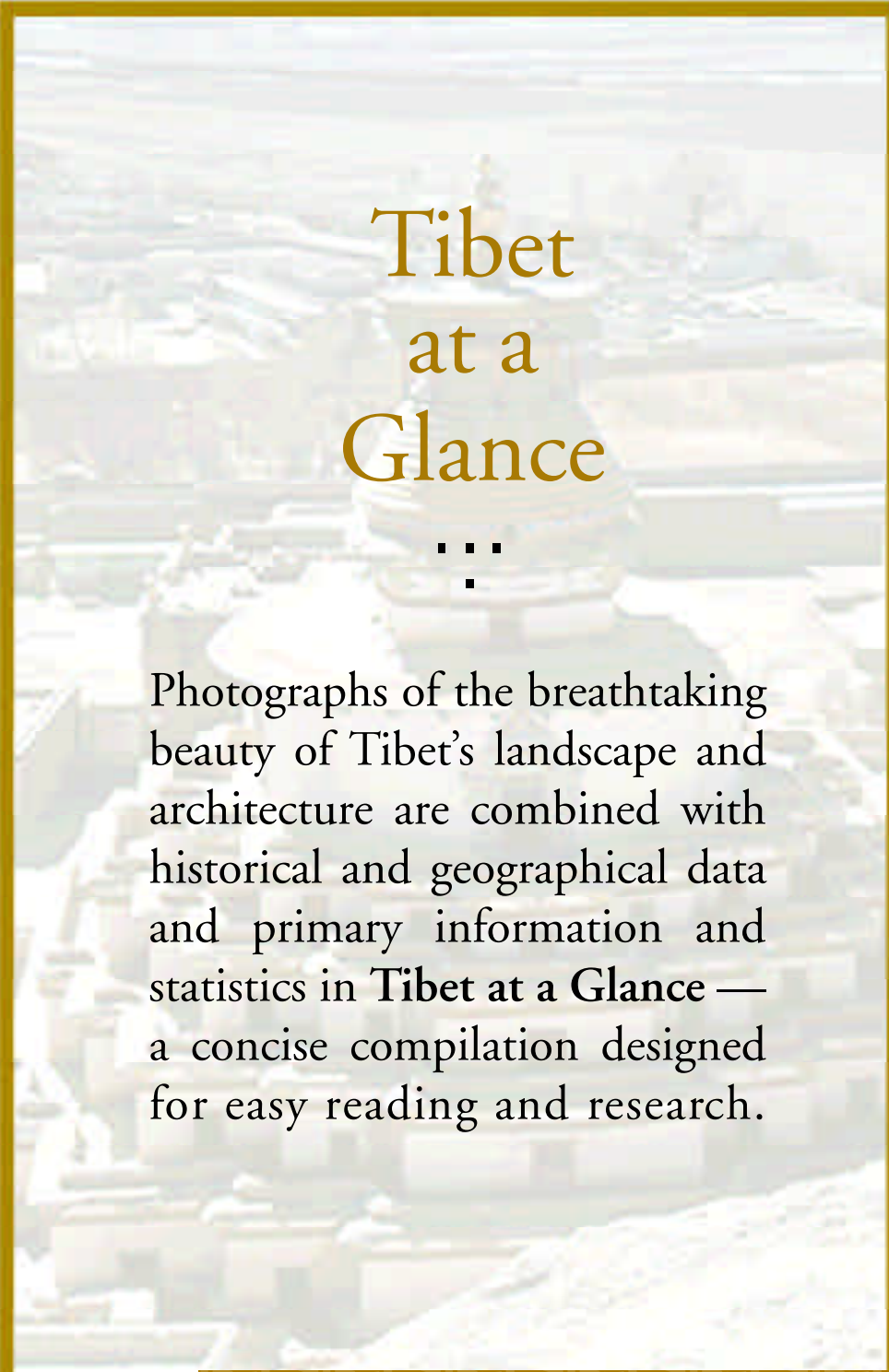
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Tibet at a Glance

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Photographs of the breathtaking beauty of Tibet's landscape and architecture are combined with historical and geographical data and primary information and statistics in **Tibet at a Glance** — a concise compilation designed for easy reading and research.

