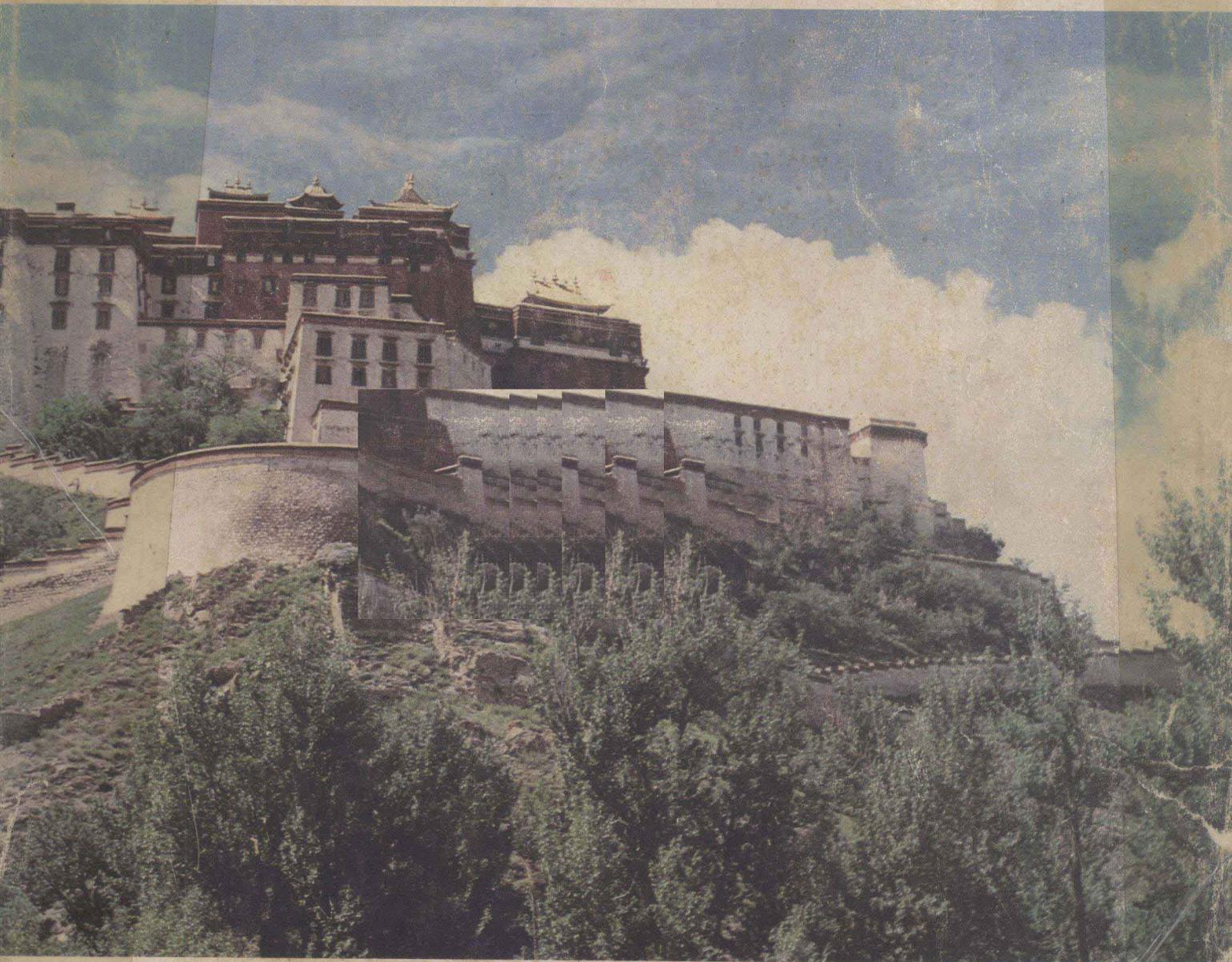




*Touring Leisurely Round Tibet*

漫遊西藏



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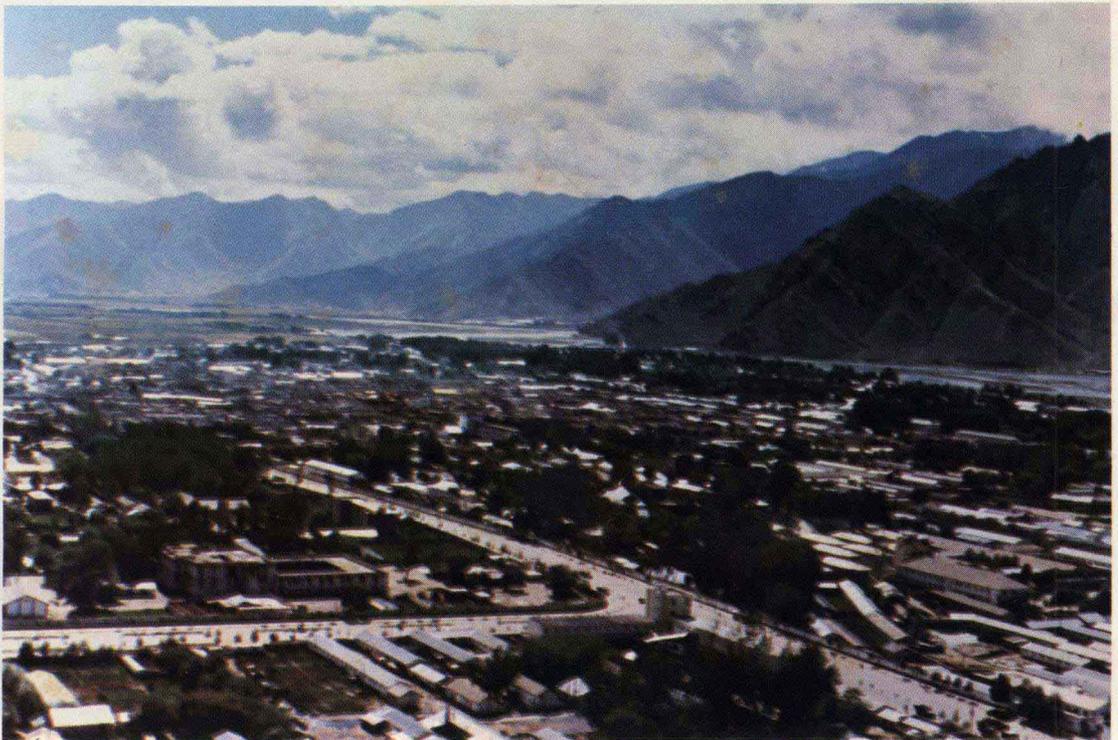
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拉薩飛機場  
Air-port of Lhasa

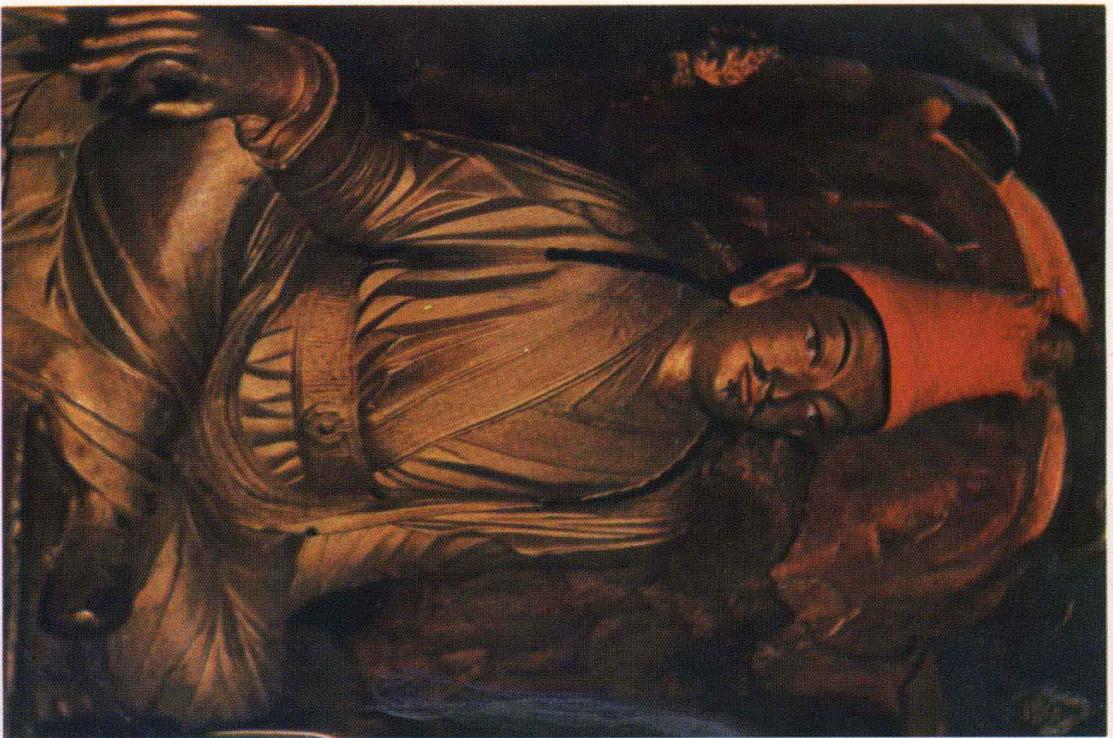


拉薩市全景



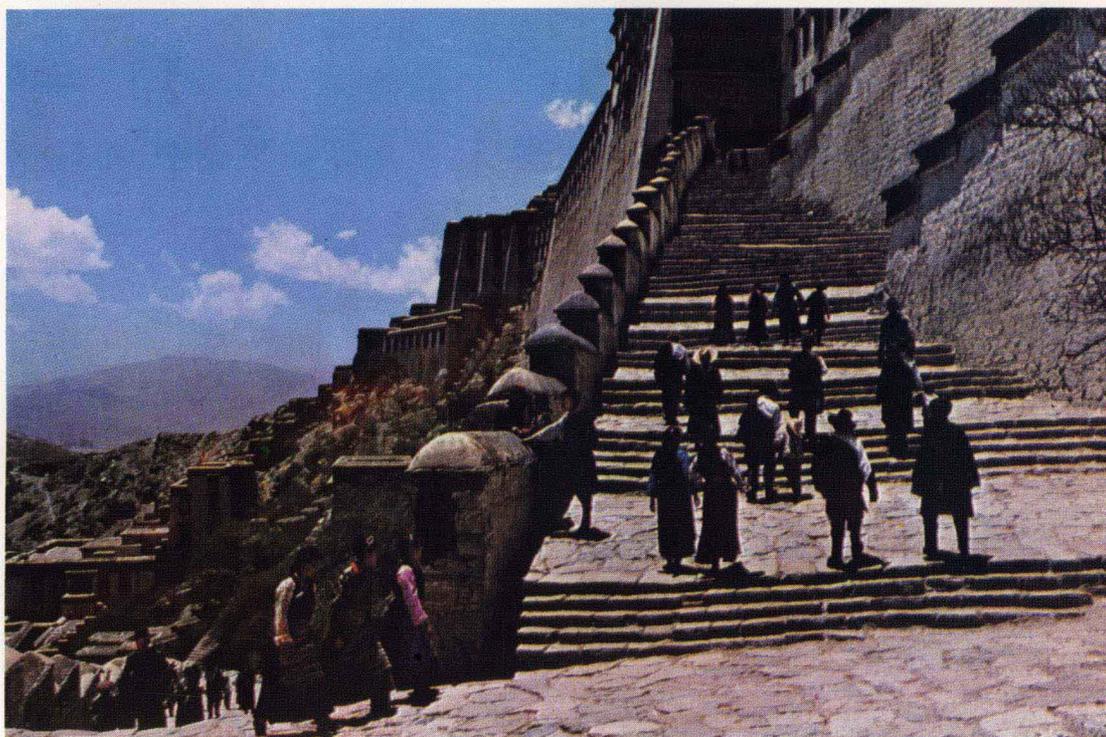
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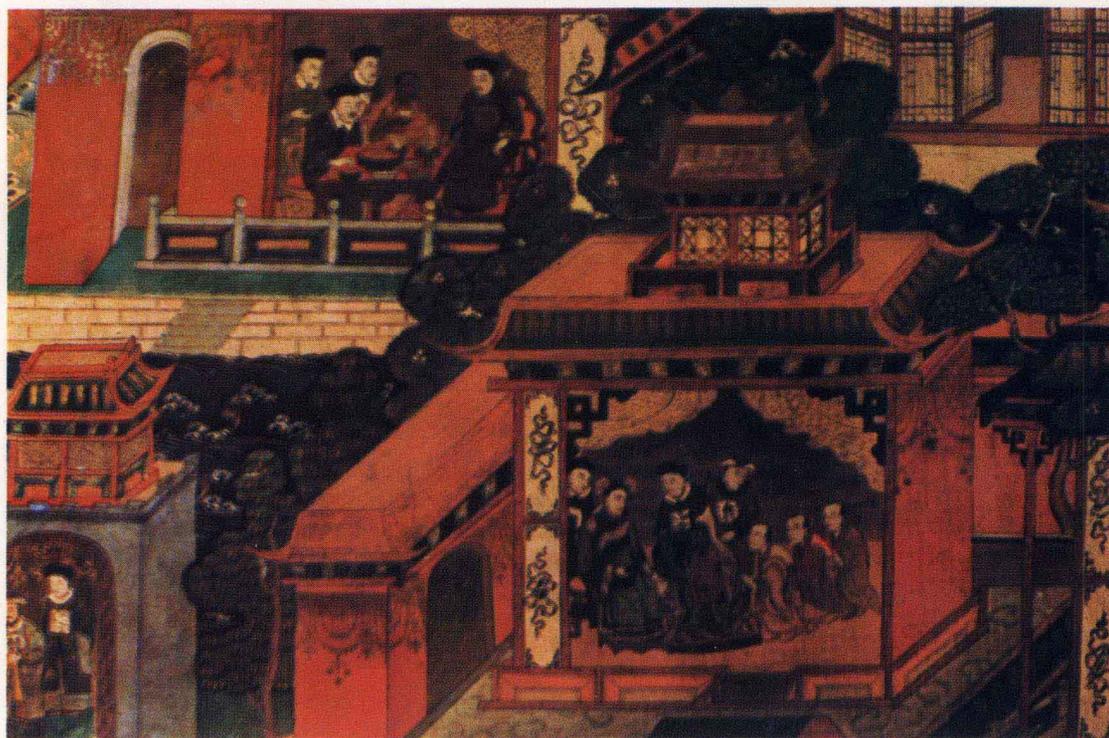
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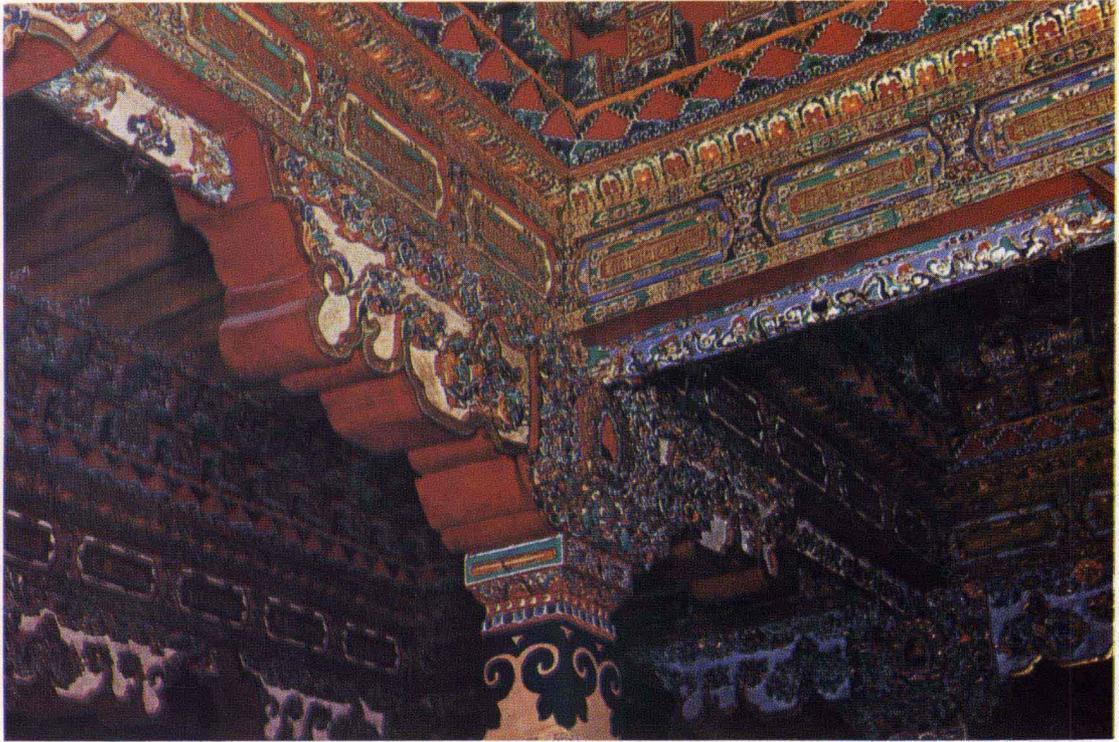
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大藏經

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# Foreword

Tibet is exceedingly fascinating. Some eulogist has it: "If not a fairyland, it does not belong to the mundane world." On the other hand, for its average altitude of over 4,000 metres, the thin air and the severe cold, it is depicted by some as "death-land".

Tibet is situated in China's south-western border region. It was called in ancient times the land of Chian or Yun and in the Tang and Tsoong dynasties, "Turvan". As from the Yuan dynasty, it was incorporated into the Chinese territory, being addressed to as "Si Van". It was named in the Ming dynasty "Wu Sze Chian", and from the outset of the Chin dynasty re-named Tibet, being so termed ever since. The Tibetans address themselves as "Po Bha" (meaning the people of Tibet in the Tibetan dialect). Over six hundred years ago, it was a foreigner – reputed traveller Marco Polo – who first left behind accounts touching on Tibet. Since then, one batch after another of adventurers and explorers craved for leaving their foot-prints on this land which appeared so mystic and hazy as to be awesome and unveiling some, if not all, of its secrets. As late in the '80s, a western journalist has remarked: "In this globe, nowhere else than Tibet has for so long remained shrouded in mystery."

In August 1974, I realized the aspiration a photo-correspondent cherished for long years. For the first time I flew from Chengtu, Szechuen to Tibet. I went southward to Tack Son of Kan Bha hsien and northward to an exit of the Tang Ku Lha mountains. I also visited the "no-man land" – Chian Tang prairie – and such sparsely populated areas as Bha Chiu and Soo hsien. I was singularly charmed with the landscapes, the air and things that are unique of Tibet! At that time, an idea occurred to my mind: how nice would it be if an album came out to reflect the land in all its aspects. In May 1975, I came to Tibet for the second time, staying here more than two months. For over a month, I climbed up the Bhu Dha Lha Palace almost daily, treading every crook and corner of this sacred palace. The work I did then has led me to deeper appreciation for the Tibetan as a great race. It has a history stretching back far into the past and a distinct culture too. A study of its history and culture prompts me to sing in praise or to sob sadly, but invariably inspires one's respect. After winding up my work, I journeyed along the Tsinghai-Tibet Highway to arrive at Si Ning and therefrom I was back to Shanghai. In July 1980, I visited Tibet again. Before making the trip, I delved into a large amount of ancient and modern, Chinese and foreign materials bearing upon Tibet. So in three months time, of set purpose I called many more places. At last I went back to Cheng-tu by Szechuen-Tibet Highway, taking photos all along the way. A poet has this to say: "Every time I top the peaks in Tibet, I feel the poetic spirit permeating all around." This is just my feeling. I have made use of the time after office to finish writing this book.

The writer and photographer  
Chi Fang  
Oct. 1981

## 前 言

西藏，是一塊充滿了魅力的地方。有人曾讚美它“縱非天上，已殊人間”，由於它平均海拔四千米以上，空氣稀薄，氣候嚴寒，所以又有人把它描繪成“死亡的土地”。

西藏位於我國西南邊陲，古代稱羌、戎地，唐、宋兩朝叫做“吐蕃”，從元朝開始，正式歸入中國版圖，叫做“西番”，明朝叫做“烏斯藏”，清朝以後才叫做“西藏”，藏族人民自己叫做“博巴”（“博巴”藏語即藏民的意思）。六百多年前，作為外國人，意大利的旅行家馬可波羅首先留下了關於它的記述，以後，一批又一批的冒險家、探險家總渴望在這神奇而又朦朧可畏的地方印上自己的足跡，直至八十年代，西方記者的報導中還說：“世界上幾乎沒有地方像西藏那樣一直處於神秘之中，……”

一九七四年八月，我實現了一個攝影記者的多年的願望，第一次從成都乘飛機來到西藏，那一次，我向南來到崗巴縣的塔克遜，朝北，到達唐古拉山口，並去了“羌塘”草原的無人地以及巴青、索縣等人迹稀少的地區，西藏高原獨特的地貌風物真是太吸引我了！當時我想，要是能出一本全面反映這裏的攝影畫冊就好了。一九七五年五月，再次來到西藏，在二個多月的時間裏，有一個多月，天天爬布達拉宮，走遍了這座神宮的每一個角落，這項工作，使我進一步體會到藏族是一個非常偉大的民族，她悠久的歷史和文化真是可歌可泣，令人敬仰。工作結束後，我沿青藏線到西寧，然後回滬。一九八〇年七月，我又到西藏，在此之前，我翻閱了古今中外有關西藏的大量資料，因而在歷時三個多月的時間裏，有的放矢地跑了更多的地方，並且最後沿川藏線一路拍攝回到成都。有位詩人說：“每當我登上西藏的高山，就覺得周圍都是詩篇。”這也正是我的感受。我於公餘之暇，遂成此書。

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# Chapter 1 Approaches to Tibet

## Through an aerial forbidden zone

A hot summer day, I started flying from Chengtu, Szechuen. In an hour's time, boundless icy peaks unfolded beneath my eyes. "High up in the moon's crystal and jade pavilions, one shivers in freezing coldness." I shared that feeling of a poet of the Sung dynasty. I was soaring over the "world's roof-top" – the Tsinghai-Tibet plateau. Lying ahead was the remote and mysterious land, locked in by huge, snow-capped mountain ranges. Its mystic charm drew numerous travellers and explorers. Today, in the age of high technology, people are probably keener than ever in unravelling the puzzles that hang over its horizon.

We took an EL 18 passenger plane employed in the service of civil navigation. Before the opening of the Lhasa-Chengtu line, this aerial strip had been regarded as a forbidden zone on account of the dangers arising from land-forms, the exceptional altitude, the long navigational distance, the remoteness of airport for landing, the abrupt and multifarious climatic changes, etc. Undeniably, all these made for the high degree of difficulty in aero-navigation. However, all necessary efforts have been made in ensuring the safety of the flight. Among other measures, implementing rigorously the "2 captains" system and packing the crew with the most experienced pilots have helped build a record of not a single mishap in several decades. This air route has for long been reputed as "the golden fly-over".

Before landing at Lhasa's Kou Ah Airport, our plane wove its way through valleys of 4,000 metres above sea-level, its wings scarcely avoiding scratching the cliffs. Thrilling as it was, safe landing was assured by the ever alert captains.

Another air-line links the autonomous Tibet closely with the rest of China. Taking off from Sian, Shensi, it lands at Lhasa via the Tsinghai province.

## The trying and perilous Szechuen-Tibet Highway

"Along the narrow winding path, one trudges amid the clatter of the horse's hoofs." Thus runs a poem. In the olden days, going from Szechuen to Tibet, one had to tread an intestinal trail and cross rivers in a tiny boat made of buffalo hide. The ordeal and tribulation involved in the journey can hardly be exaggerated. In case caravans from the opposite directions came to meet face to face at a point, it resulted in a stalemate. The leaders of the two parties shouted their dialogue; they would finally agree to the values of their respective merchandises. The cheaper ones were dumped down-hill to allow the more precious ones to pass through. This was known as "haggling out of the strait".

Shortly after Tibet's peaceful emancipation, the Szechuen-Tibet and Tsinghai-Tibet Highways began to be built. The completion of these two world-famed projects have effected drastic changes to the transport conditions, the primitiveness of which becoming entirely a thing of the past. Yet, travelling along the Szechuen-Tibet Highway remains to be venturesome and so, exciting. Running from Yah An, Szechuen to Lhasa, it totals over 2,250 kilo-metres in length. It climbs over 14 huge mountains of which the Second Boy, Tse To, Young Sparrow, Wu Lha are the better known. Among these snow-capped ranges, the Second Boy Mount rising 3,200 metres above sea-level appears a dwarf, for all of the rest surpass an altitude of 4,000 or 5,000 metres. The test on will-power comes with drastic turns at the zig-zag paths, ascending or descending the mountains or passing close by deep valleys. Once in a while, poking your head out of the window, you will be shocked by either the sharp-drop from the cliffs, or the roaring whirlpools, or an ocean of clouds beneath that makes you feel as if riding in the sky.

Once, in September 1980, I set out from Lhasa to return to Chengtu. All the way, the wife of the chauffeur bade him to drive cautiously. I found, however, apart from the thrilling encounters, the journey offered plenty of chances for aesthetic enjoyment. The Autumn rhyme reigned. On both sides of the highway, woods, grass and flowers of various colours vied for beauty against the setting of high-rise snowy mountains. The epigram is in point here: "Unlike springtime, it is prettier than springtime." Yet, I was told by the chauffeur that in Spring, at many places along the road, peach trees and azalea blossom luxuriantly. Imagine their splendour to add to the whiteness of snowy mountains, the greenish forests and the shimmering reflexes over the lake surfaces. What a lovely picture it would give.

On the way, we crossed the great rivers one after another: Lhasa, Nie Yang, the Angry, the Wavy, the Golden Sands, Ah Lun and Big Ferry. Especially from the Angry to the Golden Sands, the bridges straddling over deep valleys kept me more than once in suspense. It would be extremely difficult to have these bridges constructed. On a slope of the Mount Young Bird raised from a snow-covered grave was the plaque in commemoration of Chang Fu Lin, who had sacrificed his life for laying out the road.

One might as well quote from Li Pei, a poet of the Tang dynasty. "So difficult is the way to Szechuen; it is more difficult than reaching for the blue sky." Those having completed the journey on the Szechuen-Tibet Highway certainly appreciate more of Li Pei's poetical implication. It is equally applicable to the approach to Tibet.

### **The Legendary Tsinghai Tibet Highway**

Linking Si Ning of Tsinghai and Lhasa of Tibet and totalling over 2,100 miles in length, this highway runs through mainly the prairies rising 4,000 to 5,000 metres above sea-level. In an aero-panoramic view, Tsinghai and Tibet draw together to form an expansive highland, an integral whole in itself, comprising endless series of snowy ranges.

Technically termed the Tsing-Tibet plateau, it is better known as "the source of great rivers", for both the world-renowned Yellow River and the Yangtze have their fountainheads in the mountainous region of Bha An Ka Lha on Tsinghai side.

This highway is legendary in that it is pregnant with historical and mythical associations. Shortly after driving from Si Ning, one faces the Mount of Sun and Moon. The folklore has it: "After crossing the Mount of Sun and Moon, there is one other sky." In fact, the Mount is really the line of division between two worlds: the farming with green fields on the one side and that of animal husbandry with cows and sheep crowding vast tracts on the other. The Mount has been an object of interest of a myth. When Princess Wen Chen left for Tibet, Tai Chung, an emperor of the Tang dynasty, presented her a piece of mirror, that of Sun and Moon, from which it was said one could see Chang An, the capital city of the dynasty. On her way to Tibet, upon crossing the Mount, the Princess felt utterly frustrated by the scenes of barrenness and desertion ahead, and became nostalgic. The accompanying Tibetan delegate cleverly took out a mirror, the faked mirror of Sun and Moon, from which the Princess was not able to see anything, not to say the beloved capital city. She dashed it into pieces, and continued her westbound voyage. This was how the Mount was named.

Further west, one has to cross a small river, called "Backward Flowing River". It is so named because most rivers in China flow from the west towards the east, but this one flows in the opposite direction. Again, a story has been handed down by the folks deeply attached to the Princess Wen Chen. The westbound Princess, depressed by her thoughts for her home, wept all the time, and her tears poured to form the riverlet. Not only this. The purity of her sentiments moved the God and aroused the sympathy of the river itself. Rain fell so heavily that it changed the direction of the stream. It flowed westward as if to keep company of the lonely princess.

The Tsinghai Lake sends a band of shimmering light onto the horizon. The lake occupying an area of about 700 sq. m. is the confluence of many rivers. The nearby regions rich in springs and meadows and so suitable for animal husbandry, are noted as "the northwestern paradise".

The Tsinghai-Tibetan Highway ranks among the world's highest highway as altitude is concerned. Passing by the Tsinghai Lake, it goes through the vast Gobi deserts where cars shoot rapidly for there are few turns and twists.

We stayed over-night at Chia Ka, Galmo. Chia Ka, a salt lake in the Mongolian dialect, is estimated to have 500 million tons of salt in store. Galmo, formerly a barren reef where the yellowish goats squandered about, has grown into a booming town with a populace of about 80,000 since the opening of the Tsinghai-Tibet Highway. It is the point the laying out of a railway has reached recently. Proceeding further and after crossing the rivers Chomal and Molowusoo and the mountains Kwan Lun and Tangkulha, one finds the expansive northern Tibetan prairie greeting him with open arms.

## Chapter 2      An Ancient City – Lhasa

### Sauntering along the streets of Lhasa

Having crossed the huge Ku Sui bridge on the Ya Lu Chang Bhu River, looking out from the Civil Air Navigation Service's couch, I was attracted to the lofty Bhu Dha Lha Palace sprawling on a hill. This very sight signalizes arriving at Lhasa shortly.

Lhasa, the capital of the autonomous Tibet, is a world-famous ancient city. In the Tibetan dialect, Lhasa means "the holy land". Princess Wen Chen's elaborate descriptions of the place in metaphorical terms recurred to me. "The skyline curvy like an 8-sector wheel promises unmatched felicity; the land extending like eight pieces of lotus petals invites fortune in succession; the nearby mountains clasping and shining augur well." "To the east, the undulating hills suggest a ferocious tiger recoiling to leap forward and far; to the west, two mountains with a narrow valley in-between picture a haughty eagle raising its wings to the full; to the south, a river winds on, resembling a swerving blue dragon; to the north, the escalating hills with slow slopes depict a prophetic turtle crawling onwards."

Early in one morning, I looked out from the balcony of the top-floor of the hotel I stayed in. Around, the ice-capped peaks glittered on the horizon. Streaks of mists roamed in the mountains. The morning sun turned the winding Lhasa River into a shimmering silk sash.

Lhasa's city district extends over a long tract of plain, right to the north of the River. The altitude being 3,658 metres, the air is crystal clear. As the sunny period here lasts over 3,000 hours in a year, Lhasa has won the title of "Sunlight City".

The pace of the city life is brisk. On the western side, Bhu Dah Lha Palace with its many steeple roof-tops and the Mount of Yeuh Wang (the Heribist King) face each other like a couple of lovers, but they are separated by somewhat unbridgeable distance. Down below spread out the Working People's Cultural Palace, exhibition halls, department stores, post and telegraph offices, the broad avenues built since the emancipation, etc. The area is now termed "the new town". On the eastern side, the gilded roofs of the Dah Tsiao Temple emit the mystic, golden rays. In its neighbourhood, there are clusters of the old-styled houses, the area being called "the old town".

Strolling eastward along a boulevard shaded by trees, my friends and I looked for the Luli Bridge, one built with coloured glassy tiles and which was frequently mentioned in ancient travel-logs. Now, there is no longer the river over which the Bridge was built, but the stylish, yellowish blue tiles of the time-old pavilions, remnant parts of the bridge, still shine brilliantly over a stretch of walls.

Across the boulevard, stands the newly built massive Tibetan Hospital. As far as theory and experience, and therapeutic methods and effects are concerned, the Tibetan medical science has quite many traits of its own and has attained some remarkable achievements, forming a valuable portion of the Chinese medical heritage. In this hospital, modernization has got under way. It has become a centre of the Tibetan medical services and scientific research. It is especially noted for treatment of heart troubles.

At the farther end of the boulevard, the Pah Kho (Octagonal) Street goes on, circling round Dah Tsiao Temple. From this main street, paths and lanes stretch out to form a transport web. Here, a historical site is worth noting: the Tablet registering the alliance between the Tang dynasty and the Tibetan tribes and the nearby willow tree believed traditionally to be planted by Princess Wen Chen herself.

In this district, there are numerous small shops and a good many department stores. The heavy traffic and the hustle and bustle testify to the booming businesses. Amid the surging crowds, you would notice women wearing corals on their heads, precious stones and pearls; the audacious and fierce guys with a hair-plait coil on the head; and also the pilgrims with one hand turning a scriptural wheel and the other nipping the monks' beads. Most attractive are the Tibetan girls with bright eyes, luxuriant black hair and snow-white teeth and in the tight-waist Tibetan wear, they look healthy, pretty and shapely. Here, the multi-coloured national attires are luring to the degree of distraction, and the dangling earrings of gold and silver always make a din. All these recall what is pictured in *The Arabian Nights*. This is, however, the reality on a Tibetan plateau.

Along the Pah Kho Street, there are mostly the storied houses, built by piling blocks of rocks. They look uniform and solid too; window frames are all cut-work painted in various colours, and doors are even more beautifully decorated. Yet, what is most pleasant to look at are the "flowers"! I

discovered that almost every family laid out on sills or roofs the blossoming flowers. I thought I was edging my way through a floral exhibition. For the flowers to be in full bloom at such an altitude, they must be of strains capable of standing freezing weather. So, flowers add much to the colour of the Tibetan life. The Tibetans are a flower-loving race. Lhasa sits literally amid plenty of flourishing gardens.

Treading the Pai Kho Street, I completed a cycle and returned to where I started – the gate of Dah Tsiao Temple. The street is also nicknamed Dah Pai (Grand Kneeling) Avenue. For making their way on it, buddhist worshippers kneel down for a long time over and over again. I laughed at myself for unconsciously completing one round of praying.

## Dah Tsiao Temple

About Dah Tsiao Temple, I was told by a Tibetan comrade a fine story. Over one thousand three hundred and fifty years ago, Lhasa, then called Oi Ma Tan (Horse Resting Pool) was but a vast tract of marshes where rushes grew. Later on, as the Tur Van dynasty rose into power, the King Sung Chien Khan Bhu came to establish his capital here. He first married Princess Tzie Cheng from a neighbouring country and then took Princess Wen Chen of the Tang Dynasty as wife. After arriving at Oi Ma Tan, Princess Wen Chen made a suggestion to the King that a temple be built to pay homage to the statue of the Buddha, Gautama Siddhartha, and she had the King's support. This roused Princess Tzie Cheng to having the idea of offering a temple to the Buddha. However, all the efforts she made in building a temple were in vain. Whatever were erected on a day crumbled overnight. She turned to Princess Wen Chen, who generously promised to help. She personally threw the cast, did all the necessary mathematical work and observed the topography in daytime and astrological signs at night. Eventually, it was discovered that there was a lake beneath the chosen site, and that a witch called Roza was lying face up on the bed of the lake, her heart being its centre and her blood its water. Knowing this, Princess Wen Chen proposed to have white goats carry soil to block the witch's arteries and weigh them down tight. Engineering work on a gigantic scale began, and at last, the spirits having been suppressed, the temple was built successfully. Hence, the king regarded Princess Wen Chen as the incarnation of "the Godly and Motherly Saviour". In the Tibetan dialect, goat is pronounced "Noo" and soil "Sa". Dah Tsiao Temple was originally titled "Noo Sa". Having been completed, it became the very symbol of the capital, and this was the reason why the city growing up around it, was also called "Noo Sa". From "Noo Sa" was derived the title of the city, Lhasa. Afterwards, the temple was renamed Dah Tsiao. Additions and expansion projects accomplished in later generations resulted in the massive conglomeration of buildings as we see it today.

Contemporaneous with the construction of Dah Tsiao Temple, Princess Wen Chen built a smaller one – Shiao Tsiao Temple. To give vent to her nostalgia, its gate was made to face the East. The damages done during the cultural revolution left it empty. What a pity it is!

Nowadays, Dah Tsiao Temple occupies an area of over 5,100 sq. metres. On entering its gates, one sights in the face a spacious courtyard, enclosed on the right and the left side by porticos. These columns all painted red and standing upright as if they were guardsmen, are awe-inspiring. Across the courtyard, in the middle the scripture-hall sits imposingly. Inside the hall, buddhist treasured banners flutter, the smoke from joss-sticks streams up and down, and a sort of oily smell puffs into one's nostrils. Numerous statues of buddhas and of devils too thrill one with mysticism and fear. Door-frames, tops of columns, beams, arches and walls are either engraved or painted with images of characters, birds, animals or plants. In the inner corridor of the main hall, a long row of the statues of crouching sphinx-like beasts are especially eye-catching.

At the western end of the scripture-hall, a series of murals portrays vividly the arrival of Princess Wen Chen in Tibet, the grand ceremony held to welcome her and the Tur Van folks rejoicing over the occasion. Watching for some time these pictures, I felt much enheartened as if I heard the folks' approving shouts and the loud dins made by gong-striking and drum-beating of a thousand years ago. According to one statistics, on the walls of the temple's first floor, there are over 200 pieces of large-size murals in series, of which some come to be 5 to 6 metres tall. The pictures of characters and buddhas count by thousands. These murals, being themselves artistic works, are highly valuable as references for research in social history.

At the eastern end of the main scripture-hall, in the middle sits the famed statue of the

Buddha, Guatama Siddhartha. Gilded all over and studded lavishly with rare jewels, the statue is a piece of art, uniquely magnificent and beautiful. According to a historical register, Princess Wen Chen "saw to it that a cart carried the statue of Siddhartha all the way to Tibet", and later on Princess Kin Chen did homage to it". It has been claimed that the afore described statue of Siddhartha is the very one that Princess Wen Chen brought over. At first the Princess had placed it in Shiao Tsiao Temple she built for herself. Subsequently, Tzia Sung Tai Chien, son of Princess Kin Chen, a Tibetan King with resounding military fame and also influential with the Buddhist religion, believed that the statue his grand-aunt carried over deserve to be paid respect in the largest temple. So the statue was removed to where it is now. To Tibetan buddhists, this statue of the Buddha has proved to be most responsive to prayers. So, in front of it, the scent-burning has never ceased. Devout disciples of both sexes travel over great distances, climbing over mountains and traversing forests to do homage to it. They pray for Siddhartha's blessing; some add oil to the burning lamps and some contribute fruits and foods and even money and jewels to the offerings. To perform the rite of "long kneeling", worshippers first raise both arms, clasp their palms overhead, lower the bow before the forehead to before the breast, and then prostrate on both knees, falling flat on the ground. Here and there, surfaces of the rock-pavement appear in concave condition, this bearing evidence to the effect of erasure wrought over a thousand years by the worshippers' prostration. The prevalent atmosphere of religiosity is exceedingly moving.

On the second and third floors, I spent some time in the galleries appreciating the stylized statues and murals. Rising to the fourth floor, the top of the Temple, I was nearly swooned by the dazzling golden shafts reflected from the gilded roof-tops beneath. It is quiet and pleasant out here. The decorations around range from treasured banners, scriptural wheels to animal statues, etc. Against the setting of a blue sky, the statues of fairies look as if flying on their fluttering wings. Beneath the eaves protruding from the roof, dangling and swinging are the wind-bells and also the bronze tablets on which scriptural texts are engraved. In the wind, the bells continue to ring and the bronze tablets to tingle as if to resound the liturgical chanting. It is so designed as to elicit the sense of piety.

From here, one gains a clear view of Bhu Dah Lha Palace far beyond and the city life underneath.

### Bhu Dah Lha Palace

"Your skyscrapers into which melt the grandeur and manliness of the Tibetan race, . . . . ." wrote a poet.

I climbed the steep, stony stairway as if on a scaling ladder reaching for the sky. Time and again, I gasped for breath. Looking upward, I saw but clusters of buildings vying for loftiness. Protruding pavilions braved the strong winds and gilded roof-tops glittered dazzlingly. Ahead, arose the Bhu Dha Lha Palace.

Bhu Dha Lha in Sanskrit means a buddhist holy place. As recorded in the New Tang Books, Princess Wen Chen was married in 641 a.d. to the Tibetan king, Sung Chien Kan Bhu, who very much pleased, decided "to build a town for her so that the later generations would be strongly impressed." Likewise, it was said in the Old Tang Books that "quarters and houses were set up for the Princess and her entourage to reside in." This was why the Bhu Dha Lha Palace was originally built. Regrettably, the Palace of Sung Chien Kan Bhu's times was not preserved intact, for parts of it had been gutted down and damages had been wrought by military invaders in tumultuous days. Till the middle of the 17th century, Dalai Lama the Fifth, Ah Wong Ro Song Kha Tzu and his chief minister, Song Ki Kha Tzu, carried out the reconstruction as well as the expansion projects. It took them fifty years to bring the work into completion and there appeared the Palace as we see it today. Its ground base lies at the southern foot of the Red (Bhu Dah Lha) Mount, and the super-structures edge their way along the hill-sides up to the peak. Cumulatively, it stands with 13 stories and 117.19 metres high, and extends 360 metres from the east to the west. On entering Lhasa, one sights its imposing silhouette from 20 miles or so afar.

Having finished the climb, we entered the eastern gate. Again, passing through an escalating and deep-lying passage, we faced suddenly an open and expansive terrace. Occupying an area of 1,600 sq. metres, it is situated at mid-hill, elevated 70 metres from the ground level. The Tibetans term it "Teh Yang Hsia", but it is commonly called the Eastern Terrace. In the past, on days of celebration and festivals, singing, dancing and large-scale ritual activities were held here, and it was the site where

Dalais took to amusements. Nowadays, it has become the place where tourists assemble and rest. But the huge drum hanging at the entrance, recalls one to the religious pomposities of the past: red-garbed monks busying about officiating religious ceremonies and the deafening horn blowing and drum beating. We took a short rest here, however.

The stairway at the mid-western end of the terrace leads to a really mysterious palace. Inside, the court-rooms, scripture-halls and spiritual pagodas are shrouded in solemnity. Long corridors cross each other, engraved columns appear in imposing array, and multifarious colours and shades accentuate the peculiarities of designs. The guides took us into the dim court-rooms, where the faint oil-burning lamps shone on buddha statues that looked sometimes most benign and sometimes terrifying. There are numerous buddha statues made of gold, silver or copper, or engraved out of wood; the big ones come to be 5 to 6 metres tall and the small ones in the size of a marble. The spiritual pagodas shimmer with the lustres of pearl, agate, green jade, coral and genuine gold. There are altogether eight of them, and that of Dalai the Fifth and the Thirteenth are the largest. In the Tibetan history, Dalai the Fifth ranked as a prestigious, theocratic leader, and it was he who initiated the reconstruction of the palace in the 17th century. His spiritual pagoda, 14-metre tall, overlooks the storied buildings. It is said that 1,000 taels of gold were expended for wrapping it. A spiritual pagoda usually consists of three parts: the base, the bottle and the top. Traditionally, after the death of a Dalai, his corpse is spiced and medicated, and thus dehydrated for preservation in a bottle. In the court where Dalai the Fifth's spiritual pagoda lies, respect is paid also to a pearly pagoda built by threading more than 200,000 pearls. Most tourists spend much time taking a close look of it.

Yet, in this palace, there are too many things worthy of close observation. If you are specialized in architecture or interior design, you would be interested in watching the different forms and the stylized beams, archs and frescoes. For over a thousand years since the Tang dynasty, the oriental architecture has left its imprints here. Those having an interest in archaeology or the study of cultural relics would find themselves lost in a vast museum.

Here are deposited large amounts of various scriptures and buddhist classics, the proclamations and seals the emperors of the successive dynasties issued to invest the Tibetan officials, the gifts and precious articles the emperors bestowed and the billboards bearing their own hand-writings, etc. To quote from an Englishman who published a book after visiting only few quarters of the Palace: "The Chinese art works kept in the Palace are certainly the world's most elegant things!" Those fond of fine arts will be luckier. In whichever court-room or hall, looking at the rich and vivid murals, you would feel as if staying right in a picture". The Tibetan painting has attained its own marked characteristics. The painters are apt at expressing abundantly meaningful images by presenting strong contrasts in colour. In addition, by taking a downward view at a grand scene and as well close-ups of the scattered focuses, they make the pictures on walls look magnificent, and at the same time, elegant and fine. As recorded in Dalai the Fifth's autobiography, the mural painting in the Palace commenced in 1648, and it took a group of 63 painters, picked from all over Tibet, ten years to bring the work into completion. To view in person the art works of the 17th century will be real enjoyment.

I had always wanted to have a look of the statue of Princess Wen Chen. To my satisfaction, in a cave-like buddha chamber, I found the respectable Princess. On her sides rest the statues of Sung Chien Khan Bhu, Princess Tzia Chen and several ministers. As has been claimed that these statues are the originals that remain intact, they should resemble closely the live persons. Meditating for long before the statue of Princess Wen Chen, I was convinced of her kindness, beauty and versatility. Emerging before my eyes was the image of the Princess who had offered all she had to cementing the ties between the Han and Tibetan peoples.

The top floor of the Palace accommodates two suites, used by the successive Dalai Lamas for reposing. Enjoying plenty of sun-shine, they are called respectively the Eastern and Western Sun Light Chambers. Inside, the scripture halls, parlours and bed-rooms are luxuriously laid out and lavishly ornamented with articles made of pearl, jade and gold and rare antiques. Curiously I lifted a pot of pure gold. The guide told me that it weighs nine catties. Apart from the treasures, I noticed a ritualistic tool made of an integral human skull, which it was said Dalai Lamas resorted to while reciting the imprecating liturgy of Mi sect. Its appearance gave me the shudders, and tinged the nucleus of this mysterious palace with terror.

Out from the Sun Light Chambers, one climbs to the Golden Top of the Palace. Here, in array are the dazzling roof-tops, dazzling for they are built with genuine gold. Each has its own style, though all of them point to the sky. When you feel thus amazed, you hear as if the echoes of the