

## ★ **Tibet: A History between Dream and Nation-State**

**P. Christiaan Klieger**

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P. Christiaan Klieger's *Tibet* is a complex, storied survey of the mountainous homeland of the Dalai Lama. Once a powerful empire, Tibet has struggled for centuries to maintain its identity and independence, pushing back against Chinese domination and annexation.

Klieger details Tibet's evolution from ancient, animistic beliefs with "deities and demons at every corner" to its eventual, integral adoption of Buddhism. Seventh-century leadership expanded Tibet's kingdom and made Lhasa its official capital. Tibet's impressive armies advanced into modern Burma and Nepal, conquering territory along the famed Silk Route.

With the epic sweep of a historical saga, *Tibet* chronicles subsequent centuries of invasions, geopolitical intrigues, assassinations, triumphs, and defeats. From Genghis Khan's Mongol Empire to Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Revolution, Tibet has flourished, adapted, or suffered intense devastations and loss. A fascinating profile of the present Dalai Lama is included; he, along with over 100,000 other Tibetan refugees, now lives in exile. Having held his title since 1940, the Dalai Lama represents a link to the former "free" Tibet and the modern world. The mystical process of choosing the next Dalai Lama is also covered: belief in reincarnation leads to visions, prophecies, and an actual search party dispatched to find the exalted successor.

The Dalai Lama has stated that, when his ninetieth birthday approaches, he will confer with the high Lamas of Tibetan Buddhism, along with "the Tibetan public, and other concerned people," to determine whether the "institution of the Dalai Lama should continue." *Tibet* concludes with this ambiguity, and with the irony that, while Tibet's plight has become a global concern, the current Dalai Lama may never return to the home he was forced from in 1959.

Engrossing, detailed, and enhanced by beautiful *thangka* paintings, photographs, and antique maps, *Tibet* reveals the glories and trials of a beleaguered yet enduring land.

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