

The Khaches

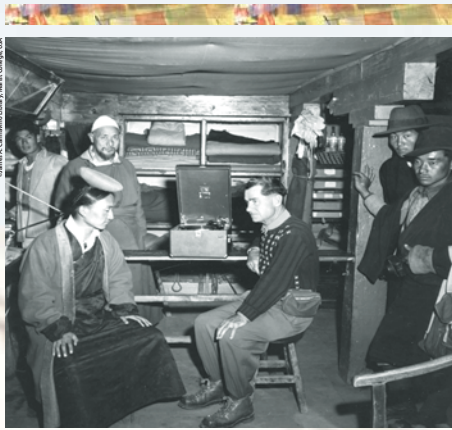
The Kashmiri Community in Tibet



The Kache family responsible for the Lopchak, the triennial tribute from Ladakh to Tibet (Lhasa)



Khache Lingka the old mosque in Lhasa



Journalist Lowell Thomas in a Muslim shop in Lhasa (1949)

Ringed by Muslim lands, Tibet has for centuries interacted with the Islamic world. Though some contacts had occurred in the 8th century, Islam was first introduced in the Tibet during the 16th century.

Most of the Muslims of Central Tibet came from Kashmir a century later, bequeathing the word 'khache' (from 'kasheer' or Kashmir) to all Tibetan Muslims. The khache families who were settled in Lhasa, Shigatse or Tsetang were collectively called the 'Lhasa Khache'.



Mohammed Rahim, a Khache in Lhasa



Members of the Lopchak Mission in Lhasa

Khaches were socially and economically well integrated and enjoyed special privileges like trade concessions and exemption from the no-meat ban during Budh Purnima. In the early 19th century, a Ladakhi Muslim family was also entrusted with carrying the triennial 'Lopchak' tribute to the Government of Tibet. Until the Chinese invasion the Khaches flourished as traders and landowners. The community went into exile in the late 1950s, many returning to the Valley as Jammu & Kashmir's 'state subjects'.



The Dalai Lama with a group of Khaches in Srinagar



Khaches during an audience with the Dalai Lama



The Dalai Lama in Leh (2011)