

A Policy of Isolation

The Forbidden Land



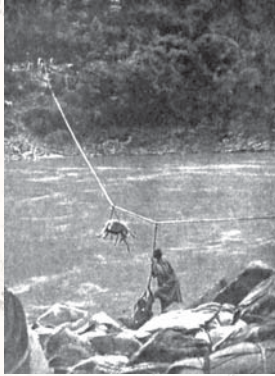
Tibetan Army guarding the border

"No other land has captured man's imagination quite like Tibet. Hidden away behind the protecting Himalayas in the heart of Central Asia, ruled over by a God-King and inhabited by a people whose only wheel was the prayer-wheel, it has long been the stuff of traveler's dreams."

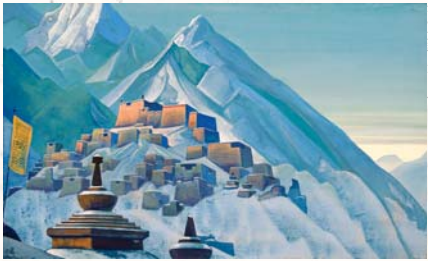
Peter Hopkirk



Border guards



Explorers faced unbelievable difficulties to discover unexplored areas.



Explorers dream of discovering a Shangri-la



French explorer Alexandra David-Neel, the first foreign woman to reach Lhasa in 1924

During the 19th and the first part of 20th century, Tibet witnessed the greatest thriller in the history of Asia: the Great Game.

Great empires fought an undeclared war on the tracts of Central Asia to bring under their suzerainty large expanses of unexplored territories. The Game was simple, send some adventurers or small armies to these remote regions, annex them, force some treaties on them and assure the natives of your protection while trading local goods against 'modern' commodities. An essential part of the game was to take along cartographers and missionaries who helped establishing control over these 'uncivilized' regions.



French explorer Dutreuil de Rhins attacked by bandits in Eastern Tibet

These intrepid travelers were not just explorers, professional soldiers, diplomats or mountaineers, some had an intelligence mission to accomplish, primarily to bring back maps and information on these uncharted places.



Map prepared by Western missionaries (1902)



The Goloks were one of the most ferocious tribes on the marches of Tibet