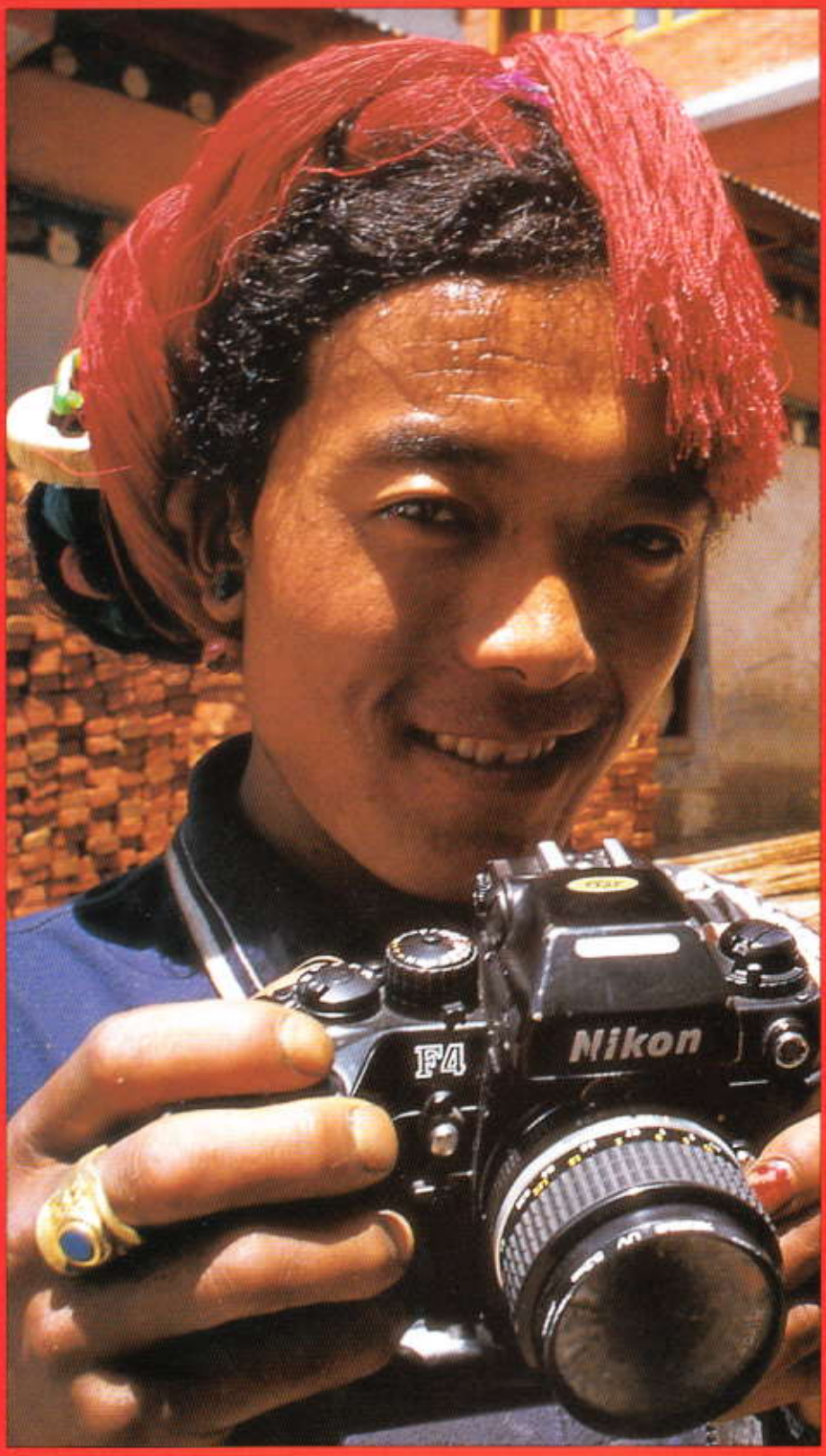
A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER TO INFORM AND ACKNOWLEDGE CERS' FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

CHINA EXPLORERS

CHINA EXPLORATION AND RESEARCH SOCIETY

VOLUME 3 NO. 1 & 2 MILLENNIUM ISSUE



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LEFT: A Khampa Tibetan checks out our camera and snaps pictures of our team members at Zhangmu along the Nepalese border. *See pages 15-17*

ABOV E:Everest finally shows its full majestic glory. *See pages 12-14*

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President's Message

It is my natural instinct to explore, especially frontier regions. Imposing physical features such as high mountains and great rivers have long been the dictate of national borders. Few areas in the world are so well defined as the natural barrier of the Himalayas, that massive mountain range that separates China's Tibet from the rest of south Asia. It is also considered one of the world's political and military hot spots.

To me, the challenges of exploration are as much natural as man-made. The role that nature plays is obvious; man-made obstacles arise from suspicion, paranoia and short-sightedness. I hope our trans-Himalayan study of this border will shed light on a little-known area, helping future generations to bring peace to the Himalayan kingdoms and prosperity to the people living on both sides of the highest mountain ranges of the world.

Consider the Indian lady pilgrim I met at the sacred lake of Manasarova. She looked me straight in the eyes and told me with utmost earnestness: "The stars dropped to the bottom of the sky, took a bath in the lake, and rose back into the sky." Though we do not embrace each other's spiritual aspirations, I have learned to respect hers as I expect her to honor mine. The widespread adoption of such an attitude wouldn't promise an end to the conflict in the region. But when people are more tolerant of each other's beliefs, conflicts are easier to resolve.

From the look on my face, the pilgrim probably knew I was skeptical. But when I raised my camera to snap a picture of her, she gave me a disarming smile.

Wong How Man
President, CERS

● This issue of China Explorers, CERS' millennium issue, carries several features about our lengthy summer expedition. Though I may be the author of these reports, they reflect the contribution and concerted efforts of every member of our team.

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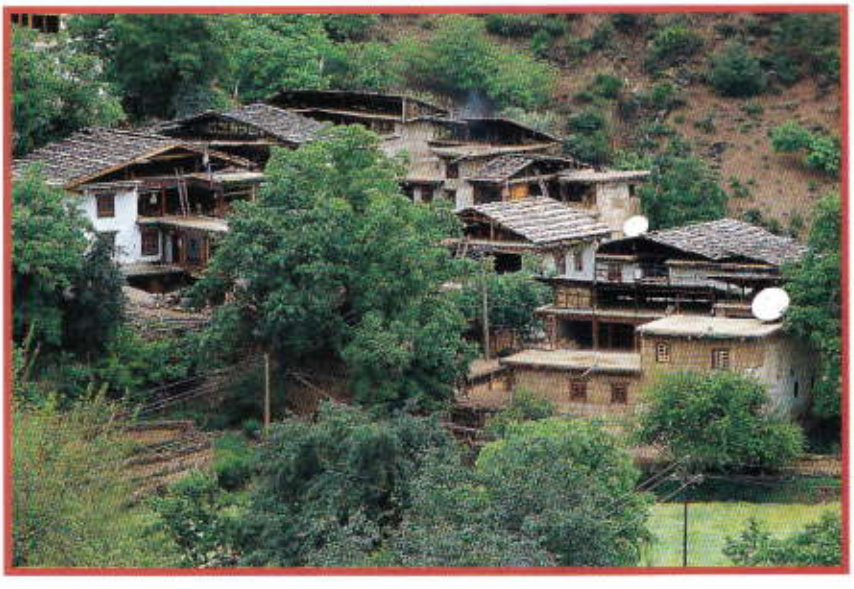
A tale of two nunneries

June 4, 1999
Lhasa, Tibet

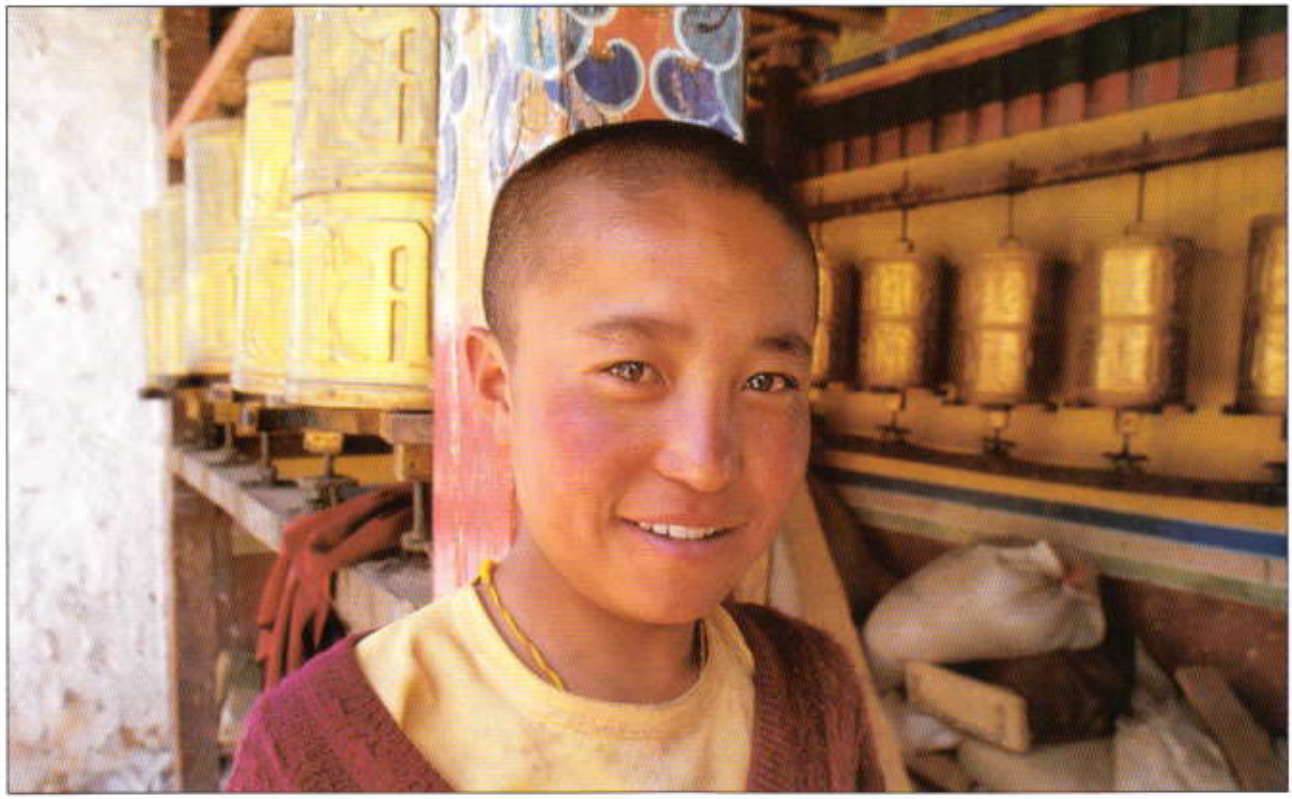


ABOVE: Nuns of Xongsi Ayni Gomba, south of Lhasa, conducting their daily recitation of sutras
RIGHT:Tibetan villagers enjoy television programs via a satellite dish, but the residents of the nearby nunnery maintain a humble lifestyle.

"We are like prisoners in our own home!" exclaimed Yangjin. She was talking about conditions at her nunnery, Dongjulin Ayni Gomba. The small building in which she and other nuns lived was once the kitchen complex and is now the only remaining structure of the famous Dongjulin monastery. It is sandwiched between a neighboring village's barley fields. Like a fortress of women warriors, they have to fend for themselves. Hostile villagers allow only a tiny access road through the mountainside into their modest yet historically important domicile.

My general impression regarding Tibetan religious buildings is that they are revered and much loved by their neighbors. That wasn't the case here, as Yangjin told me. Not only do the nuns feel unwelcome, they are often frowned upon. "Surely the villagers must help you sometimes?" I asked. "They never give us anything, not one single dollar," retorted Yangjin. "We have to hike so far to collect firewood," she sighed. Resources close to the village are reserved for the villagers.

The general outlook on nuns here is that they are of little use to the community. Unlike monks, upon whom local residents can call to chant and pray on special occasions, nuns lead a reclusive existence with little contact with the world around them. Rumors abound that these females give up a normal secular life to make up for personal pains they inflicted in the past. This may have been true for Yangjin, whose left eye and forehead are scarred into a squint. Had it not been for her constant smile and easy conversation, her ▶



appearance would deter most people from approaching her as a friend.

The nuns receive few alms and have even fewer patrons. Their belongings are simple bedding and a few personal items, all brought from each nun's home. When they cook, they do so collectively. The head nun, Lurenquqi—who is almost 80 years old—organizes the workload and daily chores. The youngest nun is only 13 years old. In the past, nuns were initiated only after they had attained the age of 19. Today, there are no such restrictions.

During my last visit in 1992, there were 51 nuns. Today there are 64. Unlike other monasteries where living quarters are along the periphery of the assembly hall, here all the nuns live within the same religious building. Sanitation has deteriorated greatly and the building is ill-maintained. Some parts of the structure are in danger of collapse.

TOP: A nun at Xongsi Ayni Gomba in Qusui County, south of Lhasa in Tibet
ABOVE: Donjulin Ayni Gomba, a nunnery in northwestern Yunnan

We assessed the ancient murals in the main assembly hall. Sections on the upper portion are original, though old and discolored. Many of those on the lower part were repainted in a crude style and stroke, in stark contrast to the older murals. Even an amateur can discern the soothing earth pigments from the overly-bright and vibrant colors of the new paint.

Tibetan monasteries are plentiful throughout the plateau. But nunneries are few and far between. Dongjulin Ayni Gomba, where Dongjulin, the main monastery for monks used to be (it has been moved 20 kilometers away), is located above the Yangtze River in northwestern Yunnan in a Tibetan area called Puntzelan. Established during the reign of the powerful 5th Dalai in the 17th century, the original monastery was one of the 13 major religious establishments in the Kham region of eastern Tibet. While most of the structures have been destroyed in waves of disturbances during the last few centuries, the present building is an important relic of its past. CERS is planning to help preserve this heritage.

Two weeks and 2,500 kilometers later, we arrived at Lhasa. Having experienced no flat tires on any of our three vehicles was considered something of a miracle; we are used to making a dozen or so tire changes every time we cross the plateau. A film crew from RTHK arrived to follow us on the next leg of our trip. The producer came down with altitude sickness on

his first day, though. Had he not gotten well quickly, we might have had to put him into our compression chamber.

We knew the next six weeks of our expedition would be crucial for our exploration and also the most difficult.

In Lhasa, I made plans to visit another famous nunnery. Xongsi Ayni Gomba is the largest and most important Nyingma (Red Sect) nunnery throughout the Tibetan plateau. It is located about 50 kilometers south of Lhasa in Qusui County. Established over 800 years ago, it stands on a mountain at an elevation of 4,295 meters. The road, though, ends at 3,995 meters, so we began to climb the rest of the way on foot.

Imagine starting a hike on the 1,300th floor of a building, then climbing the entire height of the Empire State building—another 100 storeys—to the 1,400th floor. That is roughly the height of the nunnery—and you arrive with a dizzying headache.

Jicmi Dorji at 71 is the head monk and a living buddha, or reincarnated Lama. He manages the 205 nuns under his care. In its heyday, the nunnery had over 1,000 nuns. As we arrived, most of the nuns were chanting inside the assembly hall, a practice they repeat four times a day. Ten nuns were in deep retreat in Qigong exercise. They must spend three years living the life of a recluse.

The government ordered that no one under the age of 18 be initiated as a nun. Today, the oldest nun is 87 years old. The nunnery gets no government funding, so several times a year, the nuns visit nearby pastoral and nomadic areas to collect alms. During festive days, they also go into Lhasa as supplicants.

Imagine starting a hike on the 1,300th floor of a building, then climbing the entire height of the Empire State building —another 100 storeys—to the 1,400th floor.

As we arrived, another pilgrim group from Lhasa, mostly old and middle-aged women, was already circumambulating the monastery. It seems obvious that such pilgrims represent a major source of income for the nunnery.

When asked what their biggest problem is, the nuns say it is difficulty in transportation. Last year, a pilgrim from Taiwan donated 30,000 renminbi to help open a road to the nunnery. However, only one-third of the lengthy stretch was finished when the money ran out.

At Xongsi Ayni Gomba, wildlife is abundant and most of the animals are not afraid of people—the likely result of a long history of peacefulness here. On any given day, large flocks of Tibetan Snow Cock and Sand Grouse visit the nunnery, and even feed from the nuns' hands. During winter, Blue Sheep—that are normally extremely timid—come within several meters of the complex.

Indeed, such unusual wildlife behavior at Xongsi inspired a doctoral candidate to come all the way from Wuhan to live here among the nuns to study the Snow Cocks. When we arrived, though, the Snow Cocks were in the middle of their mating season. For the next two months, they would be at a higher altitude making love nests.

Coming from the cosmopolitan region of southeast Asia, I cannot help but compare the two modest Tibetan nunneries with some of their more resourceful counterparts in Hong Kong and Taiwan. CERS is making plans to assist these nunneries. Perhaps once their stories are told, their sisters in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and other buddhist patrons, will offer a helping hand in alleviating their difficult predicament. I look forward to a day, hopefully not too far in the future, when the nuns of Dongjulin Ayni Gomba and Xongsi Ayni Gomba will find their prayers answered in abundance. ■

On the road again — across Tibet

July 30, 1999
Lhasa, Tibet

Perhaps the only surviving Catholic Church in Tibet is the French Mission House at Yenjin. While the town is famous for producing salt from the brine well sunk into the Mekong River, the mission produces another brew not far from the salt flats. At the turn of the century, the French fathers brought with them more than bibles and hymns books; they also brought the skill of winemaking. Today the churches at Chizhong and Yenjin use homemade wine during mass. They gave us some, in two plastic Sprite bottles. Our team's designated drinker Liu Hong carried them all the way across Tibet, sampling the wine during our many nights camping out.

At Yenjin, the hike was long and dreary—but the scenery was uplifting. Our team inspected the wells sunk along the Mekong River. The elongated salt crystals below the drying terraces captured our attention. These formations are like stalactite and stalagmite inside caves, some approaching three to four meters in height as they drip downwards and grow upwards until merging into a column.

I ran into a young Tibetan girl of 11 walking home from school for the weekend. Her home is along the Mekong River but more than 10 kilometers away. Seeing how I lugged my heavy camera bag while photographing, she offered to carry my bag for ▶

me. I let her take over as the altitude and the heat were beginning to wear me down. At the end of the salt flats, she returned my equipment as we parted. I tried giving her a keyholder as a small token of thanks but she consistently refused to accept it. Finally, I simply stuck it into her pocket. But the modesty of the people left an indelible impression on me.

After crossing the Mekong, we passed through the counties of Markam and Zogang in eastern Tibet. At the junction of Bangda, the final decision was made to proceed on the hazardous southern route. Twice only, in over two decades of exploring China, had I penetrated this southern route. Following my expedition in 1982 for the National Geographic, I had been unable to cross Tibet by this route. The road had been virtually closed for 15 years after a huge glacier-triggered landslide. The slide area covered most of a 30-kilometer stretch of the road. But rumors circulated among truck drivers that it is now marginally safe to cross before the rainy season. We took our chances.

Almost 700 kilometers after leaving Yenjin, we arrived at Rawu. Here at the juncture of a lake was a road leading southward towards the border with India's Assam and upper Burma. I recalled the days in 1989 when I crossed into Zayu at a sensitive frontier and was detained for nine days. It was not long after the Tiananmen Square Incident when all borders were closely guarded. Rawu, a glacier-fed lake encircled by snowfields, is exceptionally beautiful. We camped at 3,805 meters and I hiked up another 200 meters to photograph the mountains. There I enjoyed a panoramic view of the pristine lake.

Rawu is near the epicenter of the most violent earthquake ever recorded in history. On August 15, 1950, an 8.6-magnitude earthquake struck Zayu and its neighboring area. It left craters that can still be seen today. At the time, myths sprung up to suggest that it was indicative of the turmoil soon to take place in Tibet, signified by the entry of the People's Liberation Army into Lhasa. In spiritual places like Tibet, natural calamities are often given human interpretations rather than scientific ones.

We passed Bomi with few incidents. The area is densely forested with tall evergreens like fir and cedar. Some of the major tributaries of the Brahmaputra River flow through one of the most ▶

ABOVE LEFT: Tibetan Catholic converts gathered at the French Mission House of Yenjin built more than a century ago. On Sundays, the devotees congregate for religious service.

FAR LEFT: Old ladies at the Catholic Mission of Yenjin looked over a book with pictures of the missionary priests from the earlier part of this century.

ABOVE:Salt flats and terraces of Yenjin adjacent to the Mekong River in Tibet.

LEFT: The pristine and sacred lake of Xongba Cho in eastern Tibet.

PREVIOUS PAGE: A mule is a member of a caravan used to carry salt out of the area. Its face-mask is a form of protection.

scenic roads of the world. On both sides are glaciers and snowy peaks rising to phenomenal heights. But this most scenic route is also the most dreaded to drivers as landslides are frequent and massive.

Beyond Bomi, as we neared the infamous stretch at Tangmai, we witnessed scars of major slides everywhere. Though the rainy season had just begun, the mountainsides were becoming alive again. Road crews were repairing the damage as fast as they could. But bulldozers were few and far between, so workers did the digging by hand. Traffic jams and delays became the order of the day.

At one of these roadblocks, we saw many leeches. One dropped through the window into our Land Rover and attached itself to team member Randy's arm. Though there is a famous hotspring near Tangmai, no one had any inclination to visit it after the leeches incident. Cradling ourselves inside our four-wheel-drive vehicles, we negotiated many makeshift paths with trepidation until we arrived at Nyinchi. There, a stretch of paved road awaited our mud-stained vehicles. Everyone was overjoyed.

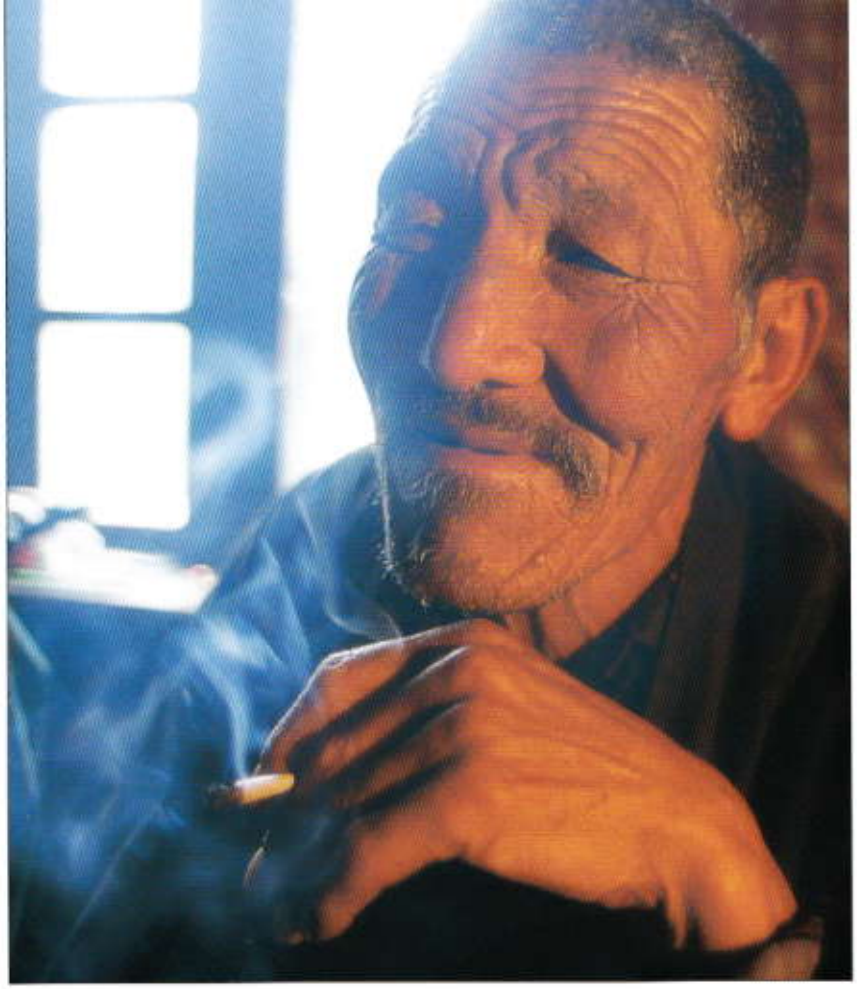
From Nyinchi, our team headed west toward Lhasa. En route, we visited Xongba Lake. The island monastery at the pristine lake is in obvious defiance of China's birth-control policy. Outside its main assembly hall are two objects designed to promote fertility. To the left stands a wood carving, exaggerated to a meter in height, of a penis. To the right is another carving of a lower body, with a female reproductive organ between stretched legs.

Both objets d'art have been smoothed to the texture of marble as plenty of hands must have caressed them in the hope of bringing the intended childbearing results. I asked the overweight lama why these two particular objects are exposed rather than put inside the monastery. He gave a shrug and turned his head to his sutra recitation. I stopped short of asking him whether he had heard of Viagra.

Xongba is a glacier-fed lake about 400 kilometers east of Lhasa. Hidden among high mountains, it is difficult for all but the most devoted pilgrims to gain access. The lake is truly heavenly tinted, a deep turquoise color. A few large trunks loosely tied together into a make-shift raft, pulled by a cable fixed between the island and the shore, offers the only passage from the lakefront to the monastery island 100 meters away. Few visitors come here other than local Tibetans who turn out on festive days.

Finally, two weeks and 2,500 kilometers after leaving Kunming, we drove into Lhasa. As if by miracle, we had had only one flat tire among our three vehicles. On previous trips, we have usually had a dozen or so breakdowns. I suddenly recalled our night's stay at the home of a rinpoche (reincarnated lama) before leaving Yunnan. He had given each of us, and the three cars, a knotted string band for protection. His blessings must have put us in good stead, vehicles included. ■

TOP: Salt crystal deposits below the drying terraces create unique columns.
ABOVE: One of the expedition vehicles crossing a flooded road in eastern Tibet.



Yatung—a border town caught in the crossfire

Gongbu wears a long face filled with wrinkles that seem to tell tales of the past. His tall body is bent into a hunch. His slender fingers hold a wooden bowl of butter tea which he sips intermittently. At 64, he is an old man in this distant corner of the world. He has just finished a three-day hike through inhospitable mountains and entered the frontier village of Azhun. This was his third or fourth trip of the year. By year's end, he will have made more than half a dozen journeys between his village of Yongdong in Bhutan and Yatung in this southern corner of Tibet.

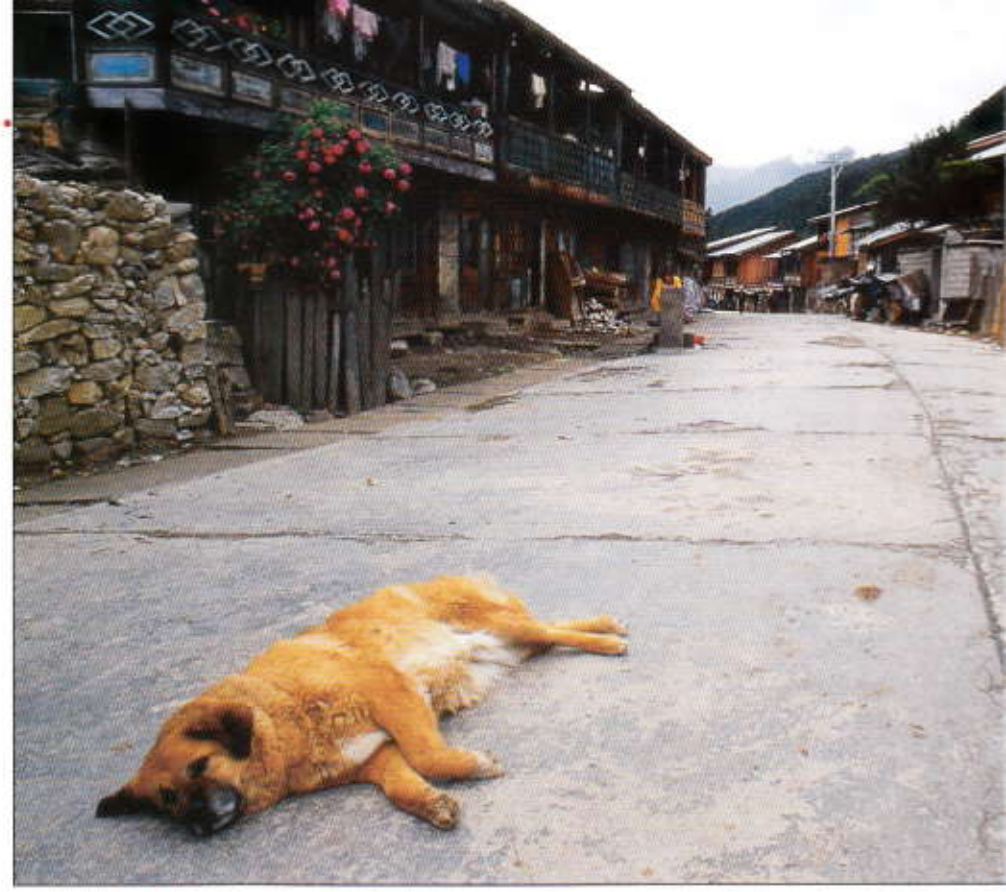
For 25 years, Gongbu has made such secret trips. At least they're secret on the Bhutanese side, but once he enters Chinese territory, he operates more openly. Though Bhutan maintains cordial diplomatic relations with China, its official policy still forbids cross-border trade. India has been exerting a strong influence over Bhutan's foreign policy since it forced a joint defense agreement upon the Bhutanese in 1949. After the India-China border war of 1962, all traffic and trading screeched to a standstill between Yatung and neighboring Bhutan and Sikkim. But small-scale trading gradually resumed.

Dodging Bhutan's border guard by traveling at night, Gongbu came with two packed horses. On the Chinese side, there are no customs houses. Gongbu needs only to register perfunctorily with the Chinese border guard. Unofficially, China condones such civilian border trade. Gongbu has brought no money, since neither Bhutanese nor Chinese currencies are used in trading. He's brought along a few Swiss watches, some sacks of rice and a few precious stones called Nine-eyed Stones that are much treasured by Tibetans. In return, he will barter for canvas shoes, thermal bottles, wool blankets and other cheap merchandise that China produces.

At Azhun, his first stop, Gongbu inspects two merchants' warehouses. Danjin Wangdu is a local Tibetan of the village and Chunzhong is an ambitious Tibetan ▶

June 10, 1999
Xigaze, Tibet

ABOVE LEFT: Gongbu, a Bhutanese merchant who travels regularly into Yatung in Tibet to trade with the local inhabitants.
ABOVE: Tseren Lamo, a Tibetan retired cadre now living in Azhun, a border village of Yatung County in southern Tibet.



woman from faraway Sichuan. Notes Chunzhong: "The fastest moving items are the cheapest and lowest quality ones. There's no use stocking expensive products as the Bhutanese can't afford them."

Gongbu is treated as an important guest at the home of Tseren Lamo as she offers not only a bed, but maybe the first point of some small exchange of items. Lamo and her younger sister Dorje Buqi are both government officials. Lamo was educated in Beijing and graduated from the prestigious Minority Institute in 1967.

Lamo takes out her graduation picture from an ageing box. It is a meter-long black and white photograph rolled into a scroll. Unrolling it, Lamo points out her face, standing near the edge of a group of several hundred people. Mao Tse-tung is seated in the middle, flanked by Chou En-lai, Zhu De, and scores of well-known people from the People's Republic. To be a college graduate from a frontier village has served Lamo well. She joined the government of nearby Yatung County, and a certificate of commendation on 10er wall marks her retirement in 1994.

Buqi is the current village chief of the 20-household Azhun village. This is literally the last frontier village before the borders of Bhutan and Sikkim. But what formerly was known as the kingdom of Sikkim was incorporated into India in 1975. So the pan-handle county of Yatung and Azhun village are uncomfortably sandwiched between Indian-occupied Sikkim and Indian-protected Bhutan.

Gongbu would barter for what he wants at this first village before continuing to Yatung about 12 kilometers away. There, he will finish his shopping before returning home. The whole trip will last about 10 days. He could have shopped in the Bhutanese capital of Thimbu, just 27 kilometers away and accessible by car. But the capital has few of the items that Gongbu brings from China. And even if they were available, they would cost many times more. Gongbu's village has 50 households, and almost half engage in small-scale border trade.

Today Yatung is a quiet border town with maybe a couple of thousand residents. But throughout most of the last two centuries, it played a pivotal role and served as a theatre for several important events that shaped Tibet's recent history.

The performers hailed from Britain, Qing Dynasty China, Sikkim, Bhutan, and later the People's Republic and India. They included such celebrities as Emperor Chien Lung of the Qing, the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama, and successive governors of British India and the East India Company.

During the late 1700s, British trade officers Bogle and Turner entered Tibet through Yatung. Their reports shaped the advance policy of British India during the next century. In 1904, the Younghusband military expedition entered Yatung, fought its way to Lhasa and opened Tibet. Subsequently, Yatung and Gyantse became port cities within Tibet, controlled by the British. Indeed, from the early part of the 20th century up until 1954, India operated all important facilities within Yatung, including its wire and post office, customs and banks. Some of these operations were not returned to China until 1957.

Yatung has seen good times and bad. As a port city into Tibet, it enjoyed trade and economic growth during the first half of this century. But in more troublesome times, it became the escape route for those fleeing Tibet. The present Dalai Lama stayed in Yatung for seven months in 1950 when the People's Liberation Army entered Tibet. He was ready to go into India if the

political situation deteriorated. But the newly formed People's Republic sent General Zhang Jinwu as negotiator, traveling through Calcutta to Yatung, and convinced the Dalai to return to Lhasa. The 9th Panchen Lama also spent time here in 1910, waiting for calm to prevail in a turbulent Tibet.

As Tibet's closest town to the Indian Ocean, Yatung is only slightly more than 500 kilometers from Calcutta, effectively making Lhasa roughly 1,000 kilometers from the closest seaport. The eastbound seaport of Tientsin is about 5,000 kilometers away, so it's easy to see the benefit of using Yatung, instead. But political skirmishes between China and India, especially after the border war in 1962, obliterated this advantage. For more than 30 years, Tibet imported and exported goods through the more costly Tientsin port.

Perhaps when the relationship between China and India stabilizes in the future, Yatung can again become a gateway in and out of Tibet. But until then, this little border town will continue to be a dead end for everyone, except for a few enterprising traders like Gongbu. ■

TOP LEFT: The town of Yatung is now quiet, unlike the heady days when it served as an important inland port half a century ago.
CENTRE: A young monk of Xigaze.
LEFT: Schoolchildren in the small town of Yatung.
TOP: Yaks are used in Tibet's "lowlands"—over 3,500 meters in altitude—for ploughing the fields.
ABOVE: Murals guarding the entrance of the Sakya Monastery in Central Tibet.

View from the PINNACLE of THE WORLD

June 14, 1999
Base Camp, Mount Everest

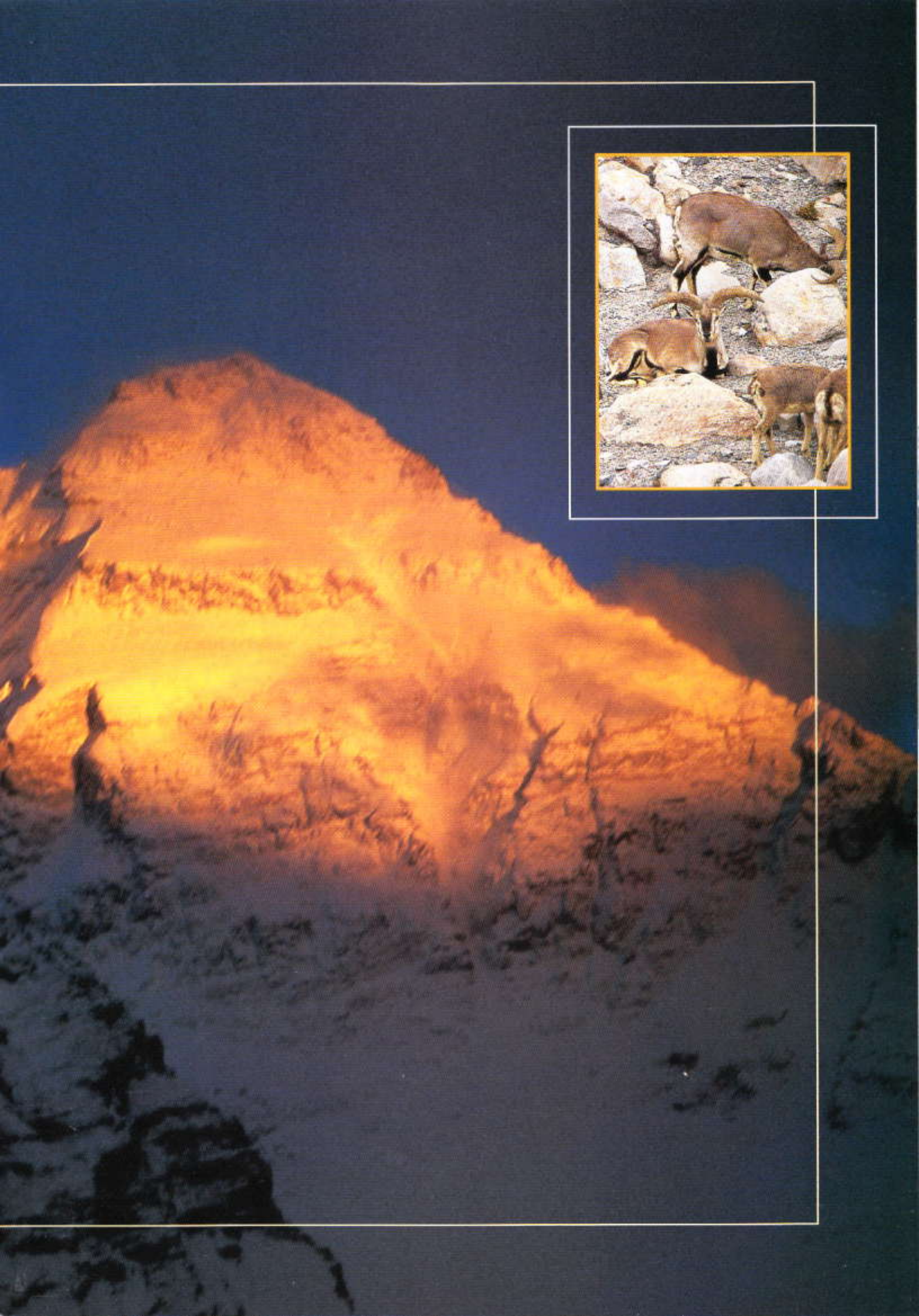
Both people and cars were feeling sick. At 5,200 meters, Everest Base Camp is only the first of six camps leading towards the summit at 8,848 meters. But the peak was nowhere in sight, veiled by heavy fog and clouds. Yet we had traveled a long way in hopes of seeing Everest, called Qumolangma by the Tibetans.

Mountaineers and trekkers come from all over the world to take in the grand view and the challenge of climbing this champion peak. But for more than a week, they had turned back after taking pictures against a solid wall of cloud, standing beside a stone tablet proclaiming the presence of the mountain. Apparently, the mountain monarch was not willing to give an audience.

There is a big tent at base camp. Liu Yiming had been here for almost two months, watching mountaineering groups come and go. Even his partner, a young fellow of 18, left after an attack of acute mountain sickness forced his evacuation to Xigaze. Liu alone was managing the logistics support for the Chinese researchers studying the ice fields of Qumolangma. The glaciologists had been up at 6,500 meters for weeks now and Liu had to organize a local Tibetan yak caravan to bring them down the next day.

We set up four tents and became the most welcome guests in Liu's big tent. Afterall, he had grown tired of t alking to himself and a few visiting nomad dogs. Liu said it didn't look as though the cloud cover would disappear any time soon. In passing, I asked Liu whether he had seen much wildlife during his stay.

"They are here all the time, the Blue Sheep," Liu remarked casually. But his answer jerked me and Zhang Fan out of the dizzy haze that settles in at high ▶



PREVIOUS PAGE: The summit of Everest catching a last ray as the sun sets to the west. The usually shy Blue Sheep is less guarded around Everest's Base Camp, perhaps because it is afforded protected status in the region. ABOVE: Everest finally shows its full majestic glory as the clouds clear on the third day of the team's visit.

altitudes. "Here? All the time?" I asked, pursuing the subject with wide open eyes. "Yes, they come down to the spring every afternoon to graze and drink," Liu replied pointedly. "If you remain quiet, they'll stay for a couple hours and you can observe them close up from 20 meters away."

But surely that's impossible. For years we had studied the rare Blue Sheep as part of our work on the plateau. They are one of the most shy and alert of the big-game animals. I have stalked them from the Qilian Mountains and the Arjin Mountain to various parts of Sichuan and Tibet. Even with a long lens, I can hardly see them, let alone observe them at close quarters. When a herd of Blue Sheep grazes, one big sheep always climbs high to keep guard.

Our disappointment at not seeing Qumolangma quickly dissipated when we heard the joyful news of the wildlife. After interrogating Liu to determine that what he saw were indeed Blue Sheep, we brought out our big lens equipment and waited anxiously for morning to come.

More clouds drifted by the following morning. At such a high elevation, we felt we must be closer to the gods. But the god of Qumolangma was keeping its gate closed and guarded. But a little after 9 a.m., we saw a group of eight Blue Sheep gradually moving down the hillside directly adjacent to our camp. They were about 200 meters away when we first saw them. Excitement and commotion rippled throughout our camp when everyone scrambled for their cameras. Some of us snuck behind the trashhouse, some hid behind Liu's truck, some used tents as camouflage.

We watched as they reached the bottom of the hill and drank from the spring, not more than 50 meters away. To our surprise, Liu stormed out of his big tent and told us, "There's no need to hide, just walk up slowly." Then he walked up towards the hill with the stone tablet, only 30 meters from the animals who seemed oblivious to his presence.

Cautiously but excitedly, we followed Liu. From this vantage point, I could photograph the group of five females and three infants easily.

For the rest of the morning and afternoon, we split up into groups and stalked the Blue Sheep beyond the hills. Xiao Chao and Ah Jun came back with great reports of their successful filming of two male and female groups. Liu Hong followed and returned with more success stories. By mid-afternoon, I and Zhang Fan followed the same trail into a valley cradled by the mountains. Within 30 minutes, we found a grazing herd of male and infant Blue Sheep. On one occasion, I got to within 10 meters of four large males, each sporting protruding horns.

I descended the mountain feeling extremely gratified. The effects of hiking at over 5,300 meters elevation suddenly seemed insignificant. After almost 20 years of exploration on the plateau, my quest for a picture that honestly reflects the Blue Sheep's full grace and elegance was finally realized.

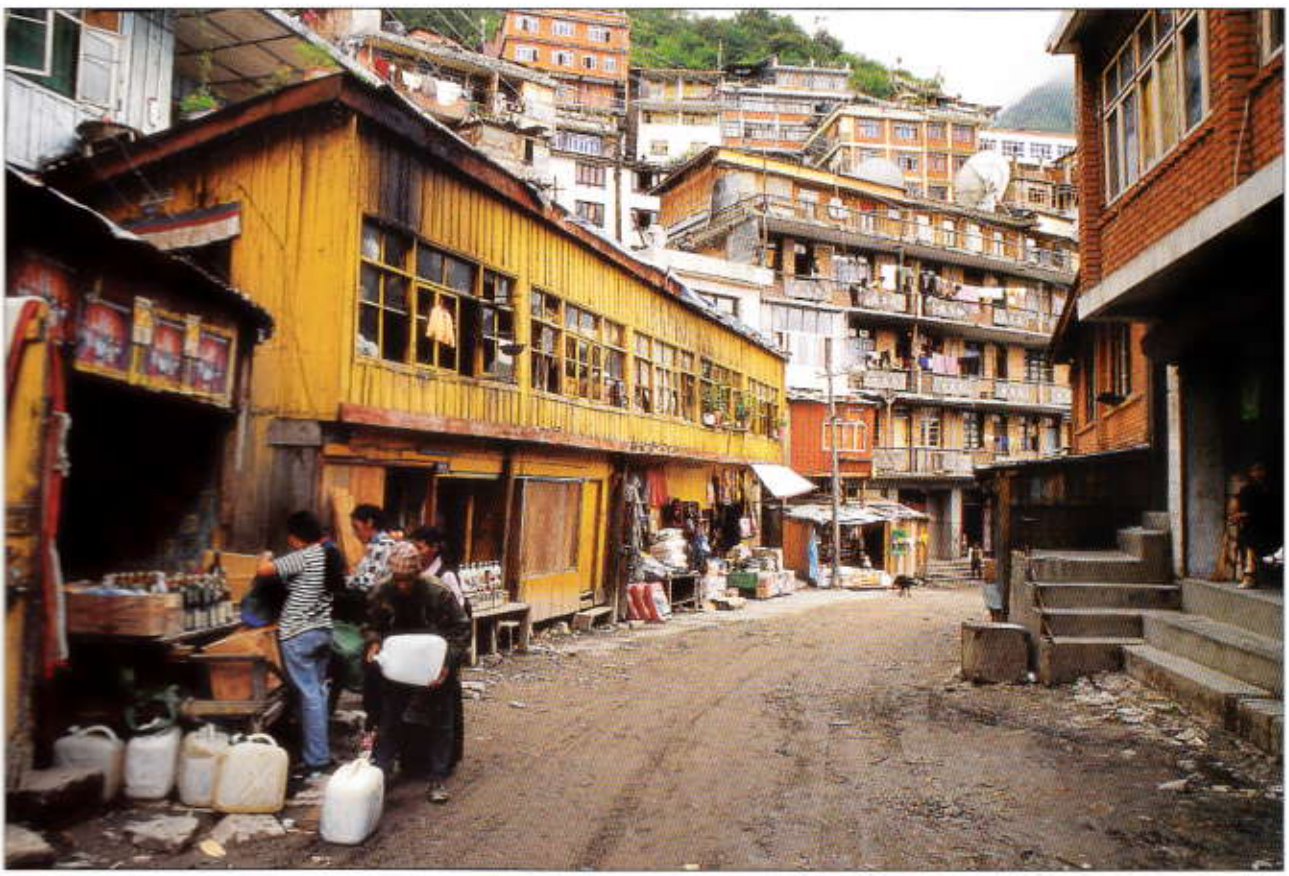
That evening, the fog and cloud began drifting away. It looked almost like a large curtain unfolding in front of a theatre screen

That evening, the fog and cloud began drifting away. It looked almost like a large curtain unfolding in front of a theatre screen. After dinner, I waited with anticipation as some of the snowfields and sheer rocks of Qumolangma began to show themselves. Finally, after 9 p.m., when darkness and the shade of nearby mountains had already overshadowed our campsite, Qumolangma finally revealed its majestic peak.

At about 9:20, a setting sun suddenly penetrated the distant clouds and shone against the summit. It gradually turned from golden to pink before paling into a shaded blue as the last ray of sun struck beyond the pinnacle of the world. I was satisfied that the Blue Sheep were nearby, maybe beholding the same glorious sight. ■

Into Nepal— without a permit

June 18, 1999
Zhangmu, Tibet



TOP: A shop owner at the border town of Zhangmu, in southern Tibet near Nepal.

ABOVE: Street scenes of Zhangmu along the China/Nepal border.

The two kinds of trucks converging at Zhangmu are distinctly different. One is heavily decorated, colorful, with a diesel engine and right-hand-drive. The other is plain blue, gasoline-powered with left-hand-drive. The former has Nepalese drivers, the latter Tibetans. When they meet at the narrow and windy roads of Zhangmu, there seems to be no law governing which side of the road they should drive on. Whoever can squeeze through has the right of way. Somehow it all seems to work congenially.

The truck traffic is perhaps an extension of the human traffic. Few laws govern ▶

ABOVE: The Nepal border guard poses with Nepalese truck drivers on the Nepal side of the bridge.

RIGHT: Decorated trucks coming into Zhangmu from Nepal. Katmandu is only about 80 kilometers away.

the mobility of the people. They are here at this border town between Nepal and China from all over the two countries. At last count, the local police registered people from 28 provinces of China. And the various ethnic costumes of the Nepalese reveal people of different backgrounds.

They are all here for the same reason: free trade, relatively speaking that is. Zhangmu is the only fully opened inland port of Tibet. Even third nationals can enter and exit through here. Everyday, several such foreign tourist groups pass through. They comprise Westerners travelling through the Himalayas to Lhasa as well as Indian pilgrims on their way to the sacred lake of Manasarowa and Mount Kailash.

But by far the biggest number of people are business people and local Sherpas and Tibetans eager to make a living off the flourishing border trade. Nepal exports rice, flour, fresh vegetables, pepper and a few curiosity items into Tibet. In return, many daily necessities and electrical appliances manufactured in China are exported to Nepal. The hottest items are fabric, bedsheets, canvas shoes, torches, water pumps, televisions, and CD players. Such exchanges, all done through entrepreneurs and individually owned businesses, make Zhangmu a vibrant, bustling town.

For two days, we observed and interviewed businessmen from both countries. We also made inquiries as to how we could enter Nepal. After visiting several government bureaus, we managed to procure an introduction letter necessary for crossing the border. We packed and drove to the border checkpoint where a Chinese officer stopped us and insisted that we have a tour guide along. That was out of the question as no tour guide was available in such a remote town. Reluctantly we turned back to our hotel.

While our team was repairing one of our cars, I decided to make a dash for the border again. I was hoping that, after lunch, a different shift of officers would be manning the border checkpoint. Sure enough, a more pleasant face in uniform was seated behind the desk. I walked up wearing a big smile on my face and told the officer that I was from Hong Kong, and since 1997, we had all become part of the same family. I pleaded that I had traveled for over a month to have a look at the famed friendly border.

He gave me a look and said, " But the real border is still 10 kilometers down the mountain. The Nepalese close their gate at 6 p.m., how can you make it back in time?" I quickly answered with yet another big smile, "But I walk very fast. I usually can hike between five and six kilometers an hour." He gave me another look and waved me across. But before I could disappear, he told me to leave my travel document as a security deposit. I quickly obliged.

Once across the checkpoint, I saw a beat-up car of 1960s vintage ready to drive off. I ran up and asked the Nepalese driver for a ride and paid him 20 yuan for the 10-kilometre run down the winding dirt road. Half an hour later, I was down at the Friendship Bridge. There I bluffed my way past the last checkpoint, saying that I was told to come have a look while the last checkpoint was holding my documents. Somehow, it worked.

Within minutes, I was standing on the middle of the bridge where the two countries meet. As the guards were busy checking an oncoming truck, I quickly walked across to the other bank, where Nepal is. There, against a long bamboo-pole roadblock, I took pictures of the Nepalese Army officer guarding the gate. He must have presumed that I had all the paperwork and smiled at my camera.

Before I could proceed further, a Chinese border guard came running across the bridge, chasing me. He warned me that without the proper visa, I was not allowed across the bridge. But by then my goal was already met. I was standing inside Nepal, had taken several pictures, and more important, had done so without any official documents. For a brief moment, I became a refugee, though without the suffering that usually envelops such stateless persons.

Luck was with me on this day. I did not have to live up to my claim of hiking five to six kilometers an hour. Within 30 minutes, a tour bus came by. I hopped aboard, gave another convincing tale, and was back at our hotel 10 kilometers up the steep mountain within 30 minutes. My friends were still working on the car in the parking lot when I showed up. They all thought I had retired to my room and slept. But I had just returned from an excursion into Nepal—without any permit. ■

Pilgrims and traders

June 28, 1999
Ali, Tibet

Mountain sickness must be contagious. It started with our team members and later was transmitted to our car. While the two seven-year-old Land Rovers were churning along happily, our newest additional vehicle, a four-wheel-drive van, had been huffing and puffing, especially when climbing. So just 150 kilometers from the sacred mountain of Kailash, it finally gave out.

We towed it to Lake Manasarova before hiring a truck to haul it onward 350 kilometers to Ali. In Ali, we hired a different truck to take it another 1,500 kilometers, over some of the highest mountain passes (6,000 meters) in the world, into Xinjiang. We will fly critical parts there during the next two weeks so that we can make the necessary repairs. To top off our frustrations, we finally learned from our driver/mechanic what had caused the problem. Qichen, our Tibetan driver, had inadvertently poured gear oil as a lubricant oil (90 weight as opposed to 20) into the engine!

Once we had put the broken-down vehicle behind us, we moved into fast gear to explore the areas around Mount Kailash, the sacred twin lakes of Manasarova, and the border of India and Nepal with Pulan County in western Tibet.

At the lakefront of Manasarova, I ran into an Indian woman pilgrim walking towards the lake. Every few steps, she would bend down and pick up a rock, look at it, then either put it in her pocket or throw it aside. I walked up and greeted her with curiosity. She took out a few rocks and described how each rock carried an effigy of a certain deity within

TOP LEFT: Sacred Mount Kailash in the distance, framed by colorful prayer flags.

TOP: Mount Kailash, a sacred mountain for both Indian pilgrims and Tibetans.

ABOVE: One of the expedition vehicles being towed across a river in western Tibet.

LEFT: A young Tibetan girl drags her sheep towards their village home as the evensets in.

her Hindu religion. She pointed to a "face" complete with eyes, nose and mouth. On another, she pointed out the likeness of a deity with the face of an elephant, showing where the trunk was.

When I asked her why she traveled so far to get here, she began a litany about her search for spirituality. "For three mornings now since we arrived here, we got up at 4 in the morning to pray and look at the lake. Between 4 and 5 a.m. is the most sacred time of the day. We all saw how the stars and constellations fell to the edge of the horizon. ▶

Finally they took a dip into the lake and bathed themselves before rising again into the sky," she said in a sincere voice steeped in emotion.

"Are you sure you were not imagining this?" I asked with skepticism. "Of course not, all of us saw it. Our whole group, all 44 of us," she quickly retorted. "It's just like now when you are speaking to me, it is all real, right in front of your eyes," she added. I showed her the pebbles I had collected from the lake. Colorful as they were, she was not impressed as they bore no images. Before we parted, she advised that I should wake up at 4 a.m. to verify the truth myself.

I opted to go talk to the others in her group. They were all camping about half a kilometer from the lake. Mr. Patwari was their group leader. At 67, he was the oldest of their pilgrim group, including eight ladies from different parts of India. Outside their tents was a large pile of plastic bottles, all filled with water collected from the lake. "This sacred water means a lot to us. Though not many can afford the trip here, the water we bring back can be shared by thousands," Patwari explained.

Soon the entire group turned out to talk to us. Everyone was eager to explain why Lake Manasarova and Mount Kailash are so important to their religion. Kailash is the home of Lord Shiva and the lake can reflect images of all deities within their Hindu religion. Indians have been coming to this sacred site for centuries and it is the life-long dream of all devoted Hindu believers to make the trip. All younger members of this group had gone to circumambulate Mount Kailash, a trip that requires 52 kilometers of hiking. Tibetans also hold Kailash sacred as they believe it to be the center of the universe.

ABOVE: An Indian pilgrim group that crossed thousands of kilometers to pay respect to the sacred Lake Manasarova and nearby Mount Kailash.

LEFT: Yogesh, a young Nepalese merchant who has been leading his caravan into Pulan for trading for the last three years.

For most of us, the trip is very expensive, about $1,500 each, from Nepal to here and back," said Patwari. "But our Tibetan tour leader has been exploiting us every step of the way. It is very unethical after we have paid so much to come." He added that the guide had twice threatened to tear up their visas and leave them stranded on the plateau if they did not succumb to his blackmailing.

"But how?" I asked. "Just take yesterday when we arrived here. It was so cold and the wind must be blowing at 60 kilometers an hour. They refused to bring our luggage here until we paid them an extra 1,000 yuan. We wanted to be close to the lake and they refused to camp here until we paid," said Patwari, with anger in his face. The more we talked, the more the group's resentment poured out.

Eventually, our conversation turned to the area's wildlife, in particular the Tibetan Antelope that is being slaughtered around this sacred land. We agreed that I would air their complaints about blackmailing tour guides with the Chinese government if they would help spread the word in India about the plight of the antelope. The wool of this protected animal is sent to Kashmir to be woven into the infamous shahtoosh shawl, long a coveted item for wealthy Indian families but now outlawed worldwide.

Not far away, another tourist group was camping out. I stopped to talk to them, 20 Americans from the Himalayan Institute. They had no complaints; everyone was extremely satisfied. Later I found out why: Their tour group was run by a privately owned tour business in Lhasa. The pilgrim group's tour was operated by a government-owned agency.

We left Kailash and the Lake Manasarova area and drove south towards the Indian/Nepalese border. About 90 kilometers later, we were at the frontier town of Pulan. There I met Yogesh, a Nepalese. At first sight, he seemed a teenager one would associate with today's popular culture. He was wearing long wavy hair with a Harley Davidson leather hat and Oakley sunglasses on top. But in fact, at the age of 20, he had already become a successful businessman.

Yogesh's family has been conducting border trading between Nepal and Tibet for generations. His father has done it for

35 years and Yogesh had been carrying on the family tradition for three years. He proudly showed me his shop at the small international trading post three kilometers outside of Pulan. His most popular items are fabric that he brought from India. Other merchandise includes incense, silverware and lump sugar. The Indian traders who use the same post would not arrive until the snow melted in mid-July since higher mountain passes separate them.

Yogesh also showed me his living quarters with a well organized kitchen. I asked whether he cooked for himself and he told me no, that he had seven hired workers. Two were with him and the rest were at home two days away inside Nepal's first village. One worker took care of his packed horses and the other looked after his daily needs. So all Yogesh did was take care of business. His father would join him in two weeks with more merchandise and a long train of packed horses. By September they would be returning home with perhaps 20 tons of Tibetan wool. Profit doesn't come easily, but the family has gradually prospered.

Later we drove another 28 kilometers to the border with Nepal. China's road ends here at a hilltop overlooking the canyon below. Across a suspension bridge spanning the river is Nepal. No motor road could be seen on the other side. From the bridge, a long steep trail leads up the first mountain pass. Yogesh's village lies over this mountain across several more passes. For nine months of the year, the passes are closed by heavy snow. Looking at this formidable barrier of the Himalayas, I began to appreciate people like the Indian pilgrim Patwari and Yogesh the young Nepalese trader who kept an ancient route alive through one of the most inhospitable parts of the world.

Two days later, we were finally at Ali, the westernmost city of Tibet. There we took our long-awaited shower. The last one we had had was at Zhangmu, 10 days earlier. The next one would probably be at Hotan in Xinjiang, probably another week away. But by then I probably wouldn't care, as home would be only a few flight connections away. ■

Gone fishin' on the roof of the world

July 3, 1999
Hotan, Xinjiang Province

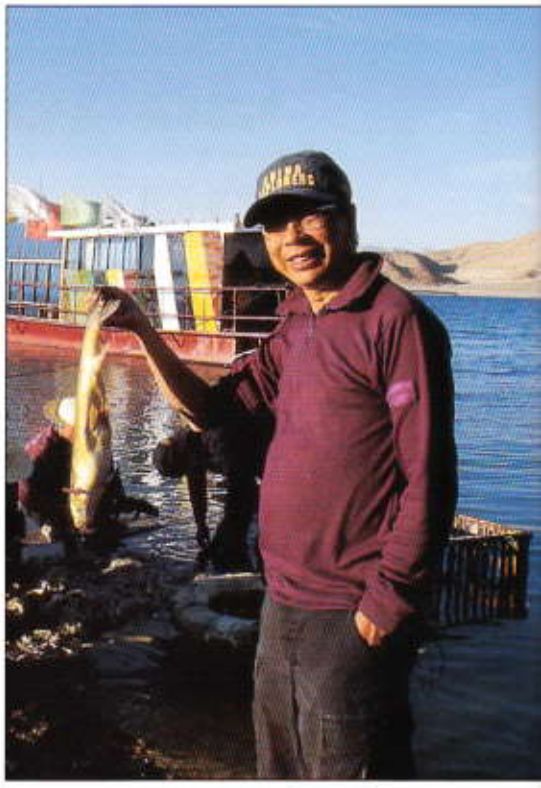
LEFT: A brown-headed gull with newborn chicks along the lakefront of Pangong Co in western Tibet.
BELOW: One of the expedition vehicles crossing a river as the expedition comes to a close near the entrance to Xinjiang.

Pangong Co is one of the longest lakes in the world. It also spans the two most populous countries. It measures roughly 200 kilometres; 160 of them fall on China's side of the border, 40 fall on India's. It is narrow, though, barely a few kilometers at its widest point. From space, it looks like a narrow strip of water cutting through the Himalayas.

The eastern side, within China, is at the westernmost section of Tibet. The west, is in India's Ladakh and Kashmir states. The water in China is fresh, while that from the Indian side is reported to be saline. There is more than a geological difference here. Political differences triggered a border war here between the two countries in 1962. In more peaceful times, the lake was a conduit of trade as merchants and pilgrims followed the lakefront from India into Tibet. Today, the region is one of the hot spots of South Asia as Pakistan and India butt heads over the future of Kashmir.

Many early British expeditions started from Kashmir and passed through Pangong Co as they entered Tibet. The region, part of the Changtang wilderness of Tibet, posts such ▶

ABOVE: Brown-headed gulls circle overhead in Bird Island located at Pangong Co, a lake shared by China and India.



RIGHT: Wong How Man inspects a fisherman's harvest at the northern tip of Pangong Co in western Tibet.

a climatic challenge as to make travels prohibitive except for the most determined explorers. In 1885 William Carey reported that the temperature fluctuated between 110 degrees Fahrenheit to minus 25 at night. Captain Bower crossed the lake in 1891and reported seeing few nomads but plenty of wildlife. George Littledale came through the area in 1895 with 160 pack animals. When he finished, he was left with only two ponies and six mules.

At Pangong Co, gunboat diplomacy is played out on the Roof of the World. But this time, the guns are on the Chinese side. China's construction of a road through nearby Aksai Chin in the 1950s provided the only access from Xinjiang into Tibet. This has been a traditional caravan route connecting the Silk Road to the plateau. India claimed the highway was built on Indian soil. In a note to China, India stated in no uncertain words that it was a "matter of surprise and regret that the Chinese Government should have constructed a road without first obtaining the permission of the Government of India" or evening informing it. But within parliament, Nehru, then Prime Minister of India, was more vague. "It is a matter for argument as to what part of it belongs to us and what part of it belongs to somebody else. It is not at all a dead clear matter."

China replied that such groundless claims were designed and installed by British colonialists before they exited the Subcontinent. As a result of the dispute, hostility flared up and neighboring Pangong Co became a battlefield. Somehow, China hauled two behemoth ships through the Himalayas into Pangong, crossing some of the highest mountain passes in the world to get them there. Today, they are still the highest deployed gunboats in the world, patrolling some volatile waters.

The boat we boarded, by comparison, was slow and underpowered. It had begun operating on Pangong Co only two weeks before our arrival. Li Laoda was captain of this steel-hulled boat, taking tourists (mainly truck drivers passing through) to Bird Island about 10 kilometers from shore. One of our objectives was to study wildlife, so we became his natural customers.

At this time of the year, the first week of July, the most common birds are the gulls and bar-headed geese that migrate here to nest and bear their young. As we approached the half-kilometer-long island, we could see thousands upon thousands of white spots dotting the shore and low hills. These were the Brown-headed gulls.

As we came ashore, their squawking calls became a frenzied chorus. But few took flight as almost all were sitting on their nests on the ground. We must have come at hatching time as nests contained hatched chicks as well as unhatched eggs. Young chicks hung around in small groups, tended by the adults. Some were just learning to wade in the water. As we closed in on the nests for filming, the birds would take flight, but would hover only a few meters above our heads.

The noise of their flapping wings was intense, especially when some would swoop down as if bombarding us. Several of us were hit by droppings. We didn't stay long as we felt we were not welcome.

Li Laoda also operates a hostel at the shore of the lake. Passersby were tempted by the favorite Pangong fish at his restaurant. For 20 yuan, one could feast to his heart's content. I observed how Li and his helper cast three nets, each measuring 100 meters long, at noon. By evening, when they pulled the nets in, they harvested more than 150 kilograms of fish, each weighing about four to five pounds. Li said his biggest catch was a fish weighing more than 10 kilograms. He also claimed that he could catch up to five tons of fish a day if he so chooses. But they would be laid to waste as there is no market for the catch. Tibetans rarely eat fish, and Xinjiang is several days away.

In passing, I asked whether these cold-water fish carry any roe. Li replied that each March, the fish have plenty of yellowish eggs, almost half a pound for each full-grown fish. I suggested that he could send some to our office in Kunming for analysis. If they are worth anything, perhaps he can invest in canning them for export. Imagine, fish roe from the most

pristine lake on the roof of the world! That would be a prized catch for the world's rich and wealthy who are focused on health and spirituality. Even the star-studded Hollywood set who turned Tibetan Buddhists may buy into the new treat.

It is in the vicinity of Ali and east of Pangong Co that early explorers reported seeing large herds of Tibetan Antelope. Indeed, Antelope Valley is thus named for a site near Aru and Memar Lakes to our east. In 1903, C. Rawling, a British officer, recounted seeing a line of 20,000 migrating antelopes that stretched across the horizon. But today, in over 40 days of travel across entire Tibet from east to west, we did not see one antelope until our last day in Tibet. Hours before we crossed into Xinjiang, we finally came across three individual male antelopes. The sighting was both exciting and painful. Exciting in that we finally saw them, and painful in that a once-dominant species had been reduced to such low numbers.

Surely publicity is mounting in China regarding the need to protect the antelope. As recently as June 18, CCTV ran an hour-long feature calling the nation's attention to the animal's plight. But in faraway Ali where the now-endangered antelope once roamed free, the situation is critical. We saw at a shop, several doorsteps away from the prefecture government building, an antelope head on display for sale priced at a meager 55 yuan. When we approached the Tibetan shop owner and asked about it, she promptly produced several more heads from her backroom. Such blatant disregard of the law is certainly due to the lack of administrative and legal enforcement of government policy.

Recently, raw antelope wool in western Tibet traded at more than 3,500 yuan a catty, whereas sheep's wool yielded a meager 8 yuan per catty. Such a high price explains why poaching and illegal trading of shahtoosh is so difficult to curtail. Before I left Ali, I took a peek inside the great gate of the Ali government compound. There I had a revelation. One corner of the government building, the most prominent side facing the street, has been rented out to a Karaoke bar. Looking at a neon sign larger than that of the official government sign, I finally realized commercialism has eclipsed effective government in this far-off land. ■

NEWS NEWS NEWS

■ Wong How Man addressed the World Presidents Organization on September 7. The distinguished group of chief executives, including 55 couples, were visiting Hong Kong on their way to China.

■ Wong also gave presentations to an IBM Business Partners gathering on May 11 in Cairns, Australia, and the Esquel Group on September 3 in Gaoming, Guangdong Province

■ CERS will hold its Annual Dinner in Hong Kong on Friday, November 12 in the ballroom at the Grand Hyatt.

■ Dr William Bleisch presented a slide-show to the Foreign Correspondents' Club in Hong Kong on August 25, on the dangers poachers represent to the endangered Tibetan Antelope.

■ CERS has moved into new and expanded offices next door to our old offices. The new address is Unit 7, 23/F SouthMark, Tower B 11 Yip Hing Street, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong.

■ Wong How Man's spectacular book of photos, From Manchuria to Tibet-A Quarter Century of Exploration, won the prestigious Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Gold Award in the United States.

SPONSORS' CORNER

CERS' exploration and research work is challenging. But the kind and generous support of our sponsors makes it much easier to get the job done.

In our past newsletters, we have featured corporate sponsors that have assisted our work in many important ways. They include Shell, Gore-Tex, Land Rover, The North Face, Coca-Cola, Kodak, Sony, and HSBC.

Many smaller contributors have given us support that has had a huge impact on our work, as well. For example, Sevylor donated the inflatable canoes we have used on many expeditions, plus a solar-heated inflatable bathtub. That meant How Man had no more excuses not to wash up on expedition. Before that contribution, his longest stretch without a bath was 29 days. (Phew!)

Magellan has donated many global positioning systems. While they could not prevent us from getting lost, they did provide exacting coordinates of where we were, when we did get lost. And they were invaluable in retracing our steps to the true source of the Yangtze River.

Dick Cepek donated off-road lights and equipment; MSR provided stoves and filters; Bushnell gave us many fine spotting scopes and binoculars. Nikon has helped out with gifts of equipment and services. To all of them, we offer a sincere thank you. We appreciate such support more than any of you may know!

Wong How Man writing his diary on the Sevylor canoe he used on the Yangtze Expedition.

THANK YOU THANK YOU

- CERS launched a new Patrons Program this summer. We would like to extend our sincerest thanks to our valued patrons:

- Vivien Chen
- William Connor II
- Hans Michael Jebsen
- York Liao
- David Lie
- Daniel Ng
- David Pong
- Marjorie Yang
- Andrew Yao
- Billy Yung

- TPC-ARMGO Fund/WOW made a contribution to CERS for its general use.

- The American Himalayan Foundation continued to support CERS' Tumu Monastery project to halt a landslide.

- The Sahan Daywi Foundation made a personal donation to CERS.

- The Eastman Kodak Company make a notable cash donation to CERS.

- The Kadoorie Charitable Foundations continues its support of CERS' project to protect the endangered Tibetan Antelope.

- CERS received a sizable donation of funding and equipment from the Shun Hing Education and Charity Fund. This support will go towards expanding and documenting CERS' project to preserve the rare Black-Necked Cranes.

LOOKING FOR A SPECIAL GIFT?

As the Holiday Season approaches, you may be wondering what to give your friend who has everything. Consider Wong How Man's spectacular book, From Manchuria To Tibet-A Quarter Century of Exploration. It recently won the prestigious Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Gold Award in the United States.This large volume presents photographs that chronicle a quarter century ofWon'g exploration in China. Francesca von Habsburg, the Archduchess of Austria, wrote the foreword to this book.

More than 260 magnificent photographs, with extended captions, tell the tales of Wong's expeditions--and highlight the changes that have occurred in remote China, among its ethnic minorities and its wildlife.

The book costs HK$500, or HK$800 for copies autographed by Wong. All proceeds support CERS' activities in the field. Call 2555-7776 to order your copies today.

CERS' MISSION:

*To **EXPLORE** remote regions of China, conduct multi-disciplinary **RESEARCH**, implement nature and culture conservation projects, and **DISSEMINATE** results through education and popular channels.*

CERS IN THE MEDIA

- On October 23 and 24, CNN International aired programs about CERS latest efforts to preserve the mysterious "Hanging Coffins" in Yunnan province. The reports and an interview with Wong How Man included descriptions of CERS' team's discovery of grave looting at one of the nationally protected sites in Sichuan.
- CNN interviewed CERS field biologist Dr. William Bleisch for a six-minute segment on August 30 about poaching activities that threaten the endangered Tibetan Antelope, sought after for its fine undercoat that is woven into fine Shahtoosh shawls that sell for upwards of $2,000. Trade in Shahtoosh is now outlawed worldwide.
- *National Geographic* magazine featured CERS' Tibetan mural-conservation project in the September issue's "Geographica" section.
- The *South China Morning Post* published a full-page story on Dr. William Bleisch's first-hand account of catching poachers high on the Tibetan plateau in its September 12th issue. The article also noted the grim future facing the Tibetan Antelope.
- RTHK aired "Hong Kong Connection" on August 23. This half-hour TV program featured CERS' study of border trade between China and its southern neighbors.
- RTHK broadcast "Our People, Our Land", on July 4. This half-hour TV program highlighted the work CERS has done to prevent a mudslide from destroying remote Tumu Monastery.
- The daily paper *Ming Pao* published an article on July 3 about Tumu Monastery and CERS' efforts to control a landslide that threatened it.
- Taiwan's *Rhythm* monthly features CERS in its October and November cover stories, with more than 50 pages about CERS' recent Trans-Himalayan Expedition.
- On May 22 and July 3, the daily Sing Tao newspaper featured an interview with RTHK's TV crew about the difficulties they encountered during their visit to Tumu Monastery, one of CERS' conservation projects. The paper also interviewed Huang Chu Xing, CERS' Project Manager at the monastery.
- The Hong Kong Economic Times published an article on September 1st about Wong How Man's career as an explorer.
- On September 12, RTHK Radio 3 began a series of six half-hour documentaries, "The Real Heroes". The shows examine the history of China and its ethnic minorities through the eyes of Wong How Man.

The production of *China Explorers* is made possible through the generous contribution of Everbest Printing and Ocean Graphics.