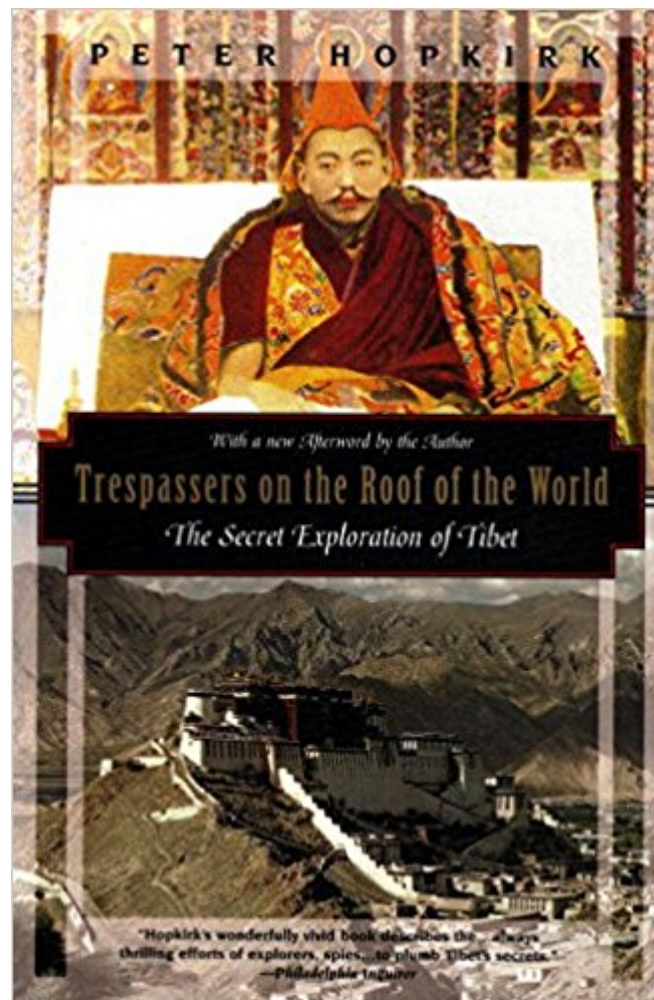




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Trespassers On The Roof Of The World: The Secret Exploration Of Tibet (Kodansha Globe)



Synopsis

For nineteenth-century adventures, Tibet was the prize destination, and Lhasa, its capital situated nearly three miles above sea level, was the grandest trophy of all. The lure of this mysterious land, and its strategic importance, made it inevitable that despite the Tibetans' reluctance to end their isolation, determined travelers from Victorian Britain, Czarist Russia, America, and a half dozen other countries would try to breach the country's high walls. In this riveting narrative, Peter Hopkirk turns his storytelling skills on the fortune hunters, mystics, mountaineers, and missionaries who tried storming the roof of the world. He also examines how China sought to maintain a presence in Tibet, so that whenever the Great Game ended, Chinese influence would reign supreme. This presence culminated in the Chinese invasion of Tibet in the 1950s, and in a brief afterword, Hopkirk updates his compelling account of "the gatecrashers of Tibet" with a discussion of Tibet today as a property still claimed and annexed by the Chinese.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Hopkirk (The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia) traces international attempts at breaking Tibet's isolationism since the mid-19th century. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Hopkirk's wonderfully vivid book describes the...always thrilling efforts of explorers, spies...to plumb Tibet's secrets." Philadelphia Inquirer
Hopkirk handles the

storytelling with infectious enthusiasm...[with] great and obvious love for the subject, and is one of those British writers who cannot write an awkward or boring sentence." — Bruce Colman, The San Francisco Chronicle "A lament for a country that, wanting only to be left alone, was hauled unceremoniously into the twentieth century, and is now an unwilling satellite of Communist China." — Richard E. Nicholls, The Philadelphia Inquirer

When it comes to delineating the history of Central Asia and environs, few writers can touch the craftsmanship of author Peter Hopkirk. In his hands, what could easily be boring history, becomes, instead, vibrant excitement. As in his other books, Hopkirk makes these mysterious and fabled lands come alive. In this book he describes the many attempts by adventurers from the outside world to penetrate remote Tibet and its almost-mystical capital, Lhasa. Chapter by chapter Hopkirk ticks off the sagas of these opportunists, some seeking fortune and fame, some on their majesty's (or tsar's) service. In the contest between Tibet versus the world, Tibet scores early and frequently, thus keeping the others out. But eventually, overpowered by modern weaponry, the outsiders win. It's tempting to cast this in terms of good-guys versus bad-guys. But it's not that easy, as the reader will see. What is easy is declaring this book a fantastic and exciting history of a mysterious land that just wanted to be left alone.

Peter Hopkirk does his usual, excellent job chronicling the efforts of Westerners (especially the British) from the 1860's to the early 20th century to find a way to explore the once forbidden kingdom of Tibet. The colorful cast of characters include men such as Francis Younghusband, Sven Hedin, Nikolai Prejevalski and women such as Dr. Susie Rijnhart and Annie Taylor. Some were military personnel given the mission to make contact with the Tibetans while some were spies recruited and trained by the British government in India to do survey work and collect information on Russian intentions in Central Asia, real or imagined. Others were missionaries such as Dr. Rijnhart (who would pay a terrible price for her efforts) but some were like Henry Savage Landor, adventurers that in his case, needed material for a book and suffered mightily in the process. Although most of the people Hopkirk chronicles in *Trespassers on the Roof of the World* were motivated by the desire and associated glory of being the first Westerner to reach Lhasa, their tales are not the most interesting, at least in my viewpoint. Mohamed-i-Hameed, Sarat Chandra Das, Kishen Singh, Nain Singh and his cousin Mani, all British spies and often referred to as "pundits", did much of the early work of opening up Tibet. Their activities were technically illegal and much resented by the Tibetans but their resourcefulness and bravery cannot be questioned and I

cannot help but admire them. Hopkirk's expose' of their activities is altogether too brief and I hope he is able to write more about them in the future. Sad to say, once the British did reach Lhasa, interest in Tibet slowly faded to the point that when the Tibetans asked western powers for aid in resisting the Chinese annexation of their country in 1950, there was very little done for them. Realpolitik at work, I suppose, but I also think it made many people (especially the Tibetans) wonder what all the fuss among Westerners over Tibet was about in the first place. All in all, Trespassers on the Roof of the World is a great book for anyone interested in learning more about Central Asia's history and is an entertaining read to boot. I highly recommend it.

great reading about the story of tibet. goes good with the great game and foriegn devils on the silk road... all by peter hopkirk

Fast read about a part of the world most of us will never visit. The lure of the unknown was like catnip to those who kept trying to gain access to Lhasa by any means possible.

Peter Hopkirk has written a fascinating book which looks at the strange country of Tibet, a land high in the Himalayas which has evolved its own form of Buddhism. Its extreme climate, desolate terrain and paranoid population made it difficult (if not impossible) to explore. It was the lure of the unknown which drew many of the Europeans to attempt to sneak into the forbidden land and their experiences make for great reading... adventure writing at its best! Includes excellent maps and photos.

Another fine book by Peter Hopkirk.

A fascinating must read for anyone interested in Tibet or the Tibetan religion. The author has several excellent books that like this book read like novels.

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