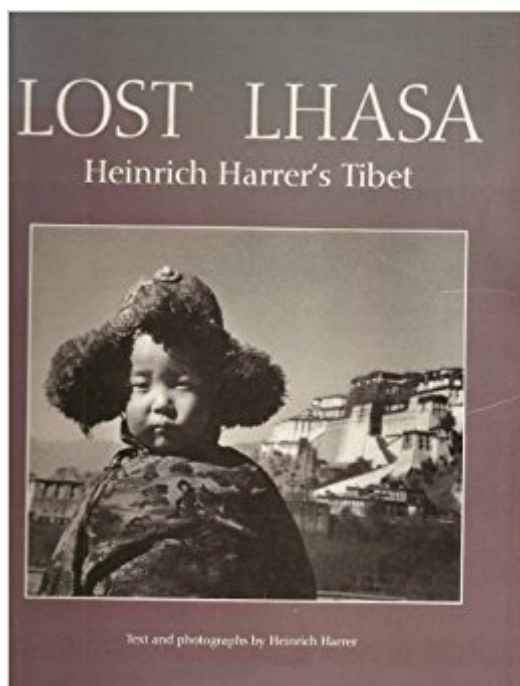


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# Lost Lhasa: Heinrich Harrer's Tibet



## Synopsis

This book provides a unique record of life in and around Tibet's capital city, Lhasa, as it will never be seen again, when Tibetan culture was still ignorant of other 20th century cultures.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the 1940s, Austrian mountain climber Heinrich Harrer escaped from a British internment camp in India and walked across the Himalayas. He limped into Lhasa two years later, and spent five years there as an honorary Tibetan. He kept diaries, bartered for an old Leica camera, and took thousands of pictures. Then in 1950 the Chinese invaded Tibet and Harrer fled. *Seven Years in Tibet* tells that story, but Harrer wanted to do more to raise international awareness. The result is *Lost Lhasa*, a collection of hundreds of previously unpublished intimate photographs of the Lhasa that used to be. With an explanatory text written in the same unpretentious prose that made *Seven Years* so popular, this paean to the Lhasa Harrer knew is beautiful and irreplaceable. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This collection of 200 photos and thematically ordered essays conjures up life in an isolated, innocent Tibet before the Chinese invasion of the 1950s. Though he presents himself humbly, Harrer (author of the 1953 classic *Seven Years in Tibet*) is clearly remarkable: a celebrated Austrian mountaineer who escaped a British prison camp to enter Tibet in 1944, he learned the language, developed a friendship with the Dalai Lama (then a teenager), worked on the country's reforestation and helped build Lhasa's sewer system. His black-and-white photos, though occasionally grainy or mundane, capture the uncommon tapestry of Tibet: hatted servants leading the horses of

government ministers, the Dalai Lama's formidable but kind mother, two honorees at a New Year's celebration clad in huge fur caps and Russian brocade robes. Harrer's photos are complemented by brief essays on such aspects of Tibetan culture as its penchant for irreverent street songs; its pilgrims' arduous rites; and its appreciation of the national drink, butter tea, which purportedly replenishes the body's stores of salt, fat and water. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This collection of photos of Lhasa, Tibet, taken by Heinrich Harrer puts the reader into the lives of Tibetans during the late 1940s early 1950s. It is a nice companion to Harrer's book, *Seven Years in Tibet*.

Great book in great condition

I have read all the books written by a Tibetan Monk, T. Lobsang Rampa, who was educated at the Tibetan medical school he called Chakpori. I have for years longed to see a picture of Chakpori before the Chinese destroyed it. Here, in this book, is such a picture and for that reason alone, for me, the book is worth the price. All other pictures and descriptions of Tibetan life prior to the invasion are 'sad' reminders that even the most isolated and peaceful countries are not immune to human greed, crippled dogmas and power madness. When, O Lord.

GOODS AS DESCRIBED. THANKS

good book but not great

Most of *LOST LHASA* documents the peaceful years that Heinrich Harrer spent in Tibet. The map of Tibet and its border with northern India is shown inside the front cover, with a line marking Harrer's route from Dehra Dun near the Ganges River in India, up into the Himalayas far northwest of Mt. Everest. After escaping from a prison camp in April, 1944, and climbing for 18 days to Tibet, then stuck in Traduen until December, 1944 while they waited for permission to travel further, they waited in Kyirong on the border of Nepal until November, 1945, when they escaped again. "To avoid large cities, we decided to move even farther north, into the Changthang region--the famous Tibetan Plateau. Here we would see only nomads and brigands; government officials avoided the area." (p. 43). Walking into Lhasa like starving beggars on January 15, 1946, "We thought of our adventures and of our comrades still in the internment camp at Dehra Dun." (p. 47). Heinrich Harrer is famous,

now, as the author of the best-selling book, SEVEN YEARS IN TIBET, which told the same story. LOST LHASA was not published until 1991, when the 2000 negatives which he had kept became the best reminder he had of the years he had enjoyed most. There is a lot of writing in this book to tell the entire story again, and in places where there aren't many pictures, the people are still fascinating. A young couple, who had given Peter Aufschnaiter and Harrer each a dried apricot on a 20,000-foot pass two months before, had much to complain about after they reached Lhasa. "They were surprised that they had to work for daily necessities, even if it was only a place to spend the night or a cup of tea. They felt that people in Lhasa were greedy, demanding things that in the Changthang you wouldn't think about. . . . We invited them to our modest home, where we had lots of barley, rice, and butter, and we supplied them for their return to the Changthang, their nomadic home, where they had plenty of meat, butter, cheese, milk, and where nature would provide for all their needs." (p. 65). Picture captions are jumbled together. The caption under the picture on page 116 explains "Noblemen and women . . ." with everyone in winter clothes "in front of the Kumbum monument in Gyantse [above]. The girl [right] sits behind three fancy teacups, complete with stands and cover." also explains the picture of a young child on page 117 with very short hair and a necklace of beads sitting behind a table with four teacups. My first clue that it was a picture of a girl was the covers on the teacups. The 7-inch-square picture on page 116 shows plain cups and saucers. I did not realize that four teacups with stands and covers were on the table in front of the kid until I tried to measure the height of each cup to see if they were taller than the kid's head in the picture. Allowing for perspective, it might be possible for a knob on top of the fourth teacup to be mistaken for an earring, just below one of the kid's ears, but the earring pictures are elsewhere in this book. Several trips to Lhasa are described in this book, including "When I returned in 1982, I found that the Chinese had destroyed the medical school that perched atop Chagpori and replaced it with a radio tower." (p. 208). A Glossary on pages 218-219 explains terms like Dob-Dob (monk-police) and Tsampa (parched barley flour, the Tibetan's staple food). Notes on the pictures on page 220 identify two of the people in the picture on page 116 and explain that the picture following it is of the daughter of Surkhang Wangchuk, the governor of Gyangste. Harrer had fled Lhasa and was staying with the governor of Gyangste when the Dalai Lama with a caravan that contained more than a thousand animals came through on the flight from Tibet to the Chumbi Valley. Harrer left there in March, 1951. "Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa to find posters of Mao plastered against the walls of the Potala." (p. 207). Among the brighter aspects of the nostalgia in this book is the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the Dalai Lama in 1989 because he "opposed the use of violence. He has instead advocated peaceful solutions based upon tolerance

and mutual respect, in order to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of his people." (pp. 216-217). This book is a monument to that tradition.

What a lovely book! Engrossing illustration of a way of life destroyed by the Chinese conquerors. I love reading Buddhist writings, but I think this would appeal even to those who are not interested in Buddhism, as Harrer seems to be not particularly religious and he concentrates on the everyday life of Tibetans in Lhasa.

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