

# TRANS HIMALAYA

Discoveries And Adventures  
In Tibet

IN  
3  
VOLUMES

Sven Hedin

# TRANS-HIMALAYA

DISCOVERIES AND ADVENTURES  
IN TIBET

BY

SVEN HEDIN



WITH 156 ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS, WATER-  
COLOUR SKETCHES, AND DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR  
AND 4 MAPS

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III



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## PREFACE

THE publication of this third volume of *Trans-Himalaya* fulfils a promise I made three years ago in the preface to the first volume.

Then I proposed to describe also my recollections of Japan, Korea, and Manchuria, and I intended to conclude with an account of my journey home through Siberia. But as soon as I began to look through my diaries and see what I had written about the source of the Indus, the highlands of western Tibet, and the Sutlej valley, I perceived that the third volume would be as bulky as the other two, and that no space could be spared for the extreme East if the material were to be dealt with as fully as it deserved. So now Japan, Korea, and Manchuria are omitted. For why should I encroach on space already scanty enough with accounts of countries visited annually by innumerable tourists, when I could present to my readers impressions of regions never before trodden by the foot of a white man, or where, at any rate, I had not a single rival? Besides, I have depicted several scenes in the great Orient in my book for young people, *From Pole to Pole*.

In three chapters of the present volume, I have given a succinct historical review of all the journeys of exploration which have touched the margin of the central chains of the Trans-Himalaya, and have shown how immense was the area of this mountain system completely unknown before my journey.

Three other chapters contain *résumés* of those journeys which had the sacred lake of Manasarowar and the source regions of the great Indian rivers for their goal. Herein I demonstrate that before me no European, nor even an Asiatic of note, had penetrated to the true sources of the Indus and the Sutlej, and that the position of the source of the Brahmaputra had never been determined, though it might be guessed whereabouts the head-stream gushed forth from the foot of the glaciers. A polemical tone was unnecessary, for no allegations worthy of credit have ever been made to the contrary. I let the facts speak for themselves; they are, as always, very eloquent.

I have avoided all wearisome citations in the popular scientific chapters. I am treating the same questions fully in the scientific work which will shortly be issued, and in which all sources will be carefully indicated.

My thanks are due to Dr. Nils Ekholm for the calculation of absolute heights, to Professor Anders Hennig of Lund for the identification of rock specimens, and to Lieutenant C. J. Otto Kjellström for the general map.

The illustrations should be leniently criticized; with one or two exceptions they are from my own photographs and sketches. Perhaps they will give the reader some notion of the lonely country, the dizzy heights of the Trans-Himalaya, and of my old friends, the amiable, unassuming nomads.

SVEN HEDIN.

STOCKHOLM, October 1912.

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31, Wards Inquisition St. CAL.

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## CHAPTER I

### FROM THE SOURCE OF THE INDUS THROUGH UNKNOWN COUNTRY

At camp 236 my horses and mules crop the tender grass that grows round the source of the Indus. The new-born stream babbles noisily among the stones in its bed, and I hear it in front of my tent like the roll of an organ in a classical mass. Its song will swell out to crashing thunder on the way through the Himalayas, but the melody is always the same, and to the music of the Indus ripples the Macedonians once defeated the peoples of the East (see Vol. II. p. 213).

My tent is anchored by its iron pegs in ground on which no European has set his foot. I am proud of being the first to visit the source of the Indus, and yet meekly thankful. From this point, where the river springs from the bosom of the earth, the increasing volumes of water hurry down towards the sea. The height is stupendous. I am resting at 16,946 feet above the level of the ocean. An Eiffel Tower on the summit of Mont Blanc! Not the eternal river alone, but the whole earth lies at my feet. I have crossed the Trans-Himalaya a fourth time and have at last reached the goal I aimed at.

Of the source of the Indus the geographers of old—Greek, Roman, and Arabian—knew nothing. Since the day when the claws of the British lion closed round the land of the Hindus, the cradle of the Indus has been repeatedly moved and located now here now there. At length English officers sent out native scouts to search for

it, and these men found the head-stream, but not the source itself. And now I listened to its monotonous murmur.

I had five of my best men from Ladak with me. They had accompanied me on my adventurous march right through Tibet; they had endured a bitterly cold winter, and surmounted the Trans-Himalaya by unknown passes; with deep devotional feeling they had heard the chants resounding through the cloister courts of Tashi-lunpo, had visited the shores of the holy lake, and on the summit of Kailas had raised their eyes towards the paradise of Siva.

I spoke Jagatai Turkish with my men, and Rabsang translated for me into Tibetan. Tundup Sonam took care of our guns and Adul stirred the pots as they simmered over the cooking-fire.

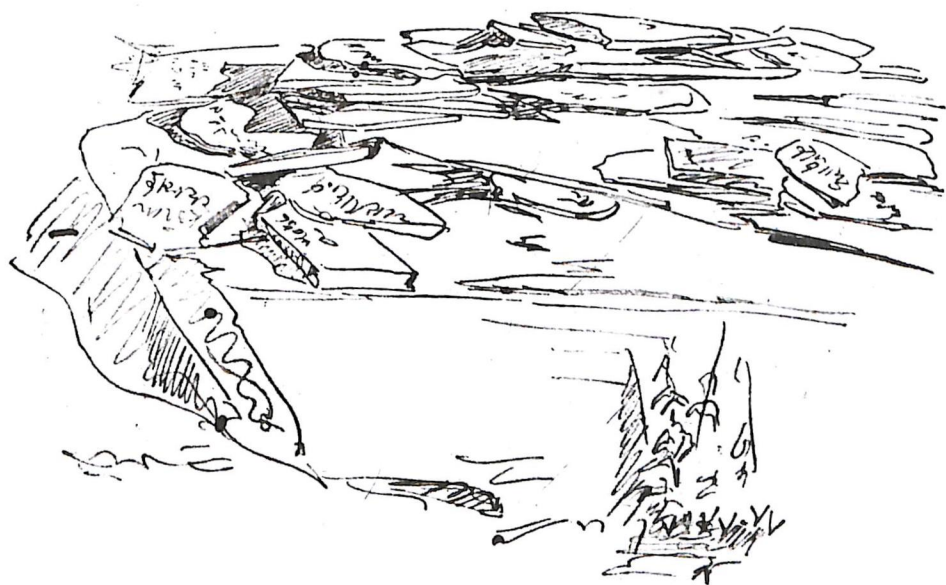
A lucky chance had thrown a Tibetan nomad named Pema Tense in my way. Allured by the liberal remuneration in bright rupees which chinked in my hand, he had let his comrades go their way and offered me his service on the route north-eastwards through unknown country. From him we hired eight sheep and bought their loads of barley. Thus my own baggage animals were not overladen, and could now and then get a good feed in a country as bare and naked as immediately after the deluge.

We set out on the morning of September 11, 1907, and the hoofs tapped again on the hard frozen soil. The temperature had fallen in the night to  $11.3^{\circ}$ . In Tibet winter is a guest which comes early and stays late. The sky was light blue and clear, and the rainy season, which we had scarcely felt, was over. But the winds of the south-west monsoon howled and moaned over the highlands, and where the soil was loose dust flew up from the hoofs of the horses.

The land lies flat and open before us. It is the "Northern Plain," the Chang-tang of the Tibetans, the high plateau with its flattened surface forms. Behind us rises the Trans-Himalaya with its wild precipitous rocks. The valley we follow is broad and enclosed between high irregular mountains. The Bokar-tsangpo, one of the head-streams of the Indus, glides noiselessly between its



1. SOURCE OF THE INDUS.



2. A MANI WALL.

Sketches by the Author.



ice-lined banks. Its water is cold and crystal clear, and it is evident that it comes from snow-fields and springs and not from glaciers.

In an expansion between the heights to the left of our route white rings of salt glitter round the small vanishing lake Jekung-tso. The same name is given to the pass to which we ascend along a ravine between bare weathered cliffs. The Bokar-tsangpo is left behind us, but in the south-east we see the bluish heights with the thin snow-fields whence the brook draws some of its water.

On the other side of the pass also we are still in the basin of the Indus, for the rivulet which meanders among small clumps of faded grass down the Lamo-latse valley joins the Bokar-tsangpo.

Pema Tense waddles whistling and singing behind his eight sheep and is always ready to give me any information I ask for.

"What is the name of this place?" I ask him at a spot where a row of cairns covered with *mani* stones crosses the path.

"Shantse-gong," he answers. "Here the pilgrims greet the gods of Kang-rinpoche, for from here the actual summit of the holy mountain first comes into sight." Pema must have been imposed on with this tale, for not a glimpse of the mountain can be obtained from the cairns.

Some tiny rivulets still trickle down through the yellow moss, the only vegetation visible, to the Lamo-latse brook. I mention them because the easternmost rivulet should perhaps be regarded as the true source of the Indus.

Another obstacle appears in our way, and then the path leads to the pass of Lamo-latse sunk in a steep crest of quartz porphyry. Here is the watershed of the Indus. To the east stretches an elevated country which has no drainage to the sea. We are at a height of 17,802 feet. Two cairns mark the top of the pass, decked with yaks' horns and rags, the offerings of pious superstitious pilgrims. The six holy syllables "Om mani padme hum" are inscribed in black on coloured streamers, and when the rushing wind makes the streamers flap and crack, one can fancy that "Om mani padme hum," uttered by many voices, is

borne by the wind over the desolate plateau to bring blessing and happiness to the troops of pilgrims.

Yes, up here the stormy wind rages furiously. I have to place myself with my back sheltered from the wind when I read the instruments, so as not to be carried away. And what a prospect towards the east-north-east! Do you imagine it is beautiful? It is terribly desolate, almost awful. I feel as lonely and forlorn as in the midst of a sea, a petrified sea with bell-shaped billows that are black and red near at hand and pass into yellow, green, and violet in the distance. I seem to stand on the crest of a wave looking down on all the others. Space without end! I should have to wander about for days and years to reproduce all these details on my map sheets. Here I take in at a single glance an enormous block of the earth's crust. Waste, cold and lonely. No men, no animals, no plants! But the sun lights up the ground and the wind howls among the rocks. There is no other sign of life.

It is pleasant to encamp (camp 237) after such a day. We pitch the tents as quickly as possible to get shelter from the storm which sweeps the ground like a stout besom. But the air is clear, for there is nothing loose to sweep away from this ground polished by the wind during millions of years. We look in vain for a yellowish-green patch which might be pasture land, and so one of the sheep is relieved of its load of barley.

When the camp is pitched at three o'clock, the afternoon seems long and the hours of solitude seem never to come to an end. I write down in my diary a description of the bit of earth I have seen since sunrise. The rock specimens I have picked out of the hills with my geological hammer are numbered and wrapped up in paper. And then Pema Tense must give me his company for a while.

"What is the name of this valley?" I ask him.

"It is called Lamo-latse-lungpe-do, and it opens after three days' journey into a large plain."

"Where is your home, Pema?"

"My tent stands in Gertse, sir."

"How far off is it?"

“On, quite fifteen days’ march. We reckon eleven days’ journey from Yumba-matsen to Gertse.”

“Are there many nomads in Gertse?”

“My tribesmen live in two to three hundred black tents, and we own large flocks of sheep which are our only wealth.”

“Tell me something about the profits you derive from your sheep.”

“Well, you see, some nomads shear their sheep themselves in Gertse, and carry the wool on yaks thirteen days’ journey to Tok-jalung, whither merchants from Ladak and Hindustan come to market. Others let the sheep carry their wool to market, and the purchasers do the shearing. But those nomads do best who break salt out of the beds of dried-up lakes, pack the lumps of salt on their sheep, and tramp in midsummer all the way to market at Gyanima and to the shore of Tso-mavang, where the sheep are shorn, for they make a profit on the salt as well as on the wool. And when they travel home again their sheep are laden with barley, which they have obtained by barter. Such a journey, outwards and homewards, occupies the greater part of the summer. The sheep graze by the way, no permission being asked, and so we nomads spare our own grass for the winter.”

The Tok-jalung gold-field, at a height of 16,340 feet, is one of the highest permanently inhabited places in the world. Pema Tense had often been there, and told me that in summer 300 tents sprang up out of the earth, for at that time gold-diggers came thither from Lhasa and other places. During the winter only some thirty tents stood there. It is bitterly cold, and often a storm of powdery snow sweeps over the broad expanse.

Pema Tense looked out through the tent opening, and when he saw that the twilight was falling over the earth he rose and went out to look for his sheep and tie them up by the tents for the night. Then, after chatting a while at the camp fire of the Ladakis, he rolled himself up in his skin coat like a hedgehog and fell into a sound sleep. He had given us due notice that he intended to make off altogether as soon as we met travellers or caught sight of

a tent, for if he were caught travelling about with strangers and guiding them into the forbidden land he would be beheaded as surely as twice two make four. Therefore, he wanted his rupees paid to him every evening; and he always got them in full.

The storm keeps us company all night long. There is something depressing in this constant wind, which, according to *Perma*, will last quite eight months. It makes the tent cloth flap and beat like a sail and it whistles and groans among the ropes, and a cold draught sweeps over the ground where I lie wrapped up in furs and felt rugs. The temperature sinks to  $18^{\circ}$  in the night; but at seven o'clock it is already up to  $40.3^{\circ}$ .

I slip quickly into my clothes and am hardly dressed when Adul comes in with my breakfast consisting of two vertebræ of the last-killed wild sheep, fresh bread and tea. Outside the Ladakis are shoeing my white steed, the faithful animal which has carried me many hundred miles through dreary Tibet. On this troublesome ground of thick accumulations of detritus the horses become footsore and must be carefully attended to.

We long to get out of this country which has nothing to offer but water and wind. The path is easily recognizable, and winds along like a light-coloured riband. Innumerable men and animals have trodden it down and sunk it in the ground. Pilgrims have swarmed from Gertse, Senkor, Yumba-matsen, and other regions of Tibet to the holy mountain and the wonder-working lake. Here and there are seen signs of their camps, a slab of stone blackened by fire, and three stones between which blue flames have flickered above yak dung and brought the water in a kettle to the boil.

Hour after hour our little company marches onwards. There is seldom anything unusual to attract our attention. Here lies the bleached skull of a wild sheep, *Ovis ammon*, with its heavy beautifully curved horns. The valley opens on to a plain and we turn aside from the brook which disappears northwards. Its water murmurs melodiously under a thin sheet of ice. A small herd of wild asses or kiangs is disporting itself on the plain, but makes off when



3. PEMA TENSE, MY GUIDE TO THE SOURCE OF THE INDUS AND TO YUMBA-MATSEN.

Sketch by the Author.

we set up our tents at camp 238 beside a wall of dry yak dung. The nomads, who have collected this fuel and are now feeding their flocks in some other spot, will certainly be surprised to find that most of their store of fuel is gone. If we could get no other luxury we would at any rate enjoy a large roaring fire at even.

The next day's journey brings us to a small pass through cliffs of porphyry; on the farther side Pema Tense leads us through a valley deeply sunk between wild weathered walls of rock, and with its bottom covered with a deep layer of sharp pebbles. At times a small patch of yellow grass appears with stems as hard and sharp as needles. In two sheltered gullies hairy ragged nettles struggle for life. Otherwise the country is everywhere dismally barren, dried-up and desolate.

Beyond a second saddle consisting of limestone we at last meet a solitary traveller.

"Where do you come from?" Rabsang asks him.

"From Yumba-matsen," he answers shortly, quickening his pace.

"Where are you going?"

"To a tent not far from here?"

"What have you to do there?"

"I have left a boot behind," he replies, making off as quickly as possible. Certainly an absent-minded gentleman! Pema Tense thinks that the man belongs to a band of robbers.

A gradually ascending path brings us to the Tsalamngopta-la pass, 16,660 feet high, adorned with two cairns and the usual prayer streamers. All round the horizon the view reveals nothing new. Still on all sides stretches the same dismal country. No black tents, no flocks. We have marched north-eastwards for six days and only met a single traveller.

Here at any rate we run no risk of being stopped by dictatorial governors and militia levies. We feel ourselves to be the lords of the land. If I had a larger caravan, more men and more provisions, I could travel unhindered a very long way eastwards. There is a peculiar charm in the adventures and excitement of a forbidden route. But

the object of the present excursion—the source of the Indus—has been attained, and the main caravan is waiting for us at Gartok. Well, it may wait. As all is going well, we will try to advance two days' journey farther to the north-east. We leisurely descend the slope from the pass and prepare for the night in the Gyamboche district at camp 239.

On setting out on September 14, we decided that our next business was to look out for the tent of the headman of Yumba-matsen, who, Pema Tense believed, was staying in the neighbourhood. Every hill which seemed to promise a wide prospect was climbed by one of our party. Several times we thought we saw black tents to the north-east, but in the telescope they resolved themselves into heaps of rubbish or ring fences, which the nomads use as sheep-folds. The only thing we discovered was the small lake Nyanda-nakbo-tso.

Singular country! The mountains do not form continuous chains but rise in rolls of weathering products or steep humps of solid rock, apparently without any order. They are yellow and red, violet, grey and black. The surface is coloured, but the tones are subdued and solemn.

The people of the country seem to have fled before us, but to-day signs of man appear. The way passes twelve *mani* walls with stones bearing the everlasting "Om mani padme hum." Round an open pond four such votive cairns are erected. The animal life also announces a more favourable country. A covey of partridges chirps on the pebbles of a slope, and five of them are a welcome addition to our store of provisions. They are plucked at once and their feathers whirl in the air like wind-driven smoke. They are cleaned on the march, and are tied together and secured on the back of the white mule, where the head of a wild sheep, killed at the source of the Indus, is already enthroned and nods at every step of the mule. Wild asses are also seen more frequently than before.

The view in front is again barred by a small ridge at the foot of which grass more luxuriant than we have hitherto seen grows round a spring. A long well-kept *mani* wall runs up the slope, and not far from it stand

perhaps a dozen cairns in a row. There must be men here. We hurry up to the crest, keenly expectant, and hope to catch sight of black tents on the other side, but not even the field-glass can detect a single Tibetan. Only wild asses wander over the plain, two hares race along a slope, and some bluish-black ravens circle leisurely above our heads. For the rest the desert stretches silent and dreary before us, and in the background shimmers the little lake.

Disappointed we move onwards. We approach the lake basin and the air becomes milder. Were it not for the horrible wind we could enjoy here a last touch of departing summer.

After a time the desert scene is enlivened by 500 sheep which trot before us in the same direction. Ah! there are our friends from Singi-buk, Pema Tense's comrades, with their caravan. They took another route and now we are following in their track. Gertse is their destination. The sheep carry small loads of barley, for which the herdsmen have bartered the easily won salt they have taken from the ground.

Now we are on the steppe round the lake where grasshoppers fill the air with their rattle, and lizards dart noiselessly over the sand. We notice on a slope by the farther shore fifteen *mani* walls. Astonished at finding them piled up so far from the track, I ask Pema Tense about them, and he asserts that they are tombstones of dead Tibetans.

A second lake now appeared behind a small isolated hill of limestone, and thither we directed our steps. The water may be drunk by any one who is not too particular. But we did not put our stomachs to the proof as Ishe, one of our Ladakis, discovered a spring of fresh water near the eastern shore. There we made ourselves comfortable enough to spend a night in the desert. The arrangements had been partially provided by the nomads, who row and then pitch their tents on the lake shore and feed their yaks and sheep on the good pasturage. There is a steep wall of phyllitic schist which can easily be split into slabs, and several small *mani* walls are built of them. On the top of one sits a yak skull with huge horns; the six holy syllables



are carved in its white forehead and filled in with ochre so that they are red as blood. An old skin coat and a vest had been left among the stones.

Out on the lake a flock of ducks were quacking, and at dusk twenty wild geese alighted on the shallow water. Then a shot cracked and put an end to their repose. Three of the far-travelled visitors found their way into our kitchen. When the darkness of night fell over the earth we heard again an eager conversation among some sixty wild geese as they splashed in the water or whizzing down folded their wings above the surface. They came from the south-west and were off again next morning before us. Soon cold weather would cover the mud with a crust of ice and force the wild geese to return to lower, warmer regions.

After sunset deep violet shadows rose up in the east, turquoise-blue tints lingered a while in the zenith, while sulphur-yellow flames hovered over the western horizon. They soon paled and went out, and the camp fires burnt all the brighter. Out in the lake, which has a very slowly falling bottom, were heard splashing footsteps. It was Tundup Sonam returning with his game. At the foot of cliffs of schist the dogs barked at the echo of their own voices. Their bark pierced sharp and shrill through the otherwise silent night.



C. H. H.

#### 4. SNAPSHOTS IN CAMP.

Sketches by the Author.