



THE TIBET MUSEUM E-NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE

- Photo Exhibitions 1
- Photo Identification Project 2
- Tibet Awareness Talk Series 3
- Destruction of Lhasa 4
- Workshops & Training 7

Photo Exhibition at TIPA

9th–11th June 2012

During the Fourth All India Tibet Support Groups Conference held in Dharamsala, the Tibet Museum of the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR) held photo exhibitions titled *Glimpses on the History of Tibet* and *A Long Look Homeward* at the the Tibet Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA). Over 150 Indian supporters from across India who participated in the conference visited the exhibition, which aided them in a richer

understanding of both Tibet’s history and the sobering reality of China’s occupation. In addition, the museum had the opportunity to host His Holiness the Dalai Lama who had come for the inauguration of the conference and made his gracious presence felt at our photo exhibition.



Photo Exhibition in Shimla

6th–9th July 2012

To mark the auspicious occasion of His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s 77th birthday, and with an earnest request made by the Tibetan Settlement Office in Shimla, the Tibet Museum hosted a rare photo exhibition titled *Biography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama* and *Glimpses on the History of Tibet* at the famous Ritz Ground—the most tourist-ed attraction in Shimla, on 7 July 2012. The exhibition highlighted the life history of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama as well as the history of Tibet. Around 1,500 people paid to see the exhibition and left with a better awareness of Tibetan history.





Visitors closely examine the photo exhibition in Delhi

Photo Exhibition in Delhi

29th Jan.–2nd Feb. 2013

The Tibet Museum had yet another opportunity to host a photo exhibition based on the themes of *A Long Look Homeward* and the ongoing self-immolations happening inside Tibet that continue to demand freedom for Tibetans and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet. This exhibition was venue at the Press Club of India on 29 January 2013. Notable guests included Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay, Speaker Penpa Tsering and other members of Parliament, important delegates from Delhi and assorted media.

Another exhibition based on the same themes was hosted at the north and south exit doors of Talkatora Stadium on 30 January 2013, where the inaugural ceremony of the Tibetan People's Solidarity Campaign was held. Around 4,000 visitors comprising Tibetans from India, Nepal and Bhutan visited our exhibition, as well as many Indian supporters including former Deputy Prime Minister of India Shri. Lal Krishna Advani.

On 31 January 2013, the Tibet Museum hosted a photo exhibition on the ongoing crisis of self-immolations at the India International Centre in New Delhi in order to enhance awareness of the current situation inside Tibet. The exhibition corresponded with the Gandhian Peace Foundation panel discussion on Tibet titled "Tibet: The Current Situation and Its Implications for India and China" at the same venue.

The exhibition on self-immolation was also hosted in Jantar Mantar in New Delhi for two days from 1-2 February 2013 during the huge gathering of the Tibetan Solidarity Movement at Jantar Mantar. The exhibition aimed to inform Tibetans and non-Tibetans about the sobering realities inside Tibet.

Photo Identification Project

Feb.–Mar. 2013

As a part of the Tibet Museum's Photo Identification Project, Ms. Tsering Dolma and Mr. Thinley visited Tibetan settlements near Dehra Dun from 23 February to 3 March 2013 and Bylakuppe Tibetan Settlements from 17–29 March 2013 to identify photos. The project was completed by interviewing relevant Tibetans, specifically those from older generations. More than 600 photographs related to Tibetan society, religion, Tibetan settlements, farming and agricultural products were identified with the help of former senior abbots, former CTA officials, elder monks and other Tibetans.



Photo Identification Project near Dehra Dun



Tibet Awareness Talk Series

Held Monthly

To enhance awareness of Tibet and its overall situation, the Tibet Museum conducts a talk series every month inviting researchers, scholars, and other learned and experienced people. The target audience is tourists from different parts of the world visiting the Tibet Museum who want to learn something about Tibet and participate in a question and answer session and other post-talk recreations.

Mr. Tsering Dhondup, researcher at the Environment and Development Desk, gave a talk on “The Geological Evolution of the Tibetan Plateau” to more than 30 visiting tourists at the Tibet Museum on 15 May 2012.

Mrs. Tsering Tsomo, Executive Director of the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), presented a discussion at the Tibet Museum on the current human rights situation in Tibet on 6 June 2012. There were around 46 people from every corner of the world who took interest in this talk that was followed by questions and answers.

Ms. Kalden Tsomo and **Ms. Tsomo**, researcher for the DIIR Human Rights Desk, gave a talk on “The Status and Usage of Tibetan Language in Tibet” to a gathering of 30 tourists at the Tibet Museum on 22 June 2012.



Ms. Kalden Tsomo giving a presentation at the Tibet Museum

Ms. Dukten Kyi, researcher for TCHRD, was invited to speak on the issue of self-immolations and its various causes and conditions at a gathering of 35 tourists and visitors at the Tibet Museum on 11 July 2012.

Mr. Tenpa Gyeltsen, researcher for the Environment and Development Desk, spoke on “Non-Voluntary Resettlement” of nomadic herders to a gathering of 27 earnest visitors at the Tibet Museum on 3 August 2012.



Mr. Tsering Dhondup

Mr. Dawa Tsering, former political prisoner and field officer of

TCHRD, was invited to speak on Tibet’s struggle for freedom, the new generation of Tibetans and the situation of Tibetan prisoners in Tibet to 32 earnest visitors and tourists at the Tibet Museum on 11 September 2012.

Mr. Tenzin Norbu, head of the Environment and Development Desk, spoke on “Tibet and Its Environment” to 32 foreign tourists and museum visitors on 21 July 2012.

Mr. Tsering Choedup of the International Tibet Network, Asia Region, gave a talk on the “Global Tibetan Movement” to an audience of 40 people on 12 October 2012.

Mr. Tenzin Losel, former field researcher for Human Rights Watch and the International Campaign for Tibet, spoke on the topic of “Religion – A Highly Regulated Aspect of Tibetan Life “ and “Chinese Government Control Over Tibetan Buddhism” to the audience of 40 people on 26 October 2012.



A large section of Old Lhasa has been demolished to construct the Barkhor Shopping Mall

The Destruction of Lhasa

By Woeser

Our Lhasa is on the verge of destruction; this is absolutely not a case of crying wolf!

A tourist who has been to Lhasa wrote on Sina Weibo: “Today I can understand clearly that the original intended objective for Lhasa has been the construction of an extravagant tourist-city monstrosity along the lines of Lijiang. All the Old City’s street stalls, guest houses, and its low-end service sector have to move out, to be replaced by high-end art and antique shops, and hotels. Moreover, all the buildings along the old streets have to have uniform facades and uniform signboards. So is it that China’s cities are to have only this one type of d**ba** Korean-style beauty makeover?”

Note that among the photographs that this tourist posted, the “Construction Survey” for the Barkhor Shopping Mall presents the scope of the project as encompassing 150,000 square meters, with an

underground parking garage alone containing 1,117 parking spaces. Moreover, last year, because the colossal “Spiritual Power Plaza,” a government-business sector joint venture built at the edge of the Old City of Lhasa was constructing an underground parking garage, it was pumping out groundwater day and night for over two years, causing anxiety among Lhasa residents as well as worries about cracks ripping through the Old City of Lhasa and depressions that could reach the dangerous point of forming sinkholes. Cracks have already appeared in many places, while

excavated sites have no water. And now the authorities want to construct a huge shopping center with an underground parking garage in another part of the Old City. Does this mean that we have reached a point at which it is now nigh impossible to prevent Lhasa from falling into the destructive clutches of hungry ghosts?

Remember: in 1994, UNESCO placed the Potala Palace on the World Heritage List. But then, in 1996, the village of Shol, which had stood for 1,100 years at the foot of the Potala Palace was moved and relocated. At the same time, the Potala Palace, now deprived of Shol, was fatally disfigured with a public square: a replica of all those identical squares found throughout China, that are meant to display and project supreme power and authority.

In 2000 and 2001 UNESCO listed Jokhang and the Norbulingka on the World Heritage List as extensions of the Potala, making Lhasa, already a sacred place in terms of its value for religion, history



A display image of the Barkhor Shopping Mall, currently under construction

and the humanities, a part of the world's cultural heritage. Nominally, then, it ought to receive protection simply as a matter of course. But in 2002, Tibetans received a deep wound to their hearts: an artillery shell-shaped "Monument to the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" was put up to tower easily over the square, facing off against the Potala Palace in the distance. In 2007 the Potala Palace received a "Yellow Card Warning" at the World Heritage Conference, with criticism leveled for the excessive and gross pursuit of tourism profits, for unrestrained exploitation and for failing to uphold its responsibilities and commitments. The Potala Palace was put at risk of losing its "World Heritage" designation.

What is regrettable is that now, not only does the Potala continue to be subjected every year to excessive exploitation for purposes of tourism, but, under the feet of several million tourists whose numbers continually increase, even Lhasa's Old City is precariously and dangerously changing its appearance as it follows the trajectory of becoming an "International Tourist City." Not only have its guts been opened, things have become drastic. It's just as the Tibetan artist Kuang Laowu judged: "Faced with the lure of material goods and the seductions of power, cultural distinctiveness loses out and urban uniformity is imposed. Behind this seeming burst of prosperity the Old City of Lhasa, its substance, long since depleted, is yesterday's faded lily; none of its ancient simplicity, with the traces of ages past, is to be found there."



The Barkhor: the circumambulation road around the Jokhang

Years ago, between 1996 and 2002, Andre Alexander, a German who had devoted himself to restoring the Old City of Lhasa, in concert with the Tibet Heritage Foundation which he founded, rescued 76 traditional structures in and around Lhasa and revealed the true state of affairs, stating that "starting in 1980 the construction process within the city has wrought unceasing destruction on the Old City's ancient structures and quarters... From 1993 on, each year an average of 35 historic structures have been demolished. At this rate the remaining historic structures will have vanished in less than 4 years." Because of their remarkable restoration work and the witness they bore went totally against the intentions of the powers that be, in the end they were expelled from Lhasa by the authorities in Tibet—authorities who single-mindedly pursue only what is in their own interests.

From the "Engineering Survey" for the "Barkhor Shopping Mall"

we can see that the goal of the renovation of the Barkhor quarter is to "cleanse, disperse, transform and elevate." And the reality that is to be understood by this is that the reconstruction of the Old City is to be divided into several large parts: the heart of the Old City, the circumambulation path around the Jokhang, is to be thoroughly cleared. All the street peddlers are to be moved inside the newly-built "Barkhor Shopping Mall."

All of the residents originally living along the street are to be moved to Tolung Dechen County in the western suburb of Lhasa; those households that move quickly can get a subsidy of between 20,000 and 30,000 RMB. Not moving will be a political problem. It's said that one old person in Lhasa who was unwilling to move has gone completely mad. As for the empty homes and courtyards, they will be used to draw investment bids. Stores, restaurants, bars, art galleries and the like are to be established here. And on other streets and allies



THE TIBET MUSEUM E-NEWSLETTER



The Old City district of Lhasa in ruins

in the Old City, such as the space in front of the Ramoche temple, big public squares are to be opened up. The surrounding households will similarly be moved to the suburbs. In the northeast corner of the Old City, the site of the former Chengguan District Government Headquarters, the Barkhor Shopping Mall has already been erected. And so it goes, on and on...

Of course, the Barkhor, which was originally a place of religious significance, will not turn into a deserted street. On the contrary, it will become a bustling street, existing only for the benefit of tourists. But it will never again be the street of those Tibetans who circumambulate, come on pilgrimage, and prostrate themselves. Even if there manage to be pilgrims making prostrations there, they will simply serve to liven things up as background for the tourists, as one disaster follows another, winding down to a pathetic and miserable end for Lhasa. Historically, Lhasa has never had a mining cave-in. And now, it has had a mining cave-in. Historically, the Kyichu has

never been blocked and dried up. Now it is drying up to the point that the fish are all dying. Historically, the Old City of Lhasa has never existed solely as a backdrop for tourists. And now it's being changed into a replica of Sifang Street in Lijiang and Daka Dzong in "Shangri-La." Might it be that one day, perhaps very soon, entry into the mountain fortress version of these tourist traps, "Old City Lhasa," will require the purchase of tickets?

No place has disappeared so quickly; no place has been inundated so quickly. Sick at heart, Andre Alexander wrote: "Each time I go, the old houses are clearly fewer, stone by stone, brick by brick, alley by alley, street by street; even the dogs are going missing." And today it's being relaced by a new Lhasa City that is being commercialized by those in power. From here on in, it's not just me, one individual, it's many people who are losing the few remaining bits of the Lhasa cityscape that they so deeply love; from here on in, it is not just my life, one individual life, it is the

lives of many people, all mixed together with memories of Lhasa, that are being covered over. It is just as one internet friend bitterly put it: "Dismantling the old structures, excavating tunnels, building crossover bridges, stopping up the Kyichu, draining the groundwater: these people are truly the incarnations of hungry ghosts! Whatever they can carry away, they carry away, and what they can't carry away they destroy!"

I should point out that over the last several years the self-immolations of 121 Tibetans have become the most conspicuous manifestation of the Tibet issue. It matters little that the international community is only paying limited attention to it, it is still the focus of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile; everything is concentrated around it and other catastrophes and dangers faced by Tibetan society are getting scant notice. For example, right now the looming destruction of Lhasa's Old City is staring us in the face. If this were taking place in the past, UNESCO could still issue a "Yellow Card Warning." However, now no one is paying attention, no one is concerned.

But the Chinese Government is taking the Tibetan self-immolations very seriously. On May 27 of last year, two Tibetans committed self-immolation in the space between the Jokhang and the Barkhor police substation. The Barkhor police substation was immediately elevated to the level of "Barkhor Ancient City Public Security Bureau." The Mandala Hotel in which



the two Tibetan self-immolators had taken lodgings was seized by the authorities and turned into the “Lhasa Barkhor Ancient City Management Committee.” The Old City of Lhasa was renamed the “Barkhor Ancient City.”

But the large-scale rebuilding of the Old City by the authorities that resulted from this was actually a case of killing two birds with one stone; it was even more suited to the goals and plans for “maintaining stability.” And now, the area in front of the Jokhang, which has borne witness to so much change over the ages, has no more of the pilgrims from Kham and Amdo who prostrate themselves all the way from the far borders to Lhasa; no more lamp pavilions in which thousands and tens of thousands of butter lamp offerings were lit every day. Only snipers poised on the roofs of Tibetans’ homes, and fully armed soldiers on patrol; only the opening of one massive government-business sector joint venture shopping mall after another, each with inflatable blood-red plastic columns before their doors, flaunting the vulgarity and invasiveness of these new upstart operations.

Forty years ago, when UNESCO adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, it recognized “the importance, for all the peoples of the world, of safeguarding this unique and irreplaceable property, to whatever people it may belong...” noting that the “deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful improv-



Aditya Arya giving a talk on digitization and archiving at the Kashag Secretariat

erishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world” and asserting that “it is incumbent on the international community as a whole to participate in the protection of the cultural and natural heritage...”

For these reasons I call on UNESCO and its affiliated organizations world-wide to stop this sort of frightful “modernization,” which constitutes an unpardonable and incalculable crime against the ancient city of Lhasa’s landscape, human culture, and environment. I call on the many Tibetologists all around the world, the people and organizations studying and researching the Tibet Issue: please pay close attention to the unredeemable misfortune that is befalling the Old City of Lhasa right at this very moment.

I hope people from all walks of life will launch actions to save the Old City of Lhasa! Our Lhasa is on the Verge of Destruction! *Please, Save Lhasa!*

Digitization & Archiving Workshop

6th–7th Feb. 2013

Aditya Arya, a trustee chairman of the India Photo Archive Foundation, gave a workshop on “Digitization and Archiving Rich Cultural Heritage” at the Kashag Secretariat Hall from 6–7 February 2013. The workshop was organized by the Tibet Museum and funded by Norwegian Church Aid.

The workshop was held primarily to enhance the skills of the present working staff in their archival work and also to build a network of cooperation among Tibetan archivists in and around Dharamsala. Around 18 archivists dealing with archival work in photographs and audio-visuals attended the workshop. Participants included archivists from the Department of Information and International Relations, Department of Religion and Culture, Gaden Phodrang Office, Namgyal Monastery, Library



THE TIBET MUSEUM E-NEWSLETTER

of Tibetan Work and Archives, Tibetan Medical and Astro-Institute, Norbulingka Institute and the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts.

The two-day workshop concluded with an agenda for future planning where all the participants unanimously agreed to meet every three months for brain storming, and to build a network of archivists by starting a Facebook page and group mailing list.

Mr. Tashi Phuntsok, secretary of the Department of Information and International Relations, gave concluding remarks urging the participants to apply what they learned during the workshop to make a difference in their archival work. He also talked about the significance of historic photographs and the need for preservation and digitization.

Workshop & Training

14th–15th Sept. 2012

A workshop training session on Adobe Photoshop and InDesign was held for two consecutive days at DIIR's Lhakpa Tsering Hall. The guest speakers were Mr. Nyima, the head of Nyimon Computer Centre, Tashi Phuntsok, director of the Tibet Museum and Mr. Andreas Herkommer. The 13 workshop attendees were all CTA staff members from various departments including Religion & Culture, Education, Home, and Information & International Relations. The breadth of training content included the basics of Photoshop and InDesign, detailed

coverage on desktop publishing and social networking, followed by practical training and questions and answers. Mr. Tashi Phuntsok, then additional secretary of DIIR, gave the concluding speech and the workshop ended successfully.

Archive Management Workshop

2nd–9th Feb. 2013

Tibet Museum staff member Mr. Rabjam attended a workshop on archive management held at the National Archives of India's School of Archival Studies in New Delhi aiming for the betterment of archive management in the future. The training was for four hours every day during which different topics related to archive management were covered. It included basic learning, the systematic way to do photo exhibition, the accumulation and preservation of photos on the computer, management of archive rooms and their needs. Proper guidance and lectures were also provided on related topics. As noted by Rabjam, the workshop was an eye opening experience and it empowered him to implement the knowledge for the betterment and development of the museum's photo archive management.



Mr. Andreas Herkommer & Mr. Nyima

Adobe Photoshop Training 19th–23rd Feb. 2013

Along with the workshop on the preservation of photographs, Mr. Rabjam attended workshop training on Adobe Photoshop at Arena Animation Academy in New Delhi from 19–23 February 2013. This training included an introduction to all the basic tools, especially healing and stamp tools, which are of immense help in restoring withered, scratched and dusty photographs. Poster making, digital paintings and many other topics were covered which made the training enriching and informative.



Participants in the Adobe workshop

The Tibet Museum E-Newsletter is published bi-annually and welcomes articles, letters, photos, and related materials that are relevant to Tibetan culture and history. Articles may be submitted by e-mail to tibetmuseum@tibet.net

Published by:

*The Tibet Museum
Department of Information
& International Relations
Central Tibetan Administration
Dharamsala, H.P. India*