

## TRANSLATORS' NOTE

We hope that you enjoy our translation. We have at times altered the phraseology to make the text more accessible to readers of English, but we believe that in doing so we have clarified the meaning of the author's words. The primary cultural problem was how to denominate the social structure of pre-Communist Amdo. The word "tribe," with its associations of prehistoric simplicity wholly inappropriate for the highly sophisticated and literate society of nomadic Amdo, we have avoided entirely, preferring to use "family" for a social unit based on a single home, and "clan" (a word introduced into the English language nearly six hundred years ago precisely for this purpose) for a wider kinship group. The word "sept" (again with a specialist meaning appropriate in this context) denotes those groups of "tent" families with a shared family name (e.g., Naktsang or Lang) who may or may not share the name of their clan but who are constituent parts of it. In Amdo, clans always formed larger or smaller associations, structured in a variety of ways, under "high chiefs," and to these we have given the name "chiefdoms," as the Tibetan language makes it clear that these should not be called "kingdoms." *Phayul*, literally "father home," has been translated as "native land" rather than "fatherland," which lacks a precise English meaning, or "home," which is ambiguous. However, although truthful, neither the text nor our translation of it should be considered as a textbook for a study of nomadic society. Naktsang Nulo wrote his book for an audience familiar with it and is fairly free in his description of its institutions and practices. We have merely tried to make things a bit clearer for the general reader.

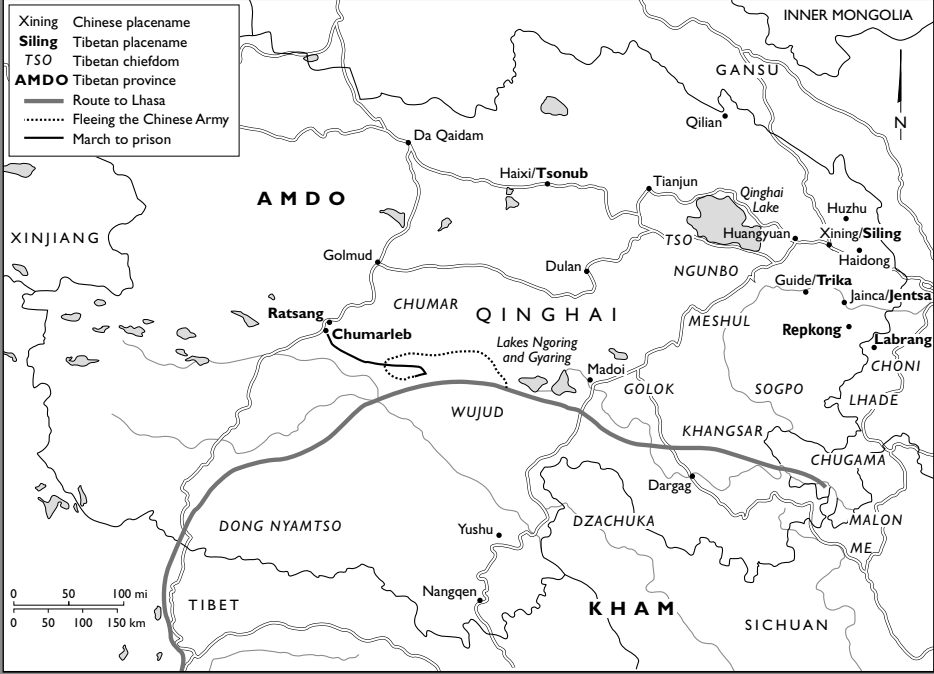
Some of the original text has been omitted for reasons of length and coherence. The original text contained very lengthy descriptions and stories of nomadic life that all readers agreed were suitable only for a specialist reader-

ship. Some of the lengthier eulogies of life on the grassland may have been included to lessen the possibility that the publication would fall foul of the censor; if so, that strategy was successful. Whatever the reason, the text as it has been presented here is more balanced between information about the author's background and upbringing on the one hand, and the core drama of the author's life on the other.

The text was translated from a dialect that is very remote from modern Standard Tibetan. This led to some difficulties in translation, as standard English-Tibetan dictionaries did not contain many of the necessary words, let alone phrases. The translators therefore had to effectively translate twice in many cases, once from dialect into Standard Tibetan, and then from Standard Tibetan into English, with reference to the context of the original dialect version. It was a difficult and slow process, but fortunately familiarity with the culture and lifestyle of the area and its history helped achieve an accuracy that would otherwise not have been possible, and we are confident that we have been faithful to this very impressive work of Tibetan literature.

We have included photographs from the C. V. Starr East Asian Library at Columbia University, from the collection of the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard University (photographer, Joseph Rock), and from the archives of the Federal Republic of Germany. The ss Ahnenerbe, or Ancestral Heritage Research and Teaching Society, sent a German expedition to Tibet from 1938 to 1939, largely for bona fide scientific purposes, of which these photographs from the archives of the Federal Republic of Germany are a record. While disassociating ourselves entirely from the organization and some of its pseudo-scientific concerns, we have made use of its images, which show extremely rare scenes not only immediately relevant to the text but also contemporary with the events described in it.

The text has been abridged, and in places chapters have been amalgamated or moved; the appendix shows the correspondence between the original Amdo Tibetan chapters and the ones numbered in the published text, as an aid to scholars and students who wish to compare the original with the translated work.



Northeastern Tibet, showing places and territories mentioned in the text, with routes taken by the author on pilgrimage and on his final journey.



Tibetan-speaking areas in Asia and Naktsang Nulo's pilgrimage to Lhasa.



MY TIBETAN CHILDHOOD