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Warriors Of Tibet: The Story Of Aten And The Khampas' Fight For The Freedom Of Their Country (Wisdom Tibet Book)



Synopsis

A heartfelt story of one man's struggle for Tibetan independence. Warriors of Tibet is a vivid portrait of a Tibetan Khampa warrior, Aten, and his people of Nyarong. He tells the history of his people, and relates how the peaceful lifestyle in Kham was shattered by the incursion and final domination of the Chinese government in the 1950s. He tells of blood battles and the terrible suffering of his people, and finally the murder of his family and his escape across the Himalayas to Dharamsala in northern India.

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Customer Reviews

"From this lofty peak of my old age, I look back toward the memories of my young days, and they still stand before me, vivid and clear as the crystal streams of my land, Nyarong."So begins the autobiography of Raptan Dorje, known as Aten, as told to Jamyang Norbu in 1974 from exile in India. Aten, who was born in 1915, speaks in lucid and heartfelt tones of his life as a child in the tribal culture of Nyarong, which is located in the eastern province of Tibet, Kham. This short and incredibly poignant book provides a sharper picture than any I have previously encountered of the pre-1950 culture of Tibet and its near-total destruction during the Chinese invasion of the 1950's and its aftermath. In a voice that calls forth eerie reminders of Wounded Knee, Aten laments in the book's opening page of the slaughter of his family in a surprise Chinese attack, "...On a frozen wasteland, thinly covered with wind-swept snow, I left behind me the twisted, bullet-ridden carcasses of my family and my only little daughter...So much sorrow, so much pain and death."The

Khampas (people of Kham), who seem to have a reputation in Asia reminiscent of the Sioux on this continent, are a striking people. Incredibly skilled horse riders, they were also fierce warriors who fought a guerilla war against the Chinese for years in the face of scorched earth tactics and overwhelming odds before being finally crushed. Yet Kham was also filled with monasteries and produced many of the greatest meditation masters of the Kagyu and Nyingma Buddhist traditions. Of those who escaped into exile, a number of Khampa Buddhist teachers played key roles in introducing Tibetan Buddhism in the West. Ven. Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche and H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche immediately come to mind as examples.

"I also had my Russian rifle, but at the moment it was useless as I had no ammunition for it. It was not much to fight the Chinese with, yet I felt I had made the right decision, and that there was no use in being a man if I did not have the courage to rise and fight the enemy." These words vividly convey the brave thoughts and noble emotions of Rapten Dorje (Aten), a Tibetan native son whose family and land and culture were violently ripped away from him by the invading Chinese in the 1950s. Raised and nurtured with a life-long, deep spirituality and prayerful compassion for all living things, Aten and his fellow Khampas (of Eastern Tibet) were taught to live by the teachings of their beloved spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama. This short book is Aten's extremely powerful autobiography as told through Jamyang Norbu, a former member of the Tibetan guerilla force himself who later worked for the Tibetan government-in-exile. The two met in 1974 and worked closely together to produce this amazing chronicle of a spiritually-rich, peaceful people who have lived in virtual isolation for many, many centuries on the "roof of the world." Aten presents a beautiful, lucid story of his native Tibet during his formative years before the onslaught of Chinese invaders - the physically robust and spiritually devoted Tibetan people, the great monasteries, magnificent Tibetan Buddhist traditions, tremendously skilled Khampa horsemen, the centuries-old spiritual significance of "om mani padme hum" and, of course, Lhasa's tremendous Potala Palace. "For our people in Eastern Tibet, it was the ultimate experience to see Lhasa at least once before we died." I heartily agree with a previous reviewer who calls this book "the 'Black Elk Speaks' of Tibet.

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