



A Historical Atlas of Tibet

Karl E. Ryavec

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Cradled among the world's highest mountains—and sheltering one of its most devout religious communities—Tibet is, for many of us, an ultimate destination, a place that touches the heavens, a place only barely in our world, at its very end. In recent decades Western fascination with Tibet has soared, from the rise of Tibetan studies in academia to the rock concerts aimed at supporting its independence to the simple fact that most of us—far from any base camp—know exactly what a sherpa is. And yet any sustained look into Tibet as a *place*, any attempt to find one's way around its high plateaus and through its deep history, will yield this surprising fact: we have barely mapped it. With this atlas, Karl E. Ryavec rights that wrong, sweeping aside the image of Tibet as Shangri-La and putting in its place a comprehensive vision of the region as it really is, a civilization in its own right. And the results are absolutely stunning.

The product of twelve years of research and eight more of mapmaking, *A Historical Atlas of Tibet* documents cultural and religious sites across the Tibetan Plateau and its bordering regions from the Paleolithic and Neolithic times all the way up to today. It ranges through the five main periods in Tibetan history, offering introductory maps of each followed by details of western, central, and eastern regions. It beautifully visualizes the history of Tibetan Buddhism, tracing its spread throughout Asia, with thousands of temples mapped, both within Tibet and across North China and Mongolia, all the way to Beijing. There are maps of major polities and their territorial administrations, as well as of the kingdoms of Guge and Purang in western Tibet, and of Derge and Nangchen in Kham. There are town plans of Lhasa and maps that focus on history and language, on population, natural resources, and contemporary politics.

Extraordinarily comprehensive and absolutely gorgeous, this overdue volume will be a cornerstone in cartography, Asian studies, Buddhist studies, and in the libraries or on the coffee tables of anyone who has ever felt the draw of the landscapes, people, and cultures of the highest place on Earth.

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