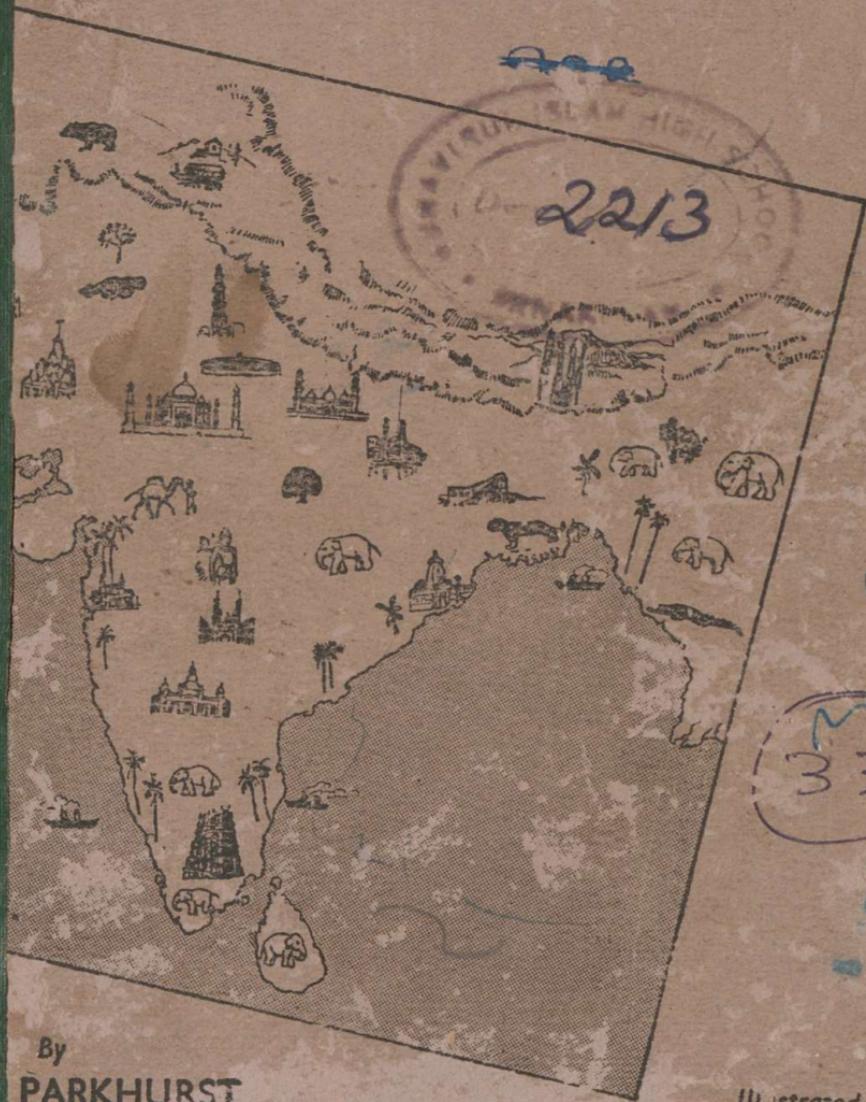


BHUTAN,

THE LAND OF THE

THUNDERBOLT

2213



By  
**PARKHURST**

Illustrated

# HERE AND THERE IN INDIA

## THIRD SERIES

1. THE UNITED PROVINCES
2. ORISSA
3. THE BENGAL PRESIDENCY
4. THE TELUGU COUNTRY
5. SIKKIM
6. SOME FAMOUS MAHOMMEDAN SAINTS  
AND THEIR SHRINES
7. THE SEVEN HOLY PLACES OF THE HINDUS
8. IN THE STEPS OF GAUTAMA BUDDHA
9. TWO CHRISTIAN SHRINES
10. THE MYSTERIOUS LAND OF TIBET
11. BHUTAN, THE LAND OF THE THUNDERBOLT
12. CEYLON, THE PEARL OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

*(For First and Second Series see p. 4 of Cover)*

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# BHUTAN—THE LAND OF THE THUNDERBOLT

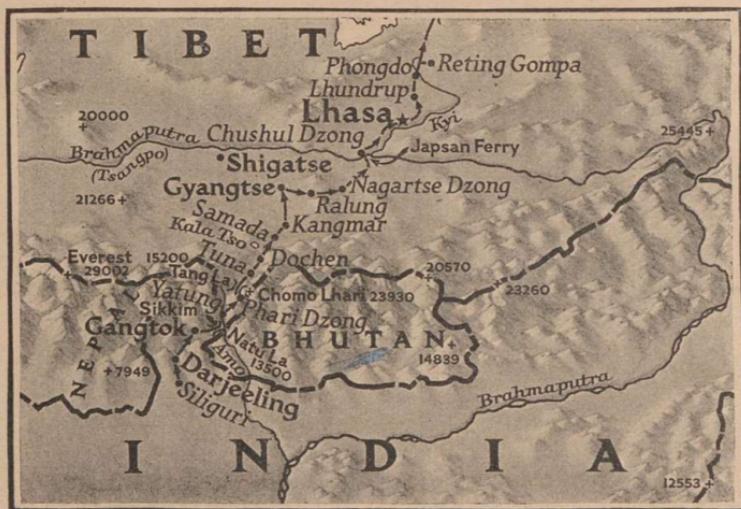
1

(The Land of the Thunderbolt!)  
What does this mean? (The Abbot  
of a Buddhist monastery is called the  
Dorje-Lopan, "The Wielder of the  
Thunderbolt".) In Bhutan the title  
of the spiritual head of the Buddhists  
is Dharma Raja, meaning "The  
Thunder King", and in the centre of  
his seal are engraved the words "I  
am the Thunderer." It is a curious  
fact that whilst we are in Bhutan,  
Sikkim or the Darjeeling Hills we



shall often experience severe thunderstorms in which tremendous claps of thunder may be heard.

2 (The State of Bhutan is situated near the eastern end of the Himalaya



Mountains. These mountains, together with Tibet, are its northern boundary. To the west is the State of Sikkim; Tibet also forms its eastern frontier, while to the south are the

Bengal Duars and Assam. Poonakha is the capital.)<sup>(2)</sup>

We do not know very much about the early history of the closed land of Bhutan. There is a very old legend which says that the warrior Sangaldip suddenly emerged from the mountains near Cooch Behar, but whether he came from Bhutan or Assam is not clear. He soon conquered the countries of Bengal and Bihar, but was in turn defeated by Afrasiab, King of Tartary. All this is supposed to have taken place in the seventh century B.C.

## 2

The next reference to Bhutan is in the eighth century A.D., when the

Indian saint Padma Sambhava converted the country to Buddhism. Apparently the land at that time was divided between two rulers, the Khijikhar-thod, King of Khempalung, and Naguchhi, King of Sindhu. The sons of the King of Sindhu extended his territories to Doroji-Tag in Tibet and to Sikkim. During the course of the war the eldest son of King Naguchhi was killed. The king's grief knew no bounds; he could think of nothing but his loss. It was then that the saint Padma arrived on the scene, and with the aid of the King's daughter, a girl of wonderful beauty, brought Naguchhi back to a happier state of mind and converted him to Buddhism.

In A.D. 1100 the fate of Bhutan seems to have been decided by the Dupka sect founded by Yeses Dorji.

3 (Nothing of importance is recorded until the advent of the famous Dugom Dorji, who made Bhutan into one kingdom.) This man was of noble lineage and showed great intellectual and artistic powers. Even as a child he made carvings of marvellous beauty. He is supposed to have been born in A.D. 1534. During his thirty-five years in Bhutan he was continuously engaged in warfare and in consolidating his power. The Tibetans made five or six attempts to conquer Bhutan

but were driven back. The booty obtained from the retreating Tibetan army greatly increased Dugom Dorji's wealth, and his fame spread far and wide. The Raja of Cooch Behar sent him presents and sought his friendship, as did also the rulers of Nepal.

Most of the great monasteries and forts of Bhutan were built during his reign. First in importance comes Simtoka, and after it Pari-jong. Poonakha was founded in 1557 and was designed to accommodate six hundred monks. When the officials protested at the planning of such a large house, Dugom Dorji replied, "The building will in time be found

much too small." It is remarkable to read that in 1905 at least one thousand five hundred monks were in residence there !

Dugom Dorji could be humorous at times. After a notable victory over the Tibetans he was asked if he thought there would be any more expeditions from Tibet. He said, "Oh, there is no assurance that they will not come again, but as they never do any harm to us it will be all right. This time we have captured plenty of armour and weapons ; next time we will ask them to bring some tea and silks."

He was full of energy. He founded a body of Lamas and provi-

ded for their instruction. He was superintendent of the carving of wooden type for printing; he was the state's principal architect; he was the overseer of bookbinding, settlement officer, commander-in-chief of the forces, ruler of his own adherents



BHUTANESE GAMBLERS

and "chief punisher of those who could not keep the public peace." He introduced law into lawless Bhutan. Even to-day the cooly class are inveterate gamblers. They think nothing of sitting down by the roadside for a gamble. 2213

Dugom Dorji's boast was that he never wasted any time in idleness. He appointed two monks to superintend the strict enforcement of priestly vows among the Lamas, to help their studies and to preside over ceremonies. He was undoubtedly a ruler of many-sided gifts and remarkable character.

Jean Baptiste Tavernier, the famous French traveller of the

seventeenth century, says :—“The King of Bhutan always employs seven or eight thousand men as his guard. These people are armed with bows and arrows, and the majority also carry axes and shields, the former having a point on one side like a war mace. It is long since the Bhutanese first acquired the use of the musket, iron cannon, and gunpowder, which is of long grain, and is very strong. I have been assured that on their guns, figures and letters are visible which are more than five hundred years old. They cannot be taken out of the kingdom without the express permission of the Governor, and no one

dare carry away a musket unless his nearest relatives go bail that it will be faithfully returned. Except for this difficulty I would have brought one away with me. By the characters on the gun, as those who were able to read assured me, it had been made one hundred and eighty years. It was very thick, the mouth shaped like a tulip, and the interior polished like a mirror. On two-thirds of the gun there were bands in relief, and some gilt and silver flowers between two of them. The merchant of Bhutan being so particular about the return of the musket, no matter what offer I made, I could never persuade him to sell it to me.

“There are always fifty elephants about the house of the King of Bhutan for his guard, and twenty or twenty-five camels, which carry on the saddle a small piece of artillery, with a ball of about half a pound in weight. A man is seated on the crupper of the camel, and he manipulates this piece as he pleases, high or low, to the right or to the left, it being fixed on a fork attached to the saddle.

“There is no king in the world who is more feared and more respected by his subjects than the King of Bhutan, and he is even worshipped by them. When on the seat of justice or when he gives an audience, all those who present themselves be-

fore him raise their joined hands to their foreheads, and at some distance from the throne, prostrate themselves to the ground without daring to raise the head. In this humble posture they make their supplications to the King, and when they withdraw they walk backwards till they are out of his presence.

“The people of Bhutan are robust men and of fine stature, but have somewhat flat faces and noses. I am informed that the women are taller and more vigorous than the men.

“There is apparently a silver mine in the Kingdom of Bhutan, for the King coins pieces of the value of rupees. These pieces are not round

but octagonal, and there are characters on them which are neither Indian nor Chinese. Nevertheless, the merchants of Bhutan, who told me at Patna of all these things, could not inform me where the mine was, and as for gold the little they have of it is brought to them by the merchants who come from the east."

4

In former times Bhutan was divided into East Bhutan and West Bhutan, the Black Mountains separating the two. The ruler of East Bhutan was called the Tongsa Penlop, while the ruler of West Bhutan was called the Pero Penlop. (4) East Bhutan was

more ad-  
vanced and  
stronger than  
West Bhutan,  
so in 1907 the  
officials of  
East Bhutan  
deposed the  
Pero Penlop,  
and the two  
Bhutans were  
combined to-



THE LATE PERO PENLOP TSHERING PENJO

gether under the rule of the Tongsa Penlop, who was Sir Uggyen Wang-Chhuk, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I.)<sup>4</sup>

His Highness had been connected some little time before with the delicate negotiations which had been



THE LATE H. H. SIR UGGYEN WANG-CHHUK, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I.

going on between Tibetans, Nepalese, Sikkimese, and the British. When all these matters had been satisfactorily settled, the people in East Bhutan made much progress. When he assumed the throne of Bhutan, he did his best to encourage all the people in the making of the fine handicrafts at which they excel. You will read about them on another page. The whole country was plunged into mourning when His Highness passed away.

7 ( The name of the present Maharaja of Bhutan is His Highness Sir Jingmi Wang-Chhuk, C.I.E., K.C.S.I. If we have the necessary permission from the proper authority to enter Bhutan, )



THEIR HIGHNESSES THE MAHARAJA AND MAHARANI OF BHUTAN

it is best to make our way into this mysterious land by way of Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim.) Up to six miles after leaving Gangtok the road is very good. The first halting place is Karponang, where it is possible to get a night's rest in small but gloomy huts. If we are trekking at the right time of the year, this road is particularly beautiful. It winds through forest-clad hills on which are coloured rhododendrons and white magnolias in full bloom. Close at hand, on either side of the road, grow primulas in every shade of mauve and purple. Feathery bamboos add to the beauty of the scene. As we mount higher and higher we may

possibly reach snow, and from Lagyup onwards the whole country may lie beneath a sheet of dazzling white.

5

The district we are now in is called Chumbi. We have to cross the Natu-la peak, 14,780 feet high, and it takes about six hours to reach the top of the pass. From there we go down to Pema, 9690 feet, in the Chumbi valley, where we can halt for the night at a place called Champitany. On our way to Richin-jong we cross the Ammon-chhu by a substantial bridge.

We shall have to take care that our ponies are kept well away from

a certain kind of tree, the leaves of which are poisonous and fatal to ponies. After instructing our coolies to be very careful we proceed on our trek. After passing many villages we cross the Chalu-chhu, which is a well-wooded park spreading for several miles up the valley of the river Chalu-chhu. Among the trees we shall find silver fir, holly-oak, various pines, rhododendrons and larch.

After days on good roads and bad roads, over bridges and mountain pathways, we eventually reach the gompa or monastery of Gorina. In the monastery there are very good fresco paintings, and the hangings



CHORTEN AT GORINA MONASTERY

~~round~~  
round the altar are overlaid with brass open-work, much better than any to be seen in Lhasa. There is a handsome *chorten* at Gorina. *Chortens* were originally built to contain relics, but most of them are now pieces of masonry erected on beautiful sites as an act of merit. They are generally in three parts—the square base, representing the earth, is surmounted by an orb, signifying water, and crowned by a cone, representing fire.

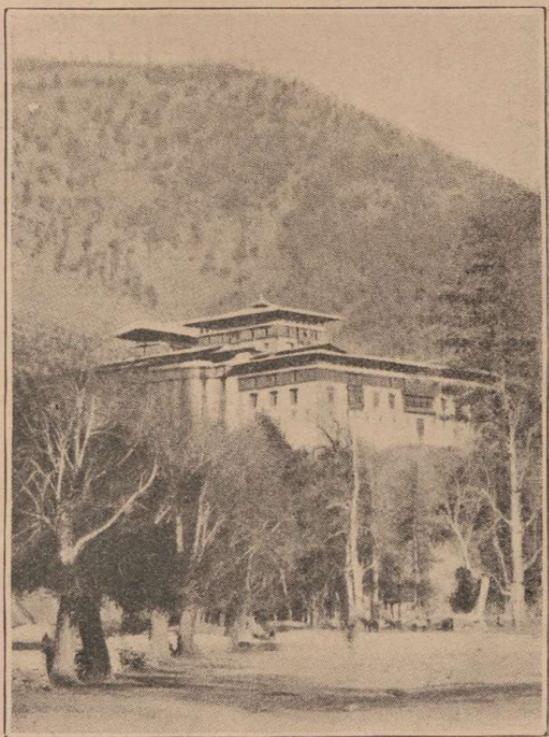
As we walk round the village we shall be astonished to notice the curious Bhutanese custom of feeding mules with eggs. Each beast is given three eggs. The eggs are broken into a horn, the mule's head is held up,

and the contents of the horn are poured down the animal's throat. They seem to like the food very much. The Bhutanese always give this food to their animals when they have any extra work to do. They say it keeps the mules in first-rate condition.

## 6

Our next halt is the Paro Fort, situated on a mound overhanging the river Pachhu. In the words of an historian: "The fort is a very striking building and far surpasses any ideas we have formed about Bhutanese architecture." Crossing a heavy drawbridge we enter a huge gateway,

where we see a row of cages in which are kept four enormous Tibetan mastiffs. These beautiful animals are very ferocious. Then we find ourselves in



PARO-JONG

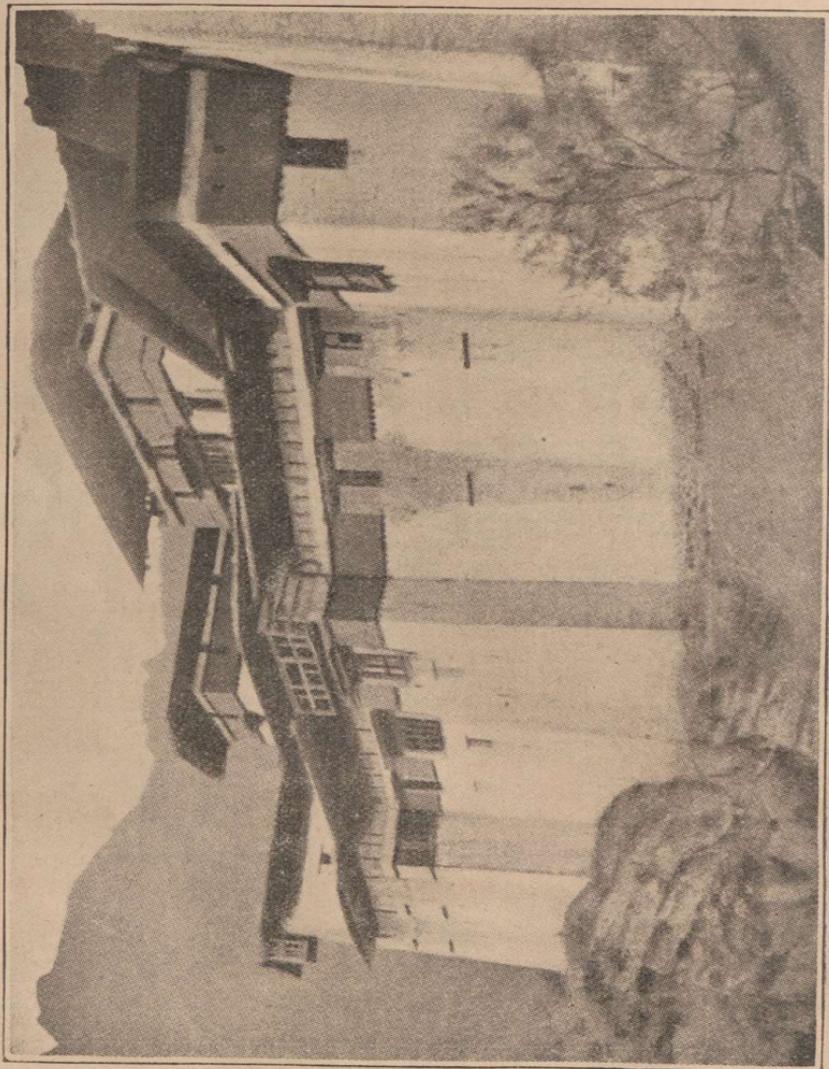
a courtyard, around which are many rooms and verandahs. It reminds one very much of an old English castle. On the first floor is the Gompa, an impressive and well lit

hall. The decorations are very fine. In the larger of the two citadels in the centre of the courtyard we may notice catapults for throwing huge stones.

The first thing which catches the eye as we enter the fort is a large praying-cylinder some ten feet high, turned by a crank ; at each turn of the cylinder a bell is rung. Beyond the hall is the Penlop's state room. The beams are beautifully painted in blue, orange and gold, the Chinese Dragon being a favourite device. All round the room and arches are suspended bows, quivers, polished iron helmets, swords, matchlocks, Chinese lanterns, flags, silk scarves and so forth.

Nine miles from Paro is Fort Dug-gye-jong. Another historian says: "We entered Dug-gye-jong, a fortress upon the crown of a low, rocky hill. The approach to the only entrance is defended by three round towers. I found the whole of the premises very clean; the Jongpen entertained us with a lunch of scrambled eggs and sweet rice coloured with saffron, fresh milk, walnuts and dried fruits. His wife, who prepared the meal, was one of the cleanest and best-looking women I have seen in Bhutan, and her little boy, wearing an exact copy in miniature of his father's dress, was a nice little chap.

↳ The Dug-gye-jong armoury is said to



DUG-GYE-JONG

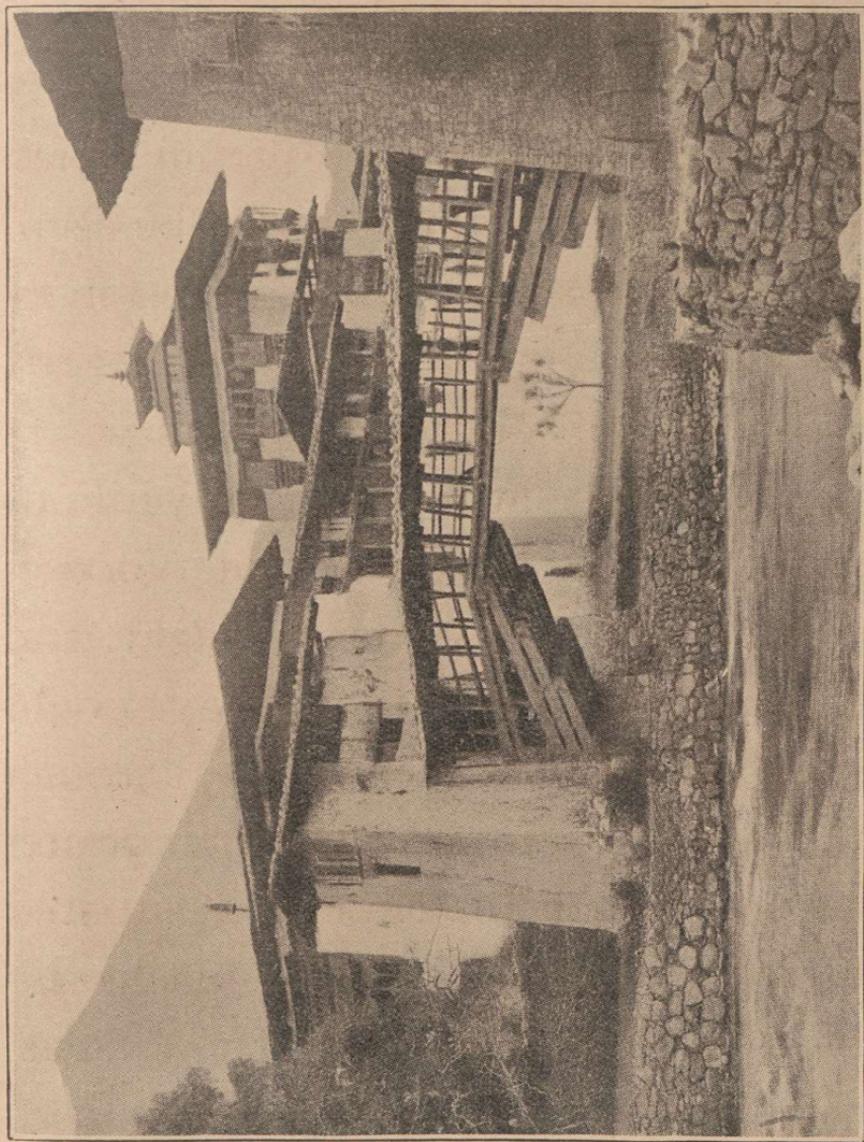
be the best in the country. (The road from Dug-gye is very good and ascends gradually to a pass (8900 feet) near the Beila-jong.)

As we leave Pemithang we find a very large, well-cared-for house on the left bank of the river about two miles higher up. It belonged to the ex-Pero Penlop Tshering Penjo. It says a great deal for the kindness of heart of His Highness the Maharaja of Bhutan that he allowed the ex-Pero Penlop, who was one of his most powerful enemies, to return home and die there in peace, and permitted his widow and daughter to remain there unmolested.

Our long and difficult journey has

now brought us to our destination, Poonakha, the capital of Bhutan.

The forts in Bhutan are generally built on commanding sites from which the surrounding country can be seen, and Poonakha fort is no exception to this rule. Lying between two rivers, it has no difficulties about its water supply. The main entrance of Poonakha is by a steep flight of wooden steps about twenty feet in height, and in times of emergency they could easily be removed. We go through the gateway and enter the first courtyard. The main citadel is situated in this court. Beyond is a smaller citadel reserved entirely for Lamas, who number about three thousand.



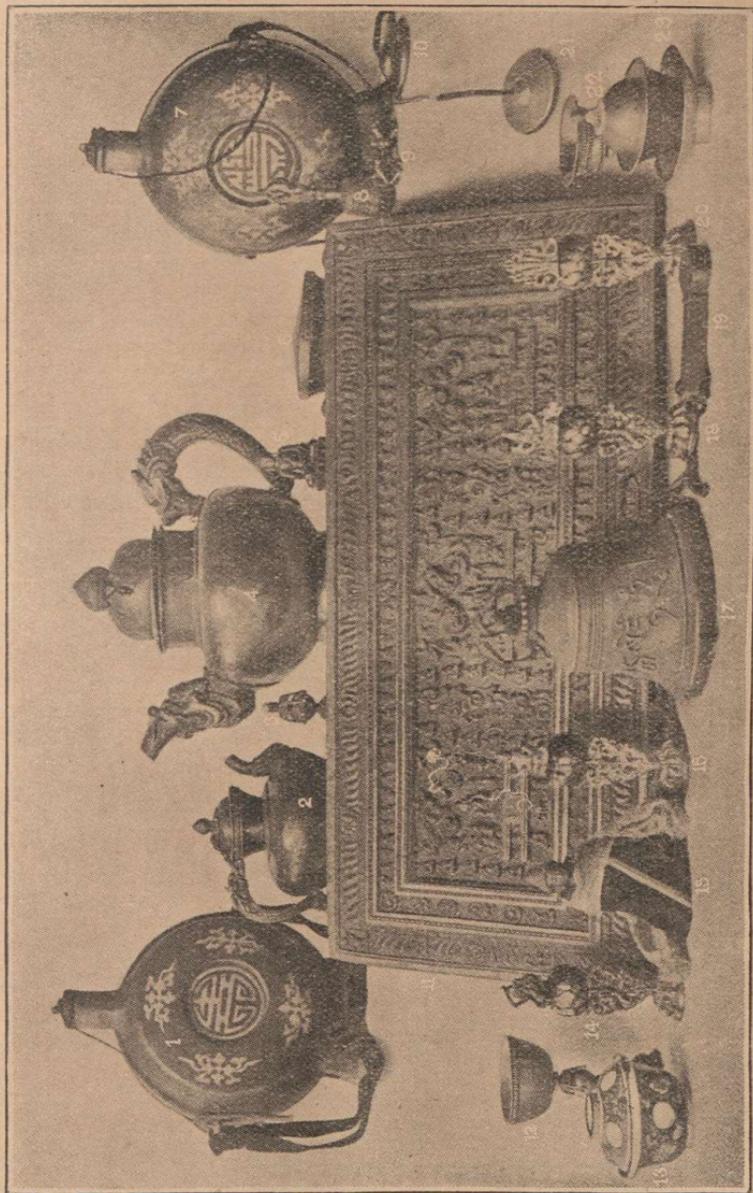
POONAKHA JONG

The earthquake of 1897 did a great deal of damage to this fort. Many of the frescoes in the gompa were seriously disfigured, but the embroidered banners and brocade hangings are magnificent.

7

Now that we have arrived at the capital, we will consider some of the arts and crafts of Bhutan's people.

↳ (The Bhutanese excel in bronze casting and fine metal work of all kinds. They produce the most exquisite specimens of workmanship in silver and silver gilt. Other articles are trumpets, candlesticks, rice-boxes,



SOME METAL ARTICLES MADE IN BHUTAN

tables, etc., used in the gompa, and its religious rites. The Bhutanese also cover many of the monastery pillars with copper and silver beaten into most beautiful patterns. They cast excellent bells of very fine tone, and they manufacture sword-blades.)<sup>6</sup> The blades, when finished, are highly polished and look like silver. They are very handsome weapons and the handles are generally inlaid with turquoise and coral.

Nearly every house of importance has a large workroom set aside for the weaving of cloth. The Bhutanese are expert in making silk, woollen and cotton goods.

In the monasteries the Lamas

make beautiful needlework pictures of the Holy Ones. They are made by sewing innumerable pieces of coloured silks and brocades together in a most skilful and tasteful manner. These needlework pictures are real works of art.

Basketwork and the weaving of fine matting from split cane is another industry adopted by many



WEAVING CLOTH

of the inhabitants.

A great source of income is the orchards of oranges and apples. A few years ago one tree alone bore 3,200 apples weighing 632 lbs. The fruit is exported in large quantities to Calcutta.

May Their Highnesses Sir Jingmi Wang-Chhuk and his consort live long and help Bhutan still further along the road of progress.



## EXERCISES

1. Where is Bhutan; why is it called the "Land of the Thunderbolt"?
2. Write a short account of its early history.
3. What do you think of Dugom Dorji?
4. Describe Bhutan in modern times and say what happened in 1907.
5. What is a *chorten*?
6. Which article do you like best out of those illustrated on page 33.
7. Who is the present ruler of Bhutan?
8. Draw a picture of Dug-gye Fort.

# HERE AND THERE IN INDIA

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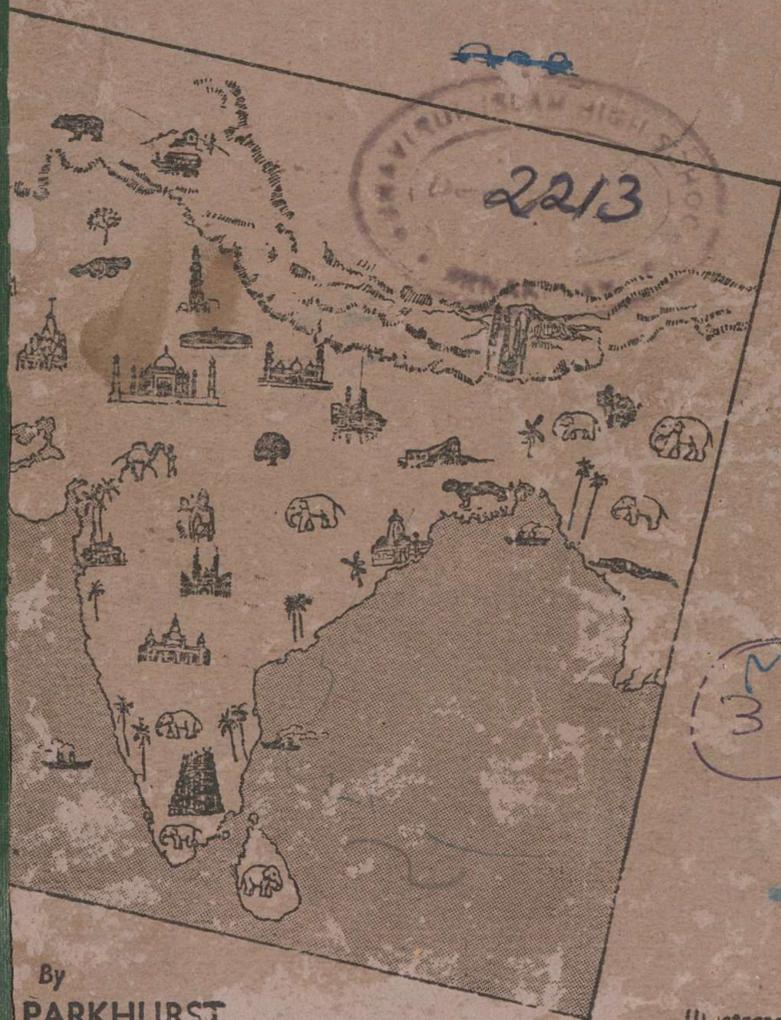
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