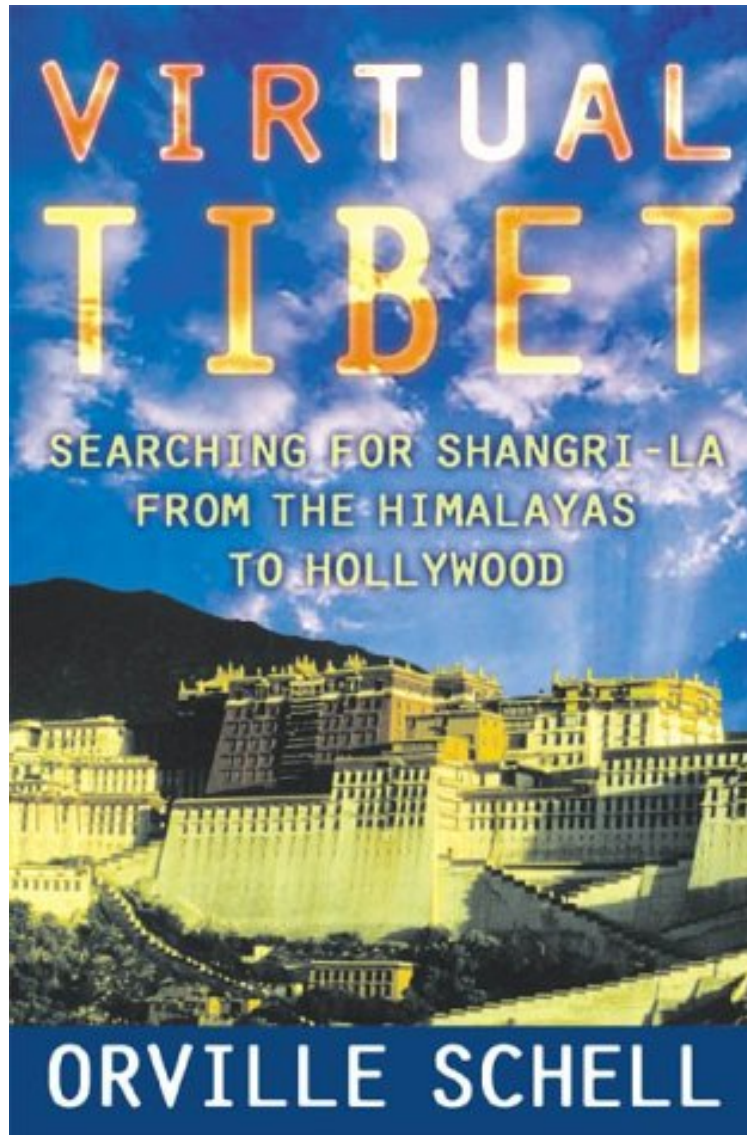


(Download pdf ebook) Virtual Tibet: Searching for Shangri-La from the Himalayas to Hollywood

## Virtual Tibet: Searching for Shangri-La from the Himalayas to Hollywood

*Orville Schell*

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**Orville Schell : Virtual Tibet: Searching for Shangri-La from the Himalayas to Hollywood** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Virtual Tibet: Searching for Shangri-La from the Himalayas to Hollywood:

13 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Thought provokingBy A CustomerAs a Christian, I have always

been curious as to why Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism provoke such passion and interest in those people around me. Instead of seeing this book as an incomplete history of that country, or as Hollywood gossip, I saw the book as a discussion on spirituality. Why do people yearn for the Other, the pure and, often, unattainable that will make our lives meaningful? What are the spiritual dangers of using what we perceive as the exotic to attain spiritual peace and fulfillment? I think that Schell writes movingly on the West's attempts to "use" Tibet as a spiritual shortcut instead of looking into itself and practicing Buddhism or Christianity with awareness and personal insight. P.S. The sections on Hollywood, especially regarding certain action movie actors are also very funny.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Om money padme humBy Bob NewmanThe love of the exotic lurks in many hearts and has for centuries. Some people, when told a place is closed, off limits, verboten, must go there at any cost. So it was with Tibet. But not only was Tibet far away, a blank spot on world maps, it had an aura of magic, mysticism, and mystery. Tibet---mysticism---the occult---spiritual life: these connections spread through the West and Russia like measles in a kindergarten. What a challenge, then, for the adventurers of this world. From the 1600s on, a certain kind of Westerners (missionaries, soldiers, explorers, mystics) yearned to reach Lhasa, the ultimate Forbidden City. Their efforts are well recorded by Orville Schell. Most of them failed, but returned with tall tales nonetheless. In 1904, the infamous Younghusband expedition ("Bayonets to Lhasa") battered its way to the Tibetan capital over the bodies of hundreds of Tibetans who had nothing to match machine guns. This was supposedly in aid of keeping the Russians out, but Younghusband was dead keen on getting there long before. Travel to Tibet, well into my own lifetime, was like a pilgrimage to "Otherness". Tibet, a real society, with deep socio-economic problems, a feudal system, was turned into "Virtual Tibet", a figment of Western imagination. Meanwhile, back in Hollywood----the Dalai Lama became a cult figure for many of the figures of Filmistan. The cultural destruction of Tibet under Chinese rule came to the attention of many who previously could not have found Tibet on a map. In the 1990s, not one, but two movies were produced about Tibet----the film version of Heinrich Harrer's "Seven Years in Tibet" and "Kundun", more the story of the Dalai Lama. Since filming on site was out of the question due to politics, the former was filmed in Argentina starring Brad Pitt. Schell weaves an interesting tale, alternating between the story of Tibetan travellers and the production of the film. In the end, it seems that the film and real Tibet merged because the film brought the extinct version of Tibet back to life for Tibetan actors and film audiences everywhere. "...in the popular imagination of the West, the plight of the Tibetans....occupied against their will....has been added to the lure of Tibet as a mystical place of physical beauty and spiritual refinement." But haven't Westerners created "virtual Tibet" in order to improve the quality of our lives, to give hope that somewhere out there Shangri La really exists? Wasn't Heinrich Harrer an unreconstructed Nazi? Do we know much about real Tibet? These are very interesting questions because Tibet is not the only place, nor Tibetans the only people, to suffer "virtualization". I recommend this book if any of this interests you.

12 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Tibet 101By C. DursoThis is a quick read highlighting Tibet's relationship to the outside world, especially through fallacious film accounts. It gives a good background of the country without getting too pedantic. A very good source for those seeking a good overview without th political and religious details.

The Dalai Lama meets The Player--from the Himalayas to Hollywood, a fantastic journey into the West's longstanding dream of Tibet. What has made remote, mountainous Tibet and its only real celebrity, the Dalai Lama, so abidingly fascinating to the West? From Marco Polo's vision of Tibet as a land of enchanters to James Hilton's dream of Shangri-la in *Lost Horizon*, why have Westerners projected their yearnings onto that inaccessible place as onto no other corner on earth? In *Virtual Tibet*, Orville Schell, one of the preeminent experts on modern China and Tibet, undertakes a strange and wondrous odyssey into our Tibetan fantasies. He recounts the spellbinding tale of the Western adventurers, explorers, and spiritualists who for centuries were bent on reaching forbidden Tibet and the holy city of Lhasa. At the same time, Schell leads us on a riveting present-day journey from Hollywood dharma study groups and Beastie Boy "Free Tibet" concerts to a re-creation of Lhasa in the high Argentine Andes, which was the extravagant set of *Seven Years in Tibet*, starring Brad Pitt. As the past and the present, ancient customs and the superstar culture collide, Schell sheds light on the danger of blurring virtual and real worlds. A fabulous spectacle, peopled by celebrity Buddhists and Tibetan bonzes, Yak wranglers and high-powered publicists, Steven Seagal and the Dalai Lama, *Virtual Tibet* is an elegantly written work of extraordinary charm, power, and insight.

From Publishers Weekly The Dalai Lama! The Beastie Boys! Prayer wheels! *Lost Horizon*! Brad Pitt! Schell (Mandate of Heaven), a prolific China expert and the dean of UC-Berkeley's journalism school, has produced a fluent, enlightening, well-researched and often disillusioning chronicle of Tibet and "Tibet"--the first a real place of high mountains and Buddhist tradition, the second a Western image of the place, presented in memoirs, films, T-shirts and benefit concerts from Marco Polo to *Kundun* and beyond. Schell begins with his first visit to the real Tibet in 1981, fills in his readers with relevant history and belief, then moves to Hollywood, where the Dalai Lama has become "a warmhearted, even cuddly religious icon." Schell meets and evaluates "self-styled Tibetan Buddhist[s] in the Hollywood pantheon," from Richard Gere, who appears impressively dedicated, to Steven Seagal, who comes off here

as secretive and egomaniacal and who claims to be a reincarnated lama. The author travels to Austria to interview former SS member Heinrich Harrer, who wrote the book *Seven Years in Tibet*. And--after much effort--he reaches the Argentinean location where the Brad Pitt vehicle based on Harrer's book is being shot: there he finds a dedicated director, fake lamas, real llamas and quite real, somewhat disoriented, Tibetans. After neat historical digressions, Schell returns to the present-day triangle of Hollywood-China-Tibet: noting that neither Tibet movie made much money, Schell concludes that both China and Hollywood "had occupied Tibet [and] found it disappointingly indigestible. Unfortunately, only Hollywood showed signs of... retreat." (May.-- found it disappointingly indigestible. Unfortunately, only Hollywood showed signs of... retreat." (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Tibet has a mysterious aura, as remote to Western thought and culture as its location. Schell, dean of journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of 14 previous books and numerous magazine articles, writes about the mystery of Tibet, interweaving an account of the filming of *Seven Years in Tibet* (which starred Brad Pitt and was based on Heinrich Harrer's book of the same title). Consequently, Schell's focus is dual: he simultaneously discusses Tibetan culture, religion, history, and geography and the filming of the movie, including casting and the building of the set for the holy city of Lhasa. (Ironically, the movie was filmed in the Argentine Andes and Hollywood, not Tibet.) Schell's account is, much like his previous books and articles, well written, well researched, and engaging. He has visited Tibet on many occasions and has served as an adviser on Asian affairs to President Clinton. A thorough bibliography accompanies the text. Highly recommended.-Thomas K. Fry, Univ. of Denver Penrose Lib. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *The New Yorker* "Schell's chronicle . . . nimbly separates fact from fiction. The result is a compassionate and comic exploration of our 'virtual' era."