



Smithsonian Institution

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume One

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TIBETAN.
(53)

BHOTIAS.
(54, 55)

SO much has been of late years added to our information respecting the Tibetans by Moorcroft, Gerard, Czoma de Körös, and others, that it is difficult to comprise within the limits of a notice like the present even the more important particulars concerning them; and, for a fuller account, reference must be made to the works of those distinguished travellers.

The difference between the Tibetans proper and the so-called Bhotias is but trifling. Bhot is the name given by the denizens of the plains to the bleak country above, of which they see nothing but the vast snowy fringe which overhangs them. The inhabitants of the Himalayan valleys are of Tibetan origin; their language and associations differ from those of the people of the plains; to them the name Bhotia, which belongs in strictness to the inhabitants of Tibet only, is generally applied; the Tibetans proper being, on account of the extreme height, ruggedness, and difficulty of the mountain passes, and the short period during which they remain open, comparatively but little known to the inhabitants of Hindostan.

The subjects of the illustrations differ from the persons represented under Nos. 44, 45, in being, in fact, Tibetans by birth and origin. The Tartarian cast of features is strongly marked; and in one of the subjects, No. 54, the hair is plaited into the pigtail, so familiar as a distinguishing mark of the Chinese.

The Tibetan language is of the roughest character, abounding in uncouth and, to us, unutterable, combinations of consonants. It is said to have much in common with Chinese. The horrible custom of polyandry prevails, and among most of the Tibetan tribes, the Ladakhis, for instance, in an especially disgusting form, one wife being the common property of several brothers, of whom the eldest has the right of selecting her. Primogeniture is so strictly observed that the whole property goes to the eldest son, on whom the others are dependent. The Tibetan houses, those

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