



Pioneer in Tibet: The Life and Perils of Dr. Albert Shelton

Douglas Wissing

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Dr. Albert Shelton was a medical missionary and explorer who spent nearly twenty years in the Tibetan borderlands at the start of the last century. During the Great Game era, the Sheltons' sprawling station in Kham was the most remote and dangerous mission on earth. Raising his family in a land of banditry and civil war, caught between a weak Chinese government and the British Raj, Shelton proved to be a resourceful frontiersman. One of the West's first interpreters of Tibetan culture, during the course of his work in Tibet, he was praised by the Western press as a family man, revered doctor, respected diplomat, and fearless adventurer. To the American public, Dr. Albert Shelton was Daniel Boone, Wyatt Earp, and the apostle Paul on a new frontier. Driven by his goal of setting up a medical mission within Lhasa, the seat of the Dalai Lama and a city off-limits to Westerners for hundreds of years, Shelton acted as a valued go-between for the Tibetans and Chinese. Recognizing his work, the Dalai Lama issued Shelton an invitation to Lhasa. Tragically, while finalizing his entry, Shelton was shot to death on a remote mountain trail in the Himalayas. Set against the exciting history of early twentieth century Tibet and China, *Pioneer in Tibet* offers a window into the life of a dying breed of adventurer.

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