

TIBET'S POWER PLACES (5 photos)

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Speaking of powerful power places, Tibet is loaded with them. The very majesty of the land there is overpowering. It is a fact that the cloud layer around Earth stays pretty much at the same height, which means that when you are 16,000 feet high on a Tibetan pass, the clouds above you are very much closer. You can tell and feel the difference. It is awesome, to use that word correctly.

Of course, the various pilgrimages my family and I made to Tibet were to nothing but power places, shrine after shrine, cave after cave, mountain pass after mountain pass, and great teacher after great teacher. That's what a pilgrimage is all about: sacred places.

Every high pass and its crossing in Tibet is marked by some kind of peak that is filled with hand-made piles of stones with Tibetan prayer flags streaming to one great central point, as well as all around. And these flags are literally blowing in the wind. Travelers and pilgrims stop there and add their own prayer flags because the high altitude and stronger winds are believed to better carry their prayers. In fact, the ground around these high passes is littered with all kinds of stuff, not just prayer flags, but brightly colored pieces of paper and what-not. It is usual to see all kinds of vehicles parked there while passengers pile out and pay their respects.

On Facebook an article like this about the earth and water spirits is somewhat of a novelty, but in Tibet every place is considered to have its spirit protectors and the very grandeur of the land adds to this mystique. On top of that, there are special power points that Tibetans flock to. Some are accessible, while others require steep climbing that takes all day long, arduous indeed. The altitude is so high and breathing so difficult that on the steep climbs every twenty or thirty feet my wife and I would have to take off our backpack and throw ourselves down on the ground and recover (and I mean recover) -- every twenty feet! And half the time you are climbing through the clouds!

One sacred spirit place that was very accessible is a power place along the edge of a fast-moving rushing river that runs right by Thrangu Monastery in Kham in eastern Tibet. There are long strings of prayer flags that cross the river from bank to bank, and a place where pilgrims meet to say prayers and make offerings. These particular water lords must be powerful.

Nearby, and somewhat elevated, is a sacred hill called "Mari Chörten," which translates to "Red Stupa," where pilgrims climb up to (it is a little steep, but so is Tibet) and then circumambulate. It is said that those individuals who have less negative karma can see the stupa as crystal, like glass. This stupa is a very holy support for the famous Drikung Kagyu founder known as Drikong Kyobpa Rinpoche.

Pilgrims who do circumambulation around this stupa can heal their illnesses, especially stomach illness. When we were at Thrangu Monastery, we did this. It is said that if you will eat some of the dirt from this sacred spot, it will heal or help whatever internal disease you have, especially digestive problems. There were a whole bunch of us up there circumambulating and eating dirt from the ground of the place, as odd as that might sound.

And I have not mentioned the sacred caves in Tibet, many of them where the great Tibetan saint Guru Rinpoche himself found and meditated in, like the Chimpuk Hermitage high above Samye monastery along the great Tsangpo River. If you would like, I could tell you a few stories of some Tibetan power places that we visited on pilgrimage there.

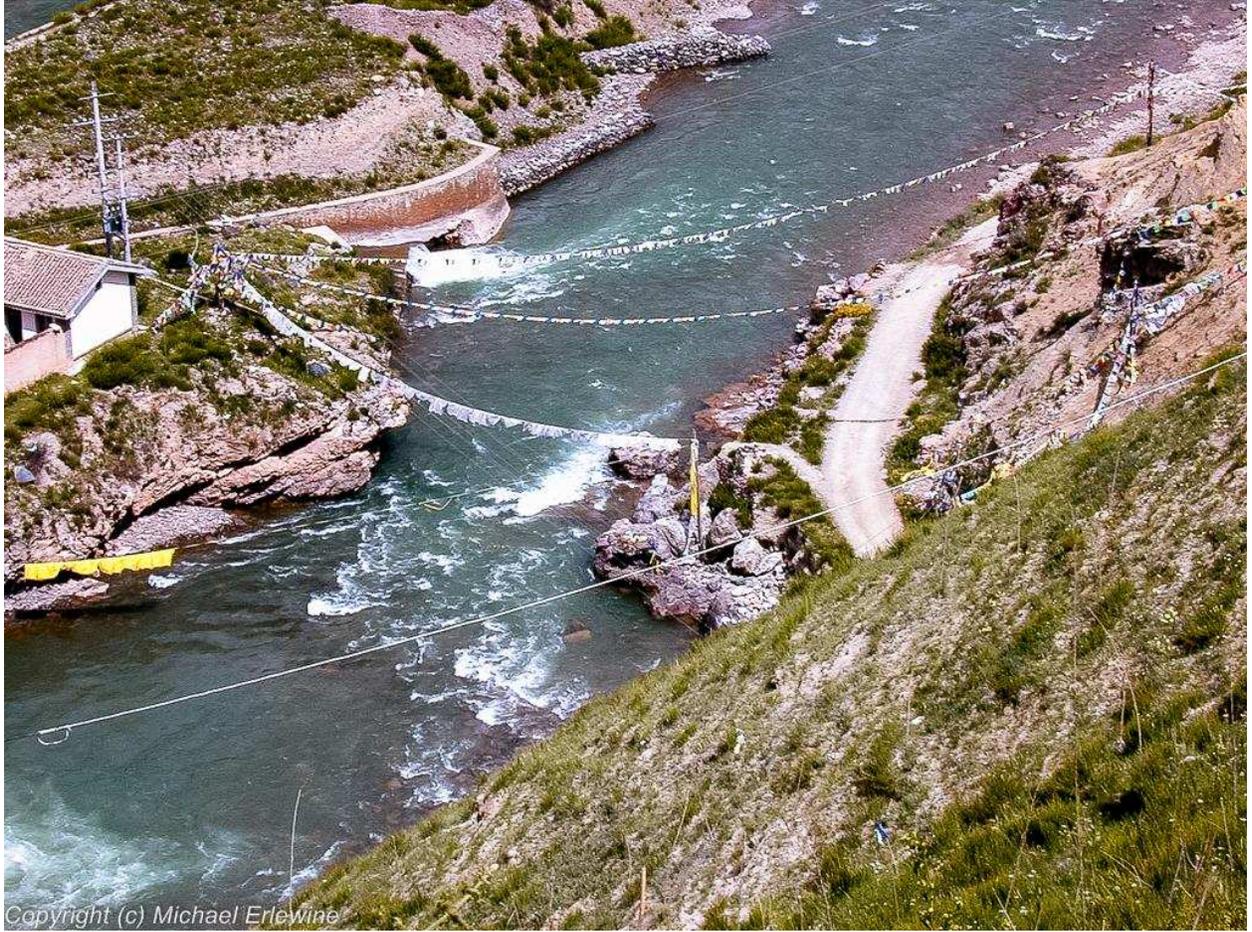
[Photos taken by me with a small camera some years ago.]



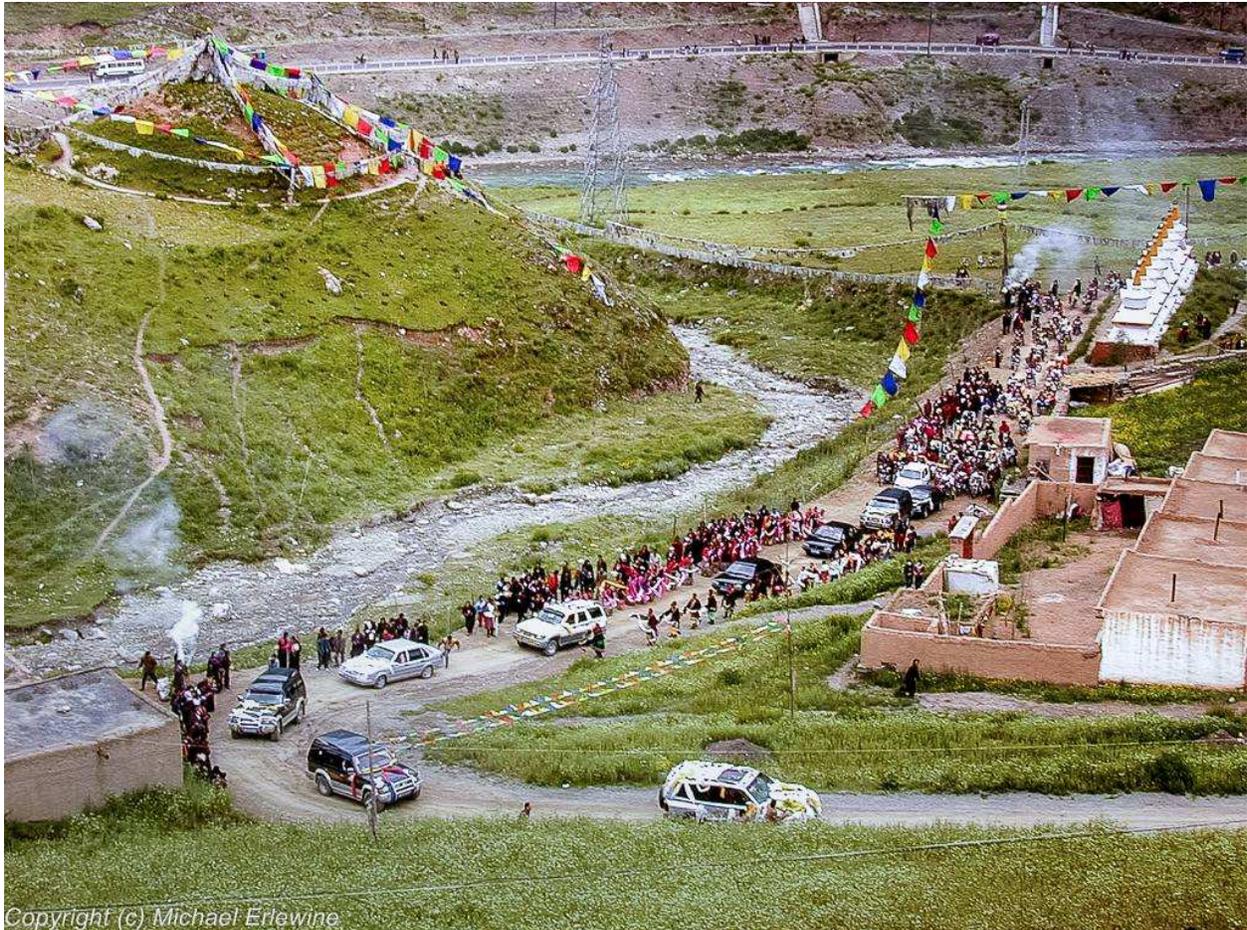
The strong river that runs by Thrangu Monastery in eastern Kham, Tibet. The sacred spot can be seen in the far right side of this photo, where the prayer flags are strung across the water.



Here you can see the power spot in the lower part of this photo, where the prayer flags are.



A close up of the power spot.



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The Red Stupa in the upper-left part of the photo, where all the prayer flags are. Meanwhile, in this photo many people welcome the arrival of the great Traleg Rinpoche back to his ancestral home. Rinpoche is in the white care in the lower part of the photo. People were lined up along the highway leading to this for miles. The care Rinpoche was driving in repeatedly got so covered with white offering scarves that they could not drive and had to remove them all.



A close up of the Red Stupa.