



Smithsonian
National Museum of Natural History

Robert Brainerd Ekvall and Betty Ekvall photographs
of Tibet, China, and Vietnam, circa 1925-1940

Sarah Ganderup

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National Anthropological Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	Robert Brainerd Ekvall and Betty Ekvall photographs of Tibet, China, and Vietnam
Identifier:	NAA.PhotoLot.2003-12
Date:	circa 1925-1940
Extent:	146 Color slides (circa)
Creator:	Ekvall, Robert B. (Robert Brainerd), 1898-1983
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Provenance

Donated by Elizabeth S. Schober, Betty Ekvall's niece, and transferred to the archives by Schober's daughter Candace Greene, Department of Anthropology, in 2002.

Location of Other Archival Materials

The Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College holds the oral history interviews, correspondence, photographs, and a manuscript by Ekvall (CN 092).

Location of Other Archival Materials

The Newark Museum holds some Tibetan material from Ekvall.

Other Finding Aids

Inventory available in the repository.

Preferred Citation

Photo Lot 2003-12, Robert Brainerd Ekvall and Betty Ekvall photographs of Tibet and Indochina, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Access to the collection requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical Note

Robert Brainerd Ekvall (1898-1978) and Betty Ekvall were missionaries for the Christian and Missionary Alliance in the Tibetan Plateau on the China-Tibet border. Robert Ekvall was born in Gangsu province, China, to parents who were among the first Christian and Missionary Alliance missionaries in Tibet. After his father's death, Ekvall returned to the United States with his mother. He attended Wheaton Academy and Wheaton College, graduating in 1920. In 1921, Ekvall married fellow Wheaton alumnus Martha Elizabeth Fischer (commonly known as Betty) and both attended the Nyack Missionary Institute. The next year they left for China, where Robert taught at the Bible school. They also traveled into Tibet to establish a mission station in Ngawa. In 1927, the Ekvalls returned to the United States due to political turmoil in China, though they went back to China the following year. On another furlough in the U.S., Robert Ekvall did some graduate work in anthropology at the University Chicago. The Ekvalls returned to Tibet, where Betty Ekvall died of illness in 1940. In 1941, Robert Ekvall traveled to Indochina where their son, David, was doing missionary work; he returned to the United States in 1944 and joined the United States Army in Burma and China. He later published books, articles, and poems on Tibet and China, and taught at the University of Washington.

Scope and Contents

Photographs made by Robert Brainerd Ekvall and Betty Ekvall while missionaries on the China-Tibet border. The photographs document Tibetan, Chinese, and Vietnamese people, ceremonies, dances and musicians, shrines, traders, boats, towns, agriculture, and scenery. The collection also includes images of the Ekvalls and other missionaries and a map of Gansu province from the Christian and Missionary Alliance newsletter.

Local Call Number(s)

NAA Photo Lot 2003-12

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Chinese
Tibetans
Vietnamese

Cultures:

Chinese
Tibetans
Vietnamese

Types of Materials:

Color slides

Photographs

Names:

Christian and Missionary Alliance
Ekvall, Betty (probable photographer)

Geographic Names:

Gansu Sheng (China)
Tibet (China)
Vietnam