Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa was born in Lhasa Tibet. His father, Laja Tashi Phuntsok Shakabpa was a senior lay official in charge of the government treasury, and the steward of Lhasa. His father's brother was Trimon Norbu Wangyal, who became the most influential minister in the cabinet of the 13th Dalai Lama. His mother was Samdup Dolma, from the Ngodrupding family. The third Reting Gyalpo Yeshe Tseltrim Gyaltse was born into the Ngodrupding family, and ruled Tibet as Regent from 1845 to 1862. His mother's older brother was Lonchen Changkyim, one of the group of three Prime Ministers during the reign of the 13th Dalai Lama. The younger brother of his mother, was Ngoshi Jampa Thuwang, personal physician of the 13th Dalai Lama. Both his maternal uncles accompanied the Great 13th into exile to India in 1910. Shakabpa joined the Government at the age of 23 in 1930, as an official of the Treasury. He was appointed Minister of Finance in 1939, a position he held until 1950. His paternal uncle Trimon, who had participated in the tripartite negotiations between Great Britain, China and Tibet in 1914, strongly encouraged him to take up an interest in Tibetan history. Trimon in 1931, handed him many documents he had personally collected from the Simla Accord negotiations, in order to counter the Chinese narrative accounts concerning his country.

Between late 1947 and early 1949, Shakabpa, in his capacity as Tibet's Finance Minister, was dispatched abroad by the Tibetan Cabinet, or Kashag, as head of a Tibetan Trade Mission. This Tibetan Trade Delegation traveled around to world to investigate the possibilities of commercial treaties, particularly with the United States. He traveled to India, China, USA, England, France, Switzerland and Italy. The mission was intended also to strengthen claims for Tibet as an independent, sovereign nation. The Tibetan Government in Exile argues that the official passport he was issued with at the time illustrates that Tibet was an independent country.
As Chinese forces spilled over into Amdo and Kham, Shakabpa and Tsechak Khenchung Thupten Gyalpo were appointed to serve as chief negotiators with the Chinese. The mission was aborted when the Tibetan cabinet minister in eastern Tibet, Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, apparently arranged an agreement with the Chinese. When the PRC entered Tibet in 1951, Shakabpa went into exile, moving to India. There he rallied international support for Tibetan independence, than remain in Tibet and be forced to collaborate with the communists. He was the chief diplomatic representative of the 14th Dalai Lama to the Indian government in New Delhi from 1959 to 1966. It was from this time on that Shakabpa began to concentrate on a rigorous and extensive study of Tibetan history.\[6]\n
As events in Tibet deteriorated in the mid-fifties, he began to organize the Tibetan resistance together with the Dalai Lama's two older brothers, Gyalo Thondup and the Taktser Rinpoche also known as Thubten Jigme Norbu.\[7]\n
Shakabpa lived in New Delhi, Kalimpong and Manhattan. He died of stomach cancer in 1989, at the age of 82, in the home of his youngest son, Tsoltim Ngima Shakabpa, in Corpus Christi, Texas. His children are Kunsang Namdrol better known as KN, Tsering Wangyal better known as TW, Champa Ongmo, Tsoltim Ngima better known as TN, and Thupten Chukie, alias TC.

**Works and articles**

Passport found in 2003

A photograph of Shakabpa's passport was first published in 1967 in his book *Tibet: A Political History*. In 2003, this Tibetan passport was rediscovered in Nepal by Friends of Tibet (India) was presented to the XIV Dalai Lama in 2004.\[14\] Issued by the Kashag to Tibet's finance minister Shakabpa for foreign travel, the passport was a single piece of pink paper, complete with photograph. It has a message in handwritten Tibetan and typed English, similar to the message by the nominal issuing officers of today's passports, stating that "the bearer of this letter – Tsepon Shakabpa, Chief of the Finance Department of the Government of Tibet, is hereby sent to China, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and other countries to explore and review trade possibilities between these countries and Tibet. We shall, therefore, be grateful if all the Governments concerned on his route would kindly give due recognition as such, grant necessary passport, visa, etc. without any hindrance and render assistance in all possible ways to him." The text and the photograph is sealed by a square stamp belonging to the Kashag, and is dated "26th day of the 8th month of Fire-Pig year (Tibetan)" (10 October 1947 in the Gregorian calendar).\[15\]

The passport has received visa and entry stamps from several countries and territories, including India, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Switzerland, Pakistan, Iraq and Hong Kong, but not China. Some visa do reflect an official status, with mentions such as "Diplomatic courtesy, Service visa, Official gratis, Diplomatic visa, for government official".

The existence of this passport, which is believed to be genuine, is used by pro-Tibetan independence groups to demonstrate the recognized independence of Tibet in the mid 1900s.

See also


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3. W. D. Shakabpa, One hundred thousand moons, p.xi.


5. Derek Maher, ibid. p.xii.


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