



Tigers of the Snow: How One Fateful Climb Made The Sherpas Mountaineering Legends

By Jonathan Neale

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The true story of the tragedy and survival on one of the world's most dangerous mountains.

In 1922 Himalayan climbers were British gentlemen, and their Sherpa and Tibetan porters were "coolies," unskilled and inexperienced casual laborers. By 1953 Sherpa Tenzing Norgay stood on the summit of Everest, and the coolies had become the "Tigers of the Snow."

Jonathan Neale's absorbing new book is both a compelling history of the oft-forgotten heroes of mountaineering and a gripping account of the expedition that transformed the Sherpas into climbing legends. In 1934 a German-led team set off to climb the Himalayan peak of Nanga Parbat, the ninth highest mountain on earth. After a disastrous assault in 1895, no attempt had been made to conquer the mountain for thirty-nine years. The new Nazi government was determined to prove German physical superiority to the rest of the world. A heavily funded expedition was under pressure to deliver results. Like all climbers of the time, they did not really understand what altitude did to the human body. When a hurricane hit the leading party just short of the summit, the strongest German climbers headed down and left the weaker Germans and the Sherpas to die on the ridge. What happened in the next few days of death and fear changed forever how the Sherpa climbers thought of themselves. From that point on, they knew they were the decent and responsible people of the mountain.

Jonathan Neale interviewed many old Sherpa men and women, including Ang Tsering, the last man off Nanga Parbat alive in 1934. Impeccably researched and superbly written, *Tigers of the Snow* is the compelling narrative of a climb gone wrong, set against the mountaineering history of the early twentieth century, the haunting background of German politics in the 1930s, and the hardship and passion of life in the Sherpa valleys.

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Editorial Review

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Among the many accounts of mountain climbing in the Himalayas, Neale could not find any that focused on the Sherpas as an entity in their own right. So he resolved to make good the deficit by writing the history of the porters whose image has evolved from that of unskilled laborers to "tigers of the snow." Neale underscores that Sherpas view expeditions as a livelihood, making them more cautious about risks than most foreigners seeking to summit. His question to them--"Why do foreigners climb mountains?"--provoked laughter as he trekked around Sherpa villages conducting oral interviews. On that journey, he encountered Ang Tsering, who had been a porter on a 1934 siege of Nanga Parbat by a German group. It was a disaster, but Neale deems it the "turning point" in Sherpa history because it changed forever how the porters thought of themselves. Although occasionally digressive, Neale engagingly profiles the Sherpas' association with Western alpinists. *Gilbert Taylor*

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Review

"If there were six people on an expedition who wrote a book about it, a reader would feel he'd been on six different expeditions. And now we have a version from the Sherpas' perspective, in many ways the most important."--Doug Scott, mountaineer and author of *The Shishapangma Expedition* and *Himalayan Climber*

"By turns comprehensive and dramatic...The kind of thoughtful and informed portrait that the Sherpas richly deserve."--*Kirkus Reviews*

"This is a very personal story of Sherpas and how they developed from casual laborers to skilled mountain men. Jonathan Neale has lived with them, learned their language, and he has gotten into their psyche and iron determination. From the Sherpas' point of view of expeditions, he has gotten it right."--George Lowe, C.N.Z.M., O.B.E.

About the Author

Jonathan Neale was born in New York, grew up in India and Texas, and lives in England. He has written three nonfiction books, three novels, and eleven plays. Neale has done anthropological field research with nomads in Afghanistan, sailed the Atlantic in a small boat, worked for several years as an AIDS counselor, written a Ph.D. thesis on naval mutinies in eighteenth-century Britain, and was part of the organizing committee for the protests against the G8 in Genoa in 2001. This book grew out of his love for trekking in the Himalayas.

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Glenn Flinchum:

This *Tigers of the Snow: How One Fateful Climb Made The Sherpas Mountaineering Legends* are generally reliable for you who want to certainly be a successful person, why. The reason of this *Tigers of the Snow: How One Fateful Climb Made The Sherpas Mountaineering Legends* can be one of the great books you must

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