

Upearance seems incongruous in a guidebook of this kind. Readers may choose to focus instead on the genuinely spiritual sites he describes with accuracy and infectious enthusiasm.

For spiritually attuned explorers, *Sacred Places: North America* is an intriguing and comprehensive travel guide to our continent's many sacred centers.—Frank Joseph

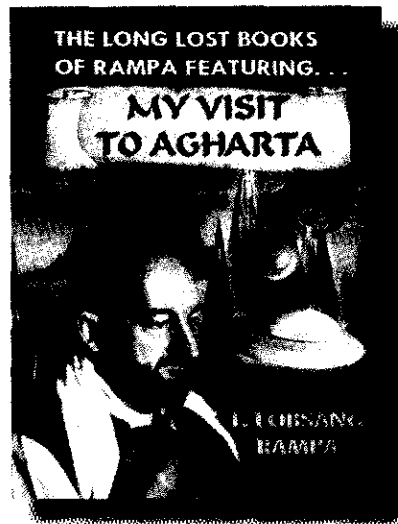
My Visit to Agharta

T. Lobsang Rampa

Inner Light Publications (New York), 2003, softcover, 144 pages, \$19.95

Before his death in 1981, occult scholar and metaphysical philosopher T. Lobsang Rampa acquired a small—but nevertheless dedicated—international following. In his lifetime, Rampa wrote several books designed to help seekers looking for a certain kind of truth discover for themselves the secrets of existence as filtered through his intimate working knowledge of the astral plane and otherworldly dimensions. While the main body of his work has been out of print for the last several years, Inner Light Publications has recently begun to publish reprints of Rampa's books for a new audience eager to learn from a proven master just how this universe of ours truly functions on a metaphysical level.

My Visit to Agharta includes previously unpublished material taken from manuscripts discovered in the personal effects of a bookseller in New York who befriended Rampa and had published some of his earlier work. The book takes its



title from its first section, in which Rampa tells an incredible yet curiously believable story about a journey to the inner earth accompanied by a Tibetan lama named Mingyar Dondup. Along the way, they manage to rescue a young woman who has been kidnapped and tortured by demonic dwellers in the underground tunnels that lead to Agharta. The woman's fate is not unique, we are told. Thousands disappear that way every year, making up the statistics of missing persons who are never heard from again.

But the real purpose of the sojourn into the depths below is to reach Agharta itself, which turns out to be a garden paradise, the center of the Earth as well as at the center of every other habitable planet in the universe simultaneously. There Rampa and his friend the lama take part in a kind of convention of wise men and saints, both human and alien, and witness a demon-

stration of the power of the light that sustains life throughout eternity.

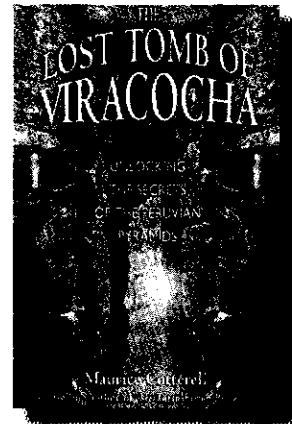
While the story is admittedly difficult to take literally, it still works beautifully as a well-crafted bit of modern mythology, and Rampa's sincere, wide-eyed telling of the tale is so infectiously positive and uplifting that you end up feeling much better whether you believe it to be factual or not.

Rampa also manages to deliver a frighteningly realistic account of how he came to be a walk-in. Since his own body was starting to die of disease and old age, Rampa and some of his spiritual helpmeets made an agreement with a suicidal young malcontent who was more than willing to give Rampa his body in exchange for freeing his own soul to dwell in the astral plane. Let the reader be warned that the grueling details of Rampa's struggle to fit his soul into the body of the younger man are not the stuff of warm and fuzzy New Age storytelling.

My Visit to Agharta also contains detailed instructions on how to free your astral body and travel anywhere at will as well as a short course on how to use a pendulum for purposes of divination. But it is Rampa's gift for good stories well told that are the book's primary fascination. For example, he relates a wonderful bit of myth about a world ruled by intelligent and quite conscious cats. When the felines' lifestyle reached a level of bliss and contentment, their world was destroyed by the powers that be because the cats had lost their abil-

ity to strive for anything better. They were subsequently sent to Earth to observe and report on the human population for the overseers of the universe, which they continue to do to this day.

Whether you're a serious student of the occult or just a casual reader looking for something a little different, this small volume by T. Lobsang Rampa offers a magical glimpse into both the mind of a true believer and his ever-evolving soul.—Sean Casteel



**The Lost Tomb
of Viracocha
Unlocking the Secrets
of the Peruvian Pyramids**

by **Maurice Cotterell**

Bear & Company (Rochester, Vt.), 2003, soft-cover, 256 pgs., \$20.00

"Viracocha" means "Sea Foam" in Quechua, a language spoken by the Incas of South America. It is the title of the most important figure in their history, a man who came from across the ocean follow-