

Donald S. Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-la*, Chicago – London: University of Chicago Press, s. 15-41.

## Chapter ONE

### *The Name*

*It hardly seems necessary to remark that the term Lamaisin is a purely European invention and not known, in Asia.* ISAAC JACOB SCHMIDT, 1835

*Altogether, therefore, "iamaism" is an undesirable designation for the Buddhism of Tibet, and is rightly dropping'out of use.* L. A. WADDELL, 1915

*Lamaism was a combination of the esoteric Buddhism of India, China, and Japan with native cults of the Himalayas.* NATIONAL GALLERY BROCHURE, 1991

A 1992 exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, **D.C.**, entitled "Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration" contained four rooms devoted to Ming China. Commenting on one of the Ming paintings, a well-known Asian art historian wrote, "The individual [Tang and Song] motifs, however, were woven into a thicket of obsessive design produced for a non-Chinese audience. Here the aesthetic wealth of China was placed at the service of the complicated theology of Tibet. The painting was of an Indian Buddhist monk, a disciple of the Buddha. The non-Chinese audience for whom the work was produced perhaps included Mongol or Tibetan Buddhists. However, the complicated theology that China's aesthetic wealth was made to serve was not identified as Buddhism, or even Tibetan Buddhism. The art historian used the term "Lamaism," an abstract noun that does not appear in the Tibetan language but has a long history in the West, a history inextricable from the ideology of exploration and discovery that the National Gallery cautiously sought to celebrate.

"Lamaism" is often regarded as a synonym for "Tibetan Buddhism." The terms, however, have different connotations. "Tibetan Buddhism" suggests a regional version of a world religion, as distinguished from Japanese Buddhism or Thai Buddhism, for example. "Lamaism" carries other associations. The art historian's comment echoes the nineteenth-

century portrait of Lamaism as something monstrous, a composite of unnatural lineage devoid of the spirit of original Buddhism. Lamaism was seen as a deformity unique to Tibet, its parentage denied by India (in the voice of British Indologists) and by China (in the voice of the Qing empire), an aberration so unique in fact that it would eventually float free of its Tibetan abode, and that abode would vanish.

In the discourse of the Christian West, we find, among its many associations, a rather consistent pairing of "Lamaism" with "Roman Catholicism." For example, a 1992 book review in the *New York Times* said of Tibetan Buddhism, "It has justly been called the Pieman Catholicism of the East: ancient and complex, hierarchical and mystical, with an elaborate liturgy, a lineage of saints, even a leader addressed as His Holiness."<sup>2</sup> The reviewer seemed unaware, however, of the long history of this particular comparison, one that began centuries before Ogden Nash reminded us that "A one –/ lama, he's a priest. A two –/ lama, he's a beast."<sup>3</sup> It is as if a certain amnesia has set in, under which the association of Tibetan Buddhism, called "Lamaism," with Roman Catholicism seems somehow free, somehow self-evident, even to be construed as somehow also objective by recourse to theories of causation, influence, borrowing, and diffusion. But the association of Lamaism with Catholicism, like all associations, is not free.

Europe refused to identify any legitimate ancestors of Lamaism in Asia; it seemed unlike anything else. And it is in this State of genealogical absence that Lamaism was most susceptible to comparison, that it could begin to look like Catholicism. The use of the term "Lamaism" in European discourse as a code word for popish ritualism, and as a substitute for "Tibet," is, in its own way, not unrelated to the recent disappearance of Tibet as a nation. During the nineteenth century Tibet's existence was both threatened and contested by Britain and China. And during the twentieth century Tibet's absence became manifest in art-exhibition catalogs and maps of Asia as it was forcibly incorporated into China. The history of these effects begins with the particular vicissitudes that led to the invention of the term "Lamaism" through a process that the nineteenth-century philologist Max Müller might have termed "the decay of language."

This chapter will trace this process of decay. It will begin with the term "lama," which today conjures the image of a smiling, bespectacled Buddhist monk, but in fact is derived from Tibet's pre-Buddhist past. Only during the ninth century did it become the official Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit term "guru." From Tibet, the term traveled to Mongolia and to China, where it eventually came to signify not simply a Tibetan Buddhist teacher but also his teaching. It was perhaps from Mongolia, perhaps from China, that Europeans derived the

abstract noun "Lamaism," which would name the religion of Tibet, and by the late eighteenth century the term was being used to serve a wide range of agendas. One of the constants during this period was the comparison of Lamaism with Roman Catholicism. The comparison was first drawn by Catholics, who felt constrained to account for the many similarities they observed between this form of heathenism and their own true faith. The comparison would later be drawn by Protestants seeking to demonstrate that the corrupt priesthood observed in Tibet had its counterpart in Europe. With the rise in Europe of the academic study of Buddhism, Lamaism was the term used to describe the state to which the original teachings of the Buddha had sunk in the centuries since his death. As with much European discourse about Tibet, Tibetans have been largely absent from the scene: the term Lamaism has no correlate in the Tibetan language. It was only after the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans fled to India in 1959 that they confronted the term, which they have generally regarded as pejorative, suggesting as it does that their religion does not deserve the designation "Buddhism." Yet the term, so deeply engrained, persists (especially among those who fear that the very use of the term "Tibet" would occasion the wrath of the People's Republic of China, into which Tibet has now been subsumed), "Lamaism" sometimes serving as a substitute for "Tibet," and "Lamaist" for "Tibetan." This chapter will trace some of the trajectories of the term.

THE TIBETAN TERM "lama" (*bla ma*) is derived from two words, *la* and *ma*. The notion of *la*, generally translated as "soul," "spirit," or "life," predates the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet. The *la* is said to be an individual's life force, the essential support of the physical and mental constitution of the person. It is mobile; it can depart from the body and wander or be carried off by gods and demons, to the detriment of the person it leaves, who will become either ill or mentally unbalanced as a result. There are therefore rites designed to call the *la* back into the body.<sup>4</sup> Even when the *la* is properly restored to its place in the body, it may simultaneously reside in certain external abodes, such as a lake, tree, mountain, or animal. The person in whom the *la* resides is in what Sir James Frazer would call a sympathetic relationship with these phenomena: if the *la* mountain is dug into, the person will fall ill. In an attempt to conquer a certain demoness, the Tibetan epic hero Gesar of Ling cuts down her *la* tree and empties her *la* lake; he fails because he does not kill her *la* sheep. The identity of these external *la* is thus commonly kept secret, and portable abodes of the *la*, usually a precious object of some kind (often a turquoise), are placed in special receptacles and hidden by the person who shares the *la*.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps in relation to the concept of this soul, the term *la* also has the common meaning of "above" or "high."

With the introduction of Buddhism in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, Tibetan monks and visiting Indian *panditas* undertook the task of translating Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan, in the process inventing hundreds of neologisms. When these exegetes came to decide upon a Tibetan equivalent for *guru*, the Sanskrit term for teacher, they departed from their storied penchant for approximating the meaning of the Sanskrit and opted instead for the word "lama" (*bia ma*). Here they combined the term *la* with *ma*, the latter having at least three meanings: as a negative particle meaning "no" or "not," as a substantive indicator (as in *nyi ma*, "sun," or *srung ma*, "protector"), and as the word for "mother." Subsequent Buddhist etymologies, drawing on the meaning of *la* as "high" rather than its pre-Buddhist usage as "soul," were then construed, which explained *la ma* as meaning either "highest" (literally "above-not," that is, "none above") or "exalted mother."<sup>6</sup> Lama came to be the standard term for one's religious teacher, a . person so significant as to be appended to the threefold Buddhist refuge formula: Tibetans say, "I go for refuge to the lama, I go for refuge to the Buddha, I go for refuge to the dharma [his teaching], I go for refuge to the sangha [the community of monks and nuns]."<sup>7</sup>

The other common use of the term lama is as a designation of incarnations. The institution of incarnation (*sprul sku*) has existed in Tibet since at least the fourteenth century, when the then recently deceased Karma pa monk Rangjung Dorje (Rang byung rdo rje, 1284-1338) was identified in his biography as having been the incarnation of Karma Pakshi (i206-i283).<sup>8</sup> Since then, every sect of Tibetan Buddhism has adopted the practice of identifying the successive rebirths of a great teacher, the most famous instance of which being, of course, the Dalai Lamas. But there are several thousand other lines of incarnation in Tibetan Buddhism. In ordinary Tibetan parlance, such persons are called lamas whether or not they have distinguished themselves as scholars, adepts, or teachers in their present lives. To ask whether a particular monk is a lama is to ask whether he is an incarnation, and the terms *bla chung* and *bla chen* refer to minor and major incarnate lamas. The ambiguity in usage between "lama" as a religious preceptor and "lama" as an incarnation has led the current Dalai Lama in his sermons to admonish his followers that a lama (as one's religious teacher) need not be an incarnation and that an incarnation is not necessarily a lama.<sup>9</sup>

One Western scholar has argued that "guru" was translated as *bla ma* to mean "mother to the soul" in order to "facilitate assimilation of the 'role' of the *guru* in Buddhism into the existing shamanic beliefs of the Tibetan people."<sup>10</sup> Whether Tibetan beliefs were "shamanic" or not, the more likely possibility is that lama meant "one endowed with the soul." What is noteworthy, however, is that this meaning is lost in the Buddhist etymologies, that as

Buddhism was introduced into Tibet the archaic meaning of *la* as "life" or "soul" disappeared.

As the *la* would sometimes leave the body, Tibetan lamas would leave Tibet, traveling to the courts of Mongol khans and Manchu emperors. And it was in these realms, beyond Tibet, that "lama" would become "Lamaism." But this process took time, for when Tibetan Buddhist teachers made their way from Tibet to the Mongolian and Chinese centers of power it seems that they were referred to not as lamas but by terms derived from the languages of their hosts. Marco Polo, for example, refers to the Tibetans at the court of Kublai Khan as *Bacsi* (*bakshi*, the Mongolian word for "teacher"): "The sorcerers who do this [prevent storms] are TEBET and KESIMUR [Kashmir], which are the names of two nations of idolaters. . . . There is another marvel performed by those BACSI of whom I have been speaking as knowing so many enchantments. . . . These monks dress more decently than the rest of the people, and have the head and the beard shaven." <sup>12</sup> At the Chinese court of the early Ming dynasty, Tibetan monks were simply called *seng*, as were Chinese monks, and the religion of Tibet was called Buddhism (*fojiao*).<sup>13</sup>

In 1775 during the reign of the Manchu Emperor Qianlong we find perhaps the first official usage of the Chinese term *lamajiao*, one of the sources from which "Lamaism" seems to derive. *Jiao* is the standard Chinese term for "teaching," being employed in terms such as *daojiao* (the teaching of the dao, "Daoism"), *rujiao* (the teaching of the literati, "Confucianism"), and *fo jiao* (the teaching of the Buddha, "Buddhism"). By the reign of Qianlong, "lama" had come to be used as an adjective to describe Tibetan religion in contexts that in the past would have simply used the term "Buddhist."<sup>14</sup> In 1792 Qianlong composed his *Lama Shuo* (Pronouncements on Lamas), preserved in a tetraglot inscription (in Chinese, Manchu, Mongol, and Tibetan) at the Yonghe-gong (today known to tourists as the "Lama Temple") in Bei-jing. Here Qianlong defends his patronage of a Tibetan sect the Chinese called the "Yellow Hats" (the Geluk) from his Chinese critics by claiming that his support has been merely expedient: "By patronizing the Yellow Church we maintain peace among the Mongols. This being an important task we cannot but protect this (religion). (In doing so) we do not show any bias, nor do we wish to adulate the Tibetan priests as (was done during the) Yuan dynasty."<sup>15</sup> Here are some of Qianlong's comments on the term "lama":

[Buddhism's] foreign priests are traditionally known as Lamas. The word Lama does not occur in Chinese books. ... I have carefully pondered over its meaning and found that *la* in Tibet means "superior" and *ma* means-"none." So *la-ma* means "without superior," just as in Chinese a priest is called a "superior" (*shang-jen*)., *Lama* also stands

for Yellow Religion."

Qianlong had clearly learned the standard Tibetan Buddhist gloss of the term as "highest." He seems determined to place the term "lama" at some distance from his reign, to declare to the subjects who speak the four languages of his realm that lamas are foreigners and that his patronage of them has been motivated by political expediency. We also see in Qianlong's discussion an example of the implication of the term "lama" and, later, "Lamaism" in Manchu imperial projects directed toward Tibet. In this case, Qianlong, who had been a generous patron and dedicated student of Tibetan lamas, sought to assure his Chinese subjects that foreign priests exercised no influence over him. As the term "Lamaism" gained currency in Europe, it would gain further implications and associations from other imperial projects, as during the nineteenth century Tibet would become an object of European colonial interests. European ideologues, however, would be far less explicit than the Manchu emperor about the political Connotations of their use of the term.

BEFORE MOVING to Europe and the nineteenth century, it would be useful to have some sense of what Europeans knew about Tibet. By the middle of the eighteenth century, knowledge of the world, gathered from the accounts of explorers, traders, and missionaries, was compiled in works like Bernard Picart's *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World*, published in London in 1741. His description of Tibetan Buddhism follows, although nowhere do the words "Tibet" or "Buddhism" appear. Instead he describes the religion of the Mongols (called Tartars) and the Kalmyks ("Calmoucks"—Mongols living in the region of Russia between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea), suggesting that this knowledge was gained from travelers to those regions rather than from travelers to Tibet. Picart describes Tibet's religion as Marco Polo described it almost five centuries earlier: as idolatry. During the seventeenth century, only four religions were identified: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Idolatry. And here we see the seeds of the association of this form of idolatry with Catholicism, in terms like "convent" and "pontiff," and in the glossing of "lama" as "priest."

The *Mongolian Tartars, Calmoucks*, and others, according to them, have, properly speaking, no other God but their *Dalai-Lama*, which signifies, as we are informed, *Universal Priest*. This Sovereign Pontiff of all the *Tartarian* Idolaters, and whom they acknowledge as their God, resides toward the Frontiers of *China*, near the City of *Potola*,

in a Convent, situate on the Summit of an high Mountain, the Foot whereof is inhabited by above twenty thousand *Lamas*, . . . who have their separate Apartments round about the Mountain, and, according to their respective Quality and Function, are planted nearer, or at a greater Distance from their Sovereign Pontiff. . . . The Term *Lama*, in the *Mongolian* Language, signifies *Priest*; and that of *Dalai*, which **in** the same Language implies *vast Extent*, has been translated in the Language of the Northern *Indians*, by *Gehan*, a Term of the same Signification. Thus *Dalai-Lama*, and *Prete-Gehan* are synonymous Terms, and the Meaning of them is *Universal Priest*.

There are two Monarchs, one Temporal, and the other Spiritual, at *Lassa*, which, some say, is the Kingdom of *Tanchuth*, or *Boratai*, or *Bar-antola*. The Spiritual Monarch is the *Grand Lama*, whom these Idolaters worship as a God. He very seldom goes abroad. The Populace think themselves happy, if they can by any Means procure the least Grain of his Excrements, or Drop of his Urine; imagining either of them as infallible Preservative from all Maladies and Disasters. These Excrements are kept as sacred Relicks, in little Boxes, and hung around their Necks. Father *Le Comte* imagines *Fo* [the Chinese term for "Buddha"] and the *Grand Lama* to be one and the same Deity; who, according to the Idea of these *Tartars*, . . . must for ever appear under a Form that may be felt or perceiv'd by the Senses, and is supposed to be immortal. He is close confined, adds he, to a Temple, where an infinite Number of *Lama's* attend him, with the most profound Veneration, and take all imaginable Care to imprint the same awful Ideas of him on the Minds of the People. He is very seldom expos'd to View, and whenever he is, 'tis at such a Distance, that it would be morally impossible for the most quick-sighted Person to recollect his Features. Whenever he dies, another *Lama*, who resembles him as near as possible, is immediately substituted in his Stead; for which Purpose, as soon as they perceive his Dissolution drawing nigh, the most zealous Devotees, and chief Ministers of the imaginary God, travel the whole Kingdom over, to find out a proper Person to succeed him. This pious Intrigue is carried on, says he, with all the Dexterity and Address imaginable. The Deification of the *Lama*, if we may depend on the Veracity of Father *Kircher*, was first owing to the extraordinary Trust and Confidence which those People re-pos'd in their *Prestor-John*."

There are hints of blasphemy here, as a mere mortal is regarded as God, and of pollution, as the populace worships human waste. There is also a hint of the sinister, as Picart, unaware that the new Dalai Lama is found only after the death of the present one, explains that the priests

search the realm for a credible substitute when the death of the Dalai Lama draws near. Finally, there is the familiar suggestion, which we will encounter again, that anything authentic in this religion is due to the influence of a Christian. Here Picart explains that the people once placed their faith in Prester John, the fabled Catholic priest whose Utopian kingdom was located sometimes in Asia, sometimes in Africa. Only later was their trust transferred to a false god, the Dalai Lama.

Tibetan religion was not only described but also explained. Thus, in a fascinating entry on Tibet in his 1784 *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, Johann Herder speculated that the religion of the lamas (still not identified as Buddhism) could not have originated in the robust northern zones of Tibet, but must have come from a warmer clime because it was "the creature of some enervate minds, that love above all things to indulge in bodily rest, and freedom from thought." He concludes: "If there be a religion upon Earth, that deserves the epithets of monstrous and inconsistent, it is the religion of Tibet." <sup>18</sup> Such condemnation of Tibetan religion was widespread. In *The Social Contract* (1762), Rousseau makes a reference to "the religion of the Lamas," which, along with that of the Japanese and Roman Catholicism, may be classified as "the religion of the priest," a type of religion that "is so clearly bad, that it is a waste of time to stop to prove it as such."<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the first occurrence of the term "Lamaism" in a European language appears in the reports of the German naturalist Peter Simon Pallas, who traveled through the realm of Catherine the Great for the Royal Academy of Sciences in Petersburg. His reports of 1769, translated into English by the Reverend John Trusler and published in 1788 in his *The Habitable World Described*, contain a long description of the religion of the Kalmyks, based largely on conversations with Kalmyk converts to Christianity. There Pallas refers to the "religion of Lama" and the "tenets of Lamaism."<sup>20</sup> In 1825 Jean Pierre Abel Remusat, in his "Discours sur l'origine de la hierarchie la-mai'que," uses the term *des lamistes*.<sup>1</sup> In the account of his travels in western Ladakh from 1819 to 1825, William Moorcroft refers to "those places where Lamaism still predominates."<sup>22</sup> Hegel discusses Lamaism in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* of 1824 and 1827 and in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, delivered between 1822 and 1831, in which he finds the notion of a living human being worshipped as God, as he describes the Dalai Lama, paradoxical and revolting, just as Picart had almost a century earlier. Hegel writes, "The Abstract Understanding generally objects to this idea of a God-man; alleging as a defect that the form here assigned to the Spirit is an immediate [unrefined, unreflected] one—that in fact it is none other than Man in the concrete. Here the character of a whole people is bound up with the theological view just



indicated."

Hegel seems to have based his discussion on some version of the reports of Catholic missionaries rather than on any Tibetan text. When the first translations from Tibetan into English became available the impression they created was of a religion not nearly as coherent as Hegel had postulated. The French explorer Victor Jacquemont, in a letter from Ellora on May 22, 1832, described the translations done by the Hungarian scholar Alexander Csoma de Koros: "They are unspeakably boring. There are some twenty chapters on what sort of shoes it is fitting for lamas to wear. Among other pieces of preposterous nonsense of which these books are full, priests are forbidden to take hold of a cow's tail to ford a swift river. There is no lack of profound dissertations on properties of griffins', dragons', and unicorns' flesh or the admirable virtues of hoofs of winged horses. To judge by what I have seen of that people and what M. Csoma's translations tell us about them, one would take them for a race of madmen or idiots."<sup>24</sup> It would seem then that neither access to translations of Tibetan texts nor eyewitness description could consistently dispel European fantasies about Tibet. There were, however, occasional voices of dissent.

In his 1835 essay "Ueber Lamaismus und die Bedeutungslosigkeit dieses Namens" (On Lamaism and the Meaninglessness of This Term), Isaac Jacob Schmidt (1779—1847), who had studied Buddhism among the Kalmyks in Russia from 1804 to 1806, explains that *la* means "soul" and *ma* means "mother," and challenges an assumption that would persist far into the next century:

It is well-known that the Tibetan and Mongolian peoples, as far as their religious faith is concerned, were until not long ago almost universally called *Lamaites* (*Lamaiten*) and their religion, Lamaism. Indeed, even now there are many people, otherwise quite well-informed, who imagine that there is an essential difference between Buddhism and Lamaism. The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate the non-existence of this imagined difference and to show at the same time the extent to which the religion of Tibetans and Mongols represents a particular manifestation in the history of Buddhism. It seems hardly necessary to remark that the term *Lamaism* is a purely European invention and not known in Asia. The peoples of that faith call themselves followers of the teachings of the Buddha and are consequently, according to the European expression, Buddhists; the meaning of this term agrees completely with the Sanskrit *Bauddha*<sup>1</sup>"

Schmidt (a Mongolist) seems unaware of the Chinese term *latnajlao*, from which "Lamaism"

may derive. Nonetheless, his assertion that Lamaism is essentially a European category remains remarkable, both for its insight as well as for the fact that it has gone unnoticed in the long history of Western discourse about Lamaism.

To trace the movements of this discourse we must go back before the late Qing dynasty in China and the early nineteenth century in Europe to the time of Marco Polo and other early European visitors to the Chinese court during the Yuan dynasty. It is there that we hear the first recitations of the similarities between Tibetan Buddhism and Roman Catholicism. The trope is employed differently by two distinct groups of European exegetes of the Orient, first the Catholic, then the Protestant. One of the earliest Catholic observers was the Dominican Jourdain Catalani de Severac, who visited the empire of the "Grand Tartar":

In that empire, there are temples of idols and monasteries of men and women, as there are at home, with choirs and the saying of prayers, exactly like us, the great pontiffs of the idols wearing red robes and red hats, like our cardinals. Such luxury, such pomp, such dance, such solemn ceremony is incredible in the sacrifices to idols.<sup>26</sup>

The Portuguese Jesuit Antonio de Andrade, writing in 1626 after a Tibetan lama had watched him perform the Mass, learned from the lama that the "Grand Lama in Utsang [Central Tibet] offers small quantities of bread and wine, that he drinks of them himself and distributes the remainder to the other lamas and that he blows and breathes with his mouth over the wine he presents to God, which he alone and no one else may do. And he added that this Grand Lama wears on his head a tiara like mine but much larger."<sup>27</sup> The German Jesuit John Grueber, who reached Lhasa in 1661, observed of the Tibetans:

Thus they celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass with Bread and Wine, give extreme Unction, bless married Folks, say Prayers over the Sick, make Nunneries, sing in the Service of the Choir, observe divers Fasts during the year, undergo most severe Penances, and, among the rest, Whippings; consecrate Bishops, and send-out Missionaries who live in extream Poverty, and travel bare-foot through the Desarts as far as *China*.<sup>1\*</sup>

Once such a similarity was observed it had to be accounted for, and Catholic missionaries to China and Tibet turned to history and theology to explain why Tibetan lamas looked like priests of the Holy Mother Church. The Vincentian missionaries Huc and Gabet, who traveled in China and Tibet from 1844 to 1846, noted the affinities between what they called "Lamanesque worship" and Catholicism:

The cross, the mitre, the dalmatica, the cope which the Grand Lamas wear on their journeys, or when they are performing some ceremony out of the temple; the service with double choirs, the psalmody, the exorcisms, the censer, suspended from five chains, and which they can open or close at pleasure, the benedictions given by the Lamas over the heads of the faithful; the chaplet, ecclesiastical celibacy, spiritual retirement, the worship of the saints, the feasts, the processions, the litanies, the holy water, all these are analogies between the Buddhists and ourselves. Now, can it be said that these analogies are of Christian origin? We think so.<sup>29</sup>

They then recount a story about Tsong kha pa (1357—1419), the deified "founder" of the Geluk sect, which by the time of the Vincentians' visit had wielded political control over Tibet for two centuries. They tell of the young Tsong kha pa's encounter with a lama "from the most remote regions of the West," who took him as his disciple and "initiated [him] into all the doctrines of the West" in the few years before his peaceful death. What was remarkable about this lama, besides his unfathomable learning, were his gleaming eyes and his large nose. Hue and Gabet predictably speculate that this stranger with the prominent nose was a Catholic missionary. "It may be further supposed that a premature death did not permit the Catholic missionary to complete the religious education of his disciple, who himself, when afterwards he became an apostle, merely applied himself, whether from having incomplete knowledge of Christian doctrine, or from having apostatized from it, to the introduction of a new Buddhist liturgy."<sup>30</sup> The implication and regret, of course, is that if the Catholic missionary had lived longer, Tsong kha pa would have received full instruction in the dogmas of the Church and so could have converted Tibet to Christianity.

Here is perhaps the most common strategy for explaining similarity, called borrowing or, more properly, "genealogy" (also known as "diffusion-ism" in anthropology)—that is, accounting for coincidental phenomena or traits by appealing to historical influence. The recourse to genealogy attempts to establish not only a direct historical relation, but also a hierarchy based on the chronological proximity of the influencing agent to the originary ancestor. Hence Hue and Gabet could lay claim to all that they found "authentic" in Tsong kha pa's Buddhism by ascribing its origin to one of their own, and at the same time dismiss Tibetan Buddhism as deficient because Tsong kha pa's instruction in the Gospel remained incomplete, their own mission thereby legitimated as the fulfillment of the mysterious Westerner's work. The Europeans thus claimed a position of power, indeed the power of

origin, over Tsong kha pa, whom they perceived as the most important figure in the history of Tibetan Buddhism."

The first European encounters with Tibetan Buddhism occurred long before the rise of the science of philology, long before any notion of an ancestral heritage of "mankind" that could attempt to explain the manifestation of parallel developments in different parts of the globe. Thus, there were only two possible (but not necessarily mutually exclusive) explanations for the apparent similarities between Tibetan lamas and Catholic priests: they were either the result of the work of one of their own or they were the result of the work of another. Those who believed the former included the Jesuit missionaries to Cathay and Tibet, who were motivated by the belief (which persisted into the eighteenth century, as evidenced in the passage from Picart) that they would find remnants of the church of Prester John, who some thought may have been the first Dalai Lama.<sup>32</sup> If this was not the case, then the similarities must be the work of an other, a cause not for the delight expressed by Huc and Gabet, but for a deep anxiety, reflected in the words of the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (apparently Picart's chief source), who in 1667 described the adulation afforded the Dalai Lama:

Strangers at their approach fall prostrate with their heads to the ground, and kiss him with incredible Veneration, which is no other than that which is performed upon the Pope of Rome; so that hence the fraud and deceit of the Devil may easily and plainly appear, who by his innate malignity and hatred, in way of abuse hath transferred, as he hath done all the other Mysteries of the Christian Religion, the Veneration which is due unto the Pope of Rome, the only Vicar of Christ on Earth, unto the superstitious Worship of barbarous people.

Whence as the Christians call the *Roman* High-Priest Father of Fathers, so these *Barbarians* term their false Deity the Great *Lama*, that is, the Great High-Priest, and the *Lama of Lamas*, that is, the High-Priest of High-Priests, because that from him, as from a certain Fountain, floweth the whole form and mode of their Religion, or rather mad and brain-sick idolatry, whence also they call him the Eternal Father."

This is an extreme form of the theory of demonic plagiarism articulated by Justin Martyr and other church fathers during the second and third centuries, in which any similarity between ritual elements of the Church and those of rival cults is attributed to the work of the devil. In many cases, components of the Christian rituals were derived from these very same rival cults, such that the doctrine of demonic plagiarism served as a means of appropriating the purity of the origin, consigning the other to the corrupt state of the derivative.<sup>34</sup>

Why must this appearance be demonic? The answer derives in part from the Christian Church's claim to historical and ontological particularity. It is the task of the missionary to transmit the word of that particularity to those realms where it has not yet spread, to diffuse it from its unique point of origin. To carry its accoutrements from Rome in a time and to a place they could not possibly have been taken before, and to find them already there, suggests the workings of a power beyond history, which could only be seen as demonic. But what is described in this passage is a visual image: the dress and the liturgy were derived from their authentic source; they are a copy. It is as if the priest arrived in distant China only to see himself reflected in a mirror, with the inversion of the image so typically ascribed to the demonic. He sees the very aim of his long journey, what he hopes will have been when the last domain of the globe has been brought to the true faith—namely, that as a result of his ministry the bodies of the once idolatrous Orientals will have worn the vestments of the Christian father and will have performed the liturgy of the holy church. But to the priest, the image of the Buddhist monk at the first encounter appears to already be what it can only become later. This distant goal, a mirage of the maturation of his power, has already been achieved. The monk stands before the priest, as if he were looking in a mirror.

Unlike the infant in the "mirror stage" who regards the integrated vision of his body in the mirror with jubilation, for the priest it is a moment of dread; he recognizes the reflected image, as the child does not, as a trap and a decoy. What is monstrous is not the presence of the Buddhist monk, but the priest's identification with the monk's image, "with the automaton in which, in an ambiguous relation, the world of his own making tends to find completion."<sup>35</sup> The priest sees identity where it is absent: the dress and liturgies of Buddhism, whether Chinese or Tibetan, are not the same as those of a Roman Catholic priest. But for such a perception to occur, the fragmented body of the church must imagine itself complete, already present before its arrival, in the regalia of the Lamaist priest. The original has arrived too late, after its image, and this late arrival has as its consequence both self-constitution and alienation. The Catholic priest simultaneously identifies with the image of his foreign counterpart and armors himself against it by condemning it as demonic. It is as if the image of the Buddhist, the counterpart, throws the priest forward in time, out of the "natural" dissemination of the word, projecting him out of the process of conversion. The missionary's confrontation with his, Tibetan counterpart is then, like the mirror stage, "high tragedy: a brief moment of doomed glory, a paradise lost."<sup>36</sup>

Even at the Qing court, a Portuguese missionary to China was quoted as saying of Tibetan rituals, "There is not a piece of dress, not a sacerdotal function, not a ceremony of the court of

Rome, which the Devil has not copied in this country."<sup>37</sup> Thus this Roman Catholic genealogy of Tibetan Buddhism was not merely a case of pre-Enlightenment demonology, it persisted into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>38</sup>

As early as the mid-eighteenth century Protestants were comparing Tibetan Buddhism with Roman Catholicism, but for a different reason. Their intent was not to account for *^possibility* of similarity between idolaters and Roman Catholics, as Catholic authors had sought to do, but to claim the *necessity* of such similarities, because Roman Catholics were, in effect, idolaters as well. Thus the English Protestant Thomas Astley's *A New Collection of Voyages and Travels Consisting of The most Esteemed Relations which have been. hitherto published in any Language Comprehending Everything Remarkable in its Kind in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America*, published between 1745 and 1747, is in many ways similar to the French Catholic Picart's *The Ceremonies ,and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World*, which was published during the same decade. Yet Astley draws conclusions different from Picart's in his discussion of the Tartar court in China:

From the above Accounts of the Religion of *Fo* [Buddha], however imperfect, or disguised, the Reader may perceive a most surprizing Conformity between it, and that of *Rome*: We shall not say of Christians in general, although it is circumstanced with an incarnate God, a Saviour, a Holy Spirit, a Ternary, which some of the Missioners consider as an Emblem of the Trinity, and others a Trinity in Effect. However that may be, we find, in this Religion, every individual article, great and small, of which the *Romish* system is composed: Such as the Worship of Images, praying to Saints, and for the Dead; Purgatory, Pardons, Indulgences, Confession, Absolution, Penance; Exorcism, the Treasure of the Church, Merits and Works of Supererogation; the Pretence to work Miracles; a Hierarchy, or different Order of Priests, with a Pope at their Head; Monks and begging Friars, Nuns; in short, every Thing in Speculation and Practice down to Holy-Water and the Beads. They have not, indeed, a Wafer-God, which they first adore, and then devour; but they have a living Divinity in human Form [the Dalai Lama] transubstantiated, or transformed, as they believe, from Time to Time; who dwells among them personally, and is therefore, we think, a much more rational Object of Worship.

The Missioners, confounded at this exact Conformity of the Romish Faith, with a Religion which is confessedly idolatrous, and one continued Scene of Priestcraft, use several Arts to conceal the Resemblance; some mentioning one Part of its Doctrines,

others different Parts, none the Whole; and those who are most copious on the Occasion, recite them in a loose, scattered Way, without any Method, or Order. After all these Disguisements, the Resemblance appears so glaring, that many, to account-for it, have made a hardy Step, and pretend, that it is a Corruption of Christ tianity, meaning the *Romanish* Religion. Some affirm, that the *Nestorians* converted the People of *Tibet* and *Tartary* about the seventh and eighth Centuries: Others will have it, that the Faith was preached there in the Time of the Apostles. We call this a hardy Step, because they know, that according to the *Chinese* History, *Fo's* Religion sprung-up above a thousand years before Christ."

Astley thus catalogs the similarities, which he claims the Catholics try to hide, finding the religion of the Buddha and the Romish faith identical in everyway, except for that most preposterous article of faith, the Eucharist, which is unique to Catholics. He dismisses the possibility of historical influence, noting that Buddhism antedates Christianity (although Buddhism was introduced in Tibet only in the seventh century). For Astley, it is the very resemblance of the two that accounts for the failure of the Roman Catholic missions in China and Tibet: the Buddhists would gain nothing by converting:

But the greatest Security the *Bongos* [Buddhist monks] can have against the Progress of Popery among them, is the great Conformity between the two Religions: For, by the Change, their Followers see they will be just in the same Condition they were before; there being nothing of Novelty to induce them, excepting what arises from the Difference of a few Forms. Besides, they must naturally have a greater Respect for the Saints, Images, and Ceremonies of their own, than those of a foreign Manufacture.<sup>40</sup>

The apparent similarities between Lamaism and Roman Catholicism continued to fascinate Protestants into the twentieth century. In 1901 Dr. Susie C. Rijnhart, a Dutch missionary who had traveled in Tibet from 1895 to 1899, ' wrote, "No more interesting question offers itself to Christian scholarship -than that concerning the resemblances between the ritual of the Gelupa [sic] sect and that still in vogue in the Roman Catholic and Anglican branches of Christendom."<sup>41</sup> But the question had already been considered in depth, especially in Britain during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Buddhism enjoyed great popularity then, as evidenced by the success of Edwin Arnold's life of the Buddha, *The Light of Asia*. The Buddha was seen in such works as the greatest philosopher of India's Aryan past, and his teachings were regarded as a complete philosophical and psychological

system, one based on reason and restraint, and opposed to ritual, superstition, and sacerdotalism, demonstrating how the individual could live a moral life without the trappings of institutional religion. Standing in sharp contrast to the spiritual and sensuous exoticism of modern India, this Buddhism was also a fitting candidate for classical status because, like the civilizations of Greece, Rome, and Egypt, and unlike Hinduism, the Buddhism of India was long dead.<sup>42</sup>

The leading British Orientalists of the late Victorian period saw in Buddhism a rationalist and humanist reaction against the priestcraft of sixth-century B.C.E. India, subsumed under yet another of the "isms" of the Western study of Asia, Brahmanism. "Being opposed to all sacerdotalism and ceremonial observances, it abolished, as far as possible, the sacrificial system of the Brahmans, and rejected the terrible methods of self-torture, maintaining that a life of purity and morality was better than all the forms and ceremonies of the Vedic ritual."<sup>43</sup> Early Buddhism was thus consistently, and mistakenly, portrayed as lacking any element of ritual; ignored, for example, were the ordination ceremonies for monks and nuns; the communal confession of infractions of the monastic code, and the ceremonial conclusion of the retreat at the end of the rainy season, all said to have been sanctioned by the Buddha. As Monier-Williams, Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, described it in his 1888 Duff Lectures, "It had no hierarchy in the proper sense of that term—no church, no priests, no true form of prayer, no religious rites, no ceremonial observances."<sup>44</sup>

Among the factors contributing to such a portrayal was the Victorian interpreters' almost exclusive reliance on the texts selected and edited by the Pali Text Society (and then translated in Max Müller's Sacred Books of the East series and the Pali Text Society's Sacred Books of the Buddhists series), which were thought to constitute the canon of primitive Buddhism. This portrayal, moreover, supported the interpreters' comparative model, in which the Buddha's rejection of sacerdotalism could be interpreted as foreshadowing a similar rejection in the West during the Reformation. As Müller wrote, "The ancient history of Brahmanism leads on to Buddhism, with the same necessity with which mediaeval Romanism led to Protestantism."<sup>45</sup> The point was made more emphatically and extensively by James Freeman Clarke in his *Ten Great Religions* in the chapter "Buddhism, or the Protestantism of the East":

Why call Buddhism the Protestantism of the East, when all its external features so-much resemble those of the Roman Catholic Church?

We answer: Because deeper and more essential relations connect Brahmanism



and the Romish Church, and the Buddhist system with Protestantism. The human mind in Asia went through the same course of experience, afterward repeated in Europe. It protested, in the interest of humanity, against the oppression of the priestly caste. . . .

Buddhism in Asia, like Protestantism in Europe, is a revolt of nature against spirit, of humanity against caste, of individual freedom against the despotism of an order, of salvation by faith against salvation by sacraments. . . . Finally, Brahmanism and the Roman Catholic Church are more religious; Buddhism and Protestant Christianity, more moral.<sup>41</sup>

The rise of interest in Buddhism in England during the last half of the nineteenth century coincided with the "No Popery" movement, which was marked by the Murphy riots of 1866 to 1871 and the wide popularity of works such as Richard Whately's *Essays on the Errors of Romanism* (1856) and *The Confessional Unmasked*, distributed to each member of Parliament in 1865 by the Protestant Evangelical Mission and Electoral Union.<sup>47</sup>

It is against the background of original Buddhism and anti-Papism that the Protestant discourse on Lamaism must be placed: Lamaism, with its devious and corrupt priests and vapid sacerdotalism, would be condemned as the most degenerate form of Buddhism (if it was a form of Buddhism at all) in the decades just after Roman Catholicism was being scourged in England, in the decades before the turn of the century and the 1903 invasion of Tibet, when British troops under the command of Colonel Younghusband marched on Lhasa to demand trade privileges.

In 1877 Thomas W. Rhys Davids, the nineteenth century's leading British scholar of Buddhism and the founder of the Pali Text Society, produced a popular manual on Buddhism. It was published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge as part of its Non-Christian Religious Systems series. (Rhys Davids was the son of a Welsh Congregationalist minister.) Near the end of the book Rhys Davids considers "developments in doctrine" beyond those in the Pali canon, the locus of which was interchangeably termed "primitive Buddhism," "true Buddhism," or "original Buddhism." He writes:

The development of Buddhist doctrine which has taken place in the Panjab, Nepal, and Tibet is exceedingly interesting, and very valuable from the similarity it bears to the development which has taken place in Christianity in the Roman Catholic countries. It has resulted at last in the complete establishment of Lamaism, a religion not only in many points different from, but actually antagonistic to, the primitive system of Buddhism; and this is not only in its doctrine, but also in its church organization.<sup>48</sup>

Two comparisons are drawn here, one of similarity and one of contrast. The value of developments in Buddhist doctrine lies in their similarity to the changes undergone by Christianity in those countries that remain Roman Catholic. At the same time, Lamaism is contrasted with primitive Buddhism, such that Lamaism is seen as not merely different from but inimical to the doctrine and organization of primitive Buddhism, now long past. As Monier-Williams said, "In truth, Tibetan Buddhism is so different from every other Buddhistic system that it ought to be treated of separately in a separate volume."<sup>49</sup>

Rhys Davids's most sustained comparison of Roman Catholicism and Lamaism appears in his 1881 Hibbert Lectures, "Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by Some Points in the History of Indian Buddhism." There he provides a full page of parallels, all of which constitute "one of the most curious facts in the whole history of the world." "[E]ach with its services in dead languages, with choirs and processions and creeds and incense, in which the laity are spectators only; each with its mystic rites and ceremonies performed by shaven priests in gorgeous robes; . . . each, even ruled over by a Pope, with a triple tiara on his head and the sceptre of temporal power in his hand, the representative on earth of an eternal Spirit in the heavens!"<sup>50</sup>

The litany of parallels is now familiar. Like Thomas Astley a century before, the late Victorian interpreters of Buddhism to the West, especially the British and the Americans, no longer held to the view that the apparent similarities between Lamaism and Romanism were due to direct historical contact between the two.<sup>51</sup> Instead, Rhys Davids explains, in a vocabulary of violation, mixing begets mixing:

Each had its origin at a time when the new faith was adopted by the invading hordes of barbarian men bursting in upon an older, a more advanced civilization—when men in body, but children in intellect, quick to feel emotion, and impregnated with Animistic fallacies, became at once the conquerors and the pupils of men who passed through a long training in religious feeling and in philosophical reasoning. Then do we find that strange mixture of speculative acuteness and emotional ignorance; of earnest devotion to edification, and the blindest confidence in erroneous methods; of real philanthropy, and a priestly love of power; of unhesitating self-sacrifice, and the most selfish struggles for personal pre-eminence, which characterize the early centuries of Roman Catholicism and Tibetan Lama-ism alike.<sup>52</sup>

Whether or not the genealogical view put forward by the Roman Catholic missionaries anticipated the anthropological theory of diffusionism, the Protestant interpreters held firmly

to a variation of the theory that diffusionism briefly replaced: the "comparative method," made famous by Sir James Frazer, in which it was postulated that all societies develop according to a similar pattern, and that each is distinguished by the stage it occupies in the continuum of development and the rate at which it progresses along it. The comparative method was so named because of its claim that societies at the same stage of development, regardless of their location in time and place, share the same characteristics, allowing knowledge of one to inform analysis of another. Such a theory cast primitive societies as contemporary reminders of the archaic stages through which Western civilization had passed, and from which the savages themselves, with the encouragement and support of the West would eventually emerge. That Frazer's comparative method made its mark on Buddhist Studies is evident from this 1896 statement by Rhys Davids:

For it is precisely in India that for us Westerns the evolution of religious beliefs is most instructive. It can be traced there with so much completeness and so much clearness; we can follow it there with so much independence of judgement and so great an impartiality; and it runs, in spite of the many differences, on general lines so similar to the history of religion in the West, that the lessons to be learnt there are of the highest value. . . . Yet nowhere else do we find a system at once so similar to our own in the stages and . . . manner of its growth, and so interestingly and absolutely antagonistic *to ova* own in the ultimate conclusions it has reached.<sup>53</sup>

The same observation had been made a year earlier, this time about Tibet, by L. Austine Waddell in his *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism*: "For Lamaism is, indeed, a microcosm of the growth of religion and myth among primitive people; and in large degree an object-lesson in their advance from barbarism toward civilization. And it preserves for us much of the old-world lore and petrified beliefs of our Aryan ancestors." <sup>M</sup> More interesting, however, although not noted by Rhys Davids or Waddell, is the fact that this same (and equally anti-Papist) view had been advanced more forcefully in German by Isaac Jacob Schmidt a half century earlier, although unlike the British scholars he did not distinguish Buddhism from Lamaism. Writing in 1835, he concluded his essay on the term "Lamaism":

This brief review of a not unimportant subject in the cultural history of humankind . . . should suffice to demonstrate the lack of foundation for the European idea of Lamaism, above all else, however, to refute this bizarre notion that Lamaism somehow owed its existence to Christianity and its organization to the papal hierarchy, an idea that was

brought to Europe about 150 years ago by some Capuchins who had visited Tibet as mission-aries and that found unquestioning agreement in Europe.... This monkish prejudice had absolutely no awareness of the fact that equal circumstances must produce similar results, that just as the earlier semi-barbarism of Europe in its time produced the papacy out of Christianity, so, under equal conditions, the semi-barbarism of Asia, which continues until today, could not find it very difficult to produce a similar dominating priesthood out of the considerably older and no less dogmatically constructed Buddhism, and that it was not at all necessary for one [of those priesthoods] to assist the other. Every spiritual corporation, just as soon as its power is able to reach a certain height and to govern and dominate the benightedness of the ignorant masses arbitrarily through the mental predominance of an elevated culture, will not fail to demonstrate similar manifestations at any time in any country, but these manifestations must gradually grow more obscure and disappear eventually just as soon as the inheritance of all humankind, namely the spirit of examination, discrimination, and knowledge, gradually " achieves maturity.<sup>55</sup>

Schmidt's hopeful conclusion is perhaps a reflection of Enlightenment social philosophy. Nonetheless, he anticipates the evolutionary model to which Rhys Davids and Waddell subscribed. Here the Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism, figured prominently as the end point in the Victorian version of the history of Buddhism, according to which, after the early centuries of the brotherhood, Buddhism in India followed a course of uninterrupted deterioration from its origins as a rational, agnostic faith to a degenerate religion rife with ritual and superstition. The specific course charted by the British Buddhologists was as follows: With the rise of the Mahayana, the agnostic idealism and simple morality of primitive Buddhism was replaced by "a speculative theistic system with a mysticism of sophistic nihilism."<sup>56</sup> Further deterioration occurred with the rise of the Yogacara school, which, for reasons that remain unclear, was regarded with particular antipathy: "And this Yoga parasite, containing within itself the germs of Tantrism, seized strong hold of its host and soon developed its monster outgrowths, which crushed and cankered most of the little life of purely Buddhist stock yet left in the Mahayana."<sup>57</sup> (The author of these two statements, L. Austine Waddell, the son of a Scottish Presbyterian minister, conducted his research while serving as the assistant sanitary commissioner for the Darjeeling district; in 1889 his "Are Venomous Snakes Autotoxic?" was published in *Scientific Memoirs by Medical Officers of the Army of India*.) Were this not enough, the progress of the contamination continued as the pure essence of primitive

Buddhism was once more polluted in India with the rise of tantrism.

It was this mere shadow of original Buddhism that was belatedly transmitted to Tibet. Prior to the introduction of Buddhism, Waddell recounts, the Tibetans were "rapacious savages and reputed cannibals, without a written language, and followers of an animistic and devil-dancing or Shamanistic religion, the Bon, resembling in many ways the Taoism of China."<sup>58</sup> The introduction of a corrupt form of Indian Buddhism into this atmosphere resulted in something that Waddell calls "primitive Lamaism," which he defines as "a priestly mixture of Sivaite [*sic*] mysticism, magic, and Indo-Tibetan demonolatry, overlaid by a thin varnish of Mahayana Buddhism. And to the present day Lamaism still retains this character."<sup>59</sup> Thus the corrupt form of Buddhism that arrived in Tibet was further adulterated with the demon worship of the Tibetans: "The Lamaist cults comprise much deep-rooted devil-worship. . . . For Lamaism is only thinly and imperfectly varnished over with Buddhist symbolism, beneath which the sinister growth of poly-demonish superstition darkly appears."<sup>60</sup> Once again, the discourse of the demonic comes into play, as the superstitions of the non-Buddhist religions, both Indian and Tibetan, portrayed as parasites, eventually overwhelm the Buddhist host. Lamaism thus stands at the nadir of a long process of contamination and degeneration from the origin. In *Kirn*, Rudyard Kipling has the Teshu Lama (as the British referred to the Panchen Lama) express this view: "[I]t was in my mind that the Old Law was not being followed; being overlaid, as thou knowest, with devildom, charms, and idolatry."<sup>61</sup> Colonel Younghusband, who had led Waddell to Lhasa, was not impressed by one of the great scholars of his age, the Holder of the Throne of Ganden (dGa' Idan khri pa Bio bzang rgyal mtshan): "And his spiritual attainments, I gathered from a long conversation I had with him after the Treaty was signed, consisted mainly of a knowledge by rote of vast quantities of his holy books. The capacity of these Tibetan monks for learning their sacred books by rote is, indeed, something prodigious; though about the actual meaning they trouble themselves but little."<sup>62</sup> Even Madame Blavatsky, whose Mahatmas lived in Tibet, decried the degradation of their wisdom in the hands of Tibetans: "How the pristine purity of these grand revelations was dealt with may be seen by studying some of the so-called 'esoteric' Buddhist schools of antiquity in their modern garb, not only in China and other Buddhist countries in general, but even in not a few schools in Thibet, left to the care of uninitiated Lamas and Mongolian innovators."<sup>63</sup> She accepts the view of Lamaism as a degenerate form of pure Buddhism, writing in *Isis Unveiled*, "From pure Buddhism, the religion of these districts has degenerated into Lamaism; but the latter, with all its blemishes—purely formalistic and impairing but little the doctrine itself—is yet far above Catholicism."<sup>64</sup>

Once identified as an endpoint in the process of degeneration, Lamaism also seemed to creep backward in time. In a discussion of the Mahayana sutras in his 1877 *Buddhism*, Rhys Davids writes:

The later books were afterwards translated into Tibetan, and a new doctrine attained in Tibet to so great a development that Tibetan Buddhism, or rather Lamaism, has come to be the exact contrary of the earlier Buddhism. It has been worked up there into a regular system which has shut out all of the earlier Buddhism, although a few of the earlier books are also to be found in Tibetan translations.<sup>65</sup>

It is perhaps noteworthy that in this work Rhys Davids subsumes all of Mahayana Buddhism, the Buddhisms of China, Japan, and Tibet, under the heading Tibetan Buddhism. All "subsequent" Buddhisms are thereby absorbed under the category of Lamaism, as if the parasite identified by Waddell had spread retroactively to infect all Buddhisms that existed in a form other than the texts preserved in European libraries, all Buddhisms that were not under European control.

Tibetan Buddhism was thus regarded as doubly other in a complex play of Orientalist ideologies: with the discovery and translation of Sanskrit and Pali texts, Romantic Orientalism invented and controlled Buddhism, casting it in the role of the mimetic other—the other that is like oneself—and called it "original Buddhism." In Victorian Britain this Buddhism was represented as a "religion of reason," within which morality and free intellectual inquiry were possible without the institution of a church and its rituals. European and American philologists thus became the true and legitimate conservators of this "classical tradition." Tibetan Buddhism was then constructed as the other of this other ("original Buddhism"). It was a product not of the religion of reason but of the degeneration of the Indian textual tradition, namely, the Mahayana and tantra, the latter of which had been excoriated for centuries. "Tantra," a notoriously vague term used generally to designate an Indian movement that made use of activities traditionally proscribed in the religious path (most notably sexual intercourse), was regarded by nineteenth-century Orientalists as the most depraved of abominations. Such regard went back at least to 1730, when the Capuchin missionary Orazio della Penna described the tantric literature of Tibet: "I have not read this infamous and filthy law of Khiute [tantra], so as not to stain my mind, and because it is unnecessary. For to confute it one must know in the abstract of what it treats, and there is little good or indifferent that is not mixed up with much more witchcraft, magic incantations, and obscenity."<sup>66</sup>

A nexus of forces were therefore brought to bear to create this degenerate form of Buddhism found in Tibet, "Lamaism." This history, from its pristine origins in the distant past to the present state of decay and corruption, was derived from two different modes of representation, both controlled by the European Orientalist: what is known of early Buddhism, of primitive Buddhism, of true Buddhism, is based on texts, while the knowledge of "modern Buddhism," which deviated wildly from the texts, is derived from direct observation. Again, Monier-Williams from the Duff Lectures: "For it is certain that without any practical experience of what Buddhism has become in modern times—I mean such an experience as can only be gained by residing or traveling in countries where Buddhism now prevails—the mere study of ancient scriptures is likely to be misleading."<sup>67</sup> That is, texts can elucidate only true Buddhism; to understand the current state of what Buddhism "has become," "practical experience" of the missionary and the colonial officer is essential.

Victorian scholars were not unanimous in their portrayal of Lamaism as an extreme deviation from the Buddha's original teachings. For those connected with the missionaries, such as Monier-Williams, the root cause of the corruption lay in the Buddha himself, who denied the existence of human aspirations to the transcendent, who rejected the possibility of a supernatural force that could aid in the struggle for salvation, who could find no place in his system for a Ruler of the Universe. Thus, despite the high order of his moral precepts, the system of the Buddha was destined to turn into its opposite:

In point of fact it was not a development that took place, but a recoil—like the recoil of a spring held down for a time by a powerful hand and then released. And this resulted from the simple working of the eternal instincts of humanity, which insisted on making themselves felt notwithstanding the unnatural restraint to which the Buddha had subjected them; so that every doctrine he taught developed by a kind of irony of fate into a complete contradiction of itself.<sup>68</sup>

Lamaism was the collective embodiment of those contradictions. For others who were more sympathetic to their creation of true Buddhism, Lamaism was not a natural outcome of the founder's original faith but a deviation from it. In either case, however, comparisons with Roman Catholicism served as a further form of condemnation, where "Lamaism" becomes a substitute for "Papism." The Tibetans, having lost the spirit of primitive Buddhism, now suffered under the oppression of sacerdotalism and from the exploitation of its priests, something that England had long since thrown off. But it is not simply analogy that Pali

Buddhism (which by the end of the nineteenth century was largely under British control) is to Tibetan Buddhism (which at the end of the nineteenth century Britain was actively seeking to control) as Protestantism is to Roman Catholicism. It is rather a strategy of debasing the distant and unsubjected by comparing it with the near and long subjugated, subjugated both by its relegation to England's pre-Reformatibn past and to its present European rivals and Irish subjects. For example, Waddell begins his chapter "The Hierarchy and Re-Incarnate Lamas" with two epigraphs— "Le roi est morte, vive le roi!" and a passage from the Talmud—and then heads a subsequent page with "The First Dalai Lama-Pope," associating Lamaists with the French, Jews, and Catholics in only two pages.<sup>69</sup> "Lamaism" thus served as a code word for "Papism" in a master narrative that used its representation of the other without to attack the other within. This was not the first time Protestant polemics had figured in scholarship on other religions; such polemics had shaped the study of the religions of Late Antiquity, sometimes referred to as "Pagano-Papism."<sup>70</sup> And just as Papism was implicated in theories of world domination, so also was Lamaism. In Sax Rohmer's 1917 *The Hand of Fu Manchu*, the headquarters of the sinister doctor's conspiracy to dominate the globe is in Tibet, "a mystery concealed from the world behind the veil of Lamaism."<sup>71</sup> In 1937 the Nazi J. Stinck published *Zu Juda und Rom- Tibet: ihr Ringen urn die Weltherrschaft* (On Juda and Rome-Tibet: Their Struggle for World Domination).<sup>72</sup>

At the end of both his tomes on Tibet, Waddell offers his vision of Tibet's future, when "its sturdy overcredulous people are freed from the intolerable tyranny of the Lamas, and delivered from the devils whose ferocity and exacting worship weigh like a nightmare upon all."<sup>71</sup> There is reason for hope, he argues, when one considers that during the twelfth century the Catholic Church seemed in hopeless decay, but then Dante and then the Renaissance appeared. Indeed, Waddell claims, a knowledge of Buddhism might have saved the Catholic Church from the degeneration it suffered soon after "the disappearance of its immortal founder." Waddell, with apparent magnanimity, next demonstrates his possession of true Buddhism (which the Tibetans lack) by claiming that Christians are finally coming to understand that the teachings of Jesus are more akin to those of the Buddha than they are to Paul, Augustine, or Luther. Completing the gesture of control, he ends by proclaiming that rather than burying Tibetan Buddhism as a decadent cult, it is the mission of England "to herald the rise of a new star in the East, which may for long, perhaps for centuries, diffuse its mild radiance over this charming land and interesting people. In the University, which must ere long be established under British direction at Lhasa, a chief place will surely be as-;



signed to studies in the origin of the religion of the country."<sup>74</sup> Waddell wrote these words not from a position of imperial longing at the border, but at the conclusion of *Lhasa, and. Its Mysteries*, his account of the British invasion of 'Tibet in 1903 and 1904, during which he served as chief medical officer.

Lamaism thus serves as a fundamental trope in the history that late Victorian colonialism wrote for itself. Like all historicisms, it has its fantasy of pristine origin, here embodied in true Buddhism, and its fantasy of the end, here embodied in Tibetan Buddhism, called Lamaism, which is seen as an inevitable end whether it is a perversion of the Buddha's intention or its fulfillment. As the end point in the process of degeneration, Tibetan Buddhism after a certain stage has no history, only stasis. Change must be introduced from the outside. Whether Tibet was to be cured by the restoration of true Buddhism or by conversion to Christianity, the cure seemed to be in the possession of the West, and the colonization of Tibet was considered by some to be the best means of its administration. By defining Tibetan Buddhism as something apart, as disconnected from the other Buddhisms of Asia, all of which were under the sway of the West by the end of the nineteenth century, it was easier to portray Tibet as entirely other and hence incapable of its own representation.

These nineteenth-century denotations of Lamaism are succinctly captured, under the more archaic "Lamanism," in the current *Oxford English Dictionary*:

+ **lamanism.** *Obs.* [After F. *lamanisme* (Hue).] = LAMAISM. **So la'manical**

**a.** = LAMAIC

1852 *Blackw. Mag.* LXXI. 339 The Tibetan portion ... is inhabited by a rough race, . . . retaining many primitive superstitions beneath the engrafted Lamanism. 1867 M. JONES *Hue's Tartary* 243 The foundation of the lamanical hierarchy, framed in imitation of the pontifical court. *Ibid.* 252 It is with this view [of enfeebling the strength of the Mongol princes] as that the Emperors patronise lamanism.

In the 1852 reference Lamaism is not native to Tibet but had at some point been "engrafted" to the primitive superstitions of the people living in the Tibetan region of another country. In the first 1867 reference the Lamaist church is a copy of the original Roman Catholic hierarchy. And in the third reference, which is reminiscent of Qianlong's declaration, there is a disavowal of allegiance; the Chinese emperor's support has been a pretense. In all three references, none of which mentions "Buddhism," Lamaism is portrayed as somehow inauthentic, with that inauthenticity determined in relation to what is more original and more

real: in the first reference, Lamaism is an appendage of Tibetan superstition; in the second it is a late copy of an original; in the third it is the object of the pretense of realpolitik.

As is the case with so many of the "isms" in the study of religion, those designated by the term come to use it only when they enter into the fray of defining their "lost culture" and are confronted by the definitions of the West, definitions created by competing ideologies of authenticity. As stated at the outset, there is no term in the Tibetan language for "Lamaism"; Tibetans refer to their religion as the "Buddhist religion" (*songs rgyas pa'i chos*) or, more commonly, "the religion of the insiders" (*nang pa'i chos*). The use of the term "Lamaism" has been condemned by the spokesman for Tibetan culture, whose own name recalls the circumstances of its coinage, the current Dalai Lama. His first book on Tibetan Buddhism, published in 1963 and composed in part for foreign consumption, concludes:

Some people say that the religion of Tibet is "Lamaism" (literally, "religion of lamas," *bia má 'i chos*), as if it were a religion not taught by the Buddha, but this is not so. The original author of the sutras and tantras that are the root source of all schools of Tibetan Buddhism is the teacher Śākyamuni, Buddha.... Tibetan lamas took these as the basis and root and then listened to them, contemplated them, and meditated upon them; among the main points they did not fabricate a single doctrine that does not accord with [the teachings of the Buddha].<sup>75</sup>

Here we see the rhetoric of authenticity again at work, upholding (in opposition to the claims of Victorian scholars) the fidelity of Tibetan Buddhism to the teachings of the Buddha and the Indian masters and therefore minimizing Tibetan contributions to the development of Tibetan Buddhism. The response to "Lamaism" by Tibetans has not been unambiguous, however. The first Tibetan Buddhist monastery in the United States, founded in 1955 by the Mongolian monk Geshe Wangyal in Freewood Acres, New Jersey, took as its name the Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America.<sup>76</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, in the years following Tibet's invasion and annexation by China, the earlier Buddhological valuation of Tibetan Buddhism (sometimes still called Lamaism) as degenerate reached its antipodes, as young scholars came to exalt Tibet as a pristine preserve of authentic Buddhist doctrine and practice. Unlike the Buddhisms of China, Japan, and Southeast Asia, Tibetan Buddhism had not been tainted by Western domination. Tibet was no longer valuable to scholars of Buddhism only as an archive of the scriptures of Indian Buddhism, long lost in the original Sanskrit but preserved in a highly accurate Tibetan translation.<sup>77</sup> The Tibetan diaspora that followed the Dalai Lama's flight to India in 1959

brought with it a great flood of autochthonous Tibetan Buddhist literature, heretofore unstudied, that, largely through the efforts of the Library of Congress office in New Delhi, was made available to the universities of Europe and North America. Scorned by Waddell at the end of the last century as "contemptible mummery," this literature was now hailed by Orientalists of a new age, both professional and amateur, as a repository of ancient wisdom whose lineage, as the Dalai Lama himself claimed, could be traced back to the Buddha himself.<sup>78</sup> The comparisons with Catholicism continued, but with Tibetan Buddhism now being valued as the truer faith, the Dalai Lama was the better pope. Typically avant garde, Artaud wrote in his 1925 "Address to the Dalai Lama," "We are surrounded by bellowing popes, poetasters, critics, dogs, our Mind is gone to the dogs who think directly in terms of the earth, who think incorrigibly in the present. . . . For you well know what transparent liberation of souls, what freedom of Mind in the Mind we mean, O acceptable Pope, O true Pope of the Mind."<sup>79</sup>

What is the site of Lamaism in the late twentieth century, decades after the Orientalists used Lamaism for the rhetorical subjugation of Tibet in anticipation of its colonial subjugation? "Lamaism" is still used as a subject heading by the Library of Congress. It also retains currency among art historians. Pratapaditya Pal, regarded as the leading Western authority on Tibetan art, wrote in 1969, "The word lama is generally used in Tibet to designate a Buddhist monk [in fact, only a tiny percentage of the monks in Tibet were referred to as lamas]; and since in Tibet the monks ultimately controlled both the temporal and spiritual life of the people, *Lamaism* is particularly apposite to define that form of Buddhism that developed in Tibet."<sup>80</sup> The Victorian view of Lamaism as a mixture of Buddhist elements from India and primitive Tibetan animism persists. In 1991 the Asian art historian Sherman Lee defined the Sanskrit term *vajrayana*, used in India long before Buddhism was introduced into Tibet, as "Tantric Buddhism with an admixture of pre-Buddhist Tibetan 'Bon' worship of nature deities and demons."<sup>81</sup>

The following definition appeared in the free brochure dispensed to the public at the "Circa 1492" exhibition: "Lamaism was a combination of the esoteric Buddhism of India, China, and Japan with native cults of the Himalayas."<sup>82</sup> Among the many observations that might be made about this sentence, it is initially noteworthy that the verb is in the past tense, that Lamaism and hence its substitute Tibetan Buddhism no longer exist but inhabit a static past. Beyond the tense of the verb, there is little to suggest that this sentence was not composed a century ago. There are the same subtle differentiations from true Buddhism: Lamaism is not Buddhism or even esoteric Buddhism (a "late development"), but a

combination of various forms of esoteric Buddhism with native cults. (The Victorian scholars would have corrected the erroneous attribution of any Japanese influence on Tibetan Buddhism.) Lamaism is thus a hybrid, a mixture, a concoction of outside influences and native primitivism. It therefore follows that the signifier "Tibet" should occur nowhere in the definition.

Although the power of representation did not lead to Western political domination of Tibet, that power has been appropriated by China, which was finally able to bring Tibet under colonial dominion in a process that began with the invasion by its People's Liberation Army in 1950. The rhetorical trajectory that began when *lama jiao* became Lamaism has thus come full circle, as Lamaism, invested with two centuries of Orientalist discourse, has once again become *lama jiao* and been returned to the Orientals. This is not to suggest that the Chinese do not have their own long history of denigrating Tibetan culture. Yet the term that had been coined during the Qing, and used to isolate Tibet from Chinese culture, is now used to dissolve it into the motherland. In post-1959 Chinese publications on Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism is easily subsumed under the critique of Buddhism and religion in general and condemned for its suppression of the masses. Nonetheless, the Western representation of Tibetan Buddhism as Lamaism, a corruption of original Buddhism, has been appropriated by the Chinese to justify to the West the invasion and colonization of Tibet. In 1964 the only Westerners allowed to visit Tibet were apologists for the Chinese Communist Party. In a 1964 travelogue, *The Timely Rain: Travels in New Tibet*, Stuart and Roma Gelder resuscitated the Victorian rhetoric of Lamaism to defend the Chinese destruction of Buddhist institutions in Tibet: "The rich spiritual inheritance which, according to some who fear Communism more than they understand Tibetan Buddhism, is being destroyed by the Chinese, was in fact not there to be destroyed. It existed only in the imaginations of those who mistook the mechanical observance of ritual and religious custom for spiritual experience."<sup>83</sup>

The abstract noun, coined in the West, has become naturalized as if it were an empirical object, the manipulation of which has effects beyond the realm of rhetoric. Eventually, Lamaism becomes so particular, so different, so often described as not this and not that, that it becomes unbound and starts to float freely, like "Zen" or "mysticism." In the process the "original" site of Lamaism, Tibet, loses its boundaries and is declared missing, dissolving into the People's Republic of China. As an Australian missionary to Tibet observed earlier in the century in *The Land of Mystery, Tibet*, "Tibetan national existence and Lamaism are one and the same thing."<sup>84</sup> Tibet, unexplored and uncolonized by the European, is absorbed into China. The very use of the term Lamaism is a gesture of control over the unincorporated and

the unassimilated, used first by the Qing over Tibet, then as a code word for "Papism" by the British over Catholic Ireland and Europe, and finally by European Buddhology over the uncolonized and unread Tibet. Long the blank spot on the map marked only by the word "Thibet," the contours have now been drawn, the rivers traced to their sources, the mountains measured, only to have the borderlines, and the name "Tibet," effaced; Even among the partisans of the Tibetan cause, the focus remains largely on the unsited, on the ethereal and transhistorical, on Tibetan religion as the sole legacy, even the irreducible essence, of Tibetan culture. There is not now and never was Tibet, there was only Lamaism. The term used to mark off Tibet remains; Tibet is nowhere to be found.

Tibetans are said to believe that if the *la*, the soul, leaves the body, the person becomes unbalanced or insane. With the formation of lama from *la*, the original meaning of a left lama, causing a loss of equilibrium that resulted finally in "Lamaism." My purpose here has been to attempt a belated ritual of "calling the *la*" back to its lost abode.