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The Journey of an Image: the Western Perception of Tibet

Diana Martinez

University of Texas at El Paso, diana@miners.utep.edu

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THE JOURNEY OF AN IMAGE: THE WESTERN PERCEPTION OF
TIBET
FROM 1900-1950

Diana Martinez
Department of History

APPROVED:

Paul Edison, Ph.D., Chair

Carl T. Jackson, Ph.D.

Thomas H. Schmid, Ph.D.

Patricia D. Witherspoon, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

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THE JOURNEY OF AN IMAGE: THE WESTERN PERCEPTION OF
TIBET
FROM 1900-1950

by

Diana Martinez, B. A.

THESIS

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The Journey of an Image: The Western Perception of Tibet from 1900-1950

During a conversation at the Chenrezig Tibetan Buddhist Cultural Center in my home city of El Paso, Texas, an older couple responded with surprise when I mentioned that travelers once perceived Tibetans as dirty and savage. Their reaction was in fact a result of the modern image of Tibet and its people. Today there is an idealized image of Tibetans as a tranquil, civilized people. Our contemporary image of Tibet usually includes a monk clad in red robes meditating in eternal peace. The following analysis will focus on Western travelers' accounts of Tibet in the years from 1900 to 1950, a period during which Tibetans went from being demons to saints. This does not mean that the Tibetan people changed suddenly in the scope of fifty years from savages to civilized beings. What had changed were the travelers' choices in what they decided to record in their travel accounts. The earlier biased images of Tibet and its people as barbaric and the more recent romantic ideal are both deceptive. However, even though this study concerns subjective and often distorted Western perceptions of Tibet, it assumes that there must be some real basis for these interpretations. The images of Tibet and Tibetans were dependant on what the travelers perceived and how they interpreted what they saw. Furthermore, what they saw and how they interpreted what they saw were influenced by the political context of relations between Tibet and Western nations at the time when the adventurers traveled.

Historical realities were obscured when travelers overemphasized, ignored, or underplayed certain images and characteristics, whether they were positive or negative. In the past, negative images of Tibet have been used by both the British and Chinese

governments to justify the invasion and occupation of Tibet. By depicting Tibet as technologically backwards and as a draconian oligarchy, Britain and China furthered their claim to liberate Tibet's peasants from the ruling class and large estate holders.

Originally, beginning at the turn of the century, British officials were interested in converting Tibet into an industrial, modern society. However, they changed their view of Tibet by 1924, as they began using Tibet as a means to keep China at a distance from India's northern border. Similarly, China used a negative image of Tibet to justify its invasion in 1949 to 1950.

By idealizing Tibetans, observers overlooked the faults that all humans reveal. Similarly, the romantic image of Tibet overlooked the divisions and fragmentation among Tibetans that kept them from modernizing their military. Donald S. Lopez, a professor of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies at the University of Michigan, has made the very important point that the West's perception of Tibet as a victim at the hands of the Communist Chinese served as a means of demonizing the Chinese; he also notes that demonizing China is not a viable means to promote Tibetan independence.¹ Idealizing a people does not necessarily equate with respect. Those who do the idealizing are attached to the ideal image, not the multi-dimensional people with imperfections, faults, and beauty.

This study is based on Western travelers' published accounts of their journeys and impressions of Tibet between 1900 and 1950. A large portion of the travelers came from Great Britain, due to British imperial rule of India until 1947 and Britain's extended diplomatic relations with Tibet. Travelers in this study also came from Sweden, France, the United States, Italy, and Austria. The travelers included geographers, biologists, and

¹ Peter Bishop, *Dreams of Power: Tibetan Buddhism and the Western Imagination* (London: Athlone Press, 1993), 17.

anthropologists as well as diplomats, religious seekers, journalists, military officers, businessmen, world travelers, and mountaineers. I have attempted to draw on sources representing a cross section of nationalities and professional backgrounds.

Using Western travel accounts as a source offers an opportunity to examine the relationship and tension between the Western claim of objective observation and subjective images of the “other.” The travelers who journeyed to Tibet for scientific research expressed their faith in empirical observation. Travel accounts generally projected a sense of hard reality because of their emphasis on concrete details and objective observation; the focus on the empirical approach gave credibility to their biased images for their reading audience.²

When Tibet refused to enter into diplomacy with Britain earlier in the century, causing the British to invade in 1904, the Western perception of Tibet echoed the negative perceptions of the nineteenth century. Not coincidentally, this is when Westerners claimed to follow the empirical approach to their travelogues, and devoted many pages to lists of scientific tools and descriptions of scientific endeavors. However, the image of Tibet improved once the Tibetan government became more receptive to pursuing diplomacy with the West. When the Qing dynasty fell in 1908, the thirteenth Dalai Lama stopped contacting Chinese officials to resolve a border and taxation dispute between the Tibetan eastern provinces and China. Instead, Tibet turned to Britain to receive help against Chinese aggression. Even though the thirteenth Dalai Lama and Charles Bell established amicable relations between their respective countries from 1909 to 1913, the Western perception of Tibet did not change for almost a decade. It was not

² Thierry Dodin and Heinz Rather, *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections, and Fantasies* (Boston: Wisdom Press, 2001), 7, 11.

until 1924 when Montgomery William McGovern published a scathing account of Tibetan culture that the British Foreign Office began censoring the Westerners' travelogues in order to produce a positive image of Tibet. After 1924 the Western view of Tibet was not pristine. However, as the threat of Chinese invasion increased, Western perceptions of Tibet in travelogues became more appreciative of Tibetan culture.

After World War I, Western travelers' disillusionment with modernity and Western culture also came to inform their views of Tibet. Some travelers still discussed the need for technical development in Tibet, but that was not the only yard stick that they used to measure the worth of Tibetan culture; they also appealed to warm emotion to describe the Tibetan character and Tibetan cultural achievements. In so doing, they reflected anti-modern sentiments by associating modernity with stress, alienation, commercialism, and violence. Many Europeans and Americans were disillusioned with the idea that science and technology were going to improve humanity.³ Tibet was seen as a refuge of peace that held the secret solutions for the chaotic Western world that was in turmoil.

There was, therefore, an inverse relationship between the image that travelers had of themselves and the image they had of Tibetans. At the turn of the century, the travelers thought of themselves as the virtuous epitome of civilization especially compared to supposedly licentious and heathen Tibetans. However, from 1920's onward, this relationship began to turn upside down. More idealized images of Tibetans appeared because the travelers were influenced by changes in the diplomatic relations between Western countries and Tibet and the aftermath of world war.

³ Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

Before Tibetan studies gained popularity in academia in the 1990s, numerous scholars examined travel writing and the imperialists' perceptions of subaltern people. The method of analyzing Western perceptions of "the other" has been applied to many regions of the world; this established genre has also been utilized by scholars who study Tibet.⁴ However, most recent scholars who have dealt with the Western image of Asia and Asian culture are influenced by or they are reacting to the work of Edward W. Said. Said's *Orientalism* is a seminal work on the Western perception of Asia. Focusing primarily on the Middle East and Islam, he argues that Orientalism-the academic study of Asia by the West- has been an accomplice to imperial domination over the Arab world, rationalized by a myriad of images that the West created of Middle Eastern people. Said argues that Orientalism constructs an inferior image of the "Orient" in relation to the West, and that nineteenth-century Orientalists created a stereotypical, negative image of

⁴ S. B. Cook, *Colonial Encounters in the Age of High Imperialism*, (New York: Harper Collins College Publishing, 1986); Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Harper Perenneial,1992); Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). There is also a wide range of books that address the Western perception of Asian cultures, and that therefore provide a useful comparison with images of Tibet. For example, Ian Littlewood shows that Westerners emphasized images of the Japanese as feminine and imitative as opposed to masculine and original through popular culture in the latter half of the twentieth century. Ian Littlewood, *The Idea of Japan: Western Images, Western Myths* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996).

There have also been studies on the influence of Asian thought and religions in the United States and Europe. Carl Jackson is a pioneer in this scholarship. *The Oriental Religions and American Thought* explores the American interest in Buddhism and Hinduism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He also examines the arrival and proliferation of the Ramakrishna movement in the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in his second book, *Vedanta for the West*. J.J. Clarke also focuses on Asia's influence on Western thinkers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Jack Goody argues that cultural and economic similarities between the East and the West, and that scholars ought to focus on the common heritage between these regions rather than on the differences. Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), ix; Idem., *Vedanta for the West: The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), xii, 55; J.J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (New York: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 11; Jack Goody, *The East in the West* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 55, 226.

Arabs, or an essence of Arab culture.⁵ He insists that Orientalism cannot be considered an innocent scholarly endeavor because it “can never be detached from the general imperial context.”⁶ In my view, however, his statements about Orientalism and Western scholars as the accomplice of imperialism are not always true. As a concept Orientalism is too broad to adequately describe a heterogeneous group of researchers, or the many regions, and cultures of Asia. It could be argued that his analysis of the Western image of the “Orient” does not apply to all fields of Orientalism. Said’s question is central to the debate: “Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation (when one discusses one’s own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the ‘other’)?”⁷ Even though Orientalism often glorified the West and soiled the image of Asian societies, it did not always result in a negative image of all Asians. My research revealed that Western imperialists used Orientalism as a tool to create a negative image of Tibet and Tibetans from the late nineteenth century until 1924, but that the British imperialist agenda to protect its Northern Indian border led to a positive image of Tibet after 1924.

Orientalism remains a path-breaking critique of the negative images that resulted from Orientalist research, and has inspired later scholars to look for culturally sensitive models of research. Said clearly inspired many female and non-European thinkers and artists in the 1980’s who created revisionist attitudes toward history and culture.⁸ Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* offers

⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 333.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 325.

⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 350.

an example of such revisionist attitudes that are indebted to *Orientalism*. She states that researchers should be concerned with the autonomy, the philosophy, and principles of subaltern peoples.⁹

Mary Louise Pratt also writes about how Western travelers perceived themselves and “otherness” through travel writing. Her work focuses on the Western perception of Latin Americans and Africans rather than Asians, and how Western adventurers wrote their travel literature. She uncovers the influence of international scientific expeditions and Karl von Linné’s biological or Linnaean classification system on travel literature’s themes and on Westerners’ perceptions of themselves and “the other.”¹⁰ Pratt argues that travel literature influenced Europeans to feel superior to and entitled to subjugate other nations.¹¹ She identifies recurring tropes in travel literature such as the “anti-conquest” and the “anti-hero,” whereby European travelers depicted themselves as innocent and vulnerable. She explained that such travelers sanitized their roles in European expansion by portraying themselves as merely passive and disinterested observers of land and mineral wealth.¹² Pratt’s argument reaffirms Edward Said’s idea that Western constructs of “otherness” can never escape from imperialism. She validates another of Said’s claims that Westerners are not capable of understanding “the other” without viewing “the other”

⁹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books Limited, 1999; reprint, New York: Zed Books Limited, 2004), 185.

¹⁰ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹² *Ibid.*, 77.

as inferior.¹³ She argues that her sources used parodies to maintain the power relations between European travelers and West Africans, and thereby reinforce the imperialist ideology of racial hierarchy.¹⁴ Some of Pratt's sources are from European travelers who were sponsored by institutions that wanted to investigate the viability of colonial development in Africa and Latin America. For example, the African Association financed scientists to document and record the raw materials of Africa.¹⁵ On the other hand, she also investigates anti-colonial literature and forms of knowledge that were a response to imperialist power and knowledge by subaltern people.

Most books that concern the image of Tibet examine the image that resulted from the diaspora of Tibetans after 1950, and emphasize how the view of Tibet has been stable over time rather than dynamic. Aside from the authors who analyze the image of Tibet, there are also a variety of works that offer a narrative history of explorers who entered Tibet and that rely on Western travel accounts as objective information.¹⁶ Focusing on the image of Tibet after 1950, Donald S. Lopez's *Prisoners of Shangri-La* explains how Tibetans and Tibetologists became trapped in an ideal image of Tibet. Lopez stated that his book,

...does not set out to apportion praise and blame. Neither is its purpose to distinguish good Tibetology from bad, to separate fact from fiction, or the

¹³ She cites an example of a Westerner who portrayed Africans in a more positive light. However, her analysis reveals that this attempt to portray Africans positively still resulted in an adverse image of Africans.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 80-82.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁶ Peter Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa: The First Full Account of the British Invasion of Tibet in 1904* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961); John McGregor, *Tibet a Chronicle of Exploration* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970); George Woodcock, *Into Tibet: The Early British Explorers* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1971); Lee Feign, *Demystifying Tibet: Unlocking Secrets of the Land* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996).

scholarly from the popular, but to show their confluence. The question considered is not how knowledge is tainted but how knowledge takes form. The book then is an exploration of some of the mirror-lined cultural labyrinths that have been created by Tibetans, Tibetophiles, and Tibetologists, labyrinths that the scholar may map but in which the scholar also must wander.¹⁷

He also shows how Tibetans in the recent diaspora encouraged the Western idealized image of themselves to further their goal of Tibetan independence from China.¹⁸ Lopez explained that the West simultaneously appropriated and idealized Tibetan culture. For example, Tibetan art has been filtered through the lens of connoisseurs, scholars, and Buddhists. Where connoisseurs view Tibetan art as a commodity, scholars view it as an artifact, and Buddhists view it as an object of veneration.¹⁹ He includes some of the travelers discussed in this paper such as Charles Bell, but does not give them an in-depth analysis. His argument that the West has idealized Tibet in order to demonize China as a cruel Communist country is a premise central to my research.²⁰ However, with Alex McKay, I notice that this contrast between Tibet and China goes as far back as 1924.²¹

Donald S. Lopez is not the only academic to examine the image of Tibet and Tibetans. In *Dreams of Power*, Peter Bishop addresses the Western fantasies of Tibet after 1950 and provides examples of how far back some of those fantasies go. He examines the Western appropriation of Tibetan Buddhism from 1950 until the present

¹⁷ Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10, 11, 200.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 154-155.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

²¹ Alex C. McKay, "'Truth,' Perception, and Politics: the British Construction of an Image of Tibet," in *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections, and Fantasies*, ed. Thierry Dodin and Heinz Rather (Boston, Wisdom Publications, 2001), 79.

and the consequences of that appropriation for Tibetan Buddhist traditions.²² According to Bishop, Western intellectuals viewed Tibetan Buddhism as the cure to the problems of the West.²³ He also argues that travel accounts were received as pure objective fact by their audiences since such accounts dwelled on concrete physical items such as towns, food, and routes.²⁴ However, he emphasizes that the accounts were in reality subjective in meaning rather than the product of empirical observation, revealing the imagination of the traveler.²⁵ He argues that contemporary Western followers of Buddhism idealize Tibet to the point that they turn a blind eye to the darker, more exotic components of Tibetan Buddhist history and ritual.²⁶

Bishop also uses travel accounts to examine how Tibet has been fashioned into a sacred place in *The Myth of Shangri-La: Travel Writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscapes*.²⁷ Drawing on travel documents from 1773-1959 as examples of fantasy making, he includes not just travelers who entered Tibet, but also accounts by people in Central Asia around Tibet's border region. He recognizes that Western images of Tibet were colored by influences from the West such as Victorian attitudes towards religion, class, and sexuality.²⁸ This premise that Westerners' perceptions of Tibet were

²² Peter Bishop, *Dreams of Power*, 17.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 25, 28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 46-47, 94.

²⁷ Peter Bishop, *The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel Writing, and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), vii.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, vii, 12.

influenced by their own society is central to my own argument and in the work of other scholars such as Alex C. McKay.²⁹

While some scholars focus their studies several hundred years back, Orville Schell is primarily concerned with the West's recent fascination with Tibetan culture and history. His work, *Virtual Tibet: Searching for Shangri-La from the Himalayas to Hollywood*, includes some travelers who went to Tibet before 1950; however, most of his analysis is dedicated to how the Western media has manufactured an ideal Tibet for mass consumption. He explains that Hollywood became a factory that produced a global fantasy of Tibet through films. This idealized fantasy of Tibet penetrated websites, books, newspapers, benefit speeches, celebrity cocktail parties, meditation retreats, and benefit concerts.³⁰ He also examines Hollywood's reproductions of Tibet's political and cultural history in the medium of films such as *Seven Years in Tibet*. Schell contrasts Tibet as another "ugly socialist urban blight" to the fantasy of Tibet as a utopia.

The articles in Thierry Dodin and Heinz Rather's *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections, and Fantasies* provide a sophisticated analysis of the images of Tibet. This excellent work offers a variety of angles on Tibet's image by a wide range of scholars. For me the article that proved most valuable was Alex McKay's "Truth, Perception, and Politics: the British Construction of an Image of Tibet."³¹ McKay argues that three factors particularly influenced the positive image of Tibet, namely truth, individual

²⁹ McKay, "'Truth,' Perceptions, and Politics," 67-86.

³⁰ Orville Schell, *Virtual Tibet: Searching for Shangri-La from the Himalayas to Hollywood* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 31-35.

³¹ Alex C. McKay, "'Truth,' Perception, and Politics: the British Construction of an Image of Tibet," in *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections, and Fantasies*, ed. Thierry Dodin and Heinz Rather (Boston, Wisdom Publications, 2001), 67.

perception, and international politics.³² The section on truth describes how the British officials' earnest quest for empirical knowledge led them to accurate records despite their selective training and education.³³ When it came to individual perception McKay commented:

Yet although the cadre of officers generally sought to present a true picture of Tibet, their own inherent perceptions naturally affected their reports. These officers had passed through a process of education, training, and selection that produced individuals with a particular character and perspective.³⁴

International politics influenced the British to regulate the passage of Europeans traveling into Tibet as well as to censure travel writing coming out of Tibet in order to eliminate any competing Western images of Tibet.³⁵ His discussion makes clear that censorship is crucial to understanding the change of tone towards Tibet after 1924.

My argument differs from those scholars who focus only on the negative images that were created by the West. I address both the negative and positive images of Tibet, even when they co-exist, as they did after 1924. Claims that Orientalism is entirely innocent or that it has been the right hand of imperialism may both be rejected because both claims are absolute. Some Westerners who studied Asia produced an elevated image of the "other"; but that elevated image was created for multiple objectives including the British imperialist intention to expand its sphere of influence. Moreover, their influence in Tibet did not go unopposed by anti-British factions. Usually scholars who study the perception of Tibet organize their analysis according to the viewers'

³² Ibid., 71.

³³ Ibid., 72.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 75.

profession-- academics, bureaucrats, or scientists. By contrast, I approach Western perceptions of Tibet by time period rather than by the professional or national backgrounds of the various travelers. As I see it, views of Tibet from 1900 to 1950 can be divided into two periods each one demonstrating a consistency of perceptions among travelers: before and after 1924. My focus is on Western travelers who had been to Tibet rather than Western accounts that were informed by what Said referred to as textual knowledge. Textual knowledge can only provide limited knowledge through books about Asia rather than a firsthand experience of the complexities of an Asian region.³⁶

The first part of my research largely supports Said's argument because in the period before 1924 travelers consistently shared similar negative images despite their different nationalities and backgrounds. My analysis of the years since 1924 does not fit either Said's or McKay's view, but falls somewhere in an ambiguous middle area. McKay suggests that travelers were not allowed to publish any kind of critique of Tibetan culture from 1905 until 1947, and as a result all the images were completely positive.³⁷ By contrast, I show that Western travelers did not create a unilaterally positive image of Tibet after 1924 but offered a critique of Tibetan culture as well.

My study is divided into three sections. The first section provides a chronological overview and emphasizes the influence of geopolitics and diplomacy on the image of Tibet. It seeks to place when Western travelers journeyed to Tibet, to ascertain their professional backgrounds, and to provide information on the political relationship between Tibet and Western countries. The following two sections analyze the images of

³⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, 93.

³⁷ McKay, "'Truth,' Perceptions, and Politics," 74.

Tibet and Tibetans that the travelers created. The second section will focus on Western travelers from the turn-of-the-century until 1924. The third section spans the years from 1924 until 1950. After 1924 the British began to monitor travelers going into Tibet and censure their written material.³⁸ Travelers during this period approached Tibet from a more sympathetic and idealistic perspective than their predecessors, and combined the newer, more positive and the older negative images of Tibet. Section three ends with the year 1950, after the Chinese invasion. From this date, Tibet and Britain no longer had control over who came into the country since the People's Republic of China controlled all access to the country. Since 1950, Westerners' perceptions have been dominated by Tibetans in the diaspora.

³⁸ Ibid., 67-90.

Section 1

Chronology of Tibetan Diplomacy and Western Travelers in Tibet

A brief chronology of larger world events and the political context in which Western travelers journeyed to Tibet is imperative to understanding the depictions of Tibetans in the Western travel literature. In the years since 1900, Tibet played a balancing act between competing imperial interests to maintain its sovereignty. Tibet's problem was that it was an independent state geographically surrounded by British India, Russia, and China who all had competing interests in Tibet. Russia was located nearby to the northwest of Tibet, and China's Sichuan province bordered Tibet on its eastern provinces of Kham and Amdo. In the nineteenth century, Britain had established its presence in India just south of Tibet. By 1904, the British feared that the Russians would use Tibet as a base to invade northern India. After 1909 the British fears shifted from a Russian invasion to a Chinese invasion. The British policy aimed at establishing trade and political influence in Tibet in order to create a buffer against Chinese penetration into Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, and India. Motivated to protect their sphere of imperial influence, Britain attempted to convince Russia that China had suzerainty over Tibet because Britain feared that the Russians would use Tibet as a base to invade northern India.

The claim for China's suzerainty over Tibet began with Sino-Tibetan relations between the Manchu dynasty and the fifth Dalai Lama. Because the Dalai Lama was the spiritual leader for the Mongolians, China wanted to influence the Dalai Lama as a means of having influence over their Mongolian neighbors. The Manchu emperor, Shun-Chih, requested that the fifth Dalai Lama placate Mongolians because they were raiding

Chinese border towns in 1662.³⁹ In 1720, several years after the seventh Dalai Lama had been deposed, the Manchu Emperor K'ang-hsi helped protect and reinstate the seventh Dalai Lama on his throne in Lhasa.⁴⁰ In order to reinstate the seventh Dalai Lama, the Manchu emperor established a provisional military government that was retracted in 1723.⁴¹ From the time the Manchu emperors became militarily involved in supporting the Dalai Lamas, China had repeatedly tried to control Tibet as a province. China attempted to administer and tax Tibet, but the Tibetan government refused to be directed by Chinese administrators. Tibet acted as a sovereign nation, but recognized a priest-patron relationship with China's Manchu rulers. Under the priest-patron relationship the Dalai Lamas served as spiritual advisors for the Chinese emperors and the emperors gave Tibet military support against invasion.⁴² When the Qing Empress Cixi died in 1908, the thirteenth Dalai Lama no longer recognized any obligation to pursue friendly diplomacy with China.

Conversely, Tibetan and British foreign relations started off poorly, but would improve by 1909. In the course of settling border disputes, employing spies, and disconnecting Tibet's influence from its neighbors the British were also successful at creating a negative imprint on the minds of Tibetan officials. At first British officials had imposed divisive foreign policies upon the Himalayan countries, policies that affected the Tibetan view of British intentions and in turn contributed to a poor Western perception of

³⁹ Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 119.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴² *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion*, prod. Mario Florio, Victoria Mudd, Tom Peosay, Sue Peosay, dir. by Tom Peosay, 140 min., Earth works Films, 2003, DVD.

Tibet. In view of restrictions that Britain had established on Sikkim's relations with Tibet, it was surprising that George Nathaniel Curzon was offended by the thirteenth Dalai Lama's refusal to accept his correspondence in 1901.⁴³ After Britain gained control over Sikkim in the 1860's, it sought to cut Tibet off from its traditional relations with Sikkim and Bhutan.⁴⁴ Tibet had a longstanding relationship with its southern neighbors due to marriages between aristocrats, similar cultural backgrounds, and shared worldviews as Buddhist nations. At one point, Bhutanese officials invited Tibetan officials in 1885 to mediate a dispute between rival parties because of their shared cultural understanding. However, according to the British government, Tibet was not supposed to interact with British protectorates on their border because the Bhutanese government had agreed in 1860 not to politically associate with Tibet in order to keep the British from occupying and developing their country.⁴⁵ Also in 1885, Sikkim's ruler rejected a customary meeting with a Tibetan official because of the pressure from the British. The British had forced the eldest son of Sikkim's ruling family to sign an agreement not to allow Tibetan involvement in Sikkim, or the British would continue to occupy six districts in Sikkim including Darjeeling.⁴⁶ In the first example Tibet and Bhutan tried to maintain their traditional diplomacy and relationship despite British policies. The second example revealed that British influence over Sikkim was more powerful and divisive than its influence over Bhutan's relationship with Tibet.

⁴³ Charles Alfred Bell, *Tibet Past and Present* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1924; reprint, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 56; Thomas Laird, *The History of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama* (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 216.

⁴⁴ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 197.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 196-198.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

In addition to a foreign policy meant to encourage divisions with its nearby neighbors, British espionage and border incursions threatened Tibetan sovereignty and friendly exchanges with their southern neighbors. In 1885 the Tibetan forces were defeated by the armed force of the Macaulay Mission over a border dispute that began in 1875.⁴⁷ The Tibetans became aware of British spies when they discovered that Sarat Chandra Das had posed as a Buddhist student in order to transmit data to the British on Tibetan geography from 1879-1883.⁴⁸ The Macaulay Mission, Chandra Das's deception, and the information he transmitted made the Tibetan government distrustful about British intentions. According to historian Tsepon Shakabpa, when the Tibetans refused to abandon their newly built checkpoints that faced India, the British invaded in 1888 and took over those checkpoints.⁴⁹ This intervention confirmed for the Tibetans that the British intended to encroach on their territory rather than use diplomacy to settle border disputes. Later in 1890 and 1893 British officials made treaties with China concerning Tibet's boundary with Sikkim and trading goods in Yatung without consulting the Tibetan government.⁵⁰ This gave the impression that Britain recognized China's suzerainty over Tibet. The Tibetan government viewed this as an affront to their sovereignty, which furthered their isolationist stance toward the British and other Western nations.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 197; Bell, *Past and Present*, 59-60.

⁴⁸ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 193.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 199-200.

⁵⁰ Bell, *Past and Present*, 61; Laird, *History of Tibet*, 216; Ibid., 202-203. Bell does not mention what was traded through Yatung, but more than likely it was wool and salt in exchange for grains.

After tensions had arisen between Britain and Tibet, it is not surprising that British explorer Henry Savage Landor did not receive a warm welcome when he crossed the Tibetan border in 1897. Landor's ambition was to collect geographical data, especially in Lhasa.⁵¹ Tibet became more intent on enforcing its sovereignty after its confrontations with British officials and the ascendancy of the thirteenth Dalai Lama as the sovereign ruler 1895.⁵² Naturally, the Tibetan government was going to be more aggressive in its border policy to assert the political power of their new leader. Landor clandestinely entered the country with ammunition, and was arrested by the Tibetan government.⁵³ It may have been common for people to travel in Tibet in the 1890's armed with weapons; however, the armed entry of a foreigner into the country without permission would have appeared suspicious to any government. His clandestine journey led to a violent confrontation and arrest. Landor claimed that he was tortured during his detention.⁵⁴ He cited this experience to emphasize how cruel and draconian the Tibetan government was, but did not indicate that their reaction was a result of his own actions or the previous border incursions by his own government.

The end of the nineteenth century marked a turning point in Tibetan and British relations, which became increasingly antagonistic. As George Curzon, the viceroy of India, sought direct contact with the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan government pushed for diplomatic relations with Russia to assert their sovereignty. Advised by Chinese

⁵¹ Henry Savage Landor, *An Explorer's Adventures in Tibet: A Lonely Foreign Traveler Penetrates the Forbidden Land and Attempts to Reach the Province of Lhasa 1897Epic* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1899), 1: preface, 2.

⁵² Shakabpa, *Political History*, 195.

⁵³ Landor, *Explorer's Adventures*, 2: 184, 198-199, 211-216.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 211-216.

diplomats, the thirteenth Dalai Lama returned correspondence unopened from Curzon in 1900 and 1901.⁵⁵ The Dalai Lama's action was not only an affront to Curzon's pride and the image of Britain's imperial authority; it also pushed the Viceroy to question the security of British power in Asia. Curzon became apprehensive that Russia planned to use Tibet as a base to invade India, especially after Dorjiev, a Buddhist Buryat and trusted political advisor to the Dalai Lama, went on a diplomatic mission to Russia.⁵⁶ Dorjiev's mission solidified Curzon's suspicions concerning Russian ambition to establish a sphere of influence over Tibet.⁵⁷ In 1903 Curzon decided to invade Tibet as a means of protecting India's northern border from a Russian invasion as well as indicating British displeasure with the Tibetan government's refusal to abide by treaty agreements that Britain had made with China on behalf of Tibet.⁵⁸ He finally realized that the Tibetan government was not going to subordinate its sovereignty to China, and that Tibetan leaders would have to be dealt with directly.

Even though the Tibetans did not welcome the British invasion in 1904, the event proved to be the first step in establishing diplomacy with a force that could offset China's desire to control Tibet. Tibetans believed that the British claim that the 1904 invasion was intended to enforce trade agreements was actually a pretext to invade and to destroy Buddhism in Tibet.⁵⁹ British military leaders established an ideal image of themselves

⁵⁵ Bell, *Past and Present*, 56; Laird, *History of Tibet*, 216.

⁵⁶ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 221, 223. Dorjiev was born in the Buryat tribe of Mongols in what is known today as the Russian Republic of Buryatiya.

⁵⁷ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 223; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 196.

⁵⁸ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 203.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

and an inferior image of Tibetan society as cruel, dirty, and tyrannical. Perceval Landon, who served under the command of Colonel Francis E. Younghusband, offered one such portrayal.⁶⁰ Younghusband and Landon both wrote that the British were going to be a civilizing force that would free the peasants from their rulers. This type of thinking was necessary to establish the righteousness of their intentions. Younghusband wanted to reach Lhasa in order to deal directly with the Dalai Lama, but he had to work with the Dalai Lama's appointees because Tibet's spiritual leader had taken refuge in Mongolia out of fear of what the British intended to do to him.⁶¹

The 1904 invasion established a British presence and economic interest in Tibet that would be used to counter Chinese political power. In the treaty between the British and Tibetan government, Tibetan officials agreed to establish trade marts in the southern towns of Gyantse, Gartok, and Yatung; and to refrain from conducting diplomacy with other foreign powers.⁶² The British wanted an exclusive trade and diplomatic relationship with Tibet. On the other hand, the British continued signing treaties with Russia and China concerning Tibet's foreign policy without the input of the Tibetan government.⁶³

The 1904 invasion provided the experiences that British officers would later write about in their accounts of Tibetans. For example, Charles Bell's career began on the

⁶⁰ Perceval Landon, *Opening of Tibet: An Account of Lhasa and the Country and the People of Central Tibet and the Progress of the Mission Sent There by the English Government in the Year 1903-1904* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1905), xi-xiv.

⁶¹ Bell, *Past and Present*, 96; Laird, *History of Tibet*, 223; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 21, 215, 220-221.

⁶² Bell, *Past and Present*, 45; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 217-218.

⁶³ Bell, *Past and Present*, 88; Laird, *History of Tibet*, 229; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 220.

borders of the Himalayan countries with the 1904 invasion, even though he was not in the invasion itself. In May 1904 Bell was put in charge of finding a railroad route to go from India to Tibet, but then was transferred to replace John Claude White as the political officer of Sikkim while White participated in the British invasion of Tibet.⁶⁴ Bell would approach Tibetan culture from a commercial perspective as opposed to a military perspective. Most travelers who adopted a military stance were motivated by a belief in a righteous and just conquest of a society that needed to be freed from its corruptness. However, Bell's account was more positive than usual among military personnel.

Charles Bell met with the thirteenth Dalai Lama in 1909 as Britain and Tibet were becoming more receptive to each other due to their mutual interest. In 1909 Britain provided protection in Darjeeling and Kalimpong for the thirteenth Dalai Lama in order to gain more influence among other Buddhist countries in Asia.⁶⁵ Offering the Dalai Lama protection in northern India helped the British to establish a buffer to China as well as encourage more commerce. Tibet increasingly viewed Britain as a source from which they could draw protection and learn how to modernize in order to save itself from China. Bell's first assignment concerned agriculture, with the charge to oversee development in the Chumbi Valley from 1904-1905.⁶⁶ The next year he became the Political Officer of Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan, an office which he held until 1918. The long duration of his term and Tibet's need for British assistance contributed to his knowledge of and sympathy toward Tibet. As a result of his many years of residence in proximity to Tibet,

⁶⁴ Bell, *Past and Present*, 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

his perception of Tibet was more sympathetic than that of most of his contemporaries. At the end of his career, he recognized and was apologetic about British mistakes in diplomacy which had weakened Tibetan political clout. He recognized the 1906 and 1908 treaties as mistakes in that Britain engaged with China and Russia about Tibet's foreign policy without the Tibetan government's consent.⁶⁷ In the course of the following years a growing mutual interest developed not just between Bell and the thirteenth Dalai Lama, but also between their respective nations.

Since the British established their presence in Lhasa, British and Tibetan relations remained tenuous until China encroached upon Tibet. At first, the Dalai Lama tried to preserve the patron-priest relationship by dealing with China on his own. In 1906 he accepted an invitation to Peking where he discussed the incursion of Chinese troops in Kham with the Manchu Empress.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Britain continued to impinge on Tibet's sovereignty. In 1907 the British made a deal with Russia to ensure that Britain maintained control over Tibet's external relations and recognized China as an intermediary for trade between Tibet and other countries, with the exception of the British trading towns specified in the Lhasa Convention.⁶⁹

While Tibetan and British relations were tenuous, Chinese and Tibetan relations deteriorated near the end of Manchu rule because China became more assertive in Tibet's eastern province of Kham. In September 1908 the Dalai Lama asserted that the relationship between Tibet and China was religious only, and that Kham should not be

⁶⁷ Ibid., 88; Laird, *History of Tibet*, 229; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 220.

⁶⁸ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 221.

⁶⁹ Bell, *Past and Present*, 90.

occupied by the Chinese military or required to submit to tax collectors. However, the officials of the Qing dynasty held contempt for the Empress Dowager Cixi's authority, and these officials also did not respect the Dalai Lama when he met them to inquire about illegal tax collecting in Tibet's eastern border.⁷⁰ Tibet's religious connection to the Manchu dynasty in particular drove the thirteenth Dalai Lama to resolve political conflicts with the Empress Dowager Cixi and her nephew, Guangxu. It was believed that the Manchu emperor was the embodiment of the god of wisdom, Manjusri, just as the Dalai Lama was believed to be the embodiment of the god of infinite compassion, Chenrezig.⁷¹ The thirteenth Dalai Lama presided over the funeral rites of the Empress Dowager and her nephew and witnessed the enthronement of the last Manchu emperor, Pu Yi, in 1908.⁷² However, Tibet's and China's religious and political connection was severely weakened when Cixi and Guangxu passed away, causing the Dalai Lama to seek a stronger relationship with their British neighbors to the south.

Soon after this last religious ceremony between the spiritual leader of Tibet and the Manchu dynasty, the Dalai Lama approached Charles Bell. He visited with Bell in 1908 and returned to Lhasa in 1909.⁷³ Bell's positive impression of the thirteenth Dalai Lama's intelligence may have encouraged the British official to support the Tibetan leader.⁷⁴ In February 1910, the Dalai Lama wrote to Bell requesting advice and

⁷⁰ Ibid., 96; Laird, *History of Tibet*, 232-233; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 222-223; Rayne Kruger, *All Under Heaven: A Complete History of China* (Wiley: West Sussex, England, 2004), 383.

⁷¹ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 232-233, 200-201.

⁷² Ibid., 232-233; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 223; Kruger, *All Under Heaven*, 382.

⁷³ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 212. Shakabpa, *Political History*, 223.

⁷⁴ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 212.

protection from the Chinese threat that was approaching Lhasa from the eastern provinces.⁷⁵ Bell clearly influenced the Dalai Lama's modernizing techniques and adoption of Western-style nation-state building. In this same year the Dalai Lama established a Tibetan mint to issue coinage and a Foreign Bureau Office in Lhasa.⁷⁶ When the Chinese eventually entered Lhasa in 1910, they fired upon the Potala and the Jokhang temple, killed the head official of the Foreign Bureau, and demanded the head of the Dalai Lama.⁷⁷ They seemed intent on blocking Tibet's modernization efforts and Tibet's connection to Britain. In response the Dalai Lama fled in February 1910 to Darjeeling, India for safety, where he spent his days learning about British policies and government from Bell, who was the liaison between the Dalai Lama and British India.⁷⁸

Britain and Tibet had a mutual interest in improving foreign relations with each other, and as a result a more positive impression of Tibetans arose in the West among certain individuals. This did not happen overnight and not everyone was convinced of the value of this new, more sympathetic relationship. Thus, many of the conservative nobles and monasteries remained opposed to closer foreign relations with Britain because they saw such a warming as a threat to Buddhism in Tibet.⁷⁹ Similarly, Bell's superiors did not want to commit as an ally to Tibet, even though they favored a close relationship

⁷⁵ Bell, *Past and Present*, 109.

⁷⁶ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 223.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁷⁸ Bell, *Past and Present*, 3,112; Laird, *History of Tibet*, 235-237; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 228-230.

⁷⁹ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 247.

with the thirteenth Dalai Lama as a means of gaining influence in other Asian countries.

Bell wrote:

Lord Morely's instructions to the Indian government were to adopt a non-committal attitude on all points at issue between China and Tibet. But it seemed important to utilize this opportunity of strengthening friendship with Tibet, by according good treatment to the sacred personality of the Dalai Lama.⁸⁰

The Dalai Lama used his contacts with British officials to convince Britain that their support would be in their own interest. At one point the thirteenth Dalai Lama warned Bell that the Chinese wanted to advance beyond Tibet towards Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan which were protectorates of Britain at that time.⁸¹ The Dalai Lama's remarks encouraged Britain to invest in Tibet's protection, so that Tibet would serve as a buffer zone between India and China.

While the Dalai Lama made a positive impression on Charles Bell, Tibet was still at war with China. In October 1911 the Nationalists overthrew the Manchu Dynasty, and Chinese troops continued to fight in Lhasa and eastern Tibet.⁸² While Tibet was going through this dire situation, a friendly and respectful bond developed between the two political officials. Bell subsequently visited with the Dalai Lama several times, and he was quite impressed with the religious leader's frankness, sincerity, and intelligence.⁸³ The thirteenth Dalai Lama stayed in Kalimpong for part of 1912 before returning to

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Bell, *Past and Present*, 88; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 231.

⁸² Shakabpa, *Political History*, 238-241.

⁸³ Bell, *Past and Present*, 3; Laird, *History of Tibet*, 212.

Lhasa in June, when China lost the war in eastern Tibet.⁸⁴ According to Shakabpa the close relationship between Tibet and Britain led Britain to end the war in Tibet:

In Peking, Sir John Jordan, the British Prime Minister, met with the new Chinese President Yuan Shih-kai, and protested the Chinese military action in Tibet and their attempt to make Tibet a province of China.⁸⁵

Bell's visits with the Dalai Lama occurred while the British Prime minister pressured China to end the war in Tibet. The diplomatic relations had become so close between Bell and members of the Tibetan government that starting from 1920 the Tibetan government bestowed honorific titles on Bell and even the subsequent Political Officers of Sikkim.⁸⁶

The close relationship of the thirteenth Dalai Lama and Bell would later influence the creation of a progressive group of Tibetans in Lhasa. The progressives in the government wanted to develop their own Tibetan experts in the various technical fields to modernize Tibet. This modernization program created a new generation of Tibetans who were familiar with English culture and who desired an open relationship with the Western powers. In 1912 four Tibetan students were sent to Britain to receive an education in mining engineering, military science, electrical engineering, and telegraphy.⁸⁷ All would return to Tibet as reformers, including the chaperone for the four boys, Lungshar Dorje Tsegyal, who subsequently pushed for modernizing Tibet and served as ambassador-at-

⁸⁴ Bell, *Past and Present*, 121; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 242-243. Kalimpong is a town on the Indian side of the Indian-Tibetan border.

⁸⁵ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 243.

⁸⁶ Bell, *Past and Present*, 3; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 267.

⁸⁷ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 241-245; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 249-250.

large, whose assignment was to learn about government in Europe.⁸⁸ However, Tibet's reform policy did not depend only on Britain. They also sought support from Japan and Russia for military training of their troops.⁸⁹

The British and Tibetan alliance was made official during the Simla conference in 1914 which limited China's agency in Tibet. Britain and Tibet requested the Chinese government to take part in the Simla conference, which set out to restrict China from enforcing real power in Tibet. China was no longer to administer, occupy, or claim Tibet as its province, but the conference recognized China's suzerainty over Tibet.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the British extended protection to Tibet's spiritual leader by forbidding China to interfere with the office of the Dalai Lama, the seat of power in Tibet. The official representatives for Tibet and Britain, Lonchen Shatra and Henry McMahon, signed the treaty; however, the Chinese official refused.⁹¹ This agreement established a closer bond between Tibet and Britain. The treaty also provided Tibetan officials assurance that Britain was not a foreign enemy intent on destroying Buddhism, as they had strongly suspected before. The treaty did show that Britain supported Tibet's interest as they mediated between Tibet and China.⁹² In subsequent years the Tibetan government responded to Britain's support with loyalty and commitment. In August 1914, a month after Britain entered World War I, the Dalai Lama promised 1,000 troops

⁸⁸ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 241-245; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 250.

⁸⁹ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 245-246; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 250, 259.

⁹⁰ Bell, *Past and Present*, 5; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 254; Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 5.

⁹¹ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 245-246; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 254-255.

⁹² Bell, *Past and Present*, 174.

to aid Britain; and these troops were held in reserve, even when the country was being attacked in the eastern province of Kham by the Chinese military.⁹³

After the Tibetan and British alliance was affirmed, Britain controlled who penetrated Tibet's southern border. In 1915 Charles Bell was stationed in the southern Tibetan trading town of Gyantse, where he was able to observe and participate in the growing relationship between Britain and Tibet.⁹⁴ Bell seemed quite controlling about who came into contact with Tibet, seeking to make certain that the British would dominate all communication with Tibet. In 1916 he had Alexandra David-Neel expelled from Sikkim during her study with a yogi because she had previously entered Tibet illegally.⁹⁵ She expressed anger toward the British for expelling her, but remained resolute on reaching Lhasa despite British control.⁹⁶ As a general policy, Britain tried to screen all travelers who gained access to Tibet. The British attempted to control traffic across the Tibetan border because they had exclusive trade agreements with Tibet based on the 1904 treaty. Additionally, they also wanted to control the image of Tibet and information about Tibet's mineral wealth such as gold in their western province.⁹⁷

The establishment of good relations between Tibet and Britain did not end the publication of negative accounts by Westerners, as demonstrated by the writing of William Montgomery McGovern, an American anthropologist who wrote a disparaging

⁹³ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 257, 260.

⁹⁴ Bell, *Past and Present*, 164.

⁹⁵ *Alexandra David-Neel: One Woman's Journey from Sikkim to Forbidden Tibet*, prod. Pascal Bensoussan, dir. Jeanne Mascolo de Filippis and Antoine de Maximy, 51min., Films for the Humanities, 2003, DVD.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ McKay, "'Truth,' Perceptions, and Politics," 81.

description of Tibetan culture. McGovern published *To Lhasa in Disguise* in 1924, which narrated his journey into Tibet. McGovern had clandestinely traveled to Tibet in 1922 to achieve an inside view of Tibetan culture.⁹⁸ A lecturer in the Oriental Studies Department at the University of London, he received a doctorate of divinity at Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist monastery in Japan.⁹⁹ He intended to achieve recognition as an innovative anthropologist by publishing the account of his journey. However, his description of Tibet resembled the older tradition of Western travel accounts that presented the Tibetan people as dirty, licentious, and savage. By contrast, Charles Bell's publication of *Tibet Past and Present* in 1924 and *The People of Tibet* in 1928 presented a much more positive perspective of Tibet.

At the time of the publication of McGovern's and Bell's books, Tibet was undergoing internal fragmentation. The Panchen Lama, Tibet's second highest spiritual leader located in eastern Tibet, fled into China to evade paying taxes for the military and modernization programs that were spearheaded by the thirteenth Dalai Lama.¹⁰⁰ While the Panchen Lama was in China, he sided with the Kuomintang Nationalists against the Dalai Lama.¹⁰¹ In charge of a monastery, the Panchen Lama may have refused to pay taxes for the same reasons as the leaders of other large monasteries: the fear that British influence would erode Buddhist teachings, that building a military force was against the

⁹⁸ William Montgomery McGovern, *To Lhasa in Disguise: A Secret Expedition Through Mysterious Tibet* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1924), v-vi, 12-13.

⁹⁹ "William Montgomery McGovern (1897-1964) Papers, 1919-1967 Series 11/3/22/3 Boxes 1-5." Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Archives. <http://www.library.northwestern.edu/archives/findingaids/McGovern/William.pdf>. accessed 1/14/08

¹⁰⁰ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 263.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 263.

Dharma, and that the new tax system would erode their financial wealth. The conflict between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama revealed the on-going power struggle between the pro-British and pro-Chinese alliances, and pointed up how the Panchen Lama used his geographical proximity to China to contest the power of the Dalai Lama. The greatest ally of the Panchen Lama was China, the enemy of his perceived enemy at home.

Signs of the monasteries' backlash against the alliance with the British were evident in other modernization programs in the 1920's. A British school that was established in 1923 to teach English to Tibetans was closed down three years after its opening due to monastic pressure based on fears that British influence threatened Buddhism in Tibet.¹⁰² Two years after the school closed, Bell's book, *The People of Tibet*, was published. Bell's positive tone toward Tibet and his own honesty about British intentions should have triggered British censorship, but officials could not censure the publication because Bell had already retired from government service six years earlier.¹⁰³ Bell's comments would have triggered censorship from officials in Whitehall because they did not want to disrupt Anglo-Chinese relations and trade ties; so, Northern Indian officials were not officially supposed to directly and publically promote an independent state of Tibet in opposition to their superiors in London.¹⁰⁴ The British government's objection to his work may have been due to his admission in *Tibet Past and Present* that he could not do more for Tibet because of the agendas of his

¹⁰² Ibid., 260.

¹⁰³ Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, 268 n8.

¹⁰⁴ McKay, "'Truth,' Perceptions, and Politics," 77.

superiors.¹⁰⁵ Bell's sympathy toward Tibet may have been intended to encourage Tibetans to continue diplomacy with Britain.

While Tibet was splintered by factionalism, the thirteenth Dalai Lama encouraged Tibetan officials to embrace the modernization program. Aware of the devastation that the Communists brought to the Buddhist monasteries when they invaded Mongolia, the Dalai Lama wrote a letter in 1932 to Tibetan officials stressing the need for a military build-up to protect Buddhism in Tibet from a Communist invasion.¹⁰⁶ The letter was intended to encourage the monastic community to take a personal interest in the need to build a military force. He had to convince the high lamas and the monastic community of the need for an army despite the fact that he was to them the manifestation of the Tibetan god of compassion, Chenrezig.

While Tibetans faced even more fragmentation after the thirteenth Dalai Lama died in 1933, Tibet was not as threatened by a Chinese conquest as they once were. The decreased threat was due to China's civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists.¹⁰⁷ The two parties were too busy competing for control of China to be interested in the control of Tibet.

Tibet had its own internal problems in the wake of the thirteenth Dalai Lama's death, but it still received support from the British to counter any possible threat China posed to Tibetan autonomy. As the new regent beginning in 1935, Retting Rinpoche not only had the task of leading Tibet, but he was also charged with finding the reincarnation

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 240 n3.

¹⁰⁶ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 270-271.

¹⁰⁷ Kruger, *Under Heaven*, 390-392.

of the Dalai Lama.¹⁰⁸ Retting Rinpoche faced opposition to his power among some of his own countrymen. In 1935 the thirteenth Dalai Lama's former ambassador and supporter for modernization, Lungshar Dorje Tsegyal, attempted to take over the government; after he failed, he was blinded and imprisoned.¹⁰⁹ The next year, the Panchen Lama sought to return to Tibet accompanied by Chinese troops. While negotiating in 1935 to allow the Panchen Lama to return without Chinese troops, the British political official, Derek Williamson died from illness.¹¹⁰ His successor as the new Political Officer of Sikkim, Basil Gould, was more assertive towards China, warning the Chinese in 1936 not to enter Tibet with armed troops.¹¹¹ The following year the Chinese army lost its pretext for entering Tibet as the Panchen Lama's escort, for he died on December 1, 1937.¹¹²

During World War II Tibet's contact with the West was minimal under Retting Rinpoche who was forced to resign in 1942 because of his corrupt administration; his single accomplishment was finding the fourteenth Dalai Lama.¹¹³ Retting Rinpoche's administration may be remembered for rampant corruption, opening Tibet to China, diminishing modernization and militarization, and ending diplomatic relations with Western nations.¹¹⁴ Despite Retting Rinpoche's anti-Western diplomacy, Basil Gould,

¹⁰⁸ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 278.

¹⁰⁹ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 247, 258-259.

¹¹⁰ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 281; Margaret D. Williamson, *Memoirs of a Political Officer's Wife in Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan* (London: Wisdom Press, 1987), 24-25, 40, 115.

¹¹¹ Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 6.

¹¹² Shakabpa, *Political History*, 283.

¹¹³ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 273.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 264.

the political officer of Sikkim, attended the 1940 enthronement of the fourteenth Dalai Lama along with representatives from Nepal, Bhutan, and China.¹¹⁵

In contrast to Retting Rinpoche's rule, Taktra's regency began to open up to the British forces in 1942 in hopes that the West would reciprocate with diplomatic support; however, he was very careful that the support he gave the Allies would not be detrimental later on. When Taktra became regent in 1942, the Tibetan government only allowed the British government to transport non-military supplies such as food and clothing to aid China, so that Tibet could maintain friendly relations without compromising their security.¹¹⁶ Tibetan officials were cautious about the support they gave to the Allied forces aiding China because they did not want such aid to be used against them after World War II. Thus, the Dalai Lama refused President Franklin Roosevelt's request to use Tibet to send military supplies and weapons to China.¹¹⁷

As Tibet's relationship with the West improved during World War II, the war itself impacted the way Western travelers perceived Tibetans. During the war and the years following, Western travelers would vacillate between a positive image of Tibet and older, negative perceptions. Some Western travelers expressed disillusionment towards the concepts of progress and Western modernity, believing that both World War I and II demonstrated that science and technology were not improving humanity. The perspective of travelers who had traveled in Tibet ranged from viewing Tibetan culture from a relativist perspective to emulating Tibetans as peace-loving people. Edwin John Dingle,

¹¹⁵ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 287.

¹¹⁶ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 273; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 286.

¹¹⁷ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 287-289.

who had traveled to and resided in Tibet much earlier in the years 1911-1919 but did not publish his account of his experiences until 1939, believed that the West should emulate Tibetan ideals of compassion and peace which he contrasted to the destruction and war caused by the West.¹¹⁸ He saw Tibet as the alternative to a harsh, modern, and cold Western world. Similarly, André Guibaut, who was in Tibet from 1939 to 1940 as a geographer surveying the Ngolo County, did not publish his account of his experiences until 1949 because of his military service for France during World War II.¹¹⁹ In his book, *Tibetan Venture*, he described the people as tolerant, friendly, and graceful; yet he also presented more morbid and medieval images of Tibetan culture.

Much like the other travelers, Heinrich Harrer provided a mixed view, combining a positive image of Tibet with unpleasant images. Unlike most Western travelers, Harrer did not come to Lhasa as a tourist, short time visitor, or diplomat. When he finished an official German expedition to the Himalayas he stayed with his mountaineering team in Karachi during the August of 1939; in Karachi, Harrer and his team were arrested in a restaurant immediately after England declared war on Germany.¹²⁰ Subsequently, he escaped from a British prisoner-of-war camp in Dehra Dun, and he entered Lhasa in 1942.¹²¹ He developed a deep and loving respect for Tibetans because he lived and worked intimately among them over a long period of time. His Tibetan experience

¹¹⁸ John Edwin Dingle, *My Life in Tibet* (Los Angeles: The Institute of Mental Physics, 1939), sleeve, preface, back cover, 12-13, 18, 29.

¹¹⁹ André Guibaut, *Tibetan Venture*, trans. Lord Sudley (London: John Murray, 1949), 1-4, 190-191.

¹²⁰ Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, trans. Richard Graves (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954), xv, 19.

¹²¹ Heinrich Harrer, "My Life in Forbidden Lhasa," *National Geographic Society*, July 1955, published on line May 2008, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/print/2008/05/tibetans/harrer-text>.

spanned from 1942 to 1950. Even though he was a Nazi, he did not even allude to absurd Nazi theories that Tibetans had an Aryan heritage and that they were a superhuman race. He had entered Lhasa after he had already lived in the rough, outlying plateau for several years, so he knew colloquial Tibetan.¹²² In his account, Harrer explained that the Tibetans cordially took him because he amused the more cosmopolitan Tibetans of Lhasa with his colloquial Tibetan and ability to elude capture in reaching Lhasa.¹²³ He claimed to be a significant influence on the future sovereign of Tibet, stating that he had been the Dalai Lama's personal tutor as well as a tutor for aristocratic children.¹²⁴ His impact was probably not as strong as he suggested, but he still had an influence. The Dalai Lama later stated that the relationship had been less formal than Harrer described, but he did credit Western visitors to Lhasa like Harrer for his informal education about world politics, history, and geography.¹²⁵ During his time in Lhasa, Harrer was a part of the Tibetan modernization program. The Tibetan government employed him to do technical work around Lhasa, including maintenance of the generator for the Dalai Lama's movie theater.¹²⁶ Harrer wrote about Tibet and its people in a very sympathetic manner, but combined the previous unpleasant image with an agreeable image.

When World War II ended, the Tibetan government could not immediately pursue diplomacy with the West and modernization because there was a conflict as to who

¹²² Heinrich Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, trans. Richard Graves (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954), 139.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

¹²⁴ Harrer, "Forbidden Lhasa," on -line.

¹²⁵ Laird, *History of Tibet*, 289.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 280.

should be the regent. In 1946 Retting Rinpoche sought to resume power as the regent, but Taktra blocked the idea after he discovered that Retting Rinpoche planned to sign Tibet away to China.¹²⁷ The next year, Taktra defeated Retting's forces and imprisoned him in the Potala's dungeon, where he was murdered.¹²⁸ Now that Tibet had the leadership to resume the thirteenth Dalai Lama's plans to strengthen Tibet, the government increased its diplomacy with the Western nations and its modernization agenda.

With Taktra as the regent, Tibet sought not only to increase its contact with the West, but also to secure itself against a China that was consolidating power. The Tibetan government also had to deal with the collapse of British imperial authority in India and its replacement by a new Indian government. At the beginning of 1947 the Kashag, the cabinet of the Tibetan government, requested and received military supplies from Britain; however, in the following year the British entrusted the new Indian government with upholding their treaties with Tibet as they withdrew from India.¹²⁹ The British commitment to Tibet waned when they were no longer able to protect India's northern border. Meanwhile, support for Tibet from other Western governments remained half-hearted.

Western countries were ready to enter into trade relations with Tibet and to listen to Tibetan concerns about a Chinese invasion. However, Western nations did not offer any strong political commitments. Britain and the United States remained willing to meet

¹²⁷ Ibid., 286.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 286.

¹²⁹ Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 1, 12-13; Shakabpa, *Political History*, 294.

and talk to Tibetan agents from 1947 to 1948; the Tibetan Government sent out several trade delegations to India, England, and the United States.¹³⁰ Western nations did indirectly recognize Tibet's independent status by conducting trade negotiations with Tibet without using China as an intermediary. In 1949 when the Communists took over China, the Tibetan government began reforms in finances and external affairs.¹³¹ As a part of reinforcing their connection to the West, they sought out worldwide publicity of their assertion of sovereignty through Lowell Thomas, a radio announcer, and his son Lowell Thomas Junior.¹³² Lowell Thomas Junior and his father entered Tibet in 1949, and the younger Thomas viewed the situation from a Cold War perspective rather than as a conflict that went back to Qing dynasty. Most of Tibet's Western visitors left as the Chinese began invading the eastern provinces in 1950. After the invasion, Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, a Tibetan official, wired the United Nations for help, but the Indian representatives to the United Nations insisted they could handle the situation without the international organizations' involvement.¹³³

In conclusion, world politics and Tibet's diplomatic relations with Western powers provide a compelling background to how travelers perceived themselves, Tibet, and its people. There was a curious and inverse relationship between how travelers saw themselves and how they viewed Tibetan culture. Before the World Wars, convinced that the West was the epitome of civilization, Western travelers viewed Tibetans as

¹³⁰ Heinrich Harrer, "My life in Forbidden Lhasa: Heinrich Harrer Photo Gallery" *National Geographic Society*, published online May 2008, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/05/tibetans/harrer-photography>.

¹³¹ Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 11-12.

¹³² Shakabpa, *Political History*, 298.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 303.

backward, immoral savages. Travelers who became more critical of their own society during or after World War I and World War II, on the other hand, were more open to appreciating Tibetan culture, though, the older, negative images persisted. They had to reconcile the older narratives with the new emerging idealist image of Tibet. As China became an increasing threat to its claim for sovereignty, Tibet had to increase its openness to the West and this shift improved the image that the West held of Tibet.

Section 2 Perceptions from the Turn of the Century to 1924

At the turn of the century, the view that most Western travelers held of Tibetans represented a continuation of the negative images of the nineteenth century. Abbé Evariste Régis Huc and Isabella Bird's accounts provide examples of the widespread view that the West was responsible for bestowing civilization on the world's less developed societies.¹³⁴ They held a high image of themselves and created an image of Tibetans as savages. This image continued until 1924 when the British began to exert control over and mold Tibet's image for diplomatic purposes. Other Western travelers who portrayed Tibet and the Tibetans as inferior include Henry Savage Landor, Francis Younghusband, Perceval Landon, Sven Hedin, and William Montgomery McGovern. Landor, who was British, came to Tibet in 1897 to conduct research on the geography of Lhasa and published several books on Tibet in 1899, 1901, 1905, and 1910.¹³⁵ Younghusband, who was in charge of the 1904 British invasion, published in 1910, and Landon published in 1905.¹³⁶ Hedin, a Swede, entered Tibet in 1907 with the goal of

¹³⁴ Abbé Evariste Régis Huc, *High Road in Tartary: An Abridged Revision of Abbé Huc's Travels in Tartary, Tibet, and China during the years 1844-1846*, ed. Julie Bedier (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), vii, 1; Isabella Bird, *Among the Tibetans* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1894; reprint, New York: Dover Publication, 2004), 43-46, 101-103.

¹³⁵ Henry Savage Landor, *In the Forbidden Land: An Account of a Journey into Tibet, Capture by Lamas and Soldiers, Imprisonment, Torture, and Ultimate Release Brought By Dr. Wilson and the Political Peshkar Karak Sing-Pal* (London & New York: Harper and Brothers, 1899); Idem, *Tibet and Nepal Painted and Described* (London: A. & C. Black, 1905); Idem, *An Explorer's Adventures in Tibet: A Lonely Foreign Traveler Penetrates the Forbidden Land and Attempts to Reach the Province of Lhasa Pan 1897 Epic* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1910), preface, 211-216.

¹³⁶ Landon, *Opening of Tibet*, xi, xiv; Francis Edward Younghusband, *India and Tibet: a history of the relations which have subsisted between the two countries from the time of Warren Hastings to 1910; with a particular account of the mission to Lhasa of 1904* (London: John Murray, 1910).

discovering the source of the Indus and Sutlej rivers.¹³⁷ Finally, McGovern, an American, came to Tibet in 1922 as an anthropologist and published his work in 1924.¹³⁸ Most of these Western travelers perceived Tibet from a military or scientific perspective. And they almost uniformly perceived Tibetans as religiously inferior, savage, licentious, and tyrannical. By examining their perceptions of Tibet and Tibetans, we discover much about how these travelers romanticized themselves and their journey into Tibet. Quite clearly, the experience of gaining access into Tibet, the individual's own cultural biases, and their motivations for journeying to Tibet all influenced how Western travelers perceived Tibet and Tibetans. When Europeans confronted an identity that they perceived as "other" from themselves, this perception served as a mirror against which their identity of themselves could be both contrasted and compared. When confronted with another culture, Westerners not only faced "otherness", but also themselves.

2.1 Savior and Scientists

Before we can understand how early Western travelers viewed Tibetans, we need to know how these travelers viewed themselves. Those travelers who came to Tibet in the name of science directly and indirectly defined themselves as both empirical investigators and as saviors; by making discoveries they would contribute knowledge to the scientific world and gain recognition for themselves in the scientific community.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Henry Savage Landor was one of the first scientists to publish his findings on Tibet. Landor came to Tibet to conduct

¹³⁷ Sven Hedin, *Trans Himalaya: Discoveries and Adventures in Tibet* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 3: vi, 2.

¹³⁸ McGovern, *To Lhasa in Disguise*, v, 12-13; Northwestern University Archives, McGovern Papers, online.

geographical research and to reach Lhasa. He definitely was serious about gathering empirical data as indicated by the wide range of tools and surveying equipment he brought with him to measure the land and climate in Tibet.¹³⁹ He intended to use the tools to develop maps for the Royal Geographic Society and apparently to prove that Tibetans were illegally collecting taxes from British subjects on British soil.¹⁴⁰ His intention was to establish the boundary between Tibet and British India, but the impression arises that he was also working to establish British imperial authority. Even though he may have thought of himself as an objective scientist, his effort was colored by a subjective drive to assert British authority over Tibet. His text, *An Explorer's Adventures in Tibet: A Lonely Foreign Traveler Penetrates the Forbidden Land*, is filled with bitterness at the indignity of being captured and imprisoned by Tibetan officials, which helps explain his depiction of Tibetans as barbarians.

The British invasion of 1904 gave Perceval Landon and Francis Younghusband a sense of service to their country, and the satisfaction in believing that they were civilizing Tibetan peasants from their miserable lives. Their belief that they were to civilize Tibetan peasants reflected the imperialistic values in Rudyard Kipling's "A White Man's Burden," which espoused the white man's responsibility to civilize the savages of the world. Younghusband felt that it was up to the officers to uphold the dignity and the authority of British imperial power. Younghusband felt that he had to assert British authority over Tibet, so that other Asian countries would not try to oppose

¹³⁹ Landon, *Explorer's Adventures*, 2: 2.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1: preface.

British power.¹⁴¹ According to him, the cause for Britain's indignation and 1904 invasion was the Tibetan government's refusal to recognize the treaty the British had concluded with China that concerned trade with Tibet.¹⁴² Landon clearly saw the role of the British as a civilizing force able to rescue ordinary Tibetans from the tyrannical rule of a religious autocracy that utilized Buddhism to manipulate the people.¹⁴³ Buddhist intentions were depicted as more abusive and domineering even than Islam, the Papacy, or Genevan Calvinism.¹⁴⁴ Both British officers imagined themselves as heroes opposing a despotic, cruel oligarchy of lamas.

While Francis Younghusband depicted the Tibetan government as despotic, he presented the British army as saviors who were seeking to free the oppressed peasantry from the yoke of tyrannical lamas. In the foreword of Perceval Landon's book, Younghusband observes that, "Owing to the magnificent behavior of the troops, the confidence of the people was entirely gained. Villages and traders thronged to our camps. Soldiers went unmolested in every part of the Lhasa bazaar."¹⁴⁵ Younghusband validated the British mission by emphasizing the hospitality of the Tibetans. According to Younghusband, the peasants of Tibet wanted to be saved from their oppressive religious leaders. He went on to claim that the peasantry wished for the British force to stay because they feared the retaliation of the lamas.¹⁴⁶ He argued that the British should

¹⁴¹ Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, 92-93.

¹⁴² Landon, *Opening of Tibet*, 26.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, xii.

¹⁴⁶ Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, 208.

continue to occupy Tibet to keep it from falling back into barbarism.¹⁴⁷ However, Shakabpa's account of the British occupation of Lhasa contradicts Younghusband's report of the British army being unmolested in Lhasa. He noted that after a monk had attacked the British camp, the British officials held him hostage to ensure their own security.¹⁴⁸ Thus, Younghusband's claim that the peasantry wanted to keep the British as a civilizing force is questionable.

Freeing the peasants from the lamaic oligarchy was one of several affirmed goals of the 1904 expedition. Empirical observation and scientific discovery was another mission within the expedition. Perceval Landon noted how the mission expanded knowledge of Tibet and its people as they traveled through concentrated population centers.¹⁴⁹ A number of officers utilized their specialized expertise in geology, wildlife biology, and anthropology to gather information about Tibet.¹⁵⁰ By emphasizing the component of objective science, Western accounts increased the impression that the image they projected of Tibetans was objective fact.

Obviously, Tibet was a place where the Western traveler could achieve some fame as a scientist. Sven Hedin was motivated to travel to Tibet in 1907 to be the first man ever to go to the source of the Indus and Sutlej rivers.¹⁵¹ He was very concerned that the information that he was collecting would be viewed as original compared to the

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 13-14.

¹⁴⁸ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 216.

¹⁴⁹ Landon, *Opening of Tibet*, xiv.

¹⁵⁰ Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, 337.

¹⁵¹ Hedin, *Trans Himalaya*, 3: vi, 2.

work of other scientists and adventurers before him.¹⁵² Such travelers saw themselves as more than simple observers of physical geography. The travelers competed to discover the unknown, and Tibet was seen as the land where scientists could claim discoveries for the Western world.

William M. McGovern's perspective was scientific as well; unlike Hedin, he approached his subject from a social science perspective and anthropology, rather than physical geography. He conceived his role as that of an outside observer of Tibetan society, looking from the inside; and, indeed, he disguised himself as a Tibetan.¹⁵³ He observed:

It certainly was interesting to be forced to see Tibet and the Tibetans from the Tibetan point of view, to live as a Tibetan for months when a false word or act would have given me away, to be forced to study their quaint customs, not merely from a dry dull scientific standpoint, but also that I might journey among them without being detected; and... departing from any custom with previous books, have tried to describe some of the varied experiences which I encountered during my secret expedition to the sacred city.¹⁵⁴

McGovern not only described his venture as being somewhat experimental as opposed to the usual way in which anthropology was done, but he also emphasized his journey as a risky adventure. In disguising himself, he desired to embody the participant-observer method, trying to avoid the intrusive impact that an outsider might have on the social behavior of the local people. At one point, he portrayed his act as brave because he could be discovered at any moment, innovative for looking at Tibet in a new perspective and clever for traveling secretly into a city that was closed to Westerners. McGovern

¹⁵² Ibid., v, vi.

¹⁵³ Mc Govern, *Lhasa in Disguise*, v.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., v-vi.

defended his claim as an objective scientist by describing his observations of Tibetans as “...a general but accurate description of manners and customs and beliefs, including some of the extraordinary institutions which exist in the government in Lhasa.”¹⁵⁵

In addition to his scientific claims, McGovern wanted his work to contribute to Britain’s imperial agenda. He saw the diplomatic, political, military, and industrial studies of Tibet as strategic to British involvement in Asian and world affairs.¹⁵⁶ He contrasted Tibet to Japan, arguing that Tibet did not open its borders to Western foreigners as they received help from Britain for the modernization program.¹⁵⁷ He thought that Tibet closed itself from Western penetration as the country adopted more European modernization such as telegraphs, paper money, and telephones.¹⁵⁸ McGovern sought out knowledge in order to open up Tibet to Western foreigners. He suggested that the modernization program did not improve Tibet’s foreign relations with the West.

2.2 Following the Path

Western travelers into Tibet not only saw themselves as scientists with keen observation and great knowledge to share, but also envisioned themselves as explorers following in the path of great adventurers before them. In Perceval Landon’s view, the British invasion of Tibet was excusable and inevitable because they were British and were acting in the tradition of other British officers and explorers before them. His assertions about the greatness of the British reflected a racial theory that gave them the

¹⁵⁵ Mc Govern, *Lhasa in Disguise*, vi.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, vi.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6-8. He referred to Japan’s modernization as a direct consequence of the country’s more open diplomacy to Europe.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

right to trample on other nations' sovereignties. Landon was unapologetic about the 1904 expedition because it was traditional for the British to be leaders and voyagers.¹⁵⁹ Not only did he think that the mission was following the example set by earlier British explorers, but he also clearly held the view that the British were superior to other Europeans when it came to imperialism. Landon viewed the British as the premier race of explorers, and the map of the world was proof of English superiority.¹⁶⁰ Hailing Colonel Younghusband Landon declared, "You are but the latest of a succession of explorers which has no rival in the history of another race."¹⁶¹ Landon claimed that the Younghusband 1904 expedition had excelled where earlier travelers had failed.¹⁶²

Francis Younghusband echoed Landon's narrative about following in the path of British officers before him. In his book *India and Tibet*, Younghusband celebrated the actions of a long line of diplomats that had dealt with Tibet before him. The chapters described the personalities and achievements of such earlier representatives as Warren Hastings, George Bogle, Thomas Manning, John White, and George Curzon.¹⁶³ The chapter in which he described his work followed the chapters dedicated to these men. He also tracked previous explorers' geographical knowledge to explain the work that had been done before him.

In a similar way, Sven Hedin also examined the work of other travelers in his field. He invested a significant amount of research and time to learn about scientists that

¹⁵⁹ Landon, *Opening of Tibet*, xvi.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁶³ Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, 4, 7, 9, 13, 23, 33, 66, 96, 97.

came to Asia before him. In *Trans Himalaya*, he devoted three chapters to earlier European travelers who penetrated the Himalayas.¹⁶⁴ Quite literally, he retraced the paths that the other travelers took, explaining that Francesco della Penna, Johann Grueber, and Albert Dorville had all followed the very same routes as such earlier travelers as Abbé Evariste Régis Huc and Joseph Gabet.¹⁶⁵ He then evaluated the quality and value of these travelers' journeys, indicating which travelers contributed good research, which did not, and whom he wished to emulate. Thus, he criticized Vasilief, a Russian professor, for vagueness in his description of mountain chains during his trip to Tibet, while commending Karl Ritter for mapping the Dsang and Khor Mountains.¹⁶⁶ He also noted that George Bogle and Warren Hastings had traveled to Tibet without contributing geographical information.¹⁶⁷ Clearly, he did not think that all the men who had traveled to Tibet and supplied geographical information were great scholars. On the other hand, he was excited by Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich von Humboldt's map project on Chinese topography. He admired the German's achievement in mapping four huge mountain chains in Asia, the Atlai, Tian-shan, Kwen-lun, and Himalayas.¹⁶⁸ Hedin saw himself as following in the footsteps of his predecessors, pursuing a scientific journey into Tibet in the attempt to complete knowledge of the unknown. He explained, "The aim of my journey was to fill up the huge area of the middle Trans-Himalaya."¹⁶⁹ He boasted that

¹⁶⁴ Hedin, *Trans Himalaya*, 3: vii.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 144

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.

his work would eliminate the word “unexplored” on English maps of the region north of the Tsangpo.¹⁷⁰

William Montgomery McGovern similarly expressed gratitude for the information that earlier travelers passed down to him and the information that made him a wiser traveler. Noting that on an earlier expedition he had accompanied a group of scientists who were thrown out of the country by Tibetan officials, for his next trip to Tibet, he traveled in disguise, profiting by his experience during the previous trip.¹⁷¹ He revered earlier travelers who were experienced in organizing and administering expeditions, citing William Dederich who funded scientific expeditions to and explored Antarctica in 1914.¹⁷² Much like Sven Hedin, McGovern made it a point to research the routes that were taken by other travelers and he chose the route established by Younghusband for its directness and ease.¹⁷³

2.3 Strong, Brave, and Clever: An Image of the Travelers

A number of Western travelers presented themselves as tough, capable adventurers able to defeat any challenge that might arise through strength and cleverness, much like the classical Odysseus. These travelers portrayed Tibet as a difficult, impregnable country. They had to conquer challenges presented both by obstinate Tibetan officials and a harsh terrain. When they depicted the physical obstacles they

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ McGovern, *Lhasa in Disguise*, 10.

¹⁷² Ibid. 11.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 12.

overcame, they were emphasizing how strong one had to be to master the Tibetan environment. The travelers' image of themselves as strong and persevering is not fanciful as the Tibetan terrain was indeed dangerous to traverse.

When Henry Savage Landor described his Tibetan journey as perilous, he depicted himself as clever in out-smarting Tibetan authorities. Thus, in *An Explorer's Adventures in Tibet*, Landor described how he was able to elude the Tibetan army and their spies by taking an alternate route across a stream. He included an account of how a Tibetan official had threatened to cut off his head and he further recounted how at one point he almost lost his feet.¹⁷⁴ By insisting on pressing on despite the threats he received, he presented himself as brave. In an account of his torture, he portrayed Tibetans as cruel, while projecting an image of himself as tough for being able to withstand extreme pain. He described how he was so stretched out that he feared that his arms were going to come out of their sockets.¹⁷⁵

A more famous British adventurer, Francis Younghusband, also challenged the Tibetans and their landscape. Even though Younghusband's account focuses primarily on diplomacy, he did not fail to mention the physical hardships that made his expedition a courageous endeavor. As the army expedition passed into Tibet, he cited the precise temperature of 18 degrees below zero and the altitude as 15,200 feet; he went further to say that the oil in their guns froze and that the fierce wind slowed their progress.¹⁷⁶ Younghusband was concerned that the cold, biting wind and icy blizzards would impede

¹⁷⁴ Landor, *Explorer's Adventures*, 11-15.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 230; Landor, *Forbidden Land*, Preface, 211-216.

¹⁷⁶ Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, 160.

maintaining the army's supply lines over the Tang-la pass.¹⁷⁷ The inclusion of such precise physical details made the danger seem very real. The conditions he described were like another enemy that the troops had to fight. Younghusband further noted his men's casualties and wounds from the trek, including frostbite, altitude sickness, and pneumonia.¹⁷⁸ He clearly wanted to impress upon his readers the extreme conditions that he and his troops had endured. The troops were depicted as heroes for challenging and conquering the natural environment.

One of Younghusband's officers, Perceval Landon also described the 1904 invasion of Tibet as a harrowing experience. Detailing the hardships of the journey, he stated, "The frozen mist, laced with stinging splinters of ice, was broken horizontally into our faces by the wind which never sleeps over this terrible pass."¹⁷⁹ He focused on the powerful physical challenge to make the point that the army was stronger than those powerful natural forces. He concluded that no human effort imaginable could remove the hardships leading to Lhasa.¹⁸⁰ He seemed to be forecasting that the British needed to make the pass more accessible for further use, either for military movement or for trade.

The British officers were not the only Westerners who would depict themselves as tough men in a perilous environment. The Swedish traveler, Sven Hedin portrayed himself as both clever and strong for overcoming the mental and physical challenges of the Tibetan landscape. According to Hedin, stoic individualism and inner strength were necessary to overcome the eerie loneliness of the Tibetan plateau. He described the land

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 169.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 172.

¹⁷⁹ Landon, *Opening of Tibet*, 76.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

as a “hopelessly dismal country.”¹⁸¹ Noting how perilous the journey could be, he continued, “During the night our caravan animals stampeded down the valley pursued by wolves.”¹⁸² He also recounted a story of how his horse fell into the raging Sutlej River, describing the river as a dramatic and fatal force not to be reckoned with:¹⁸³

The depth of the river here must be considerable; the breadth was not more than 45 feet, but the velocity of the current was tremendous. Even if we had possessed poles long enough to measure the depth, we could not have used them, for the pressure of the compressed volume of water would have broken them like reeds.¹⁸⁴

After an arduous climb up the Dato-la pass, he observed, “I walk up to the cairn, and I am astonished and dumbfounded at the sight before me. How in the world are we ever to get down into the abyss?”¹⁸⁵ The remark implied that he was out to accomplish an unattainable feat. He depicted himself as being able to accomplish the unattainable by making the Tibetan landscape a fatal foe.

Just as he portrayed himself as strong and courageous, Hedin also depicted himself as competent and clever in overcoming the obstacles presented by Tibetan authorities and his Tibetan assistants on his journey into the country. When he sought to enter Tibet, his Tibetan hosts resisted, fearing the punishment of the authorities if they allowed him any farther into the country, and they encouraged him to return to India.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Hedin, *Trans Himalaya*, 3: 22.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 263-266.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 263.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 362-363.

¹⁸⁶ Hedin, *Trans Himalaya*, 1: 177.

Rather than complying, he tricked the authorities by taking an alternate route. He commented:

Now I perceived that it was only pure good luck that I succeeded in passing through forbidden land. If nomad chiefs on the Pedung-tsangpo, at Selipuk in the Kyangyang Valley, and at Takchen had known what the Gova of Takchen knew, they would not have given us a yak on hire nor sold us a handful of tsamba unless we had consented to turn back and travel eastwards. How often had we met with the same experience as now!¹⁸⁷

It is evident from the quote that he feigned returning home several times, thus reinforcing his image as clever each time he was able to bypass the officials. In his view, his trickery of Tibetan officials showed that he was more intelligent than they were.

Hedin was not the only traveler to gloat about his cleverness in evading Tibetan officials. William Montgomery McGovern also emphasized his success against Tibetan authorities. In recounting his tribulations with Tibetan officials, he depicted Tibetans as xenophobic towards Europeans. McGovern warned about the difficulties of travel into Tibet:

He who would seek to penetrate into Lhasa must first overcome the tremendous physical difficulties which bar the way to the threshold of Tibet; and even if he rises victorious over ice and snow, gnarled crag and precipitous cliff, he finds upon arrival on the plateau an angry populace which bars the way and insists on an immediate return.¹⁸⁸

He explained how explorers before him attempted alternate routes and disguises only to be thrown out.¹⁸⁹ The thrill of this challenge was to reach Lhasa and to succeed where others had failed. About to be found-out during his first night in Lhasa, he decided to

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 177-178.

¹⁸⁸ McGovern, *Lhasa in Disguise*, 5.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

reveal his identity to the authorities.¹⁹⁰ Describing his feelings about throwing off his disguise, he stated, “This was partly out of a silly boyish feeling of braggadocio--to show the Lhasa Government that I had been able to get there in spite of their efforts to keep me out.”¹⁹¹ Besides appearing clever, McGovern depicted himself as strong and persevering because of the physical pain that he endured. He wrote about his need to withstand “enormous physical strain” as he traversed the rough landscape despite symptoms of dysentery, blisters on his feet, and cuts from jagged rocks.¹⁹² He emphasized how cold and extraordinarily steep and stony the descent was over the Nambula Pass.¹⁹³

2.4 Painting an Inferior Religion

At the same time that Western travelers presented themselves in a positive way, they viewed Tibetans as religiously inferior. They dismissed the originality, creativity, and humanity of Tibetan culture. One method of portraying Tibetans as religiously inferior was to depict them as superstitious and corrupted. According to some European travelers, Buddhism in Tibet was a corrupted form of Christianity. By claiming that Buddhism was a debased mimicry of Catholicism, the travelers denied the originality and merit of Tibetan Buddhism. For the Western traveler, Tibetan Buddhism was a false faith. The travelers also depicted Tibetan lives as brutal, immoral, and filthy as further evidence of the perceived corruption of the Tibetan soul.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 343.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid., 214.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 216, 274-275.

Thus, Henry Savage Landor attacked Buddhist practitioners and the institutions of Buddhism in Tibet as being greedy and violent. He claimed that Tibetans seldom practiced the Buddhist values of love, respect, and non-violence.¹⁹⁴ He asserted that the Buddhist lamas swindled ignorant peasants for their luxuries, and that the lamas were money lenders to boot.¹⁹⁵ Francis Younghusband went further, accusing the Buddhist institutions and leaders in Tibet of sin. He condemned the lamas for lending money, which the Christian tradition viewed as usury and sinful. He concluded, “I found the Lamas, as a rule, intelligent, but inhuman, even barbarously cruel and dishonorable.”¹⁹⁶

Perceval Landon believed that Buddhism made Tibetans spiritually and racially inferior. He argued that Buddhism in Tibet had been corrupted by Bon-po deities he referred to as devil-gods; to him Buddhism was only the veneer that covered up the devil worship at the heart of their practices.¹⁹⁷ The animistic influences of Bon-po on Tibetan Buddhism made the Tibetans appear as a superstitious people. British officials such as Landon observed that Tibetans feared evil sprites and imps in natural features such as peaks and passes.¹⁹⁸ He thought Tibetans seemed servile and motivated by terror into faith because they practiced more animistic rituals. Based on Landon’s description of Buddhism, it was a threatening and dominating force in the lives of its followers.

¹⁹⁴ Landor, *Explorer’s Adventures*, 124.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁹⁷ Landon, *Opening of Tibet*, 112, 185, 186, 239.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 241.

Perceval Landon's argument against Buddhism took an overtly racist slant. He theorized that Lamaism was the cause of the inferiority of the Tibetan race because lamas neglected to encourage hygiene among the people; he linked the lack of hygiene to hare-lip, pyramidal cataract, smallpox, and physical underdevelopment.¹⁹⁹ Implicit in this was that the leaders of Buddhist ideology were irresponsible towards the Tibetan race. Landon's association of physical dirtiness with Buddhist leaders and institutions made them seem spiritually impure. Landon's description of the lamas made them appear to be distant and uncaring toward the peasants as opposed to being their shepherds.

Younghusband depicted Tibetan Buddhism as corrupt because he described lamas as full of vice. Younghusband claimed that the lamaic hierarchy in Tibet was religiously intolerant because they limited the number of Muslims in the country and would not allow them to build mosques; he contrasted the intolerance to the British who were tolerant toward Muslim worship.²⁰⁰ He depicted the lamas as intolerant despots in contrast to the benevolent imperial power of Britain. Despite a few references to lamas as cordial and gentle, generally, Younghusband viewed lamas of all ranks as dirty, degraded, unintelligent, and unspiritual; he further charged that they did not understand the deeper meaning of their own religion because they practiced rote memorization of the Buddhist text.²⁰¹ His depiction created an image of Tibetan lamas as hypocritical and licentious; indeed he compared them to the descendants of Sodom and Gomorrah.²⁰² He

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 248.

²⁰⁰ Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, 230.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 310-312.

²⁰² Ibid., 311-312.

claimed that the lamas' ownership of businesses and land invalidated their vow of poverty and simplicity.²⁰³

Sven Hedin perceived Tibetan Buddhism as inferior because he thought it was ridiculously superstitious. He referred to Buddhism in Tibet as "lama worship," and he attacked Tibetan Buddhism as a false religion for worshipping human beings rather than a single true God.²⁰⁴ This misinterpretation of Tibetan Buddhism may have resulted from Hedin's sources that focused primarily on Tibetans performing prostrations to the lamas. Hedin did not understand the significance of prostrations in the minds of the Tibetans. The practice of performing prostrations was meant to show respect for a teacher's wisdom and to decrease one's ego. After Hedin read about another traveler's description of prostrations given to the Dalai Lama, he commented that the practice was evidence of the Devil's presence in Tibet.

Here are plainly the wiles of the Devil. To make a mockery of holy things and rob God of the honour due unto Him the Evil one has by a trick of his usual cunning caused these barbarians to imitate as, and induced them to pay to a human being the reverence due to God and Jesus Christ alone.²⁰⁵

Here Tibetans were not only considered to be inferior for having a false religion, but were portrayed as barbarians influenced by the Devil. Part of the superstitious image that was cast onto the Tibetans was their blind, servile supplication to their gods. Hedin stated, "The holy Yigde is a cruel, hard hearted god, and his service must never be neglected; he must be appeased."²⁰⁶ Tibetan Buddhism depicted the deity as an evil idol the monks

²⁰³ Ibid., 312-313.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 337. Hedin, *Trans Himalaya*, 3: 55.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 337.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 56.

worshiped out of fear. Hedin described the repetition of the mantra, “*Om Mani Padme Hum*” as a plea for “the mercy of eternal powers.”²⁰⁷ However, the Chenrezig mantra has layers of meaning, which do not include begging the gods for mercy. The literal translation of the mantra is “Praise the jewel in the lotus.” The jewel and the lotus have an esoteric symbolism. The jewel, *mani*, is symbolic of compassion. The lotus, *padme*, is symbolic of wisdom. Wisdom and compassion are the two qualities to be attained for a Buddhist to reach the point of no suffering. *Om* is symbolic of the speech, body, and mind of Buddha that should be the role model of Buddhist practitioners. *Hum* is the harmony and unification of the two qualities, compassion and wisdom. So, the mantra is a daily affirmation of the principles of Buddhism rather than a plea for mercy from cruel gods.²⁰⁸

Hedin also portrayed Tibetans as ridiculous for assigning spiritual power to earthly objects. After a Tibetan official told him that it was forbidden for him to go boating on a sacred lake, Hedin asked the official, “The boat did not do any harm to the holy lake?”²⁰⁹ By dismissing the official’s explanation, he excused himself to transgress sacred landmarks in the name of science. He described how peasants worshipped stones that they believed had the foot and hand imprints from great holy men. He found it incredible that the peasants could view these as miraculous relics: “The great thing is that the crowd believes in them and continues to humbly make offerings to the monastery.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 55.

²⁰⁸ My understanding of the meaning of the mantra derives from several lessons from Lobsang Samten and Tenzin Thupwang, who were educated in the Namgyal Monastery, the personal monastery to the XIV Dalai Lama.

²⁰⁹ Hedin, *Trans Himalaya*, 3: 175-176.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 196.

He referred to the believers as blind devotees being led around like sheep with wool over their eyes. Hedin may have been factual in his description of the devotional practices of Tibetans; however, he did not try to understand the esoteric meaning of the rituals. Furthermore, he lacked an understanding of the intellectual practices that have been a part of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. One example would be the Tibetan practice of applying logic and debate to further understand the relationship between perception and reality, which has been integral to understanding the cessation of suffering in Buddhism.

William Montgomery McGovern also contributed to the image of Tibetans as superstitious and primitive. In his writing he referred to his servants directly as superstitious, and said that incense burning was a direct indication of a “primitive” religion.²¹¹ He related the outward practice of burning incense to the practice of other religions, but did not understand the inner meaning of such a procedure in Tibetan Buddhism. He understood incense burning as a primitive offering to the gods rather than a practice of training one’s mind to value generosity. In the Tibetan tradition the first quality to master is generosity, and offering incense and water is a means of being mindful of the practice of generosity. He may have assumed that offerings were to appease the deities or reciprocate a favor of the deities. However, in Tibetan Buddhism an offering given to Buddha is also understood as an offering not to him alone but to all sentient beings. Observing pilgrims traveling, he said, “I discerned these travelers to be extraordinarily kindly, simple, naïve people, completely ignorant and grossly superstitious, but quite willing to accept life as it came to them.”²¹² By viewing

²¹¹ McGovern, *Lhasa in Disguise*, 153, 372.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 203.

superstition as a lack of rational thought, he projected Tibetans as ignorant and apathetic. Nor did he attribute the Tibetan's acceptance of the vicissitudes of life to a stoic view or inner wisdom.

William McGovern correlated the Tibetan's widespread dirtiness to their superstitious and illogical outlook. He explained, "They believe that such a layer [of dirt] not only keeps the cold out but also keeps the luck in, and in many parts of the country a young man wants to be sure that his bride-elect has not washed this luck-covering away."²¹³ This seemed particularly strange to McGovern since dirtiness was not usually associated with beauty; yet, it was desirable for Tibetan brides to be viewed as beautiful. The Tibetan idea of sacred space added to McGovern's impression that Tibetans were a superstitious people. Describing a search for a campsite, he wrote:

Natives have a great fear of sleeping on the tops of passes. They believe them to be inhabited by dark and terrible demons who bring disaster upon any one who stops there, but in the present situation they had no choice, and we set about looking for a camping-place.²¹⁴

Not only did he portray Tibetans as silly and superstitious, he also compared them to children who feared monsters in their closet. Rather than finding out why Tibetans associated demons with mountain passes, he dismissed them as silly for believing in demons. By dismissing their spiritual beliefs, he also dismissed their forms of knowledge. Tibetans may have said that there were demons on the pass, but this could also mean that there had been significant fatalities in that location.

²¹³ Ibid., 202.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 117.

2.5 Despotic, Licentious, Violent, and Dirty

Western travelers saw Tibetans as religiously inferior, but reserved a special condemnation first for the lamas who were seen as tyrannical oligarchs and second for the peasants who were viewed as licentious, violent and dirty. By contrast, Western travelers saw themselves as logical, even-tempered, and democratic. According to Marco Pallis, Western scholars' view of Tibet's monastic leadership was influenced by their own views of the clergy's role during Europe's religious wars.²¹⁵ Many travelers viewed Tibet as a feudal and religious oligarchy because the closest reference point they could compare it to was their knowledge of feudal history in Europe. The Tibetan people were presented as thieves, drunkards, and sexually loose. It was not uncommon for the travelers to remark on how violent Tibetan society was. The dirtiness of the people and their homes was another emphasis in their descriptions of Tibetans. One of the travelers associated cleanliness with godliness, depicting the Tibetans as far from either characteristic.

According to Henry Savage Landor, the lamas, whom he portrayed as exploiting the weaker and disadvantaged, embodied much that was defective in Tibet. He stated that the lower lamas were slaves to the higher lamas.²¹⁶ Even amongst the Khampas, the lama was considered by Landor as the most savage and violent.²¹⁷ The lama in the Khampa camp was depicted as murderous, controlling, and brutal. Landon stated:

²¹⁵ Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939; reprint, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), 73.

²¹⁶ Landor, *Explorer's Adventures*, 128.

²¹⁷ Khampas are the people of the eastern province of Kham, who are known throughout Tibet for their banditry and violence.

[The lama's] first boast was that he killed three people (the natives said a good many more). His manner towards the people was most brutal. He was a tall man of marvelous muscular development, and between his lips, which never seem to close, he displayed a set of most powerful long pointed teeth, such as those one would see in a wild animal.²¹⁸

Not only did these depictions portray lamas as power hungry, but as violent and savage people in a province known for banditry.

Additionally, the peasants were painted as uncivilized due to filth, alcoholism, and sexual practices. Landor depicted Tibetans as weak people who could not live without alcohol. He commented, "Tibetans have a craving for alcohol."²¹⁹ He recounted how he offered alcohol at their request. However, the only alcohol he had with him was throat-burning purified alcohol which pleased them. Landor's depiction of them enjoying such harsh alcohol made them seem unrefined and desperate for any alcohol because they would go so far as to drink a harsh alcohol that was not intended for consumption. Further adding to the uncivilized image of Tibetans, he observed that the women accumulated dirt from birth without washing.²²⁰ He thereby depicted Tibetan women as undesirable and ugly.

Tibetan marriage practices were interpreted as immoral by Henry Savage Landor, Perceval Landon, and Francis Younghusband. They considered polyandry as backward and inimical to the purposes of life. Landor theorized that polyandry caused the Tibetans to be mentally and physically deficient, and that it would lead to the disappearance of the

²¹⁸ Henry Savage Landor, *Tibet and Nepal Painted and Described* (London: A&C Black, 1905), 173.

²¹⁹ Landor, *Explorer's Adventures*, 51.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 174.

Tibetan race.²²¹ Even though Landon thought polyandry worked well for the family, he still maintained that it was immoral.²²² Additionally, he commented that Tibetans were not completely devoid of morals; they were just morally loose. He stated, “It need not be said in the conventional sense of the word, morals are unknown in Tibet.”²²³

Oriental cruelty was an image that fit in with the image of the Tibetan authorities as despotic. The two British officers painted the ruling class as cruel because this image made the officers feel that the 1904 expedition was moral and justified. The Lhasa authorities appeared intimidating and violent to Landon and Younghusband. The British officers stated that Lhasa authorities tortured a lama and his servants for helping British spies, Chandra Das and Kawaguchi; some of the torture included gouging out eye balls, beating, and cutting off hands and feet.²²⁴ When Landon was visiting a monastery, he was shown a half starved hermit sealed up in a hole in the wall; he was saddened for bearing witness to the private misery of the monk’s self-immolation. He then lamented that the little boy monks were doomed to the same bleak future as the monk in the wall.²²⁵ It was in the best interest of the British officers to apply an image of oriental despotism to the Tibetan ruling class. It is very interesting that Landon compared the thirteenth Dalai Lama to King Louis XIV for ruling his ministers with an iron rod.²²⁶

This comparison intended to portray the Dalai Lama as an absolutist ruler. However, he

²²¹Landon, *Painted and Described*, 126,132-134.

²²² Landon, *Opening of Tibet*, 193, 246.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 321.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 307, 314.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 366.

never witnessed the thirteenth Dalai Lama actively rule; he was on his way to Mongolia by the time the British were encroaching upon Lhasa.

Other travelers, such as Sven Hedin, emphasized the draconian behavior of the officials and the violence of Tibetans. Tibetans were depicted as severe and drastic for their forms of punishment. Hedin recounted a story about robbers who had their hands and heads sent to Lhasa for pillaging the property of nomads.²²⁷ Hedin also narrated how his Ladaki coolies became entangled in a physical fight with the local Tibetans who refused to sell straw for the mules needed for the expedition.²²⁸ He explained that the men came to him to settle the matter, and he told them to resume the fight later to determine who wins the argument. Hedin depicted his coolies and Tibetans as children acting violently out of control, and himself as a parent who was looked upon to settle the dispute. He even went to the extent of qualifying Tibetans as pre-disposed to roughness when he referred to, “the natural rude character of Tibetans.”²²⁹

The most dramatic illustration of violence and severe punishment in Tibet was Sven Hedin’s description of a woman being lashed for selling fireworks in Lhasa. He reported that she was stripped naked, tied to rings, and lashed 150 times; after she fainted, she was revived only to receive more lashings.²³⁰ Hedin’s emphasis on the gender of the criminal made the Tibetan authorities seem extra-ordinarily cruel because women had less power in most societies; the Tibetan authorities were depicted as sadistic predators preying upon the disadvantaged. The juxtaposition of brutal punishment contrasted with

²²⁷ Hedin, *Trans Himalaya*, 3: 29.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 89.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 370.

the spirituality of the sacred city. Any expectation of Tibet as a spiritual place was eclipsed by Hedin's depiction of it as a place of cruelty.

The officials in Tibet were characterized as draconian especially when it came to the policy of keeping out foreigners. When Hedin had arrived in Tokchen, the oldest of his drivers had sobbed that he would receive a hundred stripes for bringing him farther into Tibet without permission.²³¹ He also mentioned that Tibetan chiefs would have their heads chopped off if he did not return back to the last town that he was in, Takche.²³² Another Tibetan named, Chiugompa, wanted to evade authorities by accompanying Sven Hedin because he feared being beaten to death for aiding Sven Hedin earlier.²³³ These characterizations could be a result of Hedin's malcontent with Tibetan officials for making his access to Lhasa difficult. Perhaps the Tibetans wished to project themselves as cruel to scare Westerners out of the country.

Not only did the British officers see Tibetans as cruel, but they professed further evidence of Tibetans as uncivilized by ridiculing their hygiene. Western imperialist and popular western culture associated dark skin with dirtiness, and reasoned that if non-white people were whiter or cleaner, they would be more civilized.²³⁴ Similarly, Perceval Landon emphasized that Tibetans could be white and civilized if it were not for their lack of hygiene. Furthermore, he compared Tibetans to non-whites based on the appearance

²³¹ Ibid., 177.

²³² Ibid., 182.

²³³ Ibid., 259.

²³⁴ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 86-87; Dana S. Hale, "French Images of Race on Product Trademarks during the Third Republic," in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, ed. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 138.

of dirt on Tibetan skin. He then further commented, “In spite of the dirt, wherever the bodies are not protected by clothes the skin remains of an ivory whiteness, which is indistinguishable from that of the so-called white races.”²³⁵ Landon compared Tibetans to Gurkhas and “grotesque negroes” because they were so dirty that they appeared dark; however, if they were cleaner they would appear whiter.²³⁶ Being white was the measure to which the Tibetans were upheld.

McGovern had a particularly strong opinion against the Tibetan monks as corrupt despots and the Tibetan peasants as immoral. He remarked that war between the Buddhists was a contradiction to their beliefs. He painted the nature of the monks as, “Wild, reckless men they are. Sometimes one monastery will wage war against another, and sometimes these ecclesiastical swash-bucklers will pour into the towns and seize and hack to pieces some unpopular governor.”²³⁷ He not only saw the monks as capricious and arbitrarily violent, but also as corrupt abusers of power over the government and the people. In McGovern’s account, the monastic system appeared to be a selfish oligarchy that ruined the society. According to McGovern, the monks of the three large monasteries usurped the influence of the Dalai Lama to the extent that they forced xenophobic policies onto the civil authorities.²³⁸ He compared the “rapacious” monks to blood sucking leeches.²³⁹

²³⁵ Landon, *Opening of Tibet*, 63.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 63, 72.

²³⁷ McGovern, *Lhasa in Disguise*, 4.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4-5, 331.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 330.

Not only did McGovern create a miserable image of the monastic system, but also he described an image of the peasants' lives as miserable. Tibetan lives were portrayed as pitiful due to the cold and dirt caused by the environment. He commented on the disposition of some townspeople: "The dirt, the cold, and the misery seemed to have eaten into the very souls of these poor beings, and they all had that dead, dull, sodden look of a yeomanry long since their decline."²⁴⁰ When McGovern heard that a dying man feared to be reborn as a louse, he commented, "I pitied the poor man, but could not help feeling that in Tibet the lice -- and there are plenty of them -- lead a happier existence than human beings."²⁴¹ McGovern's description of Tibetans as unhygienic made them seem ignorant about the connection hygiene had to the quality of life.

McGovern depicted Tibetans as wild and licentious. He frankly stated, "There can be no doubt that the moral life in Tibet is of a low order."²⁴² He measured Tibetan morality by Judeo-Christian ideals of sex. He thought that even Lhasa's high society was permissive of prostitution and adultery, and blamed the moral complacency on the unattainable goal of celibacy for lay people in Buddhism.²⁴³ He chronicled how Tibetans licentiously celebrated as he came into Lhasa during the New Year: "Men were shouting long songs in honor of Arak, and several laid hands on some of the local ladies, who seemed none to unwilling, and more than once a fight broke out between various groups of revelers."²⁴⁴ McGovern's narrative depicted them as licentious, violent, and

²⁴⁰ Ibid. , 127.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 129-130.

²⁴² Ibid., 450.

²⁴³ Ibid., 450.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 341.

undisciplined. After he published, the British Indian officials were alarmed at the negative impression of Tibet in McGovern's book. Charles Bell and the Western travelers that followed him began to produce a more positive depiction of Tibetans.

Section 3

The Paradox of an Image

Between 1924 and 1950 Western travelers' perceptions changed from a view of Tibetans as savages to a more positive depiction. Even though the travelers' views of Tibet had improved, there were some lingering influences from the previous decades negative of portrayal. The travelers during this period did not portray Tibet as immaculate, but the newer characterization was a more positive impression than previous depictions before 1924. An essential reason for the change was the British Foreign Office's concern about McGovern's book *To Lhasa in Disguise*, published in 1924. The British censored the travelers' accounts through the Foreign Office in order to maintain a good image of its ally by requiring travelers entering the southern border to sign a statement to turn in what they wrote about their trip.²⁴⁵ The travelers who journeyed to Tibet and wrote about it after World War I and World War II were the following: Sir Charles Bell, Alexandra David-Neel, André Guibaut, Marco Pallis, John Dingle, Heinrich Harrer, Peter Goullart, Fosco Maraini, Lowell Thomas Jr., and Giuseppe Tucci.

As the travelers observed Tibet, they perceived a paradox resulting from aesthetic and negative depictions of Tibetans. The aesthetic attributes that travelers saw in Tibetans and Tibet were cheerfulness, majestic landscapes, tranquility, spirituality, and intelligence. Alternatively, they also encountered experiences that led to negative portrayals of Tibetans and Tibet such as cruelty, superstition, xenophobia, danger, and backwardness. Their views were framed by the experiences and memories of two world wars, the Cold War, and the modernization of the West. They still valued modernity, but they were more realistic about its limits and consequences. They contrasted the

²⁴⁵ Dodin and Rather, *Imagining Tibet*, 67-90.

technological underdevelopment of Tibet to their own technologically advanced societies. Westerners were attracted to a mysterious, isolated, and forbidden Tibet. The Western travelers contrasted positive attributes, such as logic, to the negative attributes such as superstition. The travelers observed paradoxes between the positive and negative depictions when they wrote about politics, the environment, spirituality, economics, and the national character of Tibet. Both Charles Bell and Alexandria David-Neel were innovative transitional figures who contributed to a more positive image of Tibet and Tibetans.

3.1 The Transition

Charles Bell was motivated by the belief that supporting Tibet was in the best interest of Britain because they were good trade partners and a buffer to China.²⁴⁶ He set the example of disparaging China, and directly criticized his own country: “In one or another they were placed under Chinese domination, the British Government were primarily responsible for putting them there, first by the Lhasa Expedition and next by the treaties that followed.”²⁴⁷ One example he gave was point nine in the 1908 Regulations made in April of that year which forbade all British subjects from entering Tibet, including Indians. He pointed out that this policy was resented by Tibetans for placing them under Chinese regulations.²⁴⁸ When Bell portrayed China’s invasion in 1910 as tactless and savage, he asserted that it was up to the white foreigner to teach

²⁴⁶ Dodin and Rather, *Imagining Tibet*, 67-90.

²⁴⁷ Bell, *Past and Present*, 91, 113.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Asians how to practice tolerance towards each other.²⁴⁹ Even though Bell favored the Tibetan position, he viewed all Asians as quarrelling children. Like many of his peers, Bell had an imperialist agenda where he imagined Britain as the protective father that could help Tibet. Bell further removed any doubt of Britain's support of Tibet by affirming the thirteenth Dalai Lama's request for a paternal relationship between Britain and Tibet. He quoted the Dalai Lama:

I now look to you for protection, and I trust that relations between the British Government and Tibet will be that of a father to his children. Wishing to be guided by you, I hope to give you full information on my arrival.²⁵⁰

Bell's interest in forging a relationship with Tibet was motivated by the prospect of mineral and agricultural development. He made careful notes of the minerals that could be mined in Tibet such as silver, copper, iron, and coal.²⁵¹ He kept notes on the variety of crops and the altitudes they were grown in such as barley, peas, mustard, radishes, and turnips; he also included areas that were good for high yields such as Gyantse and the Chumbi Valley.²⁵² His notes on minerals and agriculture indicated a covetous imperialist eye that fantasized about how Britain could benefit from the resources of another country.

Charles Bell's imperialist agenda was the impetus for his relationship with the thirteenth Dalai Lama and the creation of a more positive image of Tibet. According to Bell, his diplomatic meetings grew into friendship with the thirteenth Dalai Lama. Bell had a high regard for his friend, whom he saw as a disciplined man because he rose at six

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 97-98.

²⁵⁰ Bell, *Past and Present*, 109.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 13.

²⁵² Ibid., 16-17; Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928; reprint, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), 30-31.

in the morning for meditation and studying Buddhism.²⁵³ Bell defended the Dalai Lama as shrewd for fleeing to Mongolia during the 1904 expedition while other British officers viewed him as a coward; Bell reasoned that the spiritual leader's flight was necessary because Tibet would have been powerless if he were captured by the Chinese.²⁵⁴

Charles Bell justified aspects of Tibetan culture that earlier travelers demeaned, such as banditry, dirtiness, and polyandry. Rather than ignore the previous negative images of Tibetans, Bell confronted them. He argued that robbery was a means of survival on the plains because subsistence living was precarious among nomads; furthermore, he rationalized that robbery was an instinct to the nomadic Tibetans because they could not resist stealing even when they came to their holy city, Lhasa.²⁵⁵ Bell not only defended Tibetans for being thieves, but he also defended them against the accusations of devil worship.

Previous travelers claimed that Tibetan Buddhism was only a cover for worshiping demons and devils. Bell pointed out that previous travelers incorrectly identified Tibetan devotional rooms as the "Chamber of Horrors" due to the fierce masks and the stuffed yaks on the walls and the ceilings.²⁵⁶ He then correctly defined the devotional room as a room for the protector gods of the household that only appeared frightening.²⁵⁷ Bell's explanation made Tibetan Buddhism appear less demonic.

²⁵³ Ibid., 131.

²⁵⁴ Bell, *Past and Present*, 129.

²⁵⁵ Bell, *People of Tibet*, 141.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 71.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

Charles Bell disputed Perceval Landon's characterization of Tibetans as filthy people. Bell referred to Landon and his peers as less knowledgeable about Tibet because they traveled in the less cosmopolitan areas of Tibet. Bell wrote, "The charge is frequently made against Tibet that they do not wash from the cradle to the grave."²⁵⁸ Bell clarified that the gentry of Lhasa washed their hands and faces with soap and water, and brushed their teeth every morning.²⁵⁹ This discussion went much deeper than dirty skin, since it challenged conventional notions of cleanliness as a sign of civilization and decency. Bell contested Landon's impression of Tibetans in order to project a depiction of them as civilized enough to be allies with England.²⁶⁰

Bell defended the practice of polyandry rather than portraying Tibetans as immoral and licentious for their unique marriage arrangements. He argued that polyandry helped Tibetans survive rather than devolve. Bell reasoned that polyandry facilitated trade because the husbands of the same family would travel in separate directions to trade among nomads; the practice also kept the land from being subdivided.²⁶¹ He approached the issue from a feminist perspective because he portrayed polyandry empowering for women. He explained that polyandry elevated women because family life revolved around the wives.²⁶² If Bell's rationale did not ease the Western reader's feelings about polyandry, they could at least be assured that it was not

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 102-103. Landon had stated, "As it is, they exist from the cradle, or what corresponds to it, to the stone slab on which their dead bodies are hacked to pieces, without a bath or even a partial cleansing of any kind."; Landon, *Opening of Tibet*, 63.

²⁵⁹ Bell, *People of Tibet*, 102-103.

²⁶⁰ Dodin and Rather, *Imagining Tibet*, 2001, 67-90.

²⁶¹ Bell, *People of Tibet*, 194; Bell, *Past and Present*, 22.

²⁶² Bell, *People of Tibet*, 159.

the standard marriage arrangement. Bell claimed that monogamy was the standard marriage practice compared to polyandry and polygamy.²⁶³ Besides protecting the moral integrity of Tibetans, Bell promoted a more enlightened image of Tibetans.

The Tibetan nobility appeared less despotic and more benevolent toward the peasantry due to Bell's depiction of education in Tibet. He made sure to note that the sons of noble families were not the only educated children. He included the custom that people of high rank welcomed local lower class children of both genders to be educated by a tutor along with their own children on their private estates.²⁶⁴ Bell portrayed the peasantry as somewhat educated rather than blind fools led astray by an oligarchy. Bell's explanation that education was available to the lower classes made the structures of power appear porous to the lower classes. Bell stated that the majority of the students enrolled in classes to prepare for government service were upper class, but the lower class was able to take advantage of these classes as well.²⁶⁵ Bell's description of the curriculum for Tibetan officials made them appear educated, competent, and moral. He explained that Tibetan gentlemen received an education in history, biographies, law, and moral precepts as requirements for a job in government service such as the official correspondence office or the finance office.²⁶⁶ His inclusion of intelligent, hard-working Tibetan women made Tibetan society appear more empowering for women. Bell affirmed that the Buddhists were fond of learning and that it was their central virtue.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Ibid., 194.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 104.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 105.

²⁶⁷ Bell, *Past and Present*, 57.

Despite the previous portrayals of Tibetans as intelligent, Charles Bell continued to depict Tibetans as irrational and superstitious. He became concerned with Tibetan superstition when he thought that it would impede economic progress. Bell thought that Tibetans would not be successful with building programs. He seemed perturbed that Tibetans believed that it was harmful to crops in the summer when they prayed to keep the rain away during the construction of a building.²⁶⁸ Similarly, he was concerned about the religious belief that crops would fail if minerals were mined.²⁶⁹ Bell obviously thought that construction and mining would be difficult in Tibet. According to Bell, religion was also responsible for financial instability. He explained that families went into debt because they paid the monks to pray for their deceased relatives to reincarnate well.²⁷⁰

Charles Bell depicted Tibetans as happy fun-loving people rather than portraying them as licentious drunkards. He did recognize that Tibetans drank alcohol, but made them appear jovial rather than carnal. According to Bell, the Tibetan rules of hospitality were to offer liquor three times to the guests, and to refill the guests' cups after two sips.²⁷¹ He described Tibetans joyfully engaged in activities together despite class distinctions. Bell claimed that their dominant characteristic was their cheerfulness, and that the poor found happiness in song and dance while they worked.²⁷² Bell described the

²⁶⁸ Bell, *People of Tibet*, 38-39.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 60-61.

evenings of the aristocratic households. After dinner, the aristocratic husbands and wives would mingle, sing, and dance with their servants without deprecating themselves.²⁷³

The relationship between aristocratic people and servants appeared to be familiar and compassionate because they spent time together as equals rather than in strict positions of superiority and inferiority.

Charles Bell's perception of Tibetan women as joyful correlated with the perception of them as beautiful. He complimented Tibetan women because they possessed strength, cheerful faces, and radiant smiles.²⁷⁴ Bell pointed out that physical beauty was relative:

As to the standards of beauty, who shall decide? Many English people deny beauty to the generality of Tibetan women; the almond eyes, flat noses, and high cheek bones are causes of offence. But to many Tibetans it appears that some European features are abnormal and ugly.²⁷⁵

He then gave voice to a Tibetan lady's perspective that English features were rather large and simian.²⁷⁶ He may have been the first Western traveler that envisioned Tibetans as both inwardly and outwardly beautiful, but he was not the last.

Much like Bell, Alexandra David-Neel was a transitional figure between the period of travelers from 1900 to 1924 and travelers who journeyed between 1924 and 1950. She focused on the grotesque occult aspects of Tibetan culture much like the earlier travelers; however, in contrast to the travelers before her, she reveled in this image rather than cast it as immoral and sinful. She romanticized Tibet as a place of wisdom and

²⁷³ Ibid., 81, 171.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 148.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 146.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

peace much in the manner of the travelers who journeyed to Tibet after her. She published this romantic vision of Tibet's dark exoticism after establishing herself as an eccentric adventurer who traveled throughout India, the Himalayan region, and Lhasa.

She fancied herself as a ground-breaking and heroic woman who expanded her mind. Alexandra David-Neel identified herself as a feminist, an anarchist, a member of the Theosophical Society, and as a Buddhist philosopher.²⁷⁷ She was drawn to northern India in 1912 to discover Buddhist doctrines from the thirteenth Dalai Lama in Kalimpong.²⁷⁸ She fostered her own greatness by emphasizing how she impressed the thirteenth Dalai Lama during their meeting rather than revealing the details of the philosophical principals they discussed. Inspired by her meeting with the Dalai Lama, she traveled to Tibet to further study Buddhism.²⁷⁹ Her experience from both her journeys to Tibet in 1912 and 1923 would lead to the several publications that would form both a dark and romantic image of Tibet. Alexandra David-Neel published her work in the latter half of the 1920's after she had reached Lhasa in 1925, became popular in France, and published several more books about Tibet.²⁸⁰

Her book, *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, which was published in 1929, featured occult and supernatural images of Tibet that included such things as zombies, and possessed daggers that represented the Bon Po influence. Her book also emphasized the supernatural phenomena rather than the philosophical meaning behind Buddhist rituals and relics. She differentiated between the supernatural powers and the evil arts. She did

²⁷⁷ *One Woman's Journey, DVD.*

²⁷⁸ Alexandra David-Neel, *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* (Paris: Plon, 1929; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 2, 4. *One Woman's Journey, DVD.*

²⁷⁹ David-Neel, *Magic and Mystery*, 4-5.

²⁸⁰ *One Woman's Journey, DVD.*

not associate evil with Tibetan Buddhism like other travelers before her, but she did attribute the evil arts to Bon Po and Tantric Hinduism.²⁸¹ Her stories about Buddhism were not idealistic either. Alexandra David-Neel wrote about a high lama who encouraged a novice monk to eat a piece of a dead lama floating downstream because the flesh of high spiritual beings contained special qualities.²⁸² Despite her outrageously disgusting details, her fascination with transmitting spiritual power from the being to another was apparent. She created an image of Tibetans that was both spiritual and barbaric. Her explanation of Tibetan *rolangs*, or zombies, seemed to be filled with more horrific detail than that of any other traveler that addressed the same subject. She explained that Bon Po sorcerers revived a corpse, hung onto it, cupped mouth to mouth, and chanted a magical spell. The sorcerer finished by biting the tongue off and keeping it as a magical weapon.²⁸³ In her accounts, she made the nuance between the benign magic practiced by the lamas and the malicious magic of the sorcerers.

Despite Alexandra David-Neel's horrific and fantastical tales, Tibet was her refuge from the modern world at war. As she contemplated remaining in the hermit's cave she lamented, "Too many causes opposed any desire of staying there and of laying down, once and for all, the burden of foolish ideas, routine cares and duties to which, like other Westerners, I still fancied myself to be bound."²⁸⁴ She obviously fantasized about remaining in Tibet. Eventually, she returned to Europe because she felt obliged to return. She used the words *suffering* and *terror* to describe her departure from Tibet, and she

²⁸¹ David-Neel, *Magic and Mystery*, 131.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 133-134.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 134-135.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

referred to the land south of the Himalayas and the West in general as *sorrowful*.²⁸⁵ She was also dissuaded from returning to her home country, France, because she felt that Tibet was safer than returning to Europe.²⁸⁶

Despite her emphasis on occult practices in Tibet, she envisioned Tibetan Buddhists as intellectuals. Alexandra David-Neel depicted lamas as intelligent leaders with degrees who led large monastic universities.²⁸⁷ The lamas appeared to be well-rounded and knowledgeable beyond Buddhism due to the variety of fields they studied. She described lamas absorbed in high intellectual pursuits such as philosophy, history, and secular literature.²⁸⁸ However, the description of intelligent Tibetans pertained only to the monasteries and the lamas; descriptions of Tibetan peasants as intelligent were absent in *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*. All of the secrets and knowledge she valued were kept inside the monasteries. Her preference for knowledge rather than personal friendships was evident when she lamented that she was leaving behind the knowledge in large monastic libraries in Shigaste.²⁸⁹ She did not express any heartbreak over parting from the villagers.

Much like Alexandra David-Neel, John Dingle and Marco Pallis journeyed to Tibet to learn its spirituality. Dingle had traveled to Tibet much earlier, approximately

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 78.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 69.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 11.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 17, 20.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 90.

from 1909, but he did not publish his account, *My Life in Tibet*, until 1939.²⁹⁰ Like David-Neel, Dingle had a psychic experience that led him to discover a mystical Tibet. The inspiration for his journey into Tibet came to John Dingle in Burma when he heard the voice of his old teacher telling to him to travel to Tibet.²⁹¹ He believed that the west should emulate Tibetan ideals of compassion and peace to change the world, and he used words such as “destruction” and “war” to describe the West.²⁹² He saw Tibetan Buddhism as the antidote to a harsh, modern, and cold Western world. Pallis had traveled to Tibet twice, in 1933 and 1936, and before he published his book *Peaks and Lamas*.²⁹³ Although he originally he went on his journey in order to join a mountaineering expedition on Gangtori peak, he later revealed that he wanted to absorb Tibetan culture by adopting the customs, the dress, the mores, and the language.²⁹⁴ Pallis and Dingle looked to Tibet as the remedy to the shortcomings of the modern West rather than being motivated by imperialist agendas.

The rest of the travelers treated in this section also portrayed Tibet in a positive light during World War II and the Cold War. André Guibaut was in Tibet from 1939-1940 as a geographer surveying the Ngolo County, but he did not publish his book until 1949 because of his service for France during World War II.²⁹⁵ He described Tibetans in

²⁹⁰ Edwin John Dingle, *My Life in Tibet* (Los Angeles: The Institute of Mental Physics, 1939), preface, sleeve, 39, 192.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 45-51.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, sleeve.

²⁹³ Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, 5, 10-11.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5, 97, 200-203.

²⁹⁵ Guibaut, *Venture*, 1-4, 190-191.

benevolent terms, yet he did not omit the more morbid and medieval images of Tibetan culture. Peter Goullart and Heinrich Harrer journeyed into Tibet during World War II. Goullart stayed in Tibet from 1939 until 1941.²⁹⁶ Heinrich Harrer and his fellow mountaineer, Peter Aufschnaiter, were Austrian Nazis who had escaped into Tibet from a British P.O.W. camp in 1939.²⁹⁷ They travelled in the outlying region and did not make it into Lhasa until 1942.²⁹⁸ Goullart and Harrer were very aware of the danger in the West caused by World War II, and they contrasted the danger of World War II with their peaceful experience in Lhasa.

The rest of the travelers entered Tibet in 1949. Fosco Maraini and Giuseppe Tucci were traveling companions from Italy. The American Thomas Lowell and his father were radio announcers that reported their travels in Tibet.²⁹⁹ Before the Chinese invasion, this last set of travelers who came into Tibet perceived it through a Cold War context. These travelers came while the West was still conscious of the horrors that modern machinery was capable of during war. However, they also experienced the comfort and the convenience of mass produced machinery such as cars and appliances, which partly accounts for why they viewed Tibet as backward.

²⁹⁶ Peter Goullart, *Land of the Lamas: Adventures in the Secret Tibet* (New York: Dutton, 1959), 3.

²⁹⁷ Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, 22.

²⁹⁸ Heinrich Harrer *My Life in Forbidden Lhasa*. National Geographic Society (originally published July 1955) Published on line May 2008 <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/print/2008/05/tibetans/harrer-text> (accessed 7/4/2008).

²⁹⁹ Shakabpa, *Political History*, 298.

3.2 A Peaceful Refuge from the West

Individuals from Western countries perceived Tibet as a peaceful refuge from the chaotic, modern world and a repository for mysteries. Western travelers idealized Tibetans as peaceful and harmonious; where on the other hand, these same Westerners were also disenchanted by the West because of its violence, machines, and impersonal modernity. According to Guibaut, the madness and the modernity of World War II did not penetrate Tibet's pure land. Even though his friend Victor Louis Liotard was murdered in Tibet, he maintained that the country was a peaceful oasis from the uncivilized world.³⁰⁰ Guibaut argued that Tibet was one of the few places in the world that could have been untouched by World War II; Tibetans, he wrote were "the only people unaware that the world became insane."³⁰¹ Tibet's image as a utopia was incorruptible for Guibaut.

Edwin John Dingle and Marco Pallis both fantasized about retreating from the West into their own idealized versions of Tibet. These two travelers obviously elevated the image of Tibet, and viewed Tibet as superior to the West. Dingle had preferred a spiritual life in Tibet to a mundane life in the West. He had no care for the outside world, and wished to remain in a Tibetan temple the rest of his life.³⁰² His tone toward Tibet was mystical, but distinctly different from that of Alexandra David-Neel. His Tibet was *serene, soft, and tranquil* rather than macabre. Marco Pallis perceived Tibet as a traditional culture that was untouched by modernity when he ran away from the

³⁰⁰ Guibaut, *Venture*, 191.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁰² Dingle, *My Life*, 154-156.

commercially homogenizing West. Travelers such as McGovern saw Tibet as a miserable place, backward in areas such as health. However, Pallis perceived the lack of progress as exactly what made Tibet a refuge. He expressed a sense of familiarity among Tibetans and entertained the idea of reincarnating as a Tibetan as long as Tibet did not emulate America, a new nation and the anti-thesis of traditional culture.³⁰³ In order for Tibet to keep its identity it could not become modern and industrial like the United States. He described the modern West as “totalitarian materialism,” and “a deplorable world reducing movement”; he then continued to say that non-traditional countries were gaining control over the world.³⁰⁴

In contrast to some of the travelers, Heinrich Harrer had no mystical fantasies of Tibet. Instead, he was attracted to the image of Tibet as a desolate land that made a good hide-out for a prisoner-of-war who turned fugitive. In 1939 Harrer made his initial plans for escape from the British prisoner-of-war camp in India; he chose Tibet as the passage to China because it seemed the least populated.³⁰⁵ He thought that since there were fewer people he would not be caught in the large empty spaces of Tibet’s landscape.³⁰⁶ After hearing about the destruction in Europe from newspapers, he strengthened his resolve to reach Lhasa.³⁰⁷ Even after he had lived in Tibet for several years, he described it as a place of refuge from the horrible consequences of World War II and ills of modern society:

³⁰³ Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, 202.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*,

³⁰⁵ Harrer, *Seven Years*, 22.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

We did not miss appliances of Western civilization. Europe with its life of turmoil seemed far away. Often as we sat and listened to the radio bringing reports from our country we shook our heads at the depressing news. There seemed no inducement to go home.³⁰⁸

In contrast to David-Neel, he was able to detach himself from the modern fancies of the West. The peaceful domain of Tibet was more desirable than the war-ridden world beyond its borders despite the lack of modern amenities.

Furthermore, travelers such as Fosco Maraini saw Tibet as a place that safeguarded intellectual secrets that were of value to mankind. Maraini, an ethnographer and a student of Giuseppe Tucci, valued Tibet as intellectual and saw it as a Utopia. He thought the mystery of Tibet could be unlocked by studying its art and culture, and that an educated man could value studying Tibet's art, ethnography, and philology.³⁰⁹ Tibet was a place that sheltered discoveries about the meaning and experience of being human. This was in sharp contrast to earlier travelers at the turn of the century who described Tibet as the place to reveal humans living miserably like lice. In Maraini's travel memoirs he held a certain attraction, respect, and admiration for a Tibetan woman named Pema Chokyi.³¹⁰ He contrasted his ideal image of her to his less than ideal image of the West. She was described as civilized, refined, and appreciative of beauty; whereas the West was described with words such as hatred, racial struggle, religious intolerance, political ferocity, and the atomic age.³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 182.

³⁰⁹ Fosco Maraini, *Secret Tibet*, trans. Eric Mosbacher (New York: Viking Press, 1952), 55-109.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 52-52.

³¹¹ Ibid., 278.

Unsurprisingly, Fosco Maraini's teacher, Giuseppe Tucci, held a similar view that Tibet was a shelter for intellectual knowledge. His journey was a scholarly pursuit to study Buddhism because he saw it as a spiritual mind-expanding place compared to the West. Tucci was an academic, so his investment in knowledge colored how he viewed Tibet. He set out to study the Buddhist temples in order to show Tibet's religious dependence on India and a reservoir of knowledge from India.³¹² During a previous visit in 1947, his interests were in the art, religion, and history of Tibet and did not include the politics of the time.³¹³ However, he saw Tibet's government as an ideal refuge in which to discover self-mastery and to expand the mind. In Tibet, he argued, men had the freedom for self-mastery because of the humane and personal government, while Western society restricted personal freedom and thought. He referred to the State in the West as an entity that wished to dictate what one thought and wrote.³¹⁴ His views were undoubtedly influenced by his experience of having been a restricted intellectual during Mussolini's fascist regime in Italy. According to Tucci, Tibet was a refuge for intellectuals to think freely.

Not all of the travelers shared a deep intellectual interest in Tibet; Lowell Thomas Jr. was above all driven by adventure. He viewed Tibet as an adventurer's dream because it was such an exclusive and inaccessible challenge.³¹⁵ Tibet, he wrote was the "Number

³¹² Giuseppe Tucci, *To Lhasa and Beyond: Diary of the Expedition to Tibet in the Year MCMXLVIII*, trans. Mario Carelli (Roma: Istituto poligrafico dello Stato, 1956), 5.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 8, 36-37, 44-45.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

³¹⁵ Lowell Thomas Jr., *Out of this World: Across the Himalayas to the Forbidden Tibet* (New York: Greystone Press, 1950), 13.

One Eldorado for explorers and travelers with the appetite for the unknown.”³¹⁶ Unlike many of his contemporaries, he did not project attributes such as peacefulness and tranquility onto Tibet. He viewed the journey to Tibet as a heroic and thrilling challenge.

Peter Goullart traveled to Tibet because of its potential as a peaceful refuge from the Sino-Japanese War and a place for mysteries to be discovered. Goullart left Shanghai in 1939 for Tibet, which he referred to as China’s western province, in-order to seek refuge from the Sino-Japanese War and to survey for the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives. He stated, “A great desire to get out into fresh air, into the free and unspoilt China of the West had taken possession of me and soon merged into a firm intention.”³¹⁷ He saw Tibet as a pure land that he had to visit to fulfill some part of himself. To Goullart, Tibet was a land of mystery and enchantment, and a place that he had dreamt of visiting all of his life. His perspective was quite unique among the travelers because he came to Tibet from the east rather than the south and he also spoke Chinese.³¹⁸

3.3 Impending Doom

Western travelers were lured to Tibet by its potential for refuge, peace, mystery, and discovery; yet they were aware of an impending invasion into Tibet between 1924 and 1950. Some travelers knew that their experience of Tibet as a “Shangri-la” would be changed by an invasion by China. The threat of a Chinese invasion prompted Westerners to view Tibetans as innocent little brothers who had to be protected. The image of Tibet

³¹⁶ Ibid., 13.

³¹⁷ Goullart, *Land of the Lamas*, 1.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 17.

as a doomed place also gave the impression that it was a rare precious jewel to behold before it became ruined by foreign influence. The Chinese invasion was not the only threat that Westerners envisioned; for a place that they idealized as being frozen in time, it was modernity that threatened that unique and charming culture. Guibaut forewarned of both Chinese and other forms of encroachment into Tibet. He stated that the pegs the Chinese put in the ground in Tibet's eastern province were a sign of their plans to take over Tibet:

They do not realize that these pegs are warning signs that a very ancient civilization, now condemned is about to disappear. Will that which is to come be an improvement? The time is obviously near when it will be possible to penetrate Tibet by car or plane. Then Lama civilization will dissolve into tourism.³¹⁹

Guibaut imagined that a future of cars and tourism, whether brought by China or the West, would be the ruin of Tibet. When he suggested that modernization would improve Tibet, he softened the image of China as an invader. Marco Pallis was more concerned about the impact of commercialism and modernity from the West. He stated:

My basic thesis is that between any traditional code of behavior and the customs of any anti-traditional civilization like ours -- the only one of its kind that history now remembers -- there is no real equivalence. Modern Occidentalism is threatening to flatten out the whole world and mould it to a single, rather dull pattern, throwing away all that diversity whereby man has expressed himself for centuries.³²⁰

In this quote he alluded to the homogenizing force brought on by the power of industrial nations. Western commercialism was the villain here, rather than China, and the victim was Tibet, which would suffer from cultural genocide. In this description the Western

³¹⁹ Guibaut, *Venture*, 2.

³²⁰ Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, 201.

traveler romanticized Tibetan culture without demonizing China, and created a critical image of his own culture.

Instead of seeing modernization as a threat, Heinrich Harrer saw China as a threat to an idyllic people. Due to his intimate friendships among the Tibetans, Harrer had strong feelings about the Chinese invasion of Tibet. He recognized that for centuries China had incorrectly asserted its claim to Tibet as a province; additionally, Harrer asserted that Tibetans had their own sovereign government to which they were entitled.³²¹ The urgency of the situation was apparent when Harrer explained that so many Westerners were invited to the country to attest to Tibet's sovereignty to the rest of the world, especially Lowell Thomas Jr., in 1949.³²² Harrer viewed China as a bully trying to push around Tibet as it desperately sought new allies. According to Harrer, the Tibetans' fear of China was reinforced by an ominous comet in 1948.³²³ "I, too, felt anxious," he wrote, "but my anxiety was based on the sobering estimate of the situation. Asia's future looked black."³²⁴ After the Tibetan National Assembly's appeal for protection from the United Nations was rejected, Harrer expressed disappointment, especially considering that the United Nations knew that Tibet was not under Chinese imperial rule. With sadness he expressed that his life in Tibet was over because the country had to surrender to China.³²⁵ For Harrer, the Tibetans were helpless, peaceful victims. And if the Tibetans

³²¹ Harrer, *Seven Years*, 230.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*, 242.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 298.

were depicted so vividly as victims, then the Chinese would come across equally and vividly as villains.

Other travelers were not so detailed or as passionate as Harrer. Tucci also described a feeling of impending doom over a peaceful Tibet; however, he considered the Tibetans as partially responsible for the invasion. He wrote:

However the echo of world events spread a dark cloud over such a serene atmosphere. It began dawning upon Tibet that it was not enough to shut one's doors in the foreigners' faces in order to feel safe in the gathering storm.³²⁶

Tibet's grasp of worldly knowledge had remained limited, he said, and its solution to invasion was collective prayer.³²⁷ He suggested that the Tibetans caught on only slowly to the realities of international politics. His analysis insinuated that a failure to look to foreign relations as a solution sooner, hastened the invasion. However, his assumption that Tibetans had excluded foreigners from their country was partly inaccurate.

Lowell Thomas Jr. showed more sympathy toward Tibet than Tucci did. He understood that his journey unfolded within a Cold War context rather than centuries of conflict between China and Tibet. Arriving in Tibet in 1949, he was there to assess the threat of the "Chinese Reds."³²⁸ His report of the situation did not look optimistic for Tibet. He pondered why Tibetans could not live their own unique culture, without the fear of invasion.³²⁹ He portrayed a peaceful people that was bullied around by a Communist country. The urgency in Thomas Junior's words was apparent:

³²⁶ Tucci, *Lhasa and Beyond*, 96.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

³²⁸ Thomas Jr., *Out of this World*, 29.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

The peril is imminent. On the north and east are innumerable victorious Chinese Communist troops who have been practically idle following the rapid collapse of the Nationalist government.³³⁰

He forecasted, “The land of the Lamas may be the next small country on the Communists’ list for extinction.”³³¹ Clearly, Thomas Jr. viewed China as a sinister Communist country. However, he did not seem committed to the idea that the United States or Britain should assume an imperial role as Tibet’s protective big brother.

Peter Goullart’s perspective was a bit different because he held out hope that the Tibetans would prevail in the face of China. Goullart depicted China as the aggressor, and took Tibet’s side on the issue of its independence. However, unlike Thomas Jr., he did not depict China as an evil Communist country. Much like Thomas Jr., Goullart did suggest that Tibetans should fight for themselves rather than rely on Western aid. He was optimistic that the Khampas would beat the Chinese army with hit and run tactics on Tibet’s difficult terrain.³³² The political atmosphere of World War II and the Cold War influenced how these Western travelers perceived Tibet as a land of both peace and doom; furthermore, the image of the Tibetan land influenced how Westerners perceived the Tibetan character.

³³⁰ Ibid., 30.

³³¹ Ibid., 40.

³³² Goullart, *Land of the Lamas*, 4.

3.4 Landscape and Character

The extreme images of the Tibetan landscape as rough and beautiful influenced the way travelers viewed the Tibetans' character. The Tibetans were illustrated as enduring, tough people who struggled with the harsh environment. Pallis explained that Tibetans were tough enough to endure the frigid and bleak weather.³³³ Thomas Jr. further described the people as dark, sturdy folk due to the winds and dirt on the plateau.³³⁴ Likewise, Harrer also believed that: "The bodily toughness of the Tibetans is due to the bracing climate and the hard work they do."³³⁵ As tough, strong, and resilient people, the Tibetans were also depicted as masculine.

Western travelers also associated the land with the Tibetans' spiritual strength. Giuseppe Tucci painted Tibetans as superstitious, yet full of spiritual strength which resulted from the toughness of the environment. Tucci perceived the Tibetan environment as a desolate place that encouraged Tibetans to supplicate the gods: "Man walks through these surroundings loaded with forces he cannot see, which weigh on him like a nightmare."³³⁶ Tucci depicted Tibetans as superstitious, devout people toward their deities. Likewise, André Guibaut connected the Tibetans' spiritual practice to the difficult environment. According to Guibaut, the monks prayed due to the thin air in the high atmosphere and the harsh environment.³³⁷ Perhaps the lack of oxygen at high

³³³Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, 206.

³³⁴ Thomas Jr., *Out of this World*, 92.

³³⁵ Harrer, *Seven Years*, 85.

³³⁶Tucci, *Lhasa and Beyond*, 35.

³³⁷Guibaut, *Venture*, 43.

altitudes made the monks' spirituality appear to be a source of strength in the face of the unforgiving living conditions. Additionally, Guibaut may have associated high altitude with prayer because of their proximity to the gods. Thus, he may have imagined the monks' prayer as especially powerful.

Even though the travelers believed that the harsh environment made the Tibetans tough, they also thought that the majestic, tranquil landscape inspired Tibetans' sense of spirituality and happiness. The freedom of the wide open plains stood in contrast to the confining Western factory.³³⁸ While Tucci sat admiring a serene green plain he said, "Just the spot to forget the world and sink into meditation."³³⁹ For Tucci, the landscape inspired self-reflection. On the other hand, Harrer described devout pilgrims, prostrating and praying on the way to Mt. Kailas in order to create good merit for a better rebirth.³⁴⁰ Western travelers described Tibetans as a deep and sensitive people, who were yet very tough and masculine. For the Western travelers, the contrast of the landscape as rough and serene seemed to be embodied in the tough and spiritual Tibetan Character.

3.5 Exclusion and Hospitality

If the perception of the land as tough and beautiful was associated with the paradox of the Tibetan character, then the idea of Tibet as both exclusive and welcoming was a result of how travelers experienced their Tibetan hosts and authorities. Travelers frequently described Tibetans as generous hosts, yet they were aware of being kept under surveillance, and depicted Tibetan authorities as meticulous guards of the interior of their

³³⁸ Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, 203.

³³⁹ Tucci, *Lhasa and Beyond*, 71.

³⁴⁰ Harrer, *Seven Years*, 62-63.

nation. Travelers who were granted access felt privileged because many Westerners were denied it. Many travelers who gained access expressed anxiety about how much further into Tibet they were able to go. Yet, travelers thought Tibetans were gracious based on how well their host initially received them and from their experience at Tibetan dinner parties.

The travelers also saw the Tibetans as exclusionary because of their isolationist foreign policies, including the restrictions they placed on travel. André Guibaut expressed anxiety about being allowed to enter Tibet, yet he was assured entrance by the Chinese because the mission was scientific.³⁴¹ In 1936 Marco Pallis had to show his passport to the Political Officer Basil Gould when he arrived in Gangtok in 1936, but Gould could not allow him further entrance into the Tibetan interior because the authorities in Lhasa were angry over another border.³⁴² Pallis reinforced the image of Tibet as impenetrable to the extent that even those travelers who had permission to enter still doubted that they would have access.

Heinrich Harrer depicted the Tibetans sometimes as hospitable and at other times exclusionary, perhaps because of his status as an illegal alien in the country. Warm, cordial Tibetan officials welcomed him generously, but were wary about his intentions in pressing into the interior.³⁴³ After politely denying him entry to Lhasa, officials gave him generous supplies to go back to India.³⁴⁴ He described a polite people that were

³⁴¹Guibaut, *Venture*, 3.

³⁴² Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, 107.

³⁴³ Harrer, *Seven Years*, 59, 61.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

protective of their country to outside threats. Since Harrer was there clandestinely as a stranger in a strange land, he emphasized the hospitality of Tibetans who helped him survive in the unforgiving climate of the plateau.³⁴⁵ He also noted how well Tibetans took care of other foreigners, even if they were there illegally as in the case of two American pilots who had crashed near Lhasa. The Tibetans sent them off to India with supplies and escorts as soon as the pilots recovered from the accident. “It would be true to say that in no other country in the world are travelers treated with greater attention and hospitality,” wrote Harrer.³⁴⁶ Giuseppe Tucci was also understanding of Tibetans’ guarded behavior towards Westerners. He attributed a meticulous inspection of his passport to the cultural disrespect previous Western visitors had shown.³⁴⁷ To Tucci and Harrer the Tibetans were justifiably exclusionist, but not xenophobic.

Lowell Thomas Jr.’s account emphasized Tibetan hospitality because his observation of the political climate in 1949 was sought out by the Tibetan Foreign Office. He did not mention Tibetan officials interrogating him, and he did not emphasize the inspection of his passport. However, he did experience the Tibetan government’s hospitality as they supplied him with shelter and a generous amount of food.³⁴⁸ Understanding that the Tibetans acted reasonably to assert their neutrality and sovereignty, he depicted the Tibetan expulsion of Chinese residents as polite and cordial: “Then the Tibetans with urbane oriental courtesy told the Chinese that they must leave at

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 108,107, 141.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 258.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 17-18, 30.

³⁴⁸ Thomas Jr., *Out of this World*, 96, 136,170.

once.”³⁴⁹ He portrayed Tibetans as amiable and generous, yet concerned about protecting themselves.

3.6 Compassionate and Happy

The image of hospitality complimented the image of Tibetans as compassionate and friendly. The more travelers depicted Tibetans as virtuous, caring, and friendly, the more these characteristics became essential to the definition of what it meant to be Tibetan. This idealized image began to replace the image of Tibetans as barbaric savages that existed in the accounts of Sven Hedin and William Montgomery McGovern. Western travelers depicted Tibetans as friendly in order to also create an image of Communist China as despotic and evil.

Many of the travelers projected the qualities of serenity and compassion on to the lamas. André Guibaut depicted the lamas as compassionate to animals as well as humans. Guibaut was consoled by them after Tibetan bandits had killed his friend Louis Victor Liotard during their expedition.³⁵⁰ Guibaut explained that Buddhist values inspired Tibetans to prohibit the killing of certain animals such as fish and vultures.³⁵¹ Edwin John Dingle epitomized his teacher, whom he referred to as “my Master,” as calm and sweet in comparison to his own frantic Western mind.³⁵² He further described his teacher as simple, tranquil, and disciplined.³⁵³ In contrast to the West, Tibet was a

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 38.

³⁵⁰ Guibaut, *Venture*, 151-152.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 21, 30.

³⁵² Dingle, *My Life*, 40-43.

³⁵³ Ibid., 79.

utopia of virtue, compassion, and peace. Dingle believed his teacher was the ultimate embodiment of love, and as such had the credibility to teach love.³⁵⁴ The real answer to the question, “What is love?” came from Tibet rather than the West in the eyes of John Edwin Dingle.

Much like Dingle, Marco Pallis defined Tibetans as full of virtue in contrast to Westerners. He felt that Tibetans were more compassionate than Christians because Tibetans thought animal abuse and hunting were immoral.³⁵⁵ He argued that with the exception of St. Francis, the Christian view toward animals was negative, and he wondered how Christians were supposed to be kind if they could not be kind to animals.³⁵⁶ Pallis went beyond defining compassion as a virtue by defining it as a spiritual power. He said that the first Tibetan lama he met had an unseen power of compassion.³⁵⁷ Thus, Pallis depicted Tibetans as people who surpassed Westerners in their ability to be compassionate.

Tibetans were not only seen as superior to the West in compassion, but they were also seen as superior in honesty. Marco Pallis attributed Tibetan honesty to their belief in Karma and the wish to see beyond the illusionary world; furthermore, Pallis was convinced that the monks’ ability to be critical of their own institutions was evidence of their candidness.³⁵⁸ He described the two pilgrims he met as “decent” and

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 138.

³⁵⁵ Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, 72, 105.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 105, 247.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 50.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 31, 245-246.

“straightforward” men and depicted one of them as “radiating a transparent benevolence.”³⁵⁹ The latter description gave the impression that kindness came out of Tibetans like light.

Much like Charles Bell, Pallis and Goullart saw an inward beauty in Tibetan women that was manifested outwardly. He compared women, both young and old, to Greek goddesses. Pallis stated, “. . .the young girls, merry and rosy-cheeked, invited us to fall head over heels in love at first sight.”³⁶⁰ Pallis associated their happy demeanor with their physical beauty. Goullart’s experience in eastern Tibet was consistent with Pallis’ description of happy and beautiful Tibetan women. During his visit, independent Tibetan women danced, laughed, and celebrated their self earned income in taverns with Tibetan men.³⁶¹ Goullart portrayed these ladies as gregarious, fun women without judging them harshly as women of sin and shame. He connected their happy disposition to their outward beauty and the confidence that came from their financial independence.

The Western travelers related the Tibetans’ happy and compassionate disposition to the environment and Buddhism. Thomas Jr.’s description connected the Tibetans’ compassion to their Buddhist beliefs. Lowell explained that Tibetans revered animal life because they believed in reincarnation.³⁶² Maraini chose to represent Tibetans as people who could endure harsh climate because they were high-spirited. He described his porters as “. . .strong, simple, cheerful fellows, perfectly attuned to these places.”³⁶³

³⁵⁹Ibid., 160.

³⁶⁰Ibid., 56.

³⁶¹ Goullart, *Land of the Lamas*, 21, 26.

³⁶² Thomas Jr., *Out of This World*, 190.

³⁶³ Maraini, *Secret Tibet*, 47.

Tucci differentiated between the Tibetan temperament and atmosphere and the Indian temperament and atmosphere:

Even the casual visitor had to share this fresh childish joy unknown, for instance, to India where the pall of dreariness weighs like summer heat on everything, and the sun burns but does not shine, drowned as it is in a haze of dust.³⁶⁴

The sight of the Tibetans celebrating the religious festival, *Monlam*, gave Tucci the impression that Tibetans were merry and full of worldly abandon.³⁶⁵

Heinrich Harrer's perception of Tibetans as compassionate and kind people merits special attention because of the duration of time that he was there, and the intimacy he had with the people. Harrer's experience in Tibet was peculiar compared to most other travelers in this study. Unlike the other travelers, he was not there as a short time visitor, tourist, scientist, or academic; he worked for and lived amongst Tibetans. He became very familiar with the different cross-sections of Tibetan society. He worked for the Tibetan government, and he knew Tibetans intimately as friends.

Perhaps because of the friendships that Heinrich Harrer formed in Tibet, he considered Tibetans as exceptionally compassionate people. Additionally, he owed his survival on the Tibetan plateau to the kindness of Tibetan strangers. The Tibetans forgave him for illegally sneaking into Lhasa because they thought it was humorous.

Harrer stated:

The fact is the Tibetans are very proud of their organization for keeping foreigners out of the country, and they found the manner in which we had broken through barriers not only deserving of attention but highly humorous. That was to our advantage, for the Tibetans are a laughter-loving folk.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴ Tucci, *Lhasa and Beyond*, 74.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

He viewed Tibetans as genuine Buddhists who practiced their beliefs in their daily lives. For example, he emphasized how Tibetans treated animals. He said, “The more life they can save the happier one is.”³⁶⁷ This made Tibetans seem altruistic toward all sentient beings, even convicts. He was surprised that convicts for murder were released back into society, and that the punishment for murder was drastically reduced.³⁶⁸

3.7 The Dark Side of Tibet

Even though the general perception of Tibetans was positive, western travelers after 1924 occasionally were disconcerted by what they perceived as a darker, eerie glimpse of Tibet. Some of the negative impressions were left over from travelers before 1924. Yet, other impressions of Tibet were a result of the lack of knowledge about the culture.

Unlike Alexandra David-Neel’s mystical and dark Tibet, André Guibaut’s account of Tibet’s dark side was violent. Guibaut traveled through the eastern province of Tibet which had its own reputation as violent even among Tibetans. The Ngolo County was inhabited by dangerous bandits; Guibaut’s journey was marked by the murder of his colleague, Victor Louis Liotard.³⁶⁹ When he visited the monasteries and temples, the walls were decorated with murals of a variety of deities. Some of the deities appeared wrathful with fangs and bowls made of skulls. However, many of the travelers did not understand the morbid iconography in Tibetan religious art. Similarly, when

³⁶⁷ Harrer, *Seven Years*, 191.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 89, 127.

³⁶⁹ Guibaut, *Venture*, 18, 21, 67.

Guibaut visited a temple, he described the mural as sadistic and morbid because its scenes mixed lust and violence together.³⁷⁰ The mural challenged his expectations of Tibetan Buddhism as free from desire and suffering. However, these deities may have been intended as fierce guards who protect the mind from delusions such as anger, attachment, and jealousy. Additionally, they may have been a reminder that life was impermanent and that it was important to practice Buddhism every day.

Marco Pallis tried to reconcile the contradiction between violent and humane images. Tibetans' rough lives seemed disconnected from the doctrines they preached. Pallis concluded that because they were capable of enduring great pain, the Tibetans did not gauge the pain threshold of other beings well.³⁷¹ When he addressed violence in Kham, he depicted the Khampas as the ideal of strength in their ability to endure the cruelty of Chinese officers.³⁷² His description of Kham during the 1906 border war with China included heroic warriors and brigands such as one Khampa who endured torture without giving away secrets.³⁷³ Pallis saved us from the gruesome details of how the Khampa was tortured.

Heinrich Harrer and Lowell Thomas Jr. both were aware of the violent side of Tibetan culture. However, in contrast to travelers like Perceval Landon, Harrer did not describe violence carried out by a cruel and despotic government. Harrer confronted some terrifying Tibetans when he came across the Khampas. When Harrer and his

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 33.

³⁷¹ Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, 106.

³⁷² Kham had a reputation as a place unique for the aggressive people and bandits even among other Tibetans.

³⁷³ Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, 165.

friend, Peter Aufschnaiter, were on their way to Lhasa, they were almost robbed.³⁷⁴ He explained the fright that he was in when he encountered Khampa brigands: “There was nothing else to do for if we got on the wrong side of them they might butcher us out of hand.”³⁷⁵ He portrayed Kham as a dangerous and violent alter ego to the rest of Tibet. For Thomas Jr., violence was a part of Tibet’s barbaric past since Buddhism had civilized a barbaric country. Thomas Jr. explained that Tibetans sacrificed children to Bon Po deities in dangerous mountain passes before Tibetans adopted Buddhism.³⁷⁶ Fosco Maraini was mesmerized by Pema Chokyi, who for him represented the paradox of Tibet’s dark side and its beauty. Pema Chokyi was a Tibetan woman who was part of Sikkim’s nobility.³⁷⁷ Maraini saw the mystery and essence of Tibet in Pema Chokyi as he pondered how her loveliness contrasted with the revolting *gon-kang*.³⁷⁸ He said:

Tibet the land of exaltation, beauty, horror, the land of open sky and stony wastes and fetid *gon-kangs*, of lofty peaks sparkling in the sun and of places where dead bodies are hacked to pieces to provide meals for the vultures; land of simplicity and cruelty, of purity and orgy.³⁷⁹

Maraini wished to reconcile the extremes between the aesthetic and the horrid. He learned from his Tibetan friend, Paljor, that rolangs were analogous to zombies. He then explained how Paljor humorously joked that if a shoe was thrown at a *rolang*, it would

³⁷⁴ Harrer, *Seven Years*, 108-111.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

³⁷⁶ Thomas Jr., *Out of this World*, 189.

³⁷⁷ Maraini, *Secret Tibet*, 48-49.

cease to be the walking dead.³⁸⁰ Maraini commented that the contrast between the macabre and the comic was essentially Tibetan.³⁸¹

3.8 Intelligent People

Western travelers from the 1920's onwards viewed Tibetans as intellectually advanced people. The travelers defined Tibetans as intelligent based on their preferences towards scholasticism, mysticism, and artistic ability. Because they interpreted Buddhism as a philosophical or intellectual pursuit, Western travelers viewed monks as scholars. Like Alexandra David-Neel, travelers such as John Dingle associated mystical powers with intelligence.

Edwin John Dingle depicted Tibetan intelligence as a mystically advanced inward-technology. Dingle thought that Tibetan lamas' amazing feats were an indication of the power of the Tibetan mind. One of the amazing feats that he claimed to witness was a holy man flying as a result of training his mind in meditation exercises.³⁸² The lama's supernatural control over his body was caused by developing the power of his mind. Another claim was that his teacher could control electrical currents in his body.³⁸³ Dingle again focused on the mystical power of the lama's mind when he described how he could feel the light of his Master's mind.³⁸⁴

³⁸⁰ Ibid, 60.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Dingle, *My Life*, 133-134.

³⁸³ Ibid., 132.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 137.

Marco Pallis viewed Tibetans as intelligent and sophisticated philosophers. He argued that the Europeans were narrow-minded because they dismissed the use of mantras as superstitious and childish, and he said that writing words of virtue on the walls was more worthwhile than creating commercial advertisements.³⁸⁵ He viewed Tibetan spiritual practice as intellectually and morally sophisticated in comparison to English commercialism. Rather than perceiving Tibetan Buddhism as superstitious, he valued it as a morally aesthetic philosophy. Pallis understood the esoteric meaning behind Tibetan Buddhist practices that other travelers could not. He described how breathing meditation was designed to realize the concept of emptiness, and that wisdom and compassion were the basic principles of Buddhism.³⁸⁶ Pallis tried to reconcile Tibetans' barbarity and sophistication by interpreting the former as superficial. He quoted a French professor who emphasized that beneath their barbarous and uncultivated appearance, the Tibetans were philosophically refined, courteous, artistic, and happy.³⁸⁷

The perception of Tibetans as intelligent continued during World War II and the Cold War. Peter Goullart described the Prince of Litang, who was a lama, as a man who knew Goullart's heart, thoughts, and aspirations so much that there was no need for talking.³⁸⁸ Much like Dingle and David-Neel, Goullart projected psychic energy onto the lamas, and thereby fostered the image of the lama as magical, omniscient, and superhuman. Lamas were also portrayed as possessing a psychic energy and a

³⁸⁵ Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, 161-163.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 164. Emptiness in Tibetan Buddhism means that things do not exist as we think they do because everything is always changing and do not exist inherently on their own.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 202-203.

³⁸⁸ Goullart, *Land of the Lamas*, 26-27.

powerfully secret knowledge. Additionally, the two Italian scholars, Tucci and Maraini, viewed the lamas as intellectual, but in a more grounded manner than Goullart, Dingle, and David-Neel. Maraini viewed his Tibetan language tutor, Mr. Sherab, as “profoundly learned and full of dignity.”³⁸⁹ Tucci considered one of the Dalai Lama’s teachers, Ganden Trichan Rinpoche, as a wise master of logic and theology.³⁹⁰ There were no dimwitted lamas portrayed in any of Tucci’s accounts.

Lowell Thomas Jr. and Heinrich Harrer perceived the different cross sections of Tibetan society as intelligent. Thomas Jr. emphasized Tibetan creativity in art, architecture, religious philosophy, literature, and folklore.³⁹¹ As a tutor for aristocratic children, Harrer considered them intelligent, but not diligent in their studies.³⁹² His appreciation for Tibetan intelligence went beyond the lamas and men. Harrer also admired Pema Chokyi’s intelligence, beauty, and progressive attitude.³⁹³ Most travelers were in awe over the lamas’ intelligence, but he referred to both the Dalai Lama and the population as a whole as intelligent and humble.³⁹⁴ However, he remarked that despite their intelligence, they thought of themselves as unintelligent because they lacked advanced technology of the West.³⁹⁵

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 25.

³⁹⁰ Tucci, *Lhasa and Beyond*, 86.

³⁹¹ Thomas Jr., *Out of this World*, 20.

³⁹² Harrer, *Seven Years*, 280.

³⁹³ Ibid., 153.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 282.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 289.

3.9 Superstitious People

For all the intelligence that Westerners perceived in Tibetans, they also viewed them as superstitious. The travelers thought that superstition stood in the way of improvements in economic development, government policy, and healthcare. To Westerners, Tibetans relied too heavily on religious practice to make decisions. Tibet appeared to be stuck in time rather than relying on technology. Despite the Tibetan government's desire to modernize the country, the travelers were struck by the country's lack of technological progress.

Heinrich Harrer and Lowell Thomas Jr. viewed Tibetan superstition as an impediment to economic progress. Both men were perplexed by the lack of modern mining techniques in a country with significant mineral wealth.³⁹⁶ Both men were aware of the Tibetan belief that disturbing the ground meant disturbing the earth gods, who sent reprisals.³⁹⁷ They considered such beliefs as obstacles to the expansion of roads and mining, and the improvement of the standards of living. Superstition seemed to ensure technological underdevelopment. Thus, the belief that wheels would disturb the earth gods kept Tibetans from employing the wheel for transportation.³⁹⁸

Due to the travelers' concern for their own health, they paid attention to the relationship between health and religious beliefs. André Guibaut and Heinrich Harrer thought that religious beliefs rather than science determined medical practices in Tibet. Guibaut was amazed when he witnessed a Tibetan conduct surgery with wizardry, rituals,

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 215, 136.

³⁹⁷ Thomas Jr., *Out of this World*, 215, 136.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 186.

prayers, and disregard for hygiene; he wondered how the Tibetan man's bullet wound had healed without infection.³⁹⁹ Harrer claimed that medicine did not progress in Tibet because the Buddhist doctrines overruled new medical knowledge. Harrer recounted the afflictions and public health problems Tibetans faced such as venereal diseases, poor sanitation, small pox, and a lack of surgical knowledge.⁴⁰⁰

Harrer and Tucci thought that superstition in Tibet not only had a negative influence on medicine, but also on their politics. They observed that religious practices determined the political decision making process. For example, the state consulted the Oracle during difficult times.⁴⁰¹ Harrer knew the Dalai Lama had to consider that the Tibetan people thought of him as a god in his decision making process. The Dalai Lama had to work within the parameters of tradition and superstition before creating more logical improvements to the government.⁴⁰² Harrer remarked, "I knew how much the young king desired to lead his people one day out of the fog of gloomy superstition."⁴⁰³

The image of Tibet as a place stuck in time reinforced the idea that superstition hampered progress. Thomas Jr. emphasized Tibet's lack of mechanical technology. After describing the absence of sanitation in Lhasa, he compared Lhasa to the pageantry in a medieval tapestry.⁴⁰⁴ Maraini thought that Tibetan society was the only civilization from

³⁹⁹Guibaut, *Venture*, 154.

⁴⁰⁰ Harrer, *Seven Years*, 198-199.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 280-218; Tucci, *Lhasa and Beyond*, 77.

⁴⁰² Harrer, *Seven Years*, 76-77.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁰⁴ Thomas Jr., *Out of this World*, 20, 184-186.

the past to continue into the present.⁴⁰⁵ Western travelers judged Tibet's lack of technology as backwards because many Western countries advanced technologically to meet the needs of World War II. However, they may not all have been aware of Tibet's modernization program.

⁴⁰⁵ Maraini, *Secret Tibet*, 131.

Section 4

Conclusion

Western travelers who journeyed to Tibet from 1900 until 1924 created an inferior and savage image of Tibetans, while they idealized themselves as the epitome of civilization to be emulated. The travelers included in this period were the following: Henry Savage Landor, Sir Francis Younghusband, Perceval Landon, Sven Hedin, and William Montgomery McGovern. These early travelers saw themselves as objective scientists and as saviors of Tibetan civilization. Their self-image as objective scientists reinforced their belief that their reports were the truth, and empowered them to believe that they could save Tibet from its savageness by introducing them to modernity. While they fantasized about civilizing Tibet, the travelers assigned themselves a superior role in relation to Tibetans. The Western travelers wanted to be portrayed as strong, brave, and clever, and wrote heroically about explorers whose paths they wished to follow.

These early Western travelers depicted Tibetans as inferior. They claimed that Tibetan Buddhism was devil worship and the ruin of Tibetan society. Westerners portrayed Tibetans as despotic, licentious, and dirty. The British officers, who wrote about Tibet from their experience in the 1904 Expedition, justified their invasion by writing despairingly of the despotic Tibetan aristocracy and monasteries. Western travelers defined Tibetans as licentious by illustrating them as sexually permissive alcoholics.

Initially, Tibetan-Anglo relations did not fare too well at the beginning of the twentieth century. Before 1900 the British and the Tibetans had border disputes that resulted in several armed conflicts. Then the British forced Bhutan and Sikkim not to

involve Tibet in any of their political matters. By 1901, Lord Curzon was sure that the Tibetan government was going to allow Russia to plan an invasion of Northern India from their side of the Himalayas. Lord Curzon's concerns and the promise of more trade in Tibet led the British to invade Tibet in 1904. However, British relations changed from 1909 to 1912 due to the relationship that was forged between the thirteenth Dalai Lama and Charles Bell. Tibetan–Anglo relations became more geared toward the mutual benefit of keeping China out of Tibet. Tibetans wanted to maintain their autonomy, and Northern Indian officials feared China's presence on their border. Bell advised the Dalai Lama in nation-state building, but could not openly promote an independent Tibetan Nation in order for Britain to continue trading with China.

The warmer and more open relationship between Tibet and Britain did not immediately affect the image of Tibet that was produced by Western travelers. It was not until McGovern's *To Lhasa in Disguise* that British officials began to censor material written by Western travelers. The censorship was done to promote a more positive image of Tibetans, and keep military support for Tibet a secret from China. Beginning with Bell's 1924 publication until Heinrich Harrer's exit, Western travelers produced a mixed image of Tibet that was far more positive than the previous images of Tibet.

From 1924 with Sir Charles Bell's publication until the Chinese invasion in 1950, the travelers' vacillated between aesthetic and grotesque images. The aesthetic was everything that the travelers appreciated such as merry people, a tranquil environment, their peaceful spirituality, and their intelligence. The travelers condemned other elements of Tibetan culture such as violence, danger, superstition, backwardness, and xenophobia. The travelers that entered Tibet during this time were the following: Sir Charles Bell,

Alexandra David-Neel, André Guibaut, Lowell Thomas Jr., Heinrich Harrer, Peter Goullart, Fosco Maraini, and Giuseppe Tucci.

Beginning in the 1930s, travelers became disenchanted with modernity. Travelers saw Tibet as a refuge of peace and a solution to Western problems such as war, alienation, industrialization, commercialization, and homogenization of cultures. These travelers associated the serene landscape with an inward peace in Tibetans. The Western travelers also viewed Tibetans such as intelligent, hospitable, and compassionate.

Even though emerging positive images were created, the travelers still included negative images. The travelers saw Tibet's peaceful environment as temporary because they imagined that the country was doomed by a Communist Chinese invasion. They associated a harsh landscape with the tough character of Tibetans as opposed to the sensitive image of Tibetans. Some travelers depicted the Tibetans as violent, as evidence by wrathful deities in murals, Khampa warriors, Khampa bandits, Bonpo sacrificial sites, and stories of *rolangs*. Many of the travelers described Tibetans as exclusionists for having a strict border policy that restricted Westerners from its interiors. However, by this period they were more understanding of Tibet's protective border policies. Travelers saw Tibetans as superstitious because they relied on religious traditions and beliefs. The travelers thought that Tibetan beliefs in such things as earth gods and oracles hampered modern progress in politics, medicine, and economic development. In the beginning of the twentieth century, Western travelers had a disparaging view of Tibetans; however, the Western travelers' view of Tibetans became more positive from the mid1920's because of Tibet's diplomacy with the West and the Western disillusionment with itself after each World War.

The views of travelers from 1900 to 1950 were rather different from our modern view of Tibetans. Popular culture and Buddhist practitioners tend to view Tibetans as almost saintly rather than real people such as ourselves. The problem is that the overly romantic and savage images of Tibetans obscure history. The image of Tibetans as savage does not address the intellectual and cultural developments of Tibetan society. It denies the Tibetans their place as philosophical and artistic contributors on par with Voltaire and Picasso. The negative perception of Tibetans also denies them the integrity of being compassionate and decent people. The romantic images obscure the physical abuse in the monasteries, banditry in Kham, and the selfishness of some aristocrats and high ranking monks to pay taxes to transform Tibet into a modern nation-state. It also does not address that Tibetans are real people who like to party, drink, and have sex. The fear is that once the pristine image of Tibetans is discredited the aesthetic qualities of their culture, such as the value of learning and compassion, would be discredited as well.

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Curriculum Vita

Diana Martinez was born in El Paso, Texas on September 17, 1978. She is the fourth child of Xochitl Valencia and Domingo Martinez. She is also the step-daughter of Nestor A. Valencia. Ms. Martinez graduated from Franklin High School in 1997. In the fall of the same year, she entered the University of Texas at El Paso. While attending the university, she majored in history, minored in secondary education, and did her student teaching in Canutillo High School. She also began her education in Buddhism during the summer of 2001 in Robert Ferrell's Asian philosophy course. She continued studying Buddhism at the Chenrezig Tibetan Buddhist Cultural Center which was located on the UTEP campus. As an undergraduate, she was active in the Buddhist Center and in Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society. She was awarded her bachelor of arts degree in history in May 2003. She taught public and private school at the secondary level before returning to the University of Texas at El Paso in 2005 to begin the master's program in history. During her master's program she continued to teach private school part time and taught middle school full time for one year.

Permanent Address:

2113 O'Hara Rd.

Anthony, NM 88021