

Exorcising Luther
Confronting the demon of modernity in
Tibetan Buddhism

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my nephew Max Daisley for constantly asking the question which continues to plague every good scholar:

“Why?”

To those who lost loved ones in February 2011 and who are still without comfort I would like to offer the following:

With folded hands I beseech
The Buddhas of all directions,
To shine the lamp of Dharma
For all bewildered in the gloom of misery.

With folded hands I beseech
The Buddhas who wish to pass away,
To please remain for countless aeons
And not to leave the world in darkness.

Śāntideva, *Bodhisattvacharyāvatāra*

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This thesis was written against the backdrop of the Christchurch 2010-2011 Earthquakes, a time of physical, emotional and spiritual upheaval. Places of meaning, both historic and personal, lay in ruins. We all knew at least someone who had been killed. Friends who had lost their jobs packed up and left, while others battled daily with despair and nihilism. When faced with such horror and tragedy it is very easy to give up. However even the most devastating forces of geology cannot break the bonds of fellowship. This thesis would not have been possible were it not for the following people.

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Abstract

This study explores the idea that the Western adaptation of Tibetan Buddhism is in fact a continuum of the Protestant Reformation. With its inhospitable terrain and volatile environment, the geography of Tibet has played an important role in its assimilation of Buddhism. Demons, ghosts and gods are a natural part of the Tibetan world. Yet why is it that Tibetan Buddhism often downplays these elements in its self portrayal to the West? Why are Westerners drawn to an idealistic view of Buddhism as being rational and free from belief in the supernatural when the reality is quite different? This thesis will show that in its encounter with Western modernity Tibetan Buddhism has had to reinvent itself in order to survive in a world where rituals and belief in deities are regarded as ignorant superstition. In doing so it will reveal that this reinvention of Buddhism is not a recent activity but one that has its origins in nineteenth century Protestant values. While the notion of Protestant Buddhism has been explored by previous scholars this thesis will show that rather than solving the problems of disenchantment, Buddhist Modernism ignores the human need to find meaning in and to take control over one's surroundings. In doing so it will argue that rather than adopting a modern, crypto-Protestant form Buddhism, Westerners instead need to find a way to naturally transplant Tibetan Buddhism onto their own surroundings.

Introduction

In April 2012 the New Zealand media website *Stuff* ran an article entitled “Beliefs stronger in face of death.”¹ Naturally such a topic eventually led to an endless debate in the comments section between readers who were atheist and those who had a form of religious belief. One reader, Sven, offered his opinion on religion, stating:

There are countless religions. Which is the right one?...Probably if anything the untiting (sic) factor is buddhism (sic), not a religion but merely a lifestyle. I do not necessarily respect religious people, but I do respect buddhists (sic) as they live selfless (sic) and help others without asking something back...²

I can only speculate on Sven’s cultural background but his Scandinavian name and his rather interesting view of Buddhism made it highly likely that he came from a western heritage. What interested me the most about Sven’s comment was his belief that Buddhism is not a religion but ‘merely a lifestyle.’

Immediately I was reminded of an episode of *Family Guy* where the character of baby Stewie develops tanorexia.³ He becomes obsessed with maintaining his tan and takes to drinking TaB, sunbathing provocatively and holding parties where the guests all wear white suits and oversized sunglasses. When asked by Brian the dog to explain his actions he scornfully informs him that being tanned is ‘...not a skin colour, it’s a lifestyle...’ For Stewie being tanned is not something that comes naturally – it is not a skin colour which immediately ties him into a particular ethnicity. Instead it is a manufactured way of living, something which

¹ Stacey Kirk, “Beliefs stronger in face of death,” *Stuff*, April 2, 2012, accessed April 3 2012, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/6677739/Beliefs-stronger-in-face-of-death>.

² Ibid, see comments section.

³ Julius Wu, “The Tan Aquatic with Steve Zissou,” *Family Guy: Season Six*, (United States of America: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2007).

must be maintained and made visible through external actions. This external display then allows him to join a selective group of those who have been ‘saved’ – in this case, those who are tanned.

When using this scene as a model I find that it can perhaps help explain what Sven meant by Buddhism being ‘a lifestyle.’ The form of Buddhism which Sven was referring to was not Buddhism as it is traditionally practiced in Asia but a Westernised form called Buddhist Modernism. As I shall show in chapter one, one of the essential elements of a modern religion is its ability to move beyond its culture of origin and therefore be adopted by those who have not been born into it. Westerners who adopt Buddhist Modernism do not have the organic elements that traditional Asian Buddhists do – their external community usually does not practice Buddhism nor are they tied to the land in the same way Asian Buddhists might be through the use of ritualised geography. In a way ‘pre-modern’ religion might be seen as akin to those who are naturally tanned – you are born with it and cannot escape it. However modern religion, and in particular Buddhist Modernism, is a ‘choice’ in that people can choose to be Buddhist and choose which elements of Buddhism they wish to follow. In order to make up for that which does not come naturally people resort to turning it into ‘a lifestyle’ – hence the Westerners who buy Tibetan prayer flags from *Cosmic Corner* or have the mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* tattooed on their shoulder in Tibetan script. They need to show that they belong to the exclusive group who are ‘saved.’

Perhaps Sven meant that Buddhism, as he understood it, allowed him to have some form of spiritual view but without forcing him to give up his individualism. In his view Buddhism is free from the constraints of ‘religion.’ No God is judging his every action. He does not have to answer to his traditionalist parents, the local priest or the religious community. He’s free to live his life as he wants since he answers to no higher power other than himself.

In my time as a student of Religious Studies I have encountered many people who share Sven's perceptions. After meeting someone for the first time and discussing my area of study a common line I often hear is "Oh, I'm not religious but if anything I probably consider myself Buddhist." When I probe deeper as to why they consider themselves Buddhist I am presented with the same reasons Sven might perhaps give. Buddhism allows them to be their self without committing to any practice or culture. Each time I find myself wondering how has Buddhism come to be seen as such a liberal, tolerant 'lifestyle' for Westerners?

Even before I began studying Religious Studies I have always felt uncomfortable by this perception of Buddhism. My own interest in Tibet first began one Sunday afternoon in 1999 when I sat down to watch *Seven Years in Tibet* which was running at the time on Sky TV. Wishing to know more about the land and culture I had seen depicted in this film, I naturally turned to Heinrich Harrer's own travelogue upon which the film was based. Translated from German, the text used a term which I often wondered was a mistranslation. Harrer often talks about the 'gods' of Tibet. Around the same time another source of information for me was *Tibet: the sacred realm, photographs 1880-1950*.⁴ Amidst the collection of photographs taken by Westerners was an image that interested me - a stuffed animal hanging from the beams of a *gönkhang*, (protector chapel). The next film I saw was *Kundun*, a biopic of the young Dalai Lama which contained scenes showing the possession of the Nechung Oracle.

In many of the non-scholastic books which I consulted at the time surrounding Buddhism I found very little information concerning the relation between these Tibetan elements and what was considered to be the founding teachings of the historical Buddha. Instead all I was presented with was a portrayal of Buddhism as being a rational ideology which encouraged the individual to seek their own salvation. This clearly did not explain the gods and acts of

⁴ Lobsang P. Lhalungpa, *Tibet the Sacred Realm: photographs, 1880-1950* (Millerton, NY: Viking Penguin, 1983).

possession within Tibetan Buddhism. I wanted to learn more but living in New Zealand we do not have an abundance of lamas to consult with. The images of Tibetan Buddhist ‘Dharma centres’ portrayed them as places where middle aged Westerners went to meditate and engage in lessons on Buddhism. Where were the rituals, the oracles and the propitiation of local deities? Even at a young age I felt that something was amiss and that these places were missing the indigenous elements of Tibetan Buddhism.

In hindsight I know now that this sense that something was amiss was due to the fact that my own perception of what religion should be was based on a Roman Catholic interpretation. Having spent my childhood education in Catholic schools I was used to rituals involving candles and incense, the worship of saints and their miraculous powers and the concept of pilgrimage and sacrifice. Priests were not equals but aloof figures who, while performing the mass, became vessels for God’s power. All of this therefore led me to perceive religion as being an ordering of society which bound the people together through the use of ritual, mysticism and connection to sites of power. When I began to investigate Tibetan Buddhism on my own accord I noticed that these elements were present in the Tibetan Buddhism as witnessed by early explorers to Tibet but somehow absent in the popular books on Buddhism which I found in the ‘religion’ sections of bookstores. I began to wonder what was going on. Why were some texts notably silent on spirit possession, wrathful protectors and rituals performed in cemeteries at night?⁵ Why did they instead continue to focus on individual meditation and mind development? Were the elements of possession and gods simply superstitious additions that had perverted the true teachings of the Buddha?

⁵ Recently when I visited a store in Christchurch which sold *thangkas* (painted wall hangings used for meditation) I asked the owner why she only had *thangkas* of buddhas and bodhisattvas and not wrathful deities. The owner replied that while she had originally stocked these none of her western customers wanted to buy them as they preferred the peaceful looking deities. Clearly many had an idealised version of what Buddhism should look like – peaceful and happy.

It was not until I finished high school and then later entered university that I realised the society I lived in was not only secular but a form of secularity based on a Protestant model. Rather than the communal approach to religion which I was so used to I found that people had their own individual relationships with God that did not require ritual or priests. They could separate their daily life from their religious life which again was something that confused me. People appeared to be less bound together as a community and more in search of their own salvation. Like sailors in the Age of Discovery they were travelling, almost recklessly, with no maps or knowledge of what lay before them – only a hope that there was land somewhere out there.

Gradually I began to realise that this process of individual rather than communal religion is what has happened to Buddhism, and in particular Tibetan Buddhism, in the West. Tibetan Buddhism had been reinterpreted to suit the spiritual needs of modern Westerners. But what if your cultural heritage is not that of Protestant modernity? What if you came from a Western tradition which, while impacted by, has not gone through the Protestant Reformation? Even more confusing, what if your cultural heritage also lies in Asia and therefore the gods which inhabit the peaks of the Himalayas are not as remote as they may be to other Westerners?

This thesis originally began with the idea of exploring why the People's Republic of China, as an atheistic nation, claims the right to recognise incarnated lamas in Tibet. However the deeper I delved into Marxism, the Chinese distinction between true religion and superstition, and the modern Western view of Buddhism the more I came to recognise that there was a common thread underlying all of these separate issues - Protestant modernity. Questions began to arise and it was then that the thesis took a new turn. Rather than looking at Chinese Marxism's engagement with Tibetan Buddhism I instead decided to focus on Tibetan Buddhism's engagement with Protestant modernity. Not knowing that it would do so, this

journey has also led me back to a topic which I examined in my Honours dissertation, the controversy surrounding the Tibetan deity Dorje Shugden and the development of the New Kadampa Tradition in the West.

My aim is to uncover the social and political factors which have led to the development of Tibetan Buddhism in the West. However it is not enough to simply gloss over the issue by using terms such as ‘Protestant Buddhism’ or ‘Buddhist Modernism.’ One needs to delve into the history of Protestantism, its doctrines regarding individual salvation and how these concepts have affected the development of Western civilisation and religion as a result. Yet at the same time I aim to show that this development has not simply been the result of Western processes but also historical and social processes which have been taking place in Asia. These processes then collide in the twentieth century, culminating with the popular form of Tibetan Buddhism as it is known today in the West.

In the first chapter I aim to explore this development of ‘religion’ in the West and how we have inherited this Protestant model through the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. This will give an overall introduction to the concepts which will be explored in later chapters.

The second chapter will examine the development of Buddhism and how it was rediscovered by the West. In this chapter I aim to uncover the elements that allowed Buddhism to become a ‘modern’ religion and therefore survive in cultures beyond those of India. This chapter will show how Protestant missionaries and disenchanted Americans shaped the Western perception of Buddhism and have created the idea of it as being a possible faith to unify the world. However as I shall note, it is not just Westerners who have been responsible for promoting this Protestant form of Buddhism but also indigenous practitioners who have sought to adapt Buddha’s teachings in order to make them compatible with the modern world.

The third chapter will examine the strongest critic of Tibetan Buddhism and the ideology against which it has had to defend itself in the modern world, Marxism. Since Marxism has its origins in German Protestantism is it accurate in its criticisms of Tibetan Buddhism as a religion? Can what arises from a German Protestant worldview be applied to the geographical-social conditions of Tibet? How have Buddhists, not only in Tibet, but also in Russia, reacted to this intrusion of Western modernity?

The fourth chapter will examine Tibetan Buddhism itself and how, by using the works of anthropologist Martin A. Mills, its development has not been in the hands of religious authorities but the local people. This will then lead us to understand the split which has occurred within Tibetan Buddhism's most prominent tradition, the Gelugpa. I will show how the split within the Gelugpa has led to two different approaches within the tradition – one with an expanding trans-ethnic world view and the other with a more localised Tibetan focus.

The fifth chapter will then examine how the encounter with Marxism and modernity have forced this split within the Gelugpa out into the wider Western world. In doing so I will show how both factions are using the elements of Buddhist Modernism in order to create a universal form of Buddhism. The difference however is that one tradition is uniquely Tibetan while the other seeks to leave behind its Tibetan origins and use the elements of 'modern' religion in order to become a worldwide faith.

My argument will be that the engagement with Protestant modernity has led to a tripartite split within Tibetan Buddhism. However this split is not a clear differentiation between Buddhist Modernism and traditional Tibetan Buddhism. All three paths contain elements of both forms of Buddhism. What is interesting is that all only two of them are what could be called universal religions – the other is a localised tradition which is thoroughly pre-modern. I will argue that it is problematic to apply the Western differentiation between 'true religion'

and ‘false religion’ as established by Immanuel Kant and later inherited by Karl Marx to Tibetan Buddhism, since in order to become a universal faith Tibetan Buddhism has to leave behind its indigenous voices. Yet these indigenous voices are important as I will show that it is the localised people and not the religious authorities who have created the unique character of Tibetan Buddhism. I will apply Mills’ argument to a Western setting and show that by creating a rational spiritual system which it claims can solve the spiritual crisis of modernity and Marxism Buddhist Modernists are only denying the indigenous voices of the local people. In doing so this only perpetuates the differentiation between true religion and superstition. Unconsciously Buddhist Modernists who do this are following the same train of thought as Chinese Marxists who are also heirs to Enlightenment thinking.

In the end I will show that there are different versions of what religion is in the West which are reflected in the Western development of Tibetan Buddhism. One is the pre-modern approach of ritual and *religio*, while the other is based on a path of individual salvation. However the question remains as to which one is the best suited to deal with the problems which have arisen as a result of modernity.

Chapter One

Religion and Modernity

In the introduction to his entry on ‘Modernity and Buddhism’ in *The Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Gustavo Benavides boldly states that ‘No religion has a greater claim to embodying modernity than Buddhism.’¹ Within this statement we see an interesting conjunction of two products which historically have their origins in differing civilisations. The religion that we call Buddhism first developed in post Upaniṣadic India well over two thousand years ago while the process of modernity has traditionally been located in the post-Enlightenment West. In contrast to Benavides’ claim is the statement made by the Slovenian critical theorist, Slavoj Žižek, who offers one interpretation of modernity as being:

...the social order in which religion is no longer fully integrated into and identified with a particular cultural life form, but acquires autonomy, so that it can survive as the same religion in different cultures.²

Therefore for Žižek, Christianity is the first ‘modern’ religion. In order to understand both of these claims we need to examine the concepts of religion and modernity for the history of both are closely intertwined. It is perhaps fitting to start with the religion of Christianity itself for without Christianity and the role it has played throughout the history of Europe there would be no Western modernity.

¹ Gustavo Benavides, “Modernity and Buddhism,” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol. 2. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003), 544.

² Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: the perverse core of Christianity*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 3.

Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus the Christ

Originating in first century Palestine, Christianity initially began as a sect within Judaism, the religion of the Jewish people who based their identity around the worship of a single God, *Yahweh* and who traced their descent back to the wandering and homeless tribes who had first become united under the rule of the ‘Judges’ in the land of Canaan during the second millennium BCE.³ Throughout their history the Jews had experienced great suffering, including the destruction of their Temple in the city of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the subsequent exile in Babylonian captivity.⁴ As a result of this they came to develop a belief in the Last Days, a future time when God would fulfil his promise to them by putting an end to their suffering and ushering in an age of worldly prosperity.⁵ Accompanying this belief in an end to history was the figure of the Messiah (Hebrew: *mashiah*) the “Anointed One” who would help bring about the Last Days.⁶

It was into this culture, sometime in the decade prior to the death of Herod the Great in 4 BCE, that a Jew called Jesus of Nazareth was born.⁷ Of humble parentage, Jesus was raised in a rather impoverished region called Galilee which lay on the periphery of Judea, a country which had been part of the Roman province of Syria since 63 BCE.⁸ Although Galilee was home to a mixture of religions, Jesus and his family were *Ioudaioi*, Jews who, despite living

³ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: the first three thousand years* (London; New York: Allen Lane, 2009), 53.

⁴ R. J. Zwi Werblowsky. "Messianism: Jewish Messianism," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones. 2nd ed. Vol. 9. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA 2005), 5974.

⁵ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 68.

⁶ Werblowsky, “Messianism,” 5974.

⁷ Jesus is the Greek form of the original Jewish name *Yeshua*, see: MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 19.

⁸ Hans-Josef Klauck, “The Roman Empire,” in *Cambridge History of Christianity: origins to Constantine*, ed. Margaret M. Mitchell, Frances M. Young and K. Scott Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 76.

beyond Judea, still followed the Temple in Jerusalem.⁹ However there was a great difference, both social and doctrinal, between the Jewish peasant farmers of Galilee and the Jewish aristocracy, the Sadducees, who ruled Judea on behalf of the Roman governors.¹⁰ Ever since the Romans had shifted the administrative centre of Judea to the town of Caesara Maritima in 10BCE, the political importance of Jerusalem had declined.¹¹ Under the renovations made by the client king Herod the Great (37-4 BCE) the Temple in Jerusalem became a site of enormous revenue yet this wealth remained guarded by Sadducees.¹² This perceived greed of the temple elders, coupled with the separation of their faith from political rule, led to a crisis of faith among the Jewish people.¹³ As a result new religious ideologies were proposed as a way of securing the destiny of the Jewish people.¹⁴

The teachings offered by Jesus were one such solution. What made them different, however, was the fact that although they were based upon Judaism, they offered a new understanding of God that could not be confined simply to a particular people or location.¹⁵ Although Jesus moved within the Jewish world he also was heavily critical of its religious and social practices which he believed were exclusive.¹⁶ Nor were his teachings aimed at a single sector

⁹ Sean Freyne, "Galilee and Judea in the first century," in *Cambridge History of Christianity: origins to Constantine*, ed. Margaret M. Mitchell, Frances M. Young and K. Scott Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 48.

¹⁰ Freyne, "Galilee and Judea," 48.

¹¹ Freyne, "Galilee and Judea," 48.

¹² Freyne, "Galilee and Judea," 50.

¹³ Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), 28.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 31.

¹⁶ Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 29.

of society. He mingled with both rich and poor and in doing so adapted his teachings so that they were compatible with the mindset of his particular audiences.¹⁷

An important feature of Jesus' message involved the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God.¹⁸ Throughout his ministry he constantly urged people to turn their backs on worldly pleasures and to prepare themselves for the coming of the Kingdom, which could happen at any given hour.¹⁹ Jesus saw himself as playing an important role in establishing this future Kingdom and he told his followers to disregard social conventions which he considered meaningless as they would be overturned by the implementation of new laws in the coming Kingdom.²⁰ In this way he saw himself as the Messiah.²¹

Because he confronted the religious authorities over their supposed shortcomings Jesus earned their ire and as a result they urged the Roman officials to execute him.²² Due to his self proclaimed status as the Messiah the Romans saw Jesus as a threat to their own rule and after putting him on trial they put him to death through crucifixion.²³ Despite his death, his followers claimed that on the third day after he died, Jesus rose from the dead and walked among them. After spending time with his followers, the Gospels of Mark and Luke record that Jesus finally ascended into Heaven.²⁴

¹⁷ Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 28.

¹⁸ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 87.

¹⁹ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 88.

²⁰ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 90.

²¹ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 86.

²² MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 92.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See: Mark 16:19 and Luke 24:50-51. The other two Gospels, Matthew and John are silent on the matter of the Ascension.

In the decades following the historical death of Jesus the movement which grew around his teachings gradually expanded to include not only Jews not also Gentiles, the non-Jewish people of the Mediterranean world. As a result of this inclusion controversy arose between various members as to whether Gentiles should follow Jewish customs such as circumcision or whether the movement started by Jesus was to remove itself from Jewish cultural practices in order to fulfil a wider mission.²⁵ An important figure at this time was Paul of Tarsus, a Jewish tent maker from Asia Minor who became an ardent follower of Jesus after experiencing a mystical conversion.²⁶ Having never met Jesus in person, Paul was unconcerned with the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth.²⁷ Instead he wished to present Jesus as the Christ (Greek: *Christos*), the Anointed One, who had been sent by God to offer salvation to all mankind.²⁸

While Paul also believed in the Coming Kingdom his approach on how individuals should prepare themselves differed from Jesus' original teachings.²⁹ Where Jesus spoke of an imminent change in social traditions, and therefore there being no need to uphold them, Paul insisted that individuals should instead remain content with their position within society.³⁰ A factor behind this was the value which Paul placed on his role as a Roman citizen and his recognition of Roman law.³¹ He recognised that there was a danger of the early movement, as it was practised in Jerusalem, being re-absorbed back into the fold of Judaism or becoming a

²⁵Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 3.

²⁶ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 97.

²⁷ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 99.

²⁸ Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 24.

²⁹ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 114.

³⁰ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 114.

³¹ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 114.

vehicle for the Jewish independence from the Roman Empire.³² Therefore rather than becoming a movement of rebellion and antagonise the Imperial authorities, Paul taught that the structures of social authority had been put in place by God and that each individual must play their regulated role in this ordained order.³³ By removing Jesus from Jewish politics Paul was able to ensure that his Greco-Roman audience would not consider Jesus a teacher whose movement was confined to political squabbles in an obscure corner of the Empire.³⁴

It was therefore Paul's re-conception of Jesus as a world encompassing Christ rather than a Jewish messiah, coupled with his emphasis on adherence to already pre-existing social structures, which allowed for Christianity to spread beyond the Jewish world. The Last Days were still considered to be imminent however they would have been conceived differently by Gentile Christians who did not have the sense of historic suffering as the Jewish people did. For the Jews their End of History would be the culmination of a promise made to them by their God and brought about by the Messiah. If Jesus truly was the Jewish Messiah then this would mean that his movement would have to become one of rebellion against the Roman authorities who denied the Jews their divine right to self governance.³⁵ Since Paul presented Jesus as a world saviour who would one day return to establish the Kingdom of God for the whole of humanity his form of Christianity did not require Gentiles to become intertwined with Jewish political rebellion. Gentile Christians could simply maintain their already privileged status as citizens of the Roman Empire and respect the authority of the Emperor.

³² Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 41.

³³ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 114.

³⁴ Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 37.

³⁵ Two rebellions by Jews against Roman occupation in 66CE and 132-5 CE also helped to further the divisions between early Christians and Judaism. During the first rebellion the rebels executed the Sadducees who were in league with the Romans. As a result the Romans retook Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. After being defeated once again the second rebellion, the Jewish faith was forced to redefine itself under the leadership of the Pharisees. This new regulation of Judaism only reinforced Jewish traditions which Christians gradually left behind. See: MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 107-08.

Paul's efforts to universalise the figure of Jesus Christ and the decision of the early Christians to disassociate their faith from Jewish politics allowed the movement to distinguish itself from Judaism and form into a separate religion. Because it was able to be applied to a broader trans-cultural, trans-national audience, Christianity became the first 'modern' religion for the Western world. Not only was it the first modern religion of the West but it was Christianity's very ability to stand above a specific political and cultural identity that also led to the creation of Western modernity.

Western modernity

The term modernity has its origins in the medieval world of Christian Europe. In its original Latin context, as used by medieval theologians, the term *modernus* (Latin: modo, an equivalent of *nunc*, which was taken to mean 'now') referred to a point of separation between the thirteenth century and the centuries of *antiqui* that had proceeded it.³⁶ This separation was marked by a series of new developments which had taken place throughout medieval Europe as a result of its encounter with the Islamic world.³⁷ Through Islamic culture Europe was exposed not only to new additions to their existing knowledge of Greek and Roman science and philosophy, but also Jewish philosophy and knowledge from India and Persia.³⁸ As a result Europeans gradually began to understand their world in a new context. No longer was it full of incomprehensible mysteries, instead it became clear that the universe operated on a

³⁶ Gustavo Benavides, "Modernity," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 186.

³⁷ Judith M. Bennett and C. Warren Hollister, *Medieval Europe: a short history* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 291.

³⁸ Bennett and Hollister, *Medieval Europe*, 291.

logical framework.³⁹ For the medieval theologians, the old ways of Christendom had passed and a new period was beginning.

This sense of differentiation is crucial to the concept of modernity, for it needs an earlier state to contrast itself with.⁴⁰ Modernity, therefore, is a critique. Yet because of its nature as a critique and the requirement of self distancing, modernity becomes a constant process.⁴¹ However it is not a singular process. Instead there are multiple strands of critique, each of which represents different spheres of human achievement such as technology, philosophy, politics and religion.⁴² These strands progress at different rates and conflict with one another, thus creating multiple modernities.⁴³

Despite the theologians of medieval Europe believing that it was they who were living in a modern era, the West has traditionally located the birth of its modernity in the eighteenth century, the century of the European Enlightenment.⁴⁴ Reinhart Koselleck credits the birth of Western modernity not to the scientific advances that were being made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but rather to a new understanding of time and historical progress that was free from religion.⁴⁵ Prior to the sixteenth century the Christian world had understood time as a single line that began with the Fall of humanity and ended with the Redemption.⁴⁶ Because of this the Christian world of the Middle Ages was one where the Apocalypse and

³⁹ Bennett and Hollister, *Medieval Europe*, 289.

⁴⁰ Benavides, "Modernity," 187.

⁴¹ Benavides, "Modernity," 188.

⁴² Benavides, "Modernity," 188.

⁴³ Benavides, "Modernity," 188.

⁴⁴ Benavides, "Modernity," 187.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Henri Charles Puech, "Gnosis and Time," in *Man and Time: papers from the Eranos yearbooks*, ed. Henry Corbin, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 48.

the End of the World constantly loomed on the horizon.⁴⁷ The Roman Catholic Church used this fear of the Apocalypse to maintain its status of authority over society, for as the earthly institution of God the Church was guaranteed to survive the Apocalypse since it played a pivotal role in God's plan for humanity.⁴⁸

However when the doctrine of eschatology and its supramundane elements were applied to the real world events of the Reformation, it became clear that the Church's concept of history was not unfolding as it envisioned.⁴⁹ In the wake of the Reformation and the wars that followed, the Catholic Church's position of authority over European society was dismantled. However the multitude of Protestant faiths that emerged as a result did not inherit the Catholic Church's former authority.⁵⁰ In place of a state which ultimately owed its allegiance to the Church there instead emerged in Europe the nation state, a state which gained its authority from the people rather than spiritual claims.⁵¹

This paved the way for the secular society, a society where religious elements were removed from the affairs of state and placed in the private sphere. The concept of secularity originated with the Latin term *saeculum* (age), which referred to the physical world of humanity and the church, which were bound by the laws of time. In opposition to this was the eternity of God.⁵² Despite this differentiation, the ordinary world was still infused with spiritual essence as is

⁴⁷ Reinhart Koselleck and Keith Tribe, *Futures past: the semantics of historical time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 11.

⁴⁸ Koselleck and Tribe, *Futures past*, 13.

⁴⁹ Koselleck and Tribe, *Futures past*, 13.

⁵⁰ Bruce Lincoln, "Conflict," in *Critical terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 56.

⁵¹ Lincoln, "Conflict," 56.

⁵² Mark Cauchi, "The secular to come: interrogating the Derridean 'secular'," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 10:1 (2009), 3.

evident in the divine claim of kings and popes.⁵³ However with the removal of the Church from public affairs following the Reformation and with the critical philosophies developed during the Enlightenment being applied to society, the term secularity underwent a change in meaning.⁵⁴ No longer was the secular world pervaded by a supramundane spiritual essence. Instead the secular world was simply ‘mundane’. All religious elements were assigned to a realm of personal choice rather than remain in the public sphere.⁵⁵

Therefore with the destiny of a nation no longer bound by spiritual doctrine a new conception of the future began to develop, that of political calculation.⁵⁶ Rather than foreseeing a definite future that culminated with the Last Judgment, there instead arose multitude possibilities which, given matters of probability, ranged from the most likely to occur to the least likely.⁵⁷ No longer was time believed to be continuing in a straight line. Instead it was seen as an ascending arrow reaching towards many rationally predicted futures.⁵⁸ It is therefore in the Age of Enlightenment that Koselleck places the birth of European modernity.

The Enlightenment is an important point in the history of Western civilisation in that it not only led to the conceptualisation of Western modernity but it is also responsible for the establishment of another important Western sociological term – religion.

⁵³ Cauchi, “The secular to come,” 3.

⁵⁴ Cauchi, “The secular to come,” 3.

⁵⁵ Cauchi, “The secular to come,” 3.

⁵⁶ Koselleck and Tribe, *Futures past*, 18.

⁵⁷ Koselleck and Tribe, *Futures past*, 18.

⁵⁸ Anthony F. Aveni, “Time,” in *Critical terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 316.

Religio and Superstes

It has long been a habit of the West to categorise belief systems under the all encompassing term *religion*. Because of this it has become a common misconception in the West to assume that all such belief systems are essentially the same and that beneath all of their differences there still remains a generic essence that enables them to be defined as *religion*.⁵⁹ This popular misunderstanding has led to the idea that religion is something which can be found in all human cultures across the globe. But through such thinking we are simply projecting our own terminology and understanding of what that terminology means upon non-Western cultures.

In order to understand this claim one must first ask the question: what do we, as products of Western civilisation, mean exactly when we speak of *religion*? If someone who was unfamiliar with the term was to turn to the dictionary they would find the following definition:

Religion *n.* Belief in superhuman controlling power, esp. In a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship; expression of this in worship; particular system of faith and worship. [F f.L *religio* bond]⁶⁰

Immediately we see that this explanation is laden with imagery and terms which have their origin in Judaism and Christianity. Words such as *obedience* and *faith* conjure up notions of a person being bound to serve and place their ultimate trust in a supernatural deity. It is worth noting that the entry gives the etymological origin for the term *religion* as being derived from

⁵⁹ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The meaning and end of Religion: a new approach to the religious traditions of mankind* (New York: New American Library, 1964), 19.

⁶⁰ The New Zealand Pocket Oxford Dictionary

the Latin word for bond. However, like the modern conception of religion this understanding of *religio* is simply one of many ways in which the term has been interpreted.⁶¹

In fact, Daniel Dubisson argues that the term was so vague and ordinary in pre-Christian Roman culture that it only became worthy of note when later adopted by early Christians.⁶² Despite this, one finds that in many texts the most often cited example of a pre-Christian understanding of *religio* is that of Cicero who mentions it in his work *De Natura Deorum*.⁶³ However because *religio* did not possess a fixed meaning for the pre-Christian Romans, Dubisson claims that it is almost naive and repetitive scholasticism to begin an examination of religion with Cicero's definition.⁶⁴ Yet in regards to the argument being made in this chapter it is important to start with Cicero for it is there that we find the contrast between superstition and true religion.

Cicero claimed that the true nature of the Roman gods had become largely misunderstood through basic human assumptions. These errors had evolved until they took on a life of their own, becoming superstitions and false beliefs.⁶⁵ Those who misinterpreted the nature of the gods and who venerated them through mistaken means in order to prolong the health of their families were called *superstes*, meaning 'a survivor,' from which the word superstition later developed. However those who sought to worship the gods through carefully practiced rituals were the 'religious.' Because of the close attention that was paid to the performance of ritual, Cicero stated that *religio* was derived from the Latin word *relegere*, meaning to 'retrace' or

⁶¹ Smith, *Meaning and end*, 23.

⁶² Daniel Dubisson, *Western Construction of Religion: myths, knowledge, and ideology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 23.

⁶³ See Smith, *The meaning and end of Religion* and Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial theory, India and 'the Mystic East'* (New York: Routledge, 1999)

⁶⁴ Dubisson, *Western Construction*, 22.

⁶⁵ Marcus Tullius Cicero and Harris Rackham, "De Natura Deorum II" in *Cicero: De Natura Deorum, Academia* (Cambridge Mass., 1933), 191-193, v.70-71.

‘reread.’⁶⁶ Since this diligence towards revering the gods was directed by a sense of piety *religio* was also an attitude.⁶⁷ So therefore for Cicero, the religious, those who applied a knowledgeable and attentive approach to the nature of the gods rather than following simple folk superstitions, were those that had ‘true religion.’

After the introduction of Christianity to the Roman Empire, the meaning of *religio* later took a new meaning as the early fathers of the Church sought to remove it from its pagan origins.⁶⁸ For early Christians the concept of faith was an important element for their community that they believed distinguished them from other religions.⁶⁹ As opposed to being a belief system which pervaded every aspect of the greater society, as was with the worship of pagan deities, Christianity defined itself as a more private and inner form of worship.⁷⁰ Continuing the idea of *religio* as being an attitude, it was this mystical connection to God that shaped its new definition. Writing in the third century of the Common Era, the Christian author Lactantius states that *religio* has its origins in the Latin term *re-ligare*, which meant to bind together.⁷¹

This reinterpretation popularised the idea of religion as being a bond between man and his creator, a bond that was strengthened by faith in the one true God. Lactantius took this development further by establishing the notion of *vera religio* and *falsa religio*, true and false religion.⁷² For Christians, their monotheistic God, his revelation and the mode of worshipping

⁶⁶ Cicero and Rackham, 193, v.72.

⁶⁷ Smith, *Meaning and end*, 26.

⁶⁸ Dubisson, *Western Construction*, 25.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Meaning and end*, 27.

⁷⁰ Dubisson, *Western construction*, 24.

⁷¹ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 36.

⁷² Smith, *Meaning and end*, 29.

Him, being *vera religio*, was therefore the only religion, all others were simply false and undeserving of the title ‘religion.’⁷³

The medieval world of Western Europe, which had grown from the ruins of the Roman Empire, saw the concept of religion reverting from the bond between man and his creator to what can possibly be described as an amalgamation of Cicero’s *religio* and *superstes*. With the Roman Catholic Church having assumed its position of authority over society, other religions no longer had any voice of authority within Christendom. As a result, the meaning of religion underwent a change. No longer was there the ‘Christian religion’ of the Roman period.⁷⁴ In its place there instead arose the notion of the ‘Christian faith,’ for it was only through faith that one could truly comprehend God.⁷⁵ While the term religion remained, it did so in the sense of defining a life apart from the profane world that was utterly devoted to God. Those who chose to take holy vows and enter into either the priesthood or a monastery were ‘religious’ and led a life of ‘religion.’⁷⁶

For the lay people of medieval society, faith as a means of maintaining a bond with God had very little to do with their everyday life. Their lives were ones where hardships such as famine, disease and death were daily realities. Therefore in order to provide the common people with a means of warding off these threats and at the same time, keeping them within the fold of Christianity, the faith took on a more superstitious element with the Church

⁷³ Dubisson, *Western Construction*, 25.

⁷⁴ Smith, *Meaning and end*, 32-33.

⁷⁵ Smith, *Meaning and end*, 33.

⁷⁶ Peter Harrison, *Religion and the religions in the English Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11.

sanctifying these non scriptural elements.⁷⁷ Prayers could not just be offered to God or Christ but to local saints who could ensure successful harvests or prevent illness.

Medieval Christianity based its doctrine of salvation on the notion that man was continually progressing towards redemption.⁷⁸ His path was continually interrupted by sin, which was then absolved through penance and confession.⁷⁹ Therefore in order to ensure that they were continually on the right path, the Christian had to adhere to standards set down by the Church and partake in rituals and ceremonies.⁸⁰ This notion of communal participation is important because it is there that we find the element of Cicero's *religio*, the retracing of ritual and the attitude of reverence towards God.

The Church's hold over the religious life therefore made medieval Christianity a regression from Lactantius' understanding of *religio* as being a bond between man and God. Instead, medieval religion was the bond between the Church and God. In order to ensure his own salvation, man had to rely upon the Church to act as an intermediary between himself and God. Religion was not faith but manmade ecclesiastical hierarchies that were deemed necessary for any bond to be maintained.

The Reformation and the rise of Protestantism

However it was this seemingly necessary reliance on the church authorities to act as intermediaries between man and God that caused post medieval theologians to question the validity of 'religion.' One such thinker was Martin Luther (1483-1546), a German monk and

⁷⁷ Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 10.

⁷⁸ Cameron, *European Reformation*, 79.

⁷⁹ Cameron, *European Reformation*, 79-80.

⁸⁰ Cameron, *European Reformation*, 12.

lecturer at the University of Wittenberg in Saxony.⁸¹ Plagued by feelings of guilt in regards to his sins, Luther, for most of his life, lived in constant fear of eternal damnation.⁸² Luther tried to combat this spiritual crisis by living the life of a model monk by fasting and performing good deeds. Yet because Luther believed that all of man's actions were inherently sinful due to the notion of Original Sin, his efforts were still leading him towards damnation and away from salvation.⁸³

When his uncertainties were discovered by his teacher, Johann von Staupitz, he was instructed to undertake a study of the scripture. It was through this intense study that he at last found the solution to his concerns in the writings of St Paul.⁸⁴ In his Letters, Paul states that salvation is to be found through faith.⁸⁵ It was this concept that changed the way Luther viewed Christianity and formed his view on the difference between faith and 'religion.'

For Luther, the origin of all his problems lay in Original Sin. The earthly components of man, such as his body and mind, were tainted by sin and therefore were an unreliable means by which to understand God.⁸⁶ One of these corrupted components was conscience, which man used to judge and evaluate his surroundings. The problem with conscience was that it constantly used reason to reinforce its perceptions of the world and God.⁸⁷ The conscience creates a god out of reason, arguing that that, since the individual it belongs to is not

⁸¹ Michael Mullet, *Luther* (London: Methuen, 1986), 22.

⁸² Mullet, *Luther*, 22-23.

⁸³ Mullet, *Luther*, 23.

⁸⁴ Mullet, *Luther*, 24.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Harrison, *Religion and the religions*, 8.

⁸⁷ Randall C. Zachman, *The Assurance of faith: conscience in the theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 20.

necessarily an evil person, then the life they live is still in accordance to God.⁸⁸ Therefore through the use of our conscience, we start to judge the world by our own standards, which we attribute to being compatible to those of God.

Conscience also uses reason to discredit the impossible. When faced with the challenge of the resurrection, conscience tells the individual that a man cannot possibly rise from his own death.⁸⁹ Therefore the individual must question their beliefs and find valid ways to explain them. By doing so the conscience is operating on natural law and therefore is creating a natural religion. Since natural religion requires man made elements, such as ritual, to perpetuate it, natural religion led the individual towards eternal damnation by distracting them from that which mattered the most; faith in the Word of God.⁹⁰

Luther called natural religion or religion of the conscience, the Theology of Glory.⁹¹ In contrast to this stood the true religion which was based upon the Theology of the Cross. The Theology of the Cross does not ask the Christian to think or evaluate its conception of God. All that it requires is that the Christian believe that Jesus Christ died in order to redeem the sins of humanity.⁹² Human salvation therefore simply lay in justification by faith. Sin is therefore no longer the burden which they must carry, for the individual believes that Christ has already inherited that burden through his own sacrifice.⁹³ Therefore in the Theology of the Cross, good deeds, ritual, pilgrimage, penance and priestly intercession do not count. The

⁸⁸ Zachman, *Assurance of faith*, 58.

⁸⁹ Zachman, *Assurance of faith*, 19.

⁹⁰ Zachman, *Assurance of faith*, 37.

⁹¹ Zachman, *Assurance of faith*, 19.

⁹² Zachman, *Assurance of faith*, 57.

⁹³ Ibid.

individual must make that leap of faith and rediscover the true *religio*, the bond between man and God as found in the figure of Christ.

In Luther's reconception, since God's mercy is only revealed through the figure of Christ, and since Christ himself is revealed to mankind only through the Word (his teachings which he distributed), Luther argued that it is only in the scriptures that a Christian can find the sole source of authority.⁹⁴ For him the external trappings of a religious life were manmade fabrications that had no divine origin in God.⁹⁵ Instituted as a way of revering God in order to obtain his favour, religious life was little more than self preservation - a distraction which caused Christians to deviate from their true duty of serving their fellow man.⁹⁶ For Luther, God was only to be found through his revelation in Christ. To seek him elsewhere and by any other means was heresy.⁹⁷

In order to truly understand the Word, Luther advocated a return to the scriptures. Since they were the word of God the scriptures were therefore the ultimate and only source of authority and not the church.⁹⁸ This viewpoint challenged the established church, for the medieval church had always seen itself as the guardians of religious knowledge and tradition.⁹⁹ To the medieval Christian, the church's interpretation of scripture was regarded as infallible and was to be accepted with implicit faith.¹⁰⁰ However it was Luther's view that by making a clear, analytical study of the scripture, a Christian could come to realise that the traditions of the

⁹⁴ Harrison, *Religion and the religions*, 20.

⁹⁵ Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 174.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Alister E. McGrath and Darren C. Marks, *The Blackwell Companion to Protestantism*, (Malden: Blackwell Pub., 200), 47.

⁹⁸ Cameron, *European Reformation*, 136.

⁹⁹ Cameron, *European Reformation*, 89.

¹⁰⁰ Cameron, *European Reformation*, 90.

church were gross misinterpretations of scripture which had taken on a life of their own.¹⁰¹

Salvation was therefore linked to knowledge, for it was only through proper knowledge that one could understand the true message of the scriptures.¹⁰²

Luther's new interpretation of the Christian's relationship with Christ started the Reformation. Challenging the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformation led to the rise of a new form of Christianity in Western Europe which, because its adherents were protesting against the established Church, became known as Protestantism. The search for a true understanding of scripture saw Protestant scholars seeking out the original Biblical texts which were written not in Latin but in Greek and Hebrew.¹⁰³ By doing so they believed that they were sweeping away the centuries of mistranslation and misinterpretation which the Roman Catholic Church had allowed to run unchecked.

This reliance on the scriptures was termed *Sola Scriptura* (by scripture alone) and shows the impact that the Reformation had on removing the 'natural' elements of religion. In the eyes of the Protestants, Roman Catholicism, or Papism, came to be viewed as a natural and therefore corrupted form of religion.¹⁰⁴ One such reformer, the Swiss Protestant Ulrich Zwingli (1484 – 1531), issued a text in 1525 entitled *De Vera et Falsa Religione Commentarius* in which he discussed the concept of true and false religion. For Zwingli, as it was with Lactantius and Luther, true *religio* was the sacred bond between man and God which could only be found through faith in Christ.¹⁰⁵ All other forms, such as devotion to church, priests and ritual were

¹⁰¹ Cameron, *European Reformation*, 136.

¹⁰² Harrison, *Religion and the religions*, 21.

¹⁰³ Cameron, *European Reformation*, 141.

¹⁰⁴ Harrison, *Religion and the religions*, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *Meaning and end*, 36.

false religion.¹⁰⁶ This splintering of Western Christianity into differing churches and sects led once more to religion becoming a pluralistic concept. Not only was there the Christian religion, but there also was now the religion of the Jews, the Mohamets¹⁰⁷ and the pagans.¹⁰⁸ These however were false religions since Christianity was regarded as the only true religion.

This new understanding that religion was an element which could be found in all human societies coincided with the Age of Discovery. Through exploration, Western civilisation came to realise that Christendom was not the centre of humanity.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile astronomical advancements made by astronomers such as Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543) proved that the earth did not lie at the centre of the universe,¹¹⁰ thus rendering obsolete the model which had previously been established by the Roman mathematician and astrologer, Ptolemy (c.90-168). The fact that Christendom, let alone humanity, was no longer positioned at the centre of the universe led to the realisation that medieval knowledge of the world was incomplete. The old methods of thinking, which had relied so heavily on biblical scripture, now came to be questioned and considered insufficient.

Humanity was no longer seen as a privileged creation but instead as a being which was simply one of many elements which comprised the universe.¹¹¹ Since Christianity was no longer considered the only religion in the world, a new way to understand the human

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ An archaic term for Muslims, referring to them as followers of their prophet Mohammed.

¹⁰⁸ Harrison, *Religion and the religions*, 39.

¹⁰⁹ James M. Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment: from Descartes to Kant*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 7.

¹¹⁰ G.A.J. Rogers, "Science and British philosophy: Boyle and Newton," in *British Philosophy and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stuart Brown (New York: Routledge, 1996), 43.

¹¹¹ Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 7

condition was required.¹¹² A new method of investigation was needed, one which was free from the overarching influence of the supernatural. It was into this void that the method which we now call ‘modern science’ began to appear and as a result, ushered in a period later known as the Scientific Revolution.¹¹³ Yet this new development, which was dedicated to the study of humanity and the natural world, saw not only the formation of modern science, but also that of the modern understanding of religion.

It is important to note that one of the first ‘modern scientists’ to develop a scientific method by which humanity could be understood, did so against the backdrop of Protestant disunity. Francis Bacon (1561-1626), an English philosopher, scientist and statesman, lived at a time when Queen Elizabeth I of England was being confronted with issues regarding the character of the Anglican Church. Some churchmen wished for the Anglican faith to retain elements of Catholicism, while others argued for a stricter reformation to take place.¹¹⁴ Since this was an issue which threatened her throne, and because she enjoyed both the Catholic aspects of ceremony and the Protestant right to be head of the church, Elizabeth formed a compromise.¹¹⁵ Yet in order to do so doctrinal arguments that were justified by reason alone were dismissed.¹¹⁶ This practical use of compromise in order to resolve conflict influenced English thought and gave birth to Francis Bacon’s theories of empiricism.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ John Henry, “Science and the Coming of the Enlightenment,” in *The Enlightened World* ed. Martin Fitzpatrick (New York: Routledge, 2004), 10.

¹¹⁴ Henry, “Science,” 15

¹¹⁵ T.A. Morris, *Europe and England in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 302-303.

¹¹⁶ Henry, “Science,” 15.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Empiricism can be described as a way in which knowledge is attained through the use of the senses as opposed to reasoned thought.¹¹⁸ Theories could no longer rest upon logical arguments, they needed to be tested and observed in order to be credible.¹¹⁹ Bacon believed that a genuine experiment should not simply set out to prove the initial claims of the scientist as the direction would always be influenced by the input of the individual performing the experiment. Rather, an experiment should set out to discover the inherent truth.¹²⁰ Since scientific experiments and their results were often confined to a select few, Bacon wished to do away with the aura of magic and mystery and present science to the general public.¹²¹ Scientific findings should also not remain static but instead be constantly expanded upon in order for them to produce genuine and effective results.¹²²

It is here, in Bacon's empirical approach to discovering the truth and his desire to liberate knowledge from the confines of the elite that we start to see the beginning of a new way of thinking. No longer was the approach to knowledge to remain rigidly entrenched in antiquated methods. The old concepts were to be tested by new means and their results observed and distributed. Knowledge was not to remain exclusive but to be shared in order to create a better humanity. It was this new way of thinking that led to the birth of the Enlightenment.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 75.

¹²⁰ Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 17.

¹²¹ Paolo Rossi, "Bacon's idea of science," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*, ed. Markku Peltonen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 32.

¹²² Ibid.

The European Enlightenment

Coined in the nineteenth century, the term Enlightenment is used to represent a period considered to have been a turning point in the evolution of Western civilisation.¹²³ The term itself is derived from a popular form of appraisal that arose in eighteenth century Europe. To say that someone was ‘enlightened’ meant that they were one who had a broad range of knowledge and that their inquisitiveness and reasoning was not limited by social conditions.¹²⁴ Rather than conform to the doctrines of higher authorities, the enlightened individual chose to view the universe in a new light, and used this new light to expel from their minds the shadows and clouds of superstition and rigid tradition.¹²⁵ The notion of using human reasoning to discover light went against the founding principles of medieval universities which had proclaimed that only through God can the light of the world be understood.¹²⁶

The origins of the Enlightenment can once again be found in the clash between Protestantism and Catholicism. Stuart Brown argues that the Enlightenment began in England in the year 1688 when the Whig political party started their revolution.¹²⁷ This revolution was a Protestant reaction to the threat of Catholic absolutism after the Catholic James II was enthroned as the king of England.¹²⁸ The English Protestants had reason to fear Catholic absolutism for in that very same year the king of France, Louis XIV, had removed the rights

¹²³ Stuart Brown, *British Philosophy and the Age of Enlightenment*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 2

¹²⁴ Margaret C. Jacob, *The Enlightenment: a brief history with documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 1.

¹²⁵ Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 2-3.

¹²⁶ Peter Schouls, “The quest for philosophical certainty” in *The Enlightenment World*, ed. Martin Fitzpatrick (New York: Routledge, 2004), 28

¹²⁷ Brown, *British Philosophy*, 3.

¹²⁸ Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 4.

of French Protestants, known as Huguenots, and forced them to either convert or go into exile.¹²⁹ Associating Catholicism with the unchallenged power of a monarchy and persecution, the English Protestants formed an allegiance with the Dutch who were led by James's son in law, William III, the Prince of Orange and Stadtholder of territories within the Dutch Republic.¹³⁰ Supported by the Dutch, the English Protestants removed James from the throne of England and replaced him with William.¹³¹ As a result of William's enthronement, a settlement was established which allowed for religious toleration and the right for parliament to remain independent of the monarchy.¹³²

The religious toleration of William III saw not only the development of new forms of Protestantism in England but also a split within the Anglican Church.¹³³ The Church was divided into two forms, the Low Church and the High Church. While the Low Church took a more liberal approach in that it based its ideology around preaching to the masses and maintaining social ethics, the High Church was conservative in that it preferred ceremonial traditions.¹³⁴ This division also found its way into politics in that the Whigs favoured the Low Church, while their opponents, the Tories, allied themselves with the High Church.¹³⁵ This era of religious and social tolerance allowed the scientist, Isaac Newton (1643-1727) to freely publish his groundbreaking works on the nature of the universe.

¹²⁹ Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 4.

¹³⁰ Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 6.

¹³¹ Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 6.

¹³² Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 6.

¹³³ Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 16-17.

¹³⁴ Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 17.

¹³⁵ Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 17.

Newton's approach to understanding the universe was to combine the rational method, as established by Descartes with the empirical method of Bacon.¹³⁶ Descartes believed that the true understanding of a subject could only be explained through the use of reason, since the senses were an unreliable method.¹³⁷ However for Newton simple theory was not enough. A subject also had to be submitted to careful observation and tested through experiments in order to define its true nature.¹³⁸ His approach is important to both the development of the Enlightenment and the study of religion in that his theories proved that the nature of the universe and humanity itself could be studied through a scientific approach that was free of any reference to God.¹³⁹ Because of this his theories were considered to be applicable to the elements of human nature and society.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, to the 'enlightened,' science could also be used to discover what exactly religion was in a way that was free from clergy and doctrine.

Immanuel Kant and True Religion

This independent search for the truth was itself the ideology which lay at the very heart of the Enlightenment. By casting aside dogmatic influences the thinkers of the Enlightenment hoped that individuals would climb to new heights of discovery from which they could form a proper understanding of the world.¹⁴¹ In his famous essay, *Was ist Aufklärung?* (What is Enlightenment?), the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) argues that Enlightenment is essentially 'man's release from his self incurred tutelage.'¹⁴² Therefore

¹³⁶ Henry, "Science," 23.

¹³⁷ Henry, "Science," 29.

¹³⁸ Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 16.

¹³⁹ Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 154.

¹⁴⁰ Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 154.

¹⁴¹ Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 6.

¹⁴² Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" *Internet History Sourcebook*, accessed April 16, 2012, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kant-what-is.asp>.

Enlightenment occurs in a society when its people finally find the courage to think and to use reason for themselves and not rely upon the intellectual guidance of institutions and figures of authority.¹⁴³

As a both a citizen of the Kingdom of Prussia and a philosopher of the German Enlightenment, Kant is an important figure, for it is in him that we find the beginning of the modern critique of religion in German thought.¹⁴⁴ Kant was writing at a time when the period of Enlightenment was considered to be coming to an end in Prussia.¹⁴⁵ This decline in Enlightenment values was due to the accession of Friedrich Wilhelm II to the throne of Prussia in 1786¹⁴⁶ who ushered in a return to conservative religious ideals, with orthodox Lutheranism regaining its place as the normative religion of Prussia.¹⁴⁷ For Kant, the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm II's own father, Friedrich II (or Friedrich the Great) was a true era of Enlightenment in that it allowed for the development of religious thought free from the interference of the monarchy. Kant chose to honour Friedrich II by declaring that he lived in "the age of enlightenment, or the century of Friedrich" and that in Friedrich "we have a shining example wherein no monarch is superior to him we honour."¹⁴⁸ It was under Friedrich II's toleration of the Enlightenment that Kant was able to combine its ideals, such as rational thinking, with those of his own Pietist upbringing in order to create his work *The Critique of Pure Reason*.

¹⁴³ This viewpoint of Kant's can be summed up by his popular quote *Sapere Aude*, that is, "Have the courage to use your own reason."

¹⁴⁴ Louis Dupré, *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 283.

¹⁴⁵ Steven Lestition, "Kant and the end of Enlightenment in Prussia," *The Journal of Modern History*, 65:1, (1993), 57.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Lestition, "Kant," 66.

¹⁴⁸ Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"

Despite the Enlightenment spreading from England to France and the Netherlands, it had come late to the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire.¹⁴⁹ The Kingdom of Prussia was no exception and when the Enlightenment finally did arrive it faced resistance from a Lutheran sect known as Pietism.¹⁵⁰ Pietism itself had originally evolved in the late seventeenth century as a reaction to the perceived spiritual stagnation that was taking place within the established Lutheran church.¹⁵¹ This loss of faith amongst the lay people was the result of three societal factors.¹⁵² The first was the general sense of indifference that the lay people felt towards the Lutheran church.¹⁵³ Rather than remain true to Luther's emphasis on faith, the church instead placed a greater emphasis on orthodox scholasticism and logic.¹⁵⁴ This indifference amongst the lay followers of Lutheranism resulted in a decline in church attendance and a lack of understanding in regards to discovering Christ through faith.¹⁵⁵ The second cause for disillusionment was the way in which Lutheran princes preferred to emulate the grandiose lifestyle of the Catholic French monarch Louis XIV rather than follow the model that was expected of a guardian of the Lutheran faith.¹⁵⁶ The third cause which gave rise to Pietism was the suffering that the German people still felt in wake of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), a war which had its origins in religious conflict between Protestant and

¹⁴⁹ Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 203.

¹⁵⁰ Allen W. Wood, "Kant's life and works" in *A Companion to Kant* ed. Graham Bird, (Malden, MA ; Oxford : Blackwell Pub., 2006) 12.

¹⁵¹ Dupré, *The Enlightenment*, 325.

¹⁵² Carter Lindberg, "Introduction," in *The Pietist Theologians: an introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Carter Lindberg, (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 7.

¹⁵³ Dupré, *The Enlightenment*, 325.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ James van Horn Melton, "Pietism, politics and the public sphere in Germany," in *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe*, ed. James E. Bradley and Dale K. Van Kley, (Notre Dame, Ind. : University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 294.

¹⁵⁶ Van Horn Melton, "Pietism," 295.

Catholic Germans.¹⁵⁷ Since the war had ended without establishing who was the victor, it could not be determined which was the ‘true’ faith.¹⁵⁸ The despair and uncertainty wrought by the war created an environment in which many feared was simply the beginning of the Apocalypse.¹⁵⁹ It was this general spiritual malaise that allowed for Pietism to take root.

Founded by Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705), Pietism began as a lay based biblical study group which placed an emphasis on communal worship within the homes of its followers.¹⁶⁰ Rather than simply follow the strict guidelines that were central to Lutheran orthodoxy, Pietism instead sought to spiritually awaken the individual and therefore renew their faith.¹⁶¹ Inspired by Johann Arndt’s *Das Wahre Christentum* (True Christianity), which stated that faith had to be tended by a love for others, Pietism also encouraged its followers to commit good deeds in society.¹⁶² This Pietist notion of the individual’s search for their own morality can be found in Kant’s idea of true religion.¹⁶³

Yet despite its beginnings as a reform movement that was apart from politics, by the mid eighteenth century Pietism had become closely intertwined with Prussian absolutism.¹⁶⁴ Pietists were first encouraged to settle in the eastern regions of Prussia by Friedrich Wilhelm I, a monarch of the House of Hohenzollern.¹⁶⁵ Although the Hohenzollern dynasty was

¹⁵⁷ Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 203.

¹⁵⁸ Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, modernity and the emancipation of man, 1670-1752* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2006), 63.

¹⁵⁹ Van Horn Melton, “Pietism,” 294-295.

¹⁶⁰ Van Horn Melton, “Pietism,” 297.

¹⁶¹ Lindberg, “Introduction,” 8.

¹⁶² Van Horn Melton, “Pietism,” 97.

¹⁶³ Dupre, *The Enlightenment*, 285.

¹⁶⁴ Van Horn Melton, “Pietism,” 307.

¹⁶⁵ Van Horn Melton, “Pietism,” 303.

Calvinist, their Prussian subjects were largely orthodox Lutherans.¹⁶⁶ The Prussian nobility, who ruled the Estates within the kingdom, were also closely aligned with the Lutheran church and as a result benefited from this relationship in terms of profits and social standing.¹⁶⁷ Therefore in order to weaken the authority of the Lutheran nobility, the Hohenzollern monarchs needed the support of a faith which countered that of orthodox Lutheranism.¹⁶⁸ Pietism provided the Hohenzollerns with this opportunity. After Friedrich Wilhelm I converted to Pietism it soon began to infiltrate the spheres of influence within Prussian society, with many Pietists gaining prominent positions within Prussian universities.¹⁶⁹ With its ideals of duty and servitude, Pietism was considered an appropriate vehicle for spreading the Prussian state's ideology of militaristic loyalty to the king and fatherland.¹⁷⁰

Therefore when the Enlightenment arrived in Prussia many Pietists within the court of Frederick Wilhelm I of Prussia felt that the Enlightenment ideal of reason was turning universities away from being centres of religious learning and morality.¹⁷¹ This in turn led to Friedrich Wilhelm I banishing the university lecturer and promoter of the Enlightenment, Christian Wolff, from his realms in 1723.¹⁷² However Wolff's exile was overturned when, in 1740, Friedrich Wilhelm's son, Friedrich II, recalled the lecturer to the University of Halle.¹⁷³ Since Wolff's philosophical works influenced Kant in the formation of his own ideas, it is no

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Van Horn Melton, "Pietism," 304.

¹⁶⁹ Van Horn Melton, "Pietism," 306.

¹⁷⁰ Lindberg, "Introduction," 10.

¹⁷¹ Wood, "Kant's life and works," 12.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

wonder then that Kant honoured Friedrich II as a monarch who helped to spread Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment use of reason as a deconstructive tool is a central theme to Kant's theory of religion. For Kant, reason has three features which enable it to ensure a common good.¹⁷⁴ First of all, reason is not limited to a certain community or location but is instead universal and therefore can be applied to the whole of humanity.¹⁷⁵ The second distinguishing feature is that reason authorises actions which may go against tradition. Therefore it acts as a constant critique, a safeguard which prevents a society from lapsing into dogmatic ignorance.¹⁷⁶ Thirdly, since reason can only lead to the moral good, it calls upon the individual to fulfil their moral duty as opposed to simply following the instructions of others.¹⁷⁷

Kant also divided reason into two spheres; private and public reason. Private reason is that of the individual who is constrained by rules imposed on them by higher authorities.¹⁷⁸ The person who is bound by others must always articulate their own thoughts in a manner which is in keeping with the establishment they serve. Therefore those who use private reason are not truly free. Public reason on the other hand is when one is free to use reason without fear of being censored by a higher authority.¹⁷⁹ Rather than being confined to a certain location or time, public reason is universal, thus making it available to all.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ Phil Enns, "Reason and Revelation: Kant and the problem of authority," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 62:2 (2007), 108.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Enns, "Reason and revelation," 107.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

As with previous philosophers, Kant established a theory of what constitutes the true religion. Rather than simply limit himself to the dichotomy between revealed and natural religion, Kant instead draws a distinction between the true religion and faiths. For Kant, faiths are systems which are limited to the cultures and timeframes in which they originated, thus rendering them inapplicable to humanity as a whole.¹⁸¹ The true religion, however, is that which is based on a rational system and therefore can be applied universally to all of humanity.¹⁸² This true religion is the religion of morality.

Since reason is a function that is available to all of humanity it will eventuate that there will be those who will feel compelled to follow their moral duty.¹⁸³ These individuals do not require absolute proof that God exists, since the proof of a creator God is beyond human capacity.¹⁸⁴ Instead, the moral individual simply must come to the realisation, through reason, that there exists a greater force which is directing all moral actions towards the common benefit of humanity.¹⁸⁵ Because the true aspects of God will always remain unknown, Kant warns against anthropomorphising God.¹⁸⁶ Rather than allowing us to know God, anthropomorphism causes us to turn God into a reflection of ourselves.¹⁸⁷ We therefore set out to please God in a manner which we believe would be suitable, yet this service is always done within the framework of our own personal biases.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Enns, "Reason and revelation," 105.

¹⁸³ Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the limits of Reason alone* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 139.

¹⁸⁴ Kant, *Religion*, 142.

¹⁸⁵ Enns, "Reason and revelation," 105.

¹⁸⁶ Kant, *Religion*, 156.

¹⁸⁷ Kant, *Religion*, 157.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

For Kant, these superstitious actions, while they may be grounded in historical and geographical foundations, are all alike.¹⁸⁹ Therefore an individual who seeks to remove sin through ritual and pilgrimage is performing an act which is hollow. This is because the same action is being performed by another in a distant country for the purpose of placating a god of a different name.¹⁹⁰ Since these actions are not guided by moral reasoning but simply by superstitious fear of a God who we create in our own image they are essentially a form of self worship and an easy form of distraction from following our true moral duty.¹⁹¹ Indeed, Kant himself states:

Whether the devotee betakes himself to church according to rule or whether he undertakes a pilgrimage to the sanctuaries in Loretto or in Palestine; whether he brings his formulas of prayer to the court of heaven with his lips, or by means of a prayer wheel, like the Tibetan...whatever be substituted for the moral service of God, it is all one and all equal in value.¹⁹²

But even though Kant believes that faiths are not the true universal religion, he still maintains that they have an importance. While the true religion is forever out of our reach, we must continue to strive for it.¹⁹³ However, to do so we first need a system in which to ground ourselves.¹⁹⁴ This is the role of historical faiths. They give us an initial understanding of the world and our relation to God from which we can then evolve, through the use of reason and

¹⁸⁹ Kant, *Religion*, 160.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Kant, *Religion*, 157.

¹⁹² Kant, *Religion*, 161. Here Kant compares Christian pilgrimage, which would have been familiar to his European readers, with an aspect of Tibetan Buddhism - a religion which in the late eighteenth century would have been considered exotic and mysterious.

¹⁹³ Enns, "Reason and revelation," 105.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

morality, towards the true religion.¹⁹⁵ Therefore the individual who follows the true religion does not do so apart from their own tradition, but rather uses the true religion to constantly critique and engage with the historical faith of their upbringing.¹⁹⁶ The true religion therefore is a critique of society and humanity, a vehicle which is driven by rationality and morality, with the betterment of humankind as its destination. This understanding of religion, as a universal system which can be found in the human character, is the legacy that Kant and the Enlightenment have left us.

¹⁹⁵ Enns, "Reason and revelation," 106.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

Chapter Two

Buddhism and the West

When David L. McMahan, an Associate Professor of Religious Studies, once asked his American students to describe Buddhism he was met with a response which conveyed many of the modern conceptions that the West has regarding the tradition.¹ Initially his students perceived Buddhism as a liberal methodology that was entirely compatible with the modern American way of life.² It did not require them to change their daily routine by adhering to strict practices.³ Nor did it demand that they forgo scientific progress by believing in supramundane beings.⁴ Instead of burdening them with all of the trappings usually associated with religion, Buddhism therefore allowed them to have a sense of spirituality while remaining modern, rational Westerners.

Yet rather than chide his students for their misconceptions, McMahan explains that they are instead only aware of a certain form of Buddhism. This Buddhism is not one which is traditionally practiced in Asia but rather is one which has been reconstructed in the West.⁵ The reconstruction of Buddhism is a process which has its origins in the nineteenth century encounter between Victorian Protestants and the Buddhists of various regions of Asia. Forged during a time when scientific progress was casting doubt on religious faith, reconstructed Buddhism was held aloft as a solution to the problems of the modern Western world.⁶ However while this process may have produced a new form of religion for the West, the

¹ David L. McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.

² Ibid.

³ McMahan, *Buddhist Modernism*, 4.

⁴ McMahan, *Buddhist Modernism*, 5.

⁵ McMahan, *Buddhist Modernism*, 4.

⁶ McMahan, *Buddhist Modernism*, 5.

consequences of it are evident in the way Tibetan Buddhism has been forced to recreate itself in order to maintain its credibility when engaging with both Marxism and Modernity.

In this chapter I shall trace the history of reconstructed Buddhism in both the nineteenth and early twentieth century, from its origins in Protestant discourse, to the aftermath of the 1893 Chicago Parliament of the World's Religions. By doing so I aim to align my argument with one made by Derek R. Peterson and Darren R. Walhof in their book *The Invention of Religion: rethinking belief in politics and history*. In *The Invention of Religion*, Peterson and Walhof start by agreeing with Russell McCutcheon's criticism of Mircea Eliade, that religion is not a *sui generis* element of human society but rather an element that has been constructed by outsiders, particularly Western academics.⁷ However where Peterson and Walhof differ from McCutcheon is that they believe that the construction of religion is a historical process which has not been solely confined to academics.⁸ Both claim that the construction of religion amongst non-Western cultures is also closely intertwined with colonial politics and administration.⁹ In this chapter I shall go one step further and argue that while the modern idea of 'Buddhism' was constructed through a process of nineteenth century colonisation, indigenous practitioners also played a part in recreating their faith in order to adapt it to the modern world.

The Buddha

If the formation of Christianity was the beginning of modernity for the West, then it can be argued that the formation of Buddhism was the beginning of alternative modernity for the

⁷ Derek R. Peterson and Darren R. Walhof, "Rethinking Religion," in *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking belief in politics and history*, ed. By Derek R. Peterson and Darren R. Walhof (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 1.

⁸ Peterson and Walhof, "Rethinking Religion," 1.

⁹ Peterson and Walhof, "Rethinking Religion," 1-2.

East. In the West, as with Christianity, the system is not named directly after its founder but rather by a title of reverence that had been bestowed upon the founder as an indication of their spiritual achievement. The historical founder of Buddhism therefore first went by the name of Siddhārtha Gautama. Born in southern Nepal sometime between the fifth and fourth century BCE, he was the son of King Suddhodana of the Śākya clan.¹⁰ In order to understand how Buddhism announced the beginning of modernity for the East, the social world into which Siddhārtha was born must first be examined.

In the second millennium BCE a nomadic, cattle herding Indo-European people who called themselves the Aryans entered the Indian subcontinent from the northwest.¹¹ With them they brought their religion, a system which was based around the worship of a pantheon of gods to whom ritual sacrifices were to be regularly made by a priestly class known as Brahmins.¹² To the Aryans, humanity was simply one of the many forms of existence that had stemmed forth from Puruṣa, the Cosmic Person whose sacrifice at the hands of the gods had led to the creation of the universe and the system of social organisation known as *varna*.¹³ To assist the gods and in order to ensure that the universe was not once again broken up, it was important for the Aryan community to regularly perform ritual sacrifices.¹⁴ These rituals also ensured that those performing or sponsoring them received material rewards and that they would gain entry to heaven after their death.¹⁵ Speaking a language which would later become Sanskrit the Aryans recorded their forms of worship in a collection of oral scriptures known as the

¹⁰ John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2007), 34.

¹¹ Stephen C. Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism: a survey* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 3.

¹² Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism*, 2.

¹³ William K. Mahoney, *The Artful Universe: an introduction to Vedic religious imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 132.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Noble Ross Reat, *Buddhism: a history* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1994), 4.

Vedas.¹⁶ Since the knowledge of ritual and scripture was only known to the Brahmins, they occupied a high position within the Aryan village communities.¹⁷ The civilisation of the Aryans and their Vedic religion has since come to be known to historians as the Vedic Period and it is often credited for containing the origins of the religion which would later evolve into Hinduism.

During the eighth century BCE the Aryans gradually migrated eastward into the Gangetic plain of north India where they encountered the indigenous non-Aryan peoples of the Indian subcontinent.¹⁸ These people followed their own religions which contained a host of indigenous gods and conceptions. Included among these indigenous concepts was the notion of karma and rebirth which differed from the traditional Aryan view of a heavenly afterlife.¹⁹ Gradually a synthesis began to take place between the two cultures and as a result new religious movements began to arise. Dissatisfaction with the physical performance of rituals in return for material rewards led to a new development that involved the internalisation of ritual, a yogic process that led to the practitioner coming to realise that they themselves were the source of the universe and that the material world was simply an illusion.²⁰ Those who adopted this new religious outlook were often wandering mendicants known as śramaṇas, individuals who had turned their backs on their expected role in Vedic society in favour of a

¹⁶ Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism*, 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism*, 3.

¹⁹ Reat, *Buddhism*, 4.

²⁰ Reat, *Buddhism*, 5.

life devoted to asceticism.²¹ The philosophies of this new religious outlook were recorded in a set of texts known as the *Upaniṣads* which date to the eighth century BCE.²²

Yet it wasn't just spiritual matters that were forcing the Vedic religion to change. After arriving in the fertile landscape of the Gangetic plain the Aryans soon learned to cultivate rice. Coupled with the development of iron tools this led to an increase in agricultural production and naturally an expansion in trade.²³ By the sixth century BCE this economic development had led to a rapid rise in urbanisation.²⁴ Since the Vedic religion relied upon the ritualised social structure of village life and agricultural patterns for its legitimacy the development of towns created a religious imbalance.²⁵ Within the cities people from various social backgrounds were able to merge, thus creating a more flexible society.²⁶ Mendicants were also attracted to the opportunities afforded by the growth of cities as they found that received support of social groups which had previously been ignored by the elitist Brahmins.²⁷ The cities with their flexible social interchange allowed for new religious practices to develop away from the rigid control of the Brahmins. It was into this new era of development in the Gangetic plain that Siddhārtha Gautama was born.

Scriptures written in the Pāli language, known as the Pāli Sutta record the details of Siddhārtha's life. It is said that as a young man he forsook his life as a prince in order to discover the truth behind the suffering of the world. Becoming a mendicant, he joined the

²¹ Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism*, 4.

²² Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism*, 5.

²³ Berkwtiz, *South Asian Buddhism*, 3.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism*, 4.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

many communities of ascetics who wandered across North India and learned from various teachers the methods of meditation which were said to lead to release from the soul from the physical world of birth and death.²⁸ Dissatisfied with the teachings and extreme methods of self denial that he encountered, Siddhārtha finally developed his own method which lay between excessive materialism and extreme self punishment.²⁹ This he later termed the Middle Path.³⁰

After putting the Middle Path into practice he was ready to pursue the final stage of his spiritual journey. Seated beneath a bodhi tree, he entered into a deep state of meditation where he progressed through the many levels of mental concentration.³¹ During this time he is said to have gained an insight into the true nature of reality.³² Existence, as understood by Siddhārtha, is an impermanent state in which all phenomena are constantly changing due to the laws of cause and effect.³³ This state of impermanence is driven by ignorance and desire which results in continual suffering and rebirth.³⁴ For Siddhārtha, time and existence was not a straight line with a beginning and an end but rather an ongoing cyclical state with neither start nor finish.³⁵ The solution to the never ending wheel of suffering, as understood by Siddhārtha, was to attain nirvāṇa, a state where desire and ignorance is extinguished which

²⁸ Reat, *Buddhism*, p.9.

²⁹ Reat, *Buddhism*, p.11.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Powers, *Introduction*, 48-49.

³² Powers, *Introduction*, 49.

³³ Bryan J. Cuevas, "Rebirth," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol. 2. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003), 713.

³⁴ Reat, *Buddhism*, 31.

³⁵ Rupert Gethin, "Cosmology," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol. 1. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 185.

results in release from rebirth.³⁶ This realisation was the enlightenment which he had sought for so long. As a result of this achievement Siddhārtha came to be known as the Buddha, a title derived from the Sanskrit root *budh* which means ‘to awaken.’³⁷ As the Buddha he then spent the next forty-five years of his life travelling across northern India in an effort to teach others the path to liberation.³⁸ He called his teachings the *Dharma*, the laws which explained the true nature of the reality and existence.³⁹

How then did the teachings of the Buddha develop into a ‘modern’ religion? Other religious movements that developed in Post-Vedic India at the same time as Buddhism, such as Jainism, taught similar paths to liberation yet they never moved beyond the confines of India. Perhaps the answer lies in the way in which Buddhism allowed for adaptability.

In contrast to the Vedic religion the Buddha dismissed the notion of a single creator God and the concept of an immortal soul which survives death. Instead the Buddha taught the doctrine of *anātman* (without spirit), which states that since all existence is conditioned by cause and effect and without permanence, so too are sentient beings.⁴⁰ Instead of possessing a soul sentient beings are composed of *skandha*, impermanent aggregates which are experienced by *viññāna* (consciousness).⁴¹ It is this consciousness which is subject to rebirth.

While the Buddha taught that there was no single God, the Buddhist understanding of cosmology admitted the existence of gods and borrowed many of the already pre-existing

³⁶ Reat, *Buddhism*, 32.

³⁷ Damien Keown, *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 42.

³⁸ Andrew Skilton, *A Concise History of Buddhism*, (Birmingham: Windhorse, 1994), 23.

³⁹ Keown, *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 74.

⁴⁰ K.T.S. Sarao, "Anātman/Ātman (No-Self/Self)," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol. 1. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA 2004), 18.

⁴¹ Mathieu Boisvert, "Skandha (Aggregate)," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol. 2. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003), 779.

Vedic deities.⁴² Along with the human realm of existence, sentient beings, depending on their conduct, also faced the possibility of being reborn in realms which were populated by *preta* (ghosts) and *Asuras* (jealous gods) or realms which were inhabited by *Devas* (gods).⁴³ While these gods lived for thousands of years in heavenly abodes they were still subject to the laws of karma and rebirth and therefore unless they gained enlightenment they too faced the possibility of an eventual death and rebirth in a lesser realm.⁴⁴ The teachings of the Buddha therefore put human existence on par with that of the gods and offered even the lowliest person the chance to either be reborn as a glorious god or supersede the gods themselves by gaining release from rebirth.

Part of Buddhism's popularity and its ability to transcend cultural and social boundaries were also due to two Buddhist concepts, that of *mārga* (path) and *upāya* (skilful means). The journey to liberation through the Buddha's teachings was likened to a path. Yet rather than being a solid, well defined path it was one which could adapt to suit the conditions through which the individual was progressing.⁴⁵ Since the path was built upon the laws of reality as taught by the Buddha, the path would remain the same no matter how different the external conditions or the nature of the individual were.⁴⁶ The path then can be suited to the lifestyle and nature of suffering as experienced by each separate individual.⁴⁷ *Upāya* or 'skilful means' as understood by Buddhists refers to the ability of the Buddha (and other teachers) to adapt

⁴² Gethin, "Cosmology," 183.

⁴³ Gethin, "Cosmology," 183.

⁴⁴ Jacob N. Kinnard, "Divinities," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol. 1. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 233.

⁴⁵ William Chu, "Path," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 636.

⁴⁶ Chu, "Path," 636.

⁴⁷ Chu, "Path," 636.

their message to the audience to whom they are teaching.⁴⁸ The concept of mār̥ga therefore is an example of upāya.

Since the Buddha preached to both householders and ascetics he was able to provide a unique alternative to the Vedas and the Upaniṣads which could be followed by people of all class and intellect. Kings, queens, beggars, prostitutes, ascetics, soldiers and merchants were all equal in the eyes of the Dharma.⁴⁹ The Middle Way therefore offered these individuals a method to attain release from suffering without having to drastically alter their place in society as they were not bound by caste or the need to perform rituals. Since there was no God or creator to worship, the Buddha's teachings could be applied without having to abandon previous worship of regional deities or submitting to a newly introduced foreign deity.

It was these unifying elements which made the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka (304 -232 BCE) choose Buddhism to become the official religion of his empire which ruled over nearly the whole entirety of the Indian subcontinent.⁵⁰ Under Aśoka the position of Buddhism in Indian society was reinforced through the construction of Buddhist monuments and the sending of missions to neighbouring realms such as the Greek kingdom of Bactria.⁵¹ During this time Buddhism became the foremost religion in India and was only eclipsed by the development of Hinduism towards the later stages of the Kushan Empire (78 CE – 225 CE) which dominated northwest India and Central Asia.⁵²

⁴⁸ Roger R. Jackson, "Upāya," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 871.

⁴⁹ Gail Omvedt, *Buddhism in India: challenging Brahmanism and caste* (New Delhi; Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2003), 63.

⁵⁰ Reat, *Buddhism*, 27.

⁵¹ Skilton, *Concise History*, 55.

⁵² Reat, *Buddhism*, 69.

Yet there was also another element which gave Buddhism the ability to move beyond regional and social boundaries, and element which was also utilised by Paul of Tarsus in his reimagining of Jesus of Nazareth; the element of the saviour figure.

The Buddha as a world saviour

For his followers, the death of Siddhārtha at the age of eighty marked his entry into *nirupadhiṣeṣanirvāṇa* the final stage of nirvāṇa whereby one is finally liberated from the wheel of rebirth and death.⁵³ Collectively calling themselves the *San̄gha*, the most devout of his followers renounced all ties to the domestic life of a householder and became monks and nuns, choosing to adhere to a strict moral code of nonviolence and abstinence from sexual behaviour and intoxicants.⁵⁴ By following this moral code, coupled with the practice of meditation designed to control the senses and develop concentration, the early followers of the Buddha sought to attain a level of awakening similar to his own.⁵⁵ Those who managed to reach this state were termed *arhat*.⁵⁶ Yet despite this level of attainment, the arhat was not considered to be of the same cosmological significance as a buddha.⁵⁷

For early Buddhists, a buddha was an exceptional being who had managed to gain enlightenment without any prior knowledge of Siddhārtha's teachings.⁵⁸ Upon reaching enlightenment through their own efforts, a buddha was then required to bring the Dharma

⁵³ Luis O. Gómez, "Nirvāṇa," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 602.

⁵⁴ Reat, *Buddhism*, 13.

⁵⁵ George D. Bond, "Arhat," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.1, (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 29.

⁵⁶ Jan Natter, "Buddha(s)," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 71.

⁵⁷ Natter, "Buddha(s)," 71.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

into a world system which is devoid of its teachings.⁵⁹ What separated Siddhārtha as “the Buddha” from the arhats of early Buddhism was that he was the ultimate teacher of the doctrine for their age of existence.⁶⁰ Siddhārtha’s human form was considered to be simply one of many *rūpakāya* (embodied forms) that a buddha can manifest in order to teach the path to enlightenment.⁶¹ Siddhārtha’s status as a buddha was increased by the development of legends which not only embellished his final life with mythological elements but also detail those lives which had preceded it.⁶² Mere humans could therefore emulate the spiritual achievements of the Buddha by following the path of the arhat but they could never be considered on the same status as such an elevated being.

Because there was no centralised authority and due to the geographic distances that existed between the various monastic communities, it was only natural that the early Buddhists would gradually form new schools of their own following the death of Siddhārtha.⁶³ Historically these early schools of Buddhism are referred to as the ‘Mainstream’ schools of thought so called because of their unified approach to the Buddha’s teachings, based their doctrines on the *Tripiṭaka*, the three baskets of teachings.⁶⁴ Although there are various debates as to when it occurred,⁶⁵ the first schism within the Buddhist communities resulted in

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ John J. Makransky, “Buddhahood and Buddha bodies,” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 76.

⁶¹ Makransky, “Buddhahood,” 76.

⁶² Heinz Bechert, “Buddha, life of the,” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 86.

⁶³ Collet Cox, “Mainstream Buddhist schools,” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 501.

⁶⁴ Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism*, 43.

⁶⁵ Some sources place the first schism at the Council of Vaiśālī which occurred one hundred years after Siddhārtha’s death. Others place it at the Council of Pāṭaliputra which was held in the third century B.C.E. See: Cox, “Mainstream,” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, 502.

the creation of two separate Buddhist identities. After a doctrinal debate held at the council, those who adhered to the winning viewpoint called themselves the *Mahāsāṃghika* (the greater community) in order to differentiate themselves from the *Sthaviravāda* (the Elders).⁶⁶ Although traditionalists, the *Mahāsāṃghika* implemented the theory that Siddhārtha was not a mere human but a supernatural being who was apart from the mundane world.⁶⁷ Although the *Mahāsāṃghika* school remained popular during Buddhism's prosperity throughout the Indian subcontinent, it eventually ceased to exist as a separate school.⁶⁸ Many scholars, however, trace the later rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism to ideas first proposed by the *Mahāsāṃghika*.⁶⁹

Further divisions occurred within Mainstream Buddhism when the *Sthaviravāda* school split itself into three separate schools; the *Pugdalavāda* and the *Sarvāstivāda* and the *Vibhajjavāda*. The *Sarvāstivāda*, or 'Everything exists,' were called so because of their belief that if current forms are in existence due to past actions then past and future forms must exist, a belief which contradicted the Buddhist tenant of impermanence.⁷⁰ Despite this ideology, the *Sarvāstivāda* school remained popular in northwest India and spread into Central Asia.⁷¹ The *Vibhajjavāda* school, which in itself was comprised of many sub schools, spread throughout the Indian subcontinent, from Kashmir to the island of Sri Lanka.⁷² With its Pāli based texts, *Vibhajjavāda* became the predominant form of Buddhism in southern

⁶⁶ Paul Harrison, "Mahāsāṃghika," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 490.

⁶⁷ Harrison, "Mahāsāṃghika," 490.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Harrison, "Mahāsāṃghika," 490.

⁷⁰ Cox, "Mainstream," 505.

⁷¹ Cox, "Mainstream," 505.

⁷² Cox, "Mainstream," 506.

India and Sri Lanka, and it was in the latter that the *Theravāda* sub-school became established.⁷³ Following the decline of Buddhism in India it was the Therāvada tradition which continued to be practiced not only in Sri Lanka but also in other regions of South East Asia such as Thailand and Burma.

Mahāyāna and the rise of the bodhisattva

In contrast to these mainstream traditions there gradually began to emerge a new form of Buddhist thought which considered its methods to be the pinnacle of Buddhist aspiration due to its focus on sacrifice and compassion for all living beings. This was the Mahāyāna, the Greater Path.⁷⁴ Although the monasteries of the mainstream schools played an important part within the wider social community, there were Buddhist practitioners who felt that the monastic life was placing too much emphasis on worldly life.⁷⁵ As a result there were monks who felt it was necessary to retreat to the forest, to live apart from society in order to practice their faith in a genuine manner.⁷⁶ These monks felt that by emulating the mode of life which had been exemplified by the Buddha they too would be able to attain Buddhahood.⁷⁷ The ‘greater path’ of Mahāyāna therefore came to refer to the path of pure ascetic practice.⁷⁸

⁷³ Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism*, 58.

⁷⁴ Mahāyāna did not arise as a sudden new development nor did it codify its ethics into a single ‘school’ of tradition. Instead it evolved in the first five centuries of the Common Era as a flexible movement within the mainstream traditions. It was not until the sixth century of the Common Era that the term Mahāyāna appeared and even then it did not refer to a solid school but rather a collection of spiritual approaches that often contradicted each other. Mahāyāna therefore was not a breakaway school but rather a new approach to the path of Buddhahood that appears to have remained, at least while in India, within the confines of the mainstream schools. See: Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism: the doctrinal foundations* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 3.

⁷⁵ Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 43.

⁷⁶ Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 31.

⁷⁷ Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 32.

⁷⁸ Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 32.

These new approaches also appear to have been confined to the periphery of regions where Buddhism was practiced.⁷⁹

Where Mahāyāna also began to depart from the mainstream tradition was in its conception of Buddhahood and nirvāṇa. While the mainstream traditions placed the attainment of nirvāṇa as the principle goal of a being's existence, the Mahāyāna believed that this was a self centred approach to enlightenment.⁸⁰ Instead the Mahāyāna focused on following the path of the *bodhisattva*. The path of the bodhisattva differs from that of the arhat or the self-awakened buddha, in that rather than seek liberation for themselves, the bodhisattvas are those who, having become motivated by compassion, seek enlightenment for the benefit of all living beings.⁸¹

⁷⁹ The Mahāyāna path appears to have particularly developed in the Gandhāran region of northwest India. This was an area which, due to being located on the silk trade routes, was influenced not only by the culture of India but also those of Greece, Iran and Central Asia. It has been theorised that some aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the figure of the bodhisattva were influenced by other Central Asian religions such as Zoroastrianism and Mitharism which contained messianic figures. See: R Emmerick, R. E. "Buddhism among Iranian Peoples." *The Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 3, part 2: the Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Jason Neelis "India, Northwest," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 366-368.

⁸⁰ Reat, *Buddhism*, 51.

⁸¹ In order to do this the aspiring bodhisattva aims to remove not only their emotional suffering but also their intellectual suffering through the attainment of *prajñā* (wisdom). This focus on wisdom is crucial to the bodhisattva's mission as it is only after developing wisdom (as exemplified in the sūtra *Prajñāpāramitā*) that a person realises that *all* phenomena are empty of inherent existence and therefore the realm of saṃsāra, the world of suffering, is fundamentally no different from nirvāṇa, in that they are both "empty." Contrary to popular belief, the bodhisattva does not postpone the state of nirvāṇa and the attainment of Buddhahood. In the Mahāyāna viewpoint there are instead different forms of nirvāṇa. The nirvāṇa of the mainstream traditions is that of the arhat, while the nirvāṇa sought by the bodhisattva is *apraṭiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa, the non-abiding nirvāṇa of full Buddhahood. The attainment of the non-abiding nirvāṇa therefore requires the bodhisattva to reject not only saṃsāra, the physical world of desire and suffering but also the notion of nirvāṇa as an extinguishing of attachment to saṃsāra. It is there, in the non-abiding nirvāṇa that the bodhisattva gains the ultimate wisdom of full Buddhahood but does not enter into a final state that is ultimately free from saṃsāra. Instead the bodhisattva remains in a mode of non-duality whereupon it can exist in both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Because the bodhisattva has realised the emptiness of all states and therefore is not limited to either of these realms, it is in possession of *dharmakāya*, a buddha-body, an embodiment of unrestricted enlightened knowledge and power. This allows the bodhisattva to project various manifestations of itself, the embodied forms of *rūpakāya*, to wherever there are those in need of its assistance. Of these forms there is the *sambhogakāya* (enjoyment body) a form which is taken in order to converse with other celestial bodhisattvas and *nirmanakāya*, the form taken by a buddha in order to interact with unenlightened beings in saṃsāra. These embodied forms may attain enlightenment but since the bodhisattva is already in possession of a *dharmakāya*, and therefore already in a state free from duality, these ulterior achievements of enlightenments are simply manifestations put on display for others. The

This notion of the bodhisattva also changed the way in which the historical Buddha himself was perceived. New sūtras appeared in which the Buddha advocated the path of the bodhisattva.⁸² It was also postulated that if Buddhahood could be attained by all sentient beings then the historical Buddha was simply just one of an unlimited number of buddhas who had already gained enlightenment in previous ages.⁸³ This meant that there would also be future buddhas and that those who were on the path to attaining Buddhahood must already be practicing the path of the bodhisattva.⁸⁴ However since only one buddha can appear at a time in a world devoid of the teachings, it was theorised that other buddhas existed in different world systems which lay in the ten directions where they were active in teaching the Dharma.⁸⁵ Devotees therefore not only had the historical Buddha to revere but also a set of cosmological buddhas with messianic aspects.⁸⁶

Patronised by the Kushan Empire, the Mahāyāna movement eventually spread into China through the efforts of Sogdian merchants and missionaries.⁸⁷ There it developed into further

bodhisattva therefore can appear at will wherever it is needed and lead others to enlightenment. The bodhisattva also makes use of the Buddhist concept of upāya and so through skilful means adapts their method of salvation to the particular predicament of those who are suffering. Since the bodhisattva is a being whose compassion is unhindered by doctrine or creed this means that the bodhisattva is able to make use of non-Buddhist elements in order to integrate their practice into the society of those to whom they seek to assist. See: Leslie S. Kawamura, “Bodhisattva(s),” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), Makransky, “Buddhahood,” and Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*.

⁸² Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 43.

⁸³ Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 218.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ One of these realms is Sukhāvāti, the realm of the West where the buddha Amitābha resides. See: Luis O. Gómez, “Amitābha,” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 14.

⁸⁶ An example of this is the Future Buddha, Maitreya, whose worship contains elements of millennialism. Maitreya is said to be residing in the heaven of Tuṣita, waiting for the time when the teachings of Siddhārtha have become forgotten to the world and humanity is at its lowest point. He will then come to re-establish the Dharma and usher in an era of prosperity and happiness. See: Lewis R. Lancaster, “Maitreya,” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones. 2nd ed. Vol. 8. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), *Gale Virtual Reference Library*, accessed April 16, 2012, 5619.

⁸⁷ Xinru Liu, “A silk road legacy: the spread of Buddhism and Islam,” in *Journal of World History*, 22:1 (2011), 58.

sub movements such as the Pure Land (which placed emphasis on the saviour aspects of the buddha Amitābha and his western paradise of Sukhāvātī) and Chan schools. These movements were also able to gain footholds in other regions of East Asia such as Korea, Japan and Vietnam. While Mahāyāna also spread to areas of South East Asia such as Cambodia, the Malayan peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago, it eventually became superseded in these regions by other forms of Buddhism and external religions.⁸⁸

The Path of the Thunderbolt

The third and final form that Buddhism was to take in India was that of Vajrayāna, the path of the *Vajra* (thunderbolt or adamant sceptre) which eventually became the form of Buddhism practiced in Tibet. Although it maintained the sūtras of earlier Buddhist movements, Vajrayāna differed from these through its adaptation of tantra, a ritualistic system which was already practiced by marginalised Hindu sects. While the Vajrayāna texts claim the system was initially instigated by Siddhārtha himself⁸⁹ the historical evidence shows that Vajrayāna arose as an attempt to preserve Buddhism against the gradual decline it was facing in the feudal society of medieval India following the fall of the Gupta dynasty in 550 CE.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ By the thirteenth century Therāvada Buddhism had overtaken Mahāyāna Buddhism in Cambodia, while by the sixteenth century Islam had come to dominate the Malayan peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago. The Indonesian island of Sumatra plays an important role in the history of Tibetan Buddhism as it was there that the Indian saint Atiśa studied under Dharmakīrti prior to his mission to Tibet where he established the Kadampa school which would eventually become the Gelugpa, see: Robert L. Brown, “Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula,” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 372 and Anne Hansen, “Cambodia,” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 106-107

⁸⁹ Scriptures attempt to explain the appearance of tantric texts long after the death of Siddhārtha by claiming that since ordinary humans were not yet ready to receive the powerful teachings during his lifetime, Siddhārtha passed them down through a secret lineage until the time for revelation was appropriate. See: Powers, *Introduction*, 251.

⁹⁰ Davidson admits that there are difficulties in using the western term ‘feudal.’ He suggests that scholars of medieval India should instead use the term coined by Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, ‘sāmānta-feudalism,’ since it allows for a broader incorporation of guilds and religious authorities into the political structure. See: Ronald M.

The medieval period was a time of economic, political and religious upheaval in Indian society, all of which greatly affected the royal sponsorship and mercantile relationships which had privileged Buddhism.⁹¹ The weakening of North Indian dynasties, in whose realms Buddhism flourished, meant that they were unable to fend off invasions from South India and its Hindu Śaivite kings.⁹² As a result of these constant invasions the cities of North India suffered from a series of exoduses as citizens migrated to the sparsely populated regions that were inhabited by tribal peoples.⁹³ This population shift caused Buddhist monks to lose the role they played as missionaries to those who generally existed outside of the Hindu caste system.⁹⁴ In these tribal regions the new settlers, led by Hindu Brahmins, established smaller periphery states and sought to legitimise their rule by incorporating the regional deities of the tribal people, which existed outside of the standard Hindu system, into their own form of worship.⁹⁵ These peripheral states often surrounded the larger dominant state and between them there existed a ritualised system in which the dominant state legitimised the rule of the lesser states.⁹⁶

As militant Śaivism spread northward in the seventh century, Buddhism found itself unable to maintain the system of patronage which it received from rulers.⁹⁷ In a time where a king was forced to maintain his rule through the use of warfare and violence, the bodhisattva ideal,

Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: a social history of the tantric movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 137.

⁹¹ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 76.

⁹² Ronald M. Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: tantric Buddhism in the rebirth of Tibetan culture* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2005), 24.

⁹³ Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 26.

⁹⁴ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 85.

⁹⁵ Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 26.

⁹⁶ Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 25.

⁹⁷ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 90.

with its emphasis on compassion and non-violence held little appeal and was seen as impractical.⁹⁸ Instead, rulers chose to emulate the image of Śiva, the Śaivite god who is responsible for destroying the universe at the end of time and whose worship justified their own military aggression.⁹⁹ As a result of this Buddhism forced to retreat to regions in North East India such as Bihar and Bengal where it remained under the patronage of the Pāla dynasty (650 CE – 950 CE).¹⁰⁰ There Buddhism withdrew into grand monasteries such as Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Odantapurā which, in their size and appearance, resembled fortresses and acted as the source of authority for the surrounding countryside.¹⁰¹

Over time Buddhists in India came to realise that their use of a specialised philosophy with its own technical terminology was one of the reasons why their faith was failing to adapt with the changes that were taking place within the wider Indian society.¹⁰² This technical terminology only supported the Buddhist view of reality and therefore it was unable to relate to new social and religious developments taking place in India.¹⁰³ This inability to still relate to the wider society saw the adoption of *Madhyamaka*, a philosophical system devised by the Indian Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (ca. second century CE).¹⁰⁴ In developing this system, Nāgārjuna argued that the only way to understand the surrounding world was through

⁹⁸ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 90.

⁹⁹ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 88-90.

¹⁰⁰ Reat, *Buddhism*, 74.

¹⁰¹ Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 29.

¹⁰² Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 99.

¹⁰³ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 99.

¹⁰⁴ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 99. In Nāgārjuna's viewpoint śūnyata, or emptiness, is not a separate existence but something which is underlying all existence. Since all existence is nothing more than a combination of causal factors there fundamentally is no difference between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as both can be deconstructed through analytical examination which in the end reveals that no phenomena is unrelated. For Nāgārjuna enlightenment is attained when this middle way, Madhyamaka, is realised. See: Karen Lang, "Madhyamaka School," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 479-485 and Paul Williams, "Nāgārjuna," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. Vol.2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 581-582.

the use of what truth was already available.¹⁰⁵ In this way Nāgārjuna can be seen as employing upāya, the skilful means, since madhyamaka allows the practitioner to understand their existence through the use of their own terminology and does not require them to follow a rigorous code of social behaviour. Because of this application of madhyamaka, Buddhism began to incorporate non-Buddhist elements into its system of practice.¹⁰⁶

These rituals containing non-Buddhist elements were initially developed and practiced in an individualistic manner in areas of society which existed beyond the reach of the monastic authority.¹⁰⁷ The practitioners who were responsible for this new form of Buddhism were mendicants called siddhas who, because they were not committed to monastic vows and authority, developed their own sense of identity and traditions.¹⁰⁸ Wandering amongst tribal peoples, outcastes and rival Śaivites, the siddhas adopted the ritual performances and deities of those they encountered and adapted them to fit the Buddhist model.¹⁰⁹ As a result they developed Buddhist rituals that revolved around sex and death with forms of worship taking place in cremation grounds or cemeteries with female partners.¹¹⁰ Through interaction with siddhas, the monks of the monasteries began to recognise the way in which the esoteric path allowed for a reengagement with the wider society.¹¹¹

Adopting the rituals of the siddhas, the monks used them to emulate the already existing feudal structure of medieval Indian society with its rulers, fortresses and political

¹⁰⁵ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 99.

¹⁰⁶ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 104.

¹⁰⁷ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 153.

¹⁰⁸ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 337.

¹⁰⁹ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 173.

¹¹⁰ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 338.

¹¹¹ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 388.

geography.¹¹² The spiritual realm was perceived in a way which reflected the feudal structures – bodhisattvas and buddhas were envisioned as kings who resided in spiritual palaces from which they ruled over surrounding divine realms that were populated with lesser gods and beings.¹¹³ Through the use of spells and visualisation rituals the aim of the esoteric Buddhist practitioner was now to visualise their self as being the divine ruler who lorded over a spiritual realm.¹¹⁴ Accompanying these rituals were scriptures which detailed the battles in which wrathful bodhisattvas defeated enemy gods and claimed their realms in the name of the Buddhist teachings.¹¹⁵ In this way the new esoteric form of Buddhism was able to appeal to kings through its concept of divine rule and violence which was acceptable if committed with the means of protecting the Dharma against its enemies.¹¹⁶

The rise of esoteric Buddhism in India is important for its development in Tibet. Developed by siddhas who existed beyond the authority of the monasteries, it contained the voices of those who were the lower strata of medieval Indian society, the villagers, the tribal peoples and the outcastes. Relying on skilful means, it incorporated their practices and rather than imposing its beliefs from the top down it was a form of Buddhism which instead worked its

¹¹² Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 163.

¹¹³ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 168. A prominent example of this can be found in the concept of the maṇḍala. As a diagram which consists of concentric circles, the maṇḍala represents a realm presided over by a buddha and its attending bodhisattvas. The buddha resides at the heart of the diagram and each consecutive circle represents the regions inhabited by those who are subservient to the buddha's central authority. Therefore the outer circle often represents the unruly and threatening borderlands inhabited by demonic forces which have grudgingly accepted the buddha's authority. As Ronald M. Davidson points out, the maṇḍala's origins can be found the feudal structure of medieval India, in which the power of the king radiates outwards from his capital all the way to the borderlands inhabited by tribal people and outcastes. See: Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 131-133.

¹¹⁴ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 167.

¹¹⁵ One such example is found in the Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha where the wrathful Buddhist protector, Vajrapāṇi defeats Maheśvara, a form of Śiva, in battle. Following this conflict Maheśvara is then reborn as the Buddha Bhasmeśvara-nirghoṣa. See: Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 150-151.

¹¹⁶ Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 151.

way upwards. This notion of an upwards moving model which is adaptable is fundamental to understanding the way in which Buddhism operates in Tibet.

The extinction of Buddhism in India

The extinction of Buddhism in India has often been attributed to the thirteenth century incursions made by Islamic armies into the subcontinent.¹¹⁷ Yet this explanation is overly simplistic and ignores the other social factors that we have already examined which were taking place in medieval Indian society. The reality is that prior to the Muslim invasions Buddhism was already on a steady path of decline in India. Although the non-institutional methods of siddhas allowed for Buddhism to incorporate local traditions, the new teachings of Hindu revivalists such as Śaṅkara (788 CE – 820 CE) also helped to establish a popular resurgence of Hinduism amongst the people.¹¹⁸ Since Hinduism was distributed amongst the common people and pervaded all elements of life, it had no single identity or focal point, unlike Buddhism which had become confined to the monasteries.¹¹⁹ Therefore although the iconoclastic, monotheistic Muslims would have found Hinduism, with its statues and myriad of gods and goddesses, to be just as offensive as Buddhism, its success in infiltrating all elements of society meant that it could not be so easily destroyed.

By the late twelfth century the Islamic invaders were sweeping across north India. Monasteries were destroyed, the monks massacred, the wealth pillaged and the libraries torched. The renowned monastery of Nālandā, which had often been visited by Tibetan scholars, was destroyed in 1197 and by 1203 there nothing was left of Vikramaśīlā.¹²⁰ In the

¹¹⁷ Charles Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs: the men who discovered India's lost religion*, (London: John Murray, 2002), 286.

¹¹⁸ Reat, *Buddhism*, 76.

¹¹⁹ Reat, *Buddhism*, 76.

¹²⁰ Reat, *Buddhism*, 76.

centuries following such devastation Buddhism in northern India became confined to a small number of practitioners.¹²¹ However with the monasteries destroyed the laity no longer had any qualified teachers to rely on for instruction.¹²² Over time Buddhism became absorbed by the ever growing Hindu cults.¹²³ Within the Vaishnava tradition the figure of the Buddha came to be seen as an avatar of the Hindu god Viṣṇu.¹²⁴ Tantric Buddhist traditions also came to be incorporated into Śaivism, with many Buddhist siddhas being accepted into the Nāth sect.¹²⁵ Therefore while the invasions cannot solely be responsible for Buddhism's decline, it was by their hand that the last bastions of Buddhism in India were utterly wiped out, leaving its practice to gradually fade until what elements remained were absorbed into Hinduism.

The teachings of the Buddha would there lie dormant in the subcontinent until the nineteenth century when Westerners would encounter forms of Buddhism in the neighbouring regions of Asia. It is to this that we must turn in order to understand how the West created an alternative 'modern' Buddhism which helped Buddhism regain its position as bringing about a form of modernity for the East.

The West discovers Buddhism

Here, according to the Saracens, is the monument of Adam our first father; but the idolaters consider it as that of Sergamon Borcam. They describe this last as the first man whose image they worshipped, and as the best that ever lived in their country. He was son to a great, rich, and powerful king, yet refused to succeed to the throne, or to

¹²¹ Skilton, *Concise History*, 145.

¹²² A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), 490.

¹²³ Reat, *Buddhism*, 76.

¹²⁴ Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 490.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

attend to any worldly concern...He left the palace, and journeyed into great and trackless mountains, where he spent his whole life virtuously and chastely...had he been a Christian, he must have been a very great saint.¹²⁶

Written in the thirteenth century, prior to the West's 'discovery' of Buddhism, Marco Polo's description of Buddhism in Sri Lanka offers a medieval Christian perception of what was then simply considered to be a form of idolatry.¹²⁷ As contact with the East increased through trade and exploration, and the concept of 'religion' broadened to include faiths other than Christianity, Judaism and Islam, further reports regarding the different forms of Buddhism encountered there gradually began to filter back to the West.¹²⁸ It was through these reports that the word 'Buddha' gradually entered European languages.

One of the first recorded uses of the term 'Buddha' in the English language appears in *An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon*, written in 1691 by an English sailor Robert Knox.¹²⁹ Along with his father, Master John Loveland, the commander of the frigate *Ann*, Knox had been part of a contingent of merchant vessels that were preparing to depart Madras for England in November 1659.¹³⁰ Yet before they could leave a storm struck the harbour and after their ship was blown off course they were forced to make for the Bay of Cothiar on the nearby island of Ceylon.¹³¹ However upon landing, Knox, his father and sixteen other crew members were taken prisoner by the local inhabitants and pressed into slavery.¹³² After his

¹²⁶ Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (Oliver & Boyd, 1845) 290-291.

¹²⁷ Allen, *Buddha and the Sahibs*, 27.

¹²⁸ Philip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 7.

¹²⁹ Allen, *Buddha and the Sahibs*, 38.

¹³⁰ Allen, *Buddha and the Sahibs*, 37.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Allen, *Buddha and the Sahibs*, 37.

father died, Knox made various attempts to escape from Ceylon.¹³³ Finally, in 1697, he and another companion managed to cross Ceylon and after reaching a Dutch port on the north coast, eventually sailed for England.¹³⁴ Upon arriving home he set about publishing his memoirs and it was in these that he described a form of idolatry that he noted was different from that which was practiced on the mainland of India (Hinduism):¹³⁵

The religion of the country is idolatry...There are many both Gods and Devils, which they worship... There is another great God, whom they call *Buddou*, unto whom the Salvation of Souls belongs.¹³⁶

At the same time that Knox was describing the Ceylonese god Buddou, other Westerners were also offering their thoughts on the figure of the Buddha who they were encountering throughout Asia under various names. Among these was Simon de la Loubère, an emissary of Louis XIV of France to the Kingdom of Siam.¹³⁷ In 1693 he wrote *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam* in which he offered his belief that the religion of Siam came from Ceylon:¹³⁸

...the Religion of the *Siumeses* came from those quarters because that they have read in a *Balie* Book, that *Sommona-Codom* whom the *Siamese* adore, was the Son of a King of the Island of Ceylon.¹³⁹

¹³³ Allen, *Buddha and the Sahibs*, 37.

¹³⁴ Allen, *Buddha and the Sahibs*, 37-38.

¹³⁵ Allen, *Buddha and the Sahibs*, 38.

¹³⁶ Allen, *Buddha and the Sahibs*, 38.

¹³⁷ Almond, *British Discovery*, 8.

¹³⁸ Almond, *British Discovery*, 8.

¹³⁹ Simon de la Loubère, *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam* (London, 1693) as quoted in Almond, *British Discovery*, 8.

Loubère also noted that the religion of Siam was practiced in China and it was there that the central figure was called *Che-kia* (Sákya, as in Sákya-muni, a title for Siddhārtha Gautama) who the Chinese claimed was from India.¹⁴⁰ However, because the Chinese had received their teachings from Siam and since they were unable to provide Loubère with any proof of the Indian origins of *Che-Kia*, Loubère was unwilling to accept that India had been birthplace of their religion.¹⁴¹

Despite this dismissal by Loubère, another French observer, the Jesuit missionary Louis le Comte was more willing to trace the origin of the Chinese figure *Che-Kia* or *Fo* to the Indian subcontinent. In his lengthy titled account of his time in China, *Memoirs and observations topographical, physical, mathematical, mechanical, natural, civil, and ecclesiastical made in a late journey through the empire of China, and published in several letters*, Le Comte had the following to say about the religion of *Fo*:

The second sect which is prevalent in *China*, and is more Dangerous and more universally spread than the former, adore an Idol which they call *Fo* or *Föe*, as the only God of the World. This Idol was brought from the *Indies* two and thirty years after the Death of Jesus Christ...No body can well tell where this Idol *Fo*, of whom I speak, was Born; those who with more likelihood say he was a Man, make him born above a thousand years before Jesus Christ, in a Kingdom of the *Indies* near the Line, perhaps a little above *Bengala*.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Almond, *British Discovery*, p.8.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Louis le Comte, *Memoirs and observations topographical, physical, mathematical, mechanical, natural, civil, and ecclesiastical made in a late journey through the empire of China, and published in several letters*. London: Benjamin Tooke, 1699. 319-320. Accessed April 16, 2012, <http://victoria.lconz.ac.nz/vwebv/holdingsInfo?bibId=958601>

Le Comte was also able to establish that the religion of *Fo* was widespread throughout Asia.¹⁴³

The number of his Disciples is very great, and it is by their means that all the *Indies* have been poisoned with his pernicious Doctrine. Those of *Siam* call them *Talapoins*, the *Tartars* call them *Lamas* or *Lama-sem*, the *Japoners* *Bonzes*, and the *Chinese* *Hocham*.¹⁴⁴

While these accounts were vague, and in some cases, inaccurate, they were later drawn upon by the British as they began to expand their influence throughout the Indian subcontinent and its neighbouring regions in the late eighteenth century. The expansion of Western powers into the East saw a growth of interest amongst educated Westerners for all matters ‘Oriental.’¹⁴⁵ In order to meet this demand a society was formed in 1784 in colonial Bengal by British citizens who also had an interest in the history and culture of the subcontinent.¹⁴⁶ This was the Asiatick Society and its formation resulted in the publication of a journal known as *Asiatick Researches* which contained papers written by the society’s members.¹⁴⁷ This journal would be instrumental in helping to distribute knowledge regarding the worship of Buddha in areas under British influence.

It was in the 1788 edition of *Asiatick Researches* that William Chambers published his belief that the figure of worship in Ceylon was the same as that to be found in Siam.¹⁴⁸ He did so by

¹⁴³ Almond, *British Discovery*, 8.

¹⁴⁴ Le Comte, *Memoirs and observations*, 320-321.

¹⁴⁵ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 43.

¹⁴⁶ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 55.

¹⁴⁷ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 56.

¹⁴⁸ Almond, *British Discovery*, 9.

combining the information he had obtained from Robert Knox's account of Ceylon and the writings of Loubère:¹⁴⁹

...their great idol *Buddou*. Between the worship of whom, as described by Knox, and that of Sommona-codom, as elated by M. De la Loubère, there is a striking resemblance in many particulars.¹⁵⁰

Because the worship of *Buddou* was to be found in Ceylon and also across South East Asia, Chambers suggested that the religion had existed in India before the rise of Hinduism.¹⁵¹

Perhaps the most influential paper on the Buddha to be published in *Asiatick Researches* was *On the Religion and Literature of the Burmas*, written by Dr Francis Buchanan, a qualified surgeon and amateur botanist. In 1794 Buchanan enlisted with the East India Company as an Assistant Surgeon and was posted to Bengal.¹⁵² Because of his connections with the Company's chief botanist, Dr William Roxburgh, he was soon presented with the chance to join a British delegation to the Court of Ava in Burma.¹⁵³

Since 1782 Burma had been ruled by King Bodawpaya, a Therāvada Buddhist monarch whose reign was marked by an expensive period of temple construction.¹⁵⁴ Yet despite his zeal for Buddhism, Bodawpaya was not above engaging in warfare and slavery in order to

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ William Chambers, 'Some Account of the Sculptures and Ruins at Mavalipuram, a Place a few Miles North of Sadras and known to Seamen by the Name of the Seven Pagodas,' *Asiatick Researches* 1 (1788), as quoted in Almond, *British Discovery*, 9.

¹⁵¹ Allen, *Buddha and the Sahibs*, 79.

¹⁵² Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 12.

¹⁵³ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 12.

¹⁵⁴ Trevor Ling, *Buddhism, Imperialism and War: Burma and Thailand in modern history* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979), 49.

expand his realm.¹⁵⁵ After Bodawpaya attacked the kingdom of Arakan in 1784 many Arakanese began to migrate to Chittagong which was administered by the East India Company as a region of Bengal.¹⁵⁶ This influx of refugees created issues for the British and matters became even more heated in 1794 when Burmese troops crossed into Bengal while hunting rebels.¹⁵⁷ As a result the British decided to send a delegation to King Bodawpaya in order to establish both diplomatic and trade relations with the Court of Ava.¹⁵⁸

As a part of this diplomatic mission Buchanan spent much of his time in Burma gathering information on the region and its culture.¹⁵⁹ While in Burma the British mission were befriended by a Catholic missionary of the Barnabite Order, Father Sangermano.¹⁶⁰ Having already made a report on the religion of the Burmese, Sangermano gave a copy of this to the British mission and since it was written in Latin, Sangermano's works were eventually passed on to Buchanan.¹⁶¹

In his study of the Burmese religion, Sangermano noted that the figure of the Buddha was to be found throughout Asia:

...all the nations comprised in the Burmese Empire...join in the adoration of Godama...and not only here, but likewise in the kingdom of Siam this is the established religion. Godama is besides adored in China under the name of Fò, and in

¹⁵⁵ Ling, *Buddhism, Imperialism and War*, 49.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 13.

¹⁵⁸ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 13.

¹⁵⁹ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 14.

¹⁶⁰ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 16

¹⁶¹ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 16.

Thibet under that of Buttà. His worship also prevails in many places along the coast of Coromandel...and particularly in the island of Ceylon.¹⁶²

Although Sangermano's own works would not be published until the late nineteenth century, Buchanan used them as a resource for *On the Religion and Literature of the Burmas* which was published in the 6th volume of *Asiatick Researches* in 1799.¹⁶³ Using the information given to Sangermano, Buchanan concluded that the figure of *Godama* had indeed been a real person who had lived nearly five hundred years before Christ.¹⁶⁴ Because of the evidence given regarding the extent of the religion, Buchanan felt it impossible that Buddhism could have existed in Ceylon and Burma without being practiced on the intermediary landmass of the Indian subcontinent.¹⁶⁵ He was therefore in agreement with the claim already made by William Chambers.¹⁶⁶

In 1811 Buchanan eventually found evidence of this claim when his work as a statistical surveyor led him to the town of Gaya in Bihar.¹⁶⁷ During his time there he visited the ruins of a nearby temple complex known as Bodh Gaya which was inhabited by a group of Hindu ascetics.¹⁶⁸ There, in the shrines, he found images of the Buddha that the ascetics had rescued from the ruins.¹⁶⁹ When speaking with the *Mahant* or leader of the ascetics, Buchanan noted

¹⁶² Vincentius Sangermano, *A Description of the Burmese Empire. Compiled chiefly from Burmese Documents* (London: Susil Gupta, 1966) as quote in Almond, *The British Discovery*, 10.

¹⁶³ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 16.

¹⁶⁴ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 81.

¹⁶⁵ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 81.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 90.

¹⁶⁸ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 91.

¹⁶⁹ V.H. Jackson, *Journal of Francis Buchanan (Afterwards Hamilton): Kept during the survey of the districts of Patna and Gaya in 1811-1812* (Patna: Superintendent, Govt. Print Bihar and Orissa, 1925), 52.

that the Buddha (whom Buchanan termed Gautama) was always referred to as *muni* (sage) or *Bagawan* (lord).¹⁷⁰ Although that particular order of ascetics had been in residence at Bodh Gaya for nearly a hundred years the ascetics had, for the most part, remained unaware of the complex's history or for what purpose it had been originally been built.¹⁷¹ It had only been in the years prior to Buchanan's own visit that the ascetics had finally come to learn of Bodh Gaya's historical importance.

While being escorted around Bodh Gaya by a Rajput, Buchanan learned that envoys from the King of Ava in Burma had journeyed to the ruins and informed the ascetics that the temple they inhabited had originally been constructed in honour of a figure they worshipped called Gautama.¹⁷² Using their ancient Sanskrit and Pāli texts as evidence, the envoys had also declared that the Bihar region had once been the homeland of Gautama.¹⁷³ As a result of this encounter the Rajput had converted to the teachings of Gautama.¹⁷⁴ Although Buchanan noted that the Hindus considered the Buddha to be an avatar of Viṣṇu, the Rajput claimed that the Burmese envoys had denied this teaching, despite seeing themselves as a sect of Hinduism.¹⁷⁵ For Buchanan, the information he gathered at Bodh Gaya proved that the Buddha had, at one stage in the history of India, been worshipped in the subcontinent.

By the end of the eighteenth century the West had come to realise that the many faiths they were encountering throughout Asia were in fact derived from the same source. These faiths all worshipped a central figure who, despite his many names and titles, the West chose to call

¹⁷⁰ Jackson, *Journal of Francis Buchanan*, 55.

¹⁷¹ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 91

¹⁷² Jackson, *Journal of Francis Buchanan*, 55.

¹⁷³ Jackson, *Journal of Francis Buchanan*, 55.

¹⁷⁴ Jackson, *Journal of Francis Buchanan*, 55.

¹⁷⁵ Jackson, *Journal of Francis Buchanan*, 61.

Buddha. Therefore it became clear that there was a ‘religion’ of the Buddha. They also realised that, despite being widespread, this religion in its many forms still referred to texts written in Sanskrit and Pāli, the ancient languages of India.¹⁷⁶ This, combined with other textual and archaeological evidence, gave the British the confidence to claim in 1836 that the Buddha had been Indian.¹⁷⁷ While the term used to summarise the practice of Buddha’s teachings differed throughout Asia, the West conclusively came to call it ‘Buddhism.’¹⁷⁸

Yet although it now had a name, the lines of definition surrounding Buddhism were still not entirely clear. Part of this was due to the fact that to the British it bore a resemblance to Hinduism in its appearance.¹⁷⁹ The relationship it held with Hinduism was made all the more complicated since some Hindus worshipped the Buddha as an avatar of Viṣṇu.¹⁸⁰ As outsiders the British also had to initially rely on Hindu pundits for their knowledge of Indian religions and as a result they were exposed to the prejudices that orthodox Hindus had towards the teachings of the Buddha.¹⁸¹

The reliance on Hindu interpretation was challenged by William Erskine in 1823. While many modern orthodox Hindus considered the Buddha to be a form taken by the god Viṣṇu in order to lead the unworthy into heresy, Erskine claimed that such a perception was at conflict

¹⁷⁶ Almond, *British Discovery*, 24.

¹⁷⁷ Elizabeth J. Harris, *Theravada Buddhism and the British encounter: religious, missionary and colonial experience in nineteenth century Sri Lanka* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 42.

¹⁷⁸ One of the first recorded instances of the term appeared in a French publication written by Michel-Jean-Francois Ozeray in 1817 entitled *Recherches sur Buddou ou Bouddou, instituteur religieux de l'Asie orientale*. See Frederic Lenoir, “The Adaptation of Buddhism to the West,” *Diogenes* 47:3 (1999), 108.

¹⁷⁹ Almond, *British Discovery*, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Almond, *British Discovery*, 15.

¹⁸¹ Almond, *British Discovery*, 15.

with the original Hindu understanding of the Buddha.¹⁸² Originally having been a figure of reverence, Erskine argued that it was only through later modifications that the Buddha came to be seen as a heretic to Hindus.¹⁸³ Instead of relying on Hindu pundits, Erskine believed that Western scholars should seek out those who practiced the Buddhists religion instead:¹⁸⁴

Nothing can be more false and exaggerated than the notions which the Purâns of the Brahmins give of the peculiar tenets of both the other sects... a translation of the chief religious works of the Bouddhists and Jains is still a desideratum, without which we cannot pronounce, with any thing approaching to certainty, on many disputed points regarding their opinions.¹⁸⁵

The view of Buddhism via the lens of Hinduism began to fade by the 1830s and instead Western scholars began to undertake their study of his religion through the aid of those who still practiced Buddhism.¹⁸⁶ With the realisation that Buddhism was widespread across Asia came the understanding that it had also evolved over the thousands of years since it had left India. Having mingled with many pre-existing cults and religions, Buddhism had also taken on various localised forms.

Western scholars also realised that there were historical and doctrinal distinctions between the Therāvada Buddhism that was practiced in Ceylon and Siam and the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna forms of Buddhism that were to be found in Northern Asia.¹⁸⁷ One of these

¹⁸² William Erskine, "Observations on the Remains of the Bouddhists in India - 31st July 1821," *Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay*, Vol.III (London, 1823), 501.

¹⁸³ Erskine, "Observations on the Remains," 501.

¹⁸⁴ Almond, *British Discovery*, 16.

¹⁸⁵ Erskine, "Observations on the Remains," 503.

¹⁸⁶ Almond, *British Discovery*, 16.

¹⁸⁷ Lenoir, "Adaptation of Buddhism," 102.

distinctions was that Therāvada Buddhism relied upon scriptures written in Pāli while Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism used later editions that had been composed in Sanskrit.¹⁸⁸

What then was true Buddhism? The only way it seemed for Western scholars to discover this was to return to the ancient scriptures that were written in Pāli. Yet by doing so these scholars were creating their own form of Buddhism. This Buddhism was not one of the various forms that were being practiced in Asia but instead one that was instead created in the academic realms of the West.¹⁸⁹ The Western creation of Buddhism was therefore a textual creation, one that was strongly influenced by the Protestant idea of *sola scriptura*.

Yet this Western reimagining of Buddhism was not confined solely to the libraries of nineteenth century European universities. As I shall show, the creation of a ‘Modern Buddhism’ was also taking place in Asia as a result of the interaction between Protestant Christian missionaries and indigenous Buddhists who were seeking to protect their religion. However, not only were indigenous Buddhists forced to ensure that the teachings of the Buddha could stand up against those of Christ, they also had to deal with spiritually dislocated Victorian Protestants who were seeking to recast Buddhism as a modern, post-Enlightenment form of rational religion. It is from this discourse that ‘Modern Buddhism’ was created.

¹⁸⁸ Lenoir, “Adaptation of Buddhism,” 102.

¹⁸⁹ Almond, *British Discovery*, 13.

Protestant Buddhism

In the eighteenth century a new form of Protestant Christianity began to emerge in Britain.¹⁹⁰

In an era when many churchgoers felt isolated from the clergy and filled with doubt due to Enlightenment rationalism, this new movement sought to bring the individual into a deeper and more purposeful relationship with Christ.¹⁹¹ Termed Evangelicalism, it was an interdenominational movement which crossed the boundaries of Protestant churches.¹⁹²

For the British, Evangelicalism differed from the standard practice of Anglicanism in that it sought to return to the ideals of the Reformation.¹⁹³ Although the Act of Toleration in 1689 had granted British religious groups the freedom to worship as they saw fit, the High Anglican Church was still characterised by orthodoxy.¹⁹⁴ Members of the clergy were closely aligned to the gentry and saw their role as a means of maintaining the rigid British class system.¹⁹⁵ Many also held multiple regional posts and as a result they chose to focus on one congregation while ignoring the spiritual needs of the others.¹⁹⁶

Faced with this apathy towards the clergy and the doubts of an Enlightenment society, Evangelicalism sought to renew the parishioner's passion for spiritual fulfilment.¹⁹⁷ One of the core elements to this new approach was for the Christian to accept conversion. Because

¹⁹⁰ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain: a history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London; Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1.

¹⁹¹ Richard Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical?* (London : Continuum, 2007), 52.

¹⁹² Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical*, 71.

¹⁹³ Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical*, 77.

¹⁹⁴ John Miller, *Cities divided: politics and religion in English provincial towns 1660-1722* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 243.

¹⁹⁵ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 17.

¹⁹⁶ Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical*, 57.

¹⁹⁷ Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical*, 52.

humanity was inherently sinful, salvation was necessary in order to ward off eternal damnation.¹⁹⁸ Therefore the individual had to place their faith unconditionally in Christ and by doing so their salvation was assured.¹⁹⁹ For Evangelicals the act of conversion was an extremely emotional moment.²⁰⁰

However one of the most prominent aspects of Evangelicalism was its focus on activism.²⁰¹ Rather than simply perform the bare minimum of their required duties, the Evangelical worked hard to bring Christian worship into the daily lives of masses.²⁰² To the Evangelical receiving the gift of salvation was simply not enough. Others also had to be made aware of Christ's promise and so they felt a strong sense of responsibility in promoting this message.²⁰³ Because of this Evangelicalism was prominent in missionary work. Yet its sense of mission differed from other institutionalised Christian faiths. Rather than seek to propagate the doctrine and agenda of a certain church, Evangelicalism was based around saving souls.²⁰⁴ With this in mind, Evangelicalism did not limit itself to regional parishes but instead sought converts abroad.²⁰⁵ One such location was the island of Ceylon.

When Napoleonic France invaded the Netherlands in 1796 the effects were not simply confined to the sphere of Europe. Recognising that their own interests in India would be under threat if the French gained control of the Dutch colonies in the Cape of Good Hope and

¹⁹⁸ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 6.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical*, 56.

²⁰¹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 10.

²⁰² Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical*, 57.

²⁰³ Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical*, 61.

²⁰⁴ Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical*, 71.

²⁰⁵ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 12.

Ceylon, the British swiftly moved to occupy and secure these territories.²⁰⁶ After the signing of the Treaty of Amiens at the end of the second Napoleonic War in 1802, the Dutch colony in Ceylon officially became a Crown Colony.²⁰⁷ Despite their initial attempts to occupy the whole island, the British only finally managed to annex the Kingdom of Kandy in 1815.²⁰⁸ As part of the Kandyan Convention, the British made the following declaration:

The religion of Boodhoo, professed by the chiefs and inhabitants of these provinces, is declared inviolable, and its rites, ministers and places of worship are to be maintained and protected.²⁰⁹

However this move to protect Buddhism was gradually undermined as followers of evangelical Christianity started to gain positions in the British Colonial Office.²¹⁰ Since the territories of the British East India Company had largely been off limits to missionaries, attention was turned to the island of Ceylon since it was instead administered the British Crown.²¹¹ Under the reign of Governor Thomas Maitland missionary activity in Ceylon had been limited to the missions established in 1805 by four ministers of the London Missionary Society.²¹² However under Governor Robert Brownrigg, who was an Evangelical Christian himself, missionaries were encouraged and his administration saw the establishment of further mission stations, including Anglican, Methodist and Baptist.²¹³ With the government

²⁰⁶ Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, 75.

²⁰⁷ Patrick Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 48.

²⁰⁸ Peebles, *History of Sri Lanka*, 49.

²⁰⁹ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 12.

²¹⁰ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 40.

²¹¹ Peebles, *History of Sri Lanka*, 53.

²¹² Peebles, *History of Sri Lanka*, 53.

²¹³ Ibid.

continually being criticised by Evangelicals for its protective stance towards Buddhism, the ideals stated in the Kandyan Convention eventually came to be ignored.²¹⁴ By the 1830s, the propagation of Christianity became an important element of British colonial rule in Ceylon.²¹⁵

The Evangelical missionaries in Ceylon differed from their predecessors in that they showed no sensitivity towards the indigenous religious traditions of the Buddhist Sri Lankans.²¹⁶ To them Buddhism was a false religion which was misleading the people.²¹⁷ Not only did the missionaries believe that their religion was superior but they also felt that the success of European civilisation was an indication that its expansion was being directed by God.²¹⁸ In order to win the people of Ceylon over to Christianity the missionaries knew that they had to undermine the teachings of the Buddha.²¹⁹ However before they could launch their attack the missionaries had to study the tenants of Buddhism first so that they might discover its weakness. Rather than simply rely upon their observations and information gained from discussions with Buddhist monks, the missionaries took a Protestant *sola scriptura* approach.²²⁰ Two Methodist missionaries who helped to formulate this method were Daniel Gogerly and Robert Spence Hardy.²²¹

²¹⁴ Richard Francis Gombrich, *Buddhism transformed: religious change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1988), 202.

²¹⁵ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 40.

²¹⁶ Whalen Lai and Michael von Bruck, *Christianity and Buddhism: a multi-cultural history of their dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 42.

²¹⁷ Lai and von Bruck, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 42.

²¹⁸ Lai and von Bruck, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 42.

²¹⁹ Lai and von Bruck, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 43.

²²⁰ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 65.

²²¹ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 62.

Although Gogerly had initially arrived in Ceylon in 1818 as a layman he was ordained as a minister in 1823 and became the General Superintendant of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission.²²² Gogerly believed that the monks had grown negligent in their understanding of the Buddha's teachings and as a result the lay people were receiving careless misinterpretations of the scriptures.²²³ Aided by Buddhist monks, he studied the Pāli language in order to uncover an authentic translation of the Buddhist scriptures.²²⁴ By using the scriptures as the sole source of authority, Gogerly felt that he would be able to demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of Buddhism to an indigenous audience and therefore be well prepared to critique it with the superiority of Christianity.²²⁵

As an ordained missionary Spence Hardy first arrived in Ceylon in 1825.²²⁶ Although Spence Hardy learned from Gogerly, his work differed in that he originally chose to translate texts written in Sinhala rather than Pāli.²²⁷ His reason for this was that since Sinhala was the language of the people, he wished to understand Buddhism as a functioning practice, rather than as a mere doctrine.²²⁸ However an unforeseen consequence of Spence Hardy's Sinhala translations, which he published as *A Manual of Buddhism*, was that they created a growing interest in Buddhism among Western audiences.²²⁹ Wishing to counter this popularised view

²²² Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 62.

²²³ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 65.

²²⁴ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 62.

²²⁵ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 65.

²²⁶ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 64.

²²⁷ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 65.

²²⁸ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 64.

²²⁹ One of those who read Spence Hardy's work was the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who would eventually incorporate Buddhist elements into his own philosophical works. See: Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 65.

of Buddhism, Spence Hardy began to make translations of the Pāli texts in order to undermine the teachings of the Buddha.²³⁰

An important element of the missionary's translations was the removal of Siddhārtha Gautama from the realm of mythology.²³¹ Harris argues that the conception of the Buddha as a divine figure featured prominently among both the monks and the lay practitioners of Sinhalese Buddhism.²³² The missionaries then used the texts as historical documents to refute the traditional claim of the Buddha's divinity and instead show that he was a mere mortal.²³³ By doing so the missionaries were constructing the modern perception of the Buddha as a teacher who was simply a human being rather than a god.²³⁴ While the reason for doing so would have been to show that the Buddha was not on the same level as Jesus Christ, the missionaries instead ended up creating a moral figure to which rational, post-Enlightenment Westerners could turn to for philosophical and spiritual solace.

Initially the Buddhist monks of Ceylon tolerated the Christian missionaries and regarded their queries as a genuine interest in Buddhism.²³⁵ However once it became clear that the missionaries were seeking to discredit Buddhism the monks began to respond with their own counter arguments.²³⁶ Yet it was not just the monks who wished to defend Buddhism against the Christian missionaries. One of the tactics used by the missionaries was to disseminate tracts, or published writings, which argued for the superiority of Christianity. In 1855 the

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 169.

²³² Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 169.

²³³ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 169.

²³⁴ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 169.

²³⁵ Lai and von Bruck, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 43.

²³⁶ Lai and von Bruck, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 143.

monks acquired a printing press which allowed them to publish their own counter arguments.²³⁷ Since the printing press was operated by lay Buddhists the defence of Buddhism was therefore a movement which was not simply restricted to the clergy.²³⁸

In order to strengthen the defence of Buddhism the monk Mohottivatte Gunananda created the Sarvajna Sasanabhivrdhidaya Dharma Samagama (Society for the Propagation of Buddhism) in 1865.²³⁹ The growing tension between the two faiths led to a succession of theological discourses which took place both through the dissemination of Buddhist and Christian tracts and oral debates.²⁴⁰ The oral debates, which first began at Baddegama in 1865, eventually concluded with the infamous debate at Pandura in 1873 between Miguttavatte Gunananda and a Wesleyan missionary David de Silva.²⁴¹ Supported by the audience, Gunananda managed to successfully defeat de Silva.²⁴² This triumph is noteworthy in that it enabled Buddhism to stand its ground in Ceylon and showed that it was capable of presenting itself as a rational and worthy alternative to Christianity. The methods used by the Buddhists to win the debate, such as a return to scripture and the publication of tracts, showed that they were willing to adopt the practices of their Christian opponents. Therefore it is in the Buddhism of nineteenth century Ceylon that we see the beginnings of Protestant

²³⁷ George D. Bond, *The Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka: religious tradition, reinterpretation and response* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 47.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Stephen R. Prothero, *The White Buddhist: the Asian odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 95.

²⁴⁰ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 95.

²⁴¹ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 95.

²⁴² Lai and von Bruck, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 43.

Buddhism in that it was not only a *protest* against Christianity but a protest that was willing to use Protestant Christian methods to counter Christianity itself.²⁴³

Gunananda's success is also noteworthy in that it managed to attract the attention of Americans. The man responsible for introducing the debate to the United States was James Martin Peebles, a travelling Spiritualist writer.²⁴⁴ Having toured Egypt and India, Peebles was in Ceylon at the time when the debate between Gunananda and de Silva took place.²⁴⁵ Upon returning to the United States he showed a report of the debate to Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott who, in 1875, would form an obscure group known as the Theosophical Society.²⁴⁶ This act would contribute towards Buddhism being appropriated and reinterpreted by late Victorian spiritual seekers.

Theosophical Buddhism

In the first half of the nineteenth century the United States of America found itself being confronted with what appeared to be a rapid breakdown of its traditional societal values.²⁴⁷ Unchecked violence such as riots, lynching and murder were becoming an increasingly common aspect of society.²⁴⁸ The institutions of authority in both the community and the family, which American society had long since been based around, were also weakening as traditional roles between men and women, parents and children and clergymen and their flock

²⁴³ Bond, *Buddhist revival*, 45.

²⁴⁴ K. Paul Johnson, *The masters revealed: Madame Blavatsky and the myth of the Great White Lodge* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), 75.

²⁴⁵ Johnson, *The masters revealed*, 76.

²⁴⁶ Johnson, *The masters revealed*, 76.

²⁴⁷ Steven Mintz, *Moralists and modernisers: America's pre-civil war reformers* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 6.

²⁴⁸ Mintz, *Moralists*, 5.

began to shift.²⁴⁹ The increase in population also led to the expansion of the cities which were characterised by the sinful behaviour of their inhabitants.²⁵⁰

While Old World societies were able to rely upon the figure of the king or emperor to impose social order, this was not the case in a democratic, modern society.²⁵¹ Therefore it was felt that in order to ensure that a democratic society maintained its moral ground, its citizens had to take responsibility for their own moral character.²⁵² The way to do this was for society to introduce methods of reform which would uplift the individual from their depraved condition towards one of perfection.

In nineteenth century America, Protestant religious life was marked by a belief that it was possible for both the individual and society as a whole to gain the worldly freedom and perfection that had been promised by the Enlightenment.²⁵³ Those who followed this ideal, which first came into being following the War of 1812, considered themselves to be reformers.²⁵⁴ While the methods of the reformers varied their belief was one of universalism, in which through social reform humanity would eventually become united and form a utopian world.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁹ Mintz, *Moralists*, 6-7.

²⁵⁰ Mintz, *Moralists*, 7.

²⁵¹ Mintz, *Moralists*, 11.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 15.

²⁵⁴ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 15.

²⁵⁵ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 17.

A driving factor behind these early reformers was the concept of millennialism.²⁵⁶

Throughout Christian history there have been sects which have made the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ, as prophesised in Revelations, a cornerstone of their faith.²⁵⁷ American millennialism had its origins in the beliefs of the English Dissenters who settled in New England following the Restoration.²⁵⁸ These Dissenters had inherited the beliefs of Puritan sects, such as the Diggers and the Fifth Monarchy Men, whose belief in the second coming of Christ had inspired them to turn against Oliver Cromwell.²⁵⁹ Since breakdown in political order was considered one of the signs of the coming millennium, the followers of millennialism often interpreted wars and political strife in such a manner.²⁶⁰

Accompanying this belief was the idea that America was God's chosen country, the 'New Israel' which would play an important role in guiding the world towards the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.²⁶¹ The First Great Awakening (1730-45), a Protestant religious revival, emphasised America as being instrumental in the future of Christian salvation as opposed to the decadence of England.²⁶² This idea gained momentum following the defeat of the British in the American Revolution.²⁶³ However the years following the Revolution were marked by a sense of disappointment when it became clear that the population was divided

²⁵⁶ Lawrence Jacob Friedman, *Charity, philanthropy and civility in American history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 131.

²⁵⁷ John M. Court, *Approaching the Apocalypse: a short history of Christian millennialism* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 2

²⁵⁸ Michael Barkun, *Crucible of the millennium: the burned over district of New York in the 1840s* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 21

²⁵⁹ Barkun, *Crucible*, 21.

²⁶⁰ Barkun, *Crucible*, 21.

²⁶¹ Mintz, *Moralists*, 16.

²⁶² Barkun, *Crucible*, 21.

²⁶³ Barkun, *Crucible*, 22.

by political loyalties as opposed to being unified by a single national loyalty.²⁶⁴ This disillusionment led to the birth of the Second Great Awakening, a period of revival which lasted until the outbreak of the American Civil War.²⁶⁵

The Second Great Awakening differed from the First in that it was post-millennialism rather than pre-millennialism.²⁶⁶ While pre-millennialism stated that it was only after Christ's return that the millennium would begin, post-millennialism believed that it was only through human efforts that the reign could be brought about.²⁶⁷ Rather than exclude humanity from His plan, God was working through humanity to bring about a world of universal brotherhood.²⁶⁸ Therefore humanity's attainment of a perfect state would not happen instantly but rather gradually as individuals were uplifted through moral learning.²⁶⁹ Because of this insistence on human rather than direct divine action, post-millennialism differed from pre-millennialism in that it actively engaged with scientific progress.²⁷⁰

The period of reform prior to the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, with its focus on universal brotherhood and religious perfection has been labelled by historians as the antebellum reform.²⁷¹ The Enlightenment values of the antebellum reform, combined with a reaction to orthodox Protestant doctrine also led to the establishment of liberal forms of faith

²⁶⁴ Barkun, *Crucible*, 22.

²⁶⁵ Barkun, *Crucible*, 23.

²⁶⁶ Barkun, *Crucible*, 24.

²⁶⁷ Barkun, *Crucible*, 24.

²⁶⁸ Barkun, *Crucible*, 25.

²⁶⁹ Barkun, *Crucible*, 26.

²⁷⁰ Barkun, *Crucible*, 27.

²⁷¹ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 16.

that aimed to incorporate universalism into their organisational structure.²⁷² Many of these liberal faiths were to be found in an area of Upper New York State known as the Burned-over District.²⁷³

One of these liberal movements was Spiritualism, a belief that contact with the dead can be made through the use of mediums.²⁷⁴ Spiritualism first came to the attention of the American populace in 1848 after newspaper editors, such as Horace Greeley, began to run a series of reports on the mysterious table rappings that were taking place in the kitchen of Margaret and Katherine Fox.²⁷⁵ Although it originally began as a form of entertainment, Spiritualism quickly began to provide spiritual solace to those who felt dislocated. It was not only popular among educated white Protestants but also amongst African Americans and Catholics.²⁷⁶ Like the Pietists and Evangelicals, Spiritualist meetings took place in homes and were usually confined to members of the family or close friends.²⁷⁷ As an inclusive movement it put women at the forefront, as many of the séances took place in the household kitchen, which was considered to be a female domain in nineteenth century America.²⁷⁸ Therefore Spiritualism offered antebellum Americans a path which not only provided spiritual comfort but, with its ideals of equality, would also allow them to work towards establishing the long desired utopia.

²⁷² Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 20.

²⁷³ The region gained this name because of the religious beliefs of its populace, which spread so intensely that they were likened to a sweeping fire by Charles Grandison Finney, a nineteenth century revivalist. See Barkun, *Crucible*, 2.

²⁷⁴ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 21.

²⁷⁵ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 21.

²⁷⁶ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 21.

²⁷⁷ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 22.

²⁷⁸ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 22.

One such American to whom Spiritualism offered this solace was Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907). Born into a Presbyterian family with roots in the Puritan movement, Olcott came to identify Christianity as a whole with the Calvinistic ideals of his upbringing.²⁷⁹ Influenced by Protestant modernists, he chose to view mankind as possessing al divine element, rather than the Calvinist concept of inherent sin.²⁸⁰ After dropping out of university in 1848 he journeyed through the Burned-over District, encountering the many liberal faiths that had taken root there.²⁸¹ Of these various traditions, the one which appealed to him the most was Spiritualism which he was introduced to by his relatives in Ohio.²⁸² Taken by this new faith, he went on to become one of the founding members of the New York Confederacy of Spiritualists in 1853.²⁸³ For Olcott, Spiritualism represented a faith which, with its tolerance and morality, would contribute to the upraising of humanity.²⁸⁴

In 1874, while attending a séance in Vermont, Olcott encountered a Russian immigrant, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who overawed him with her apparent ability to conjure up spirits and knowledge of occult secrets.²⁸⁵ The daughter of a Russian aristocrat, Blavatsky was an enigmatic figure who claimed to have travelled through Tibet where she had studied esoteric

²⁷⁹ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 19.

²⁸⁰ Stephen Prothero, "Henry Olcott Steel and Protestant Buddhism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 63:2 (1995), 288.

²⁸¹ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 20.

²⁸² Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 22.

²⁸³ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 24

²⁸⁴ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 27.

²⁸⁵ Edward Hower, "A spirited story of the psychic and the colonel," *Smithsonian*, 26:2 (1995), 110.

practices with the 'Himalayan Masters.'²⁸⁶ Hidden away in the mountains, these 'Masters' were supposedly responsible for preserving the ancient wisdom of the world.²⁸⁷

While in all probability Blavatsky never visited Tibet, she had in fact encountered a form of Tibetan Buddhism in her youth. As a child she was taken by her mother to live with her maternal grandfather, Andrey Fadeyev, who was an official charged with overseeing the Kalmyk people in the Russian region of Astrakhan.²⁸⁸ It was in Astrakhan, in the company of her grandfather, that she visited the palace of the Kalmyk prince Tumen.²⁸⁹ Situated on an island in the Volga River, the palace was also home to Khosheutovski Kurul, a temple where the Kalmyk form of Tibetan Buddhism was practiced.²⁹⁰

It was in the personal library of her grandfather that she also encountered books on occult rites which had been collected by Andrey Fadeyev's own father who had been a Rosicrucian Mason and a member of the Rite of Strict Observance.²⁹¹ As a result of this eclectic

²⁸⁶ Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: a history of the mystics, mediums and misfits who brought spiritualism to America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 33.

²⁸⁷ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 43.

²⁸⁸ Sylvia Cranston, *The extraordinary life and influence of Helena Blavatsky: founder of the modern Theosophical movement* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1993), 13-14.

²⁸⁹ Cranston, *The extraordinary life*, 14. The Kalmyks are the remnants of a Western Mongol confederacy known as the Oirat who, as a result of pressure from the Manchus and their Eastern Mongol allies, migrated from Dzungaria (an area equivalent to modern day Xinjiang in the People's Republic of China) around 1630 to the Volga river region of European Russia. Prior to their departure they had followed the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism (with influences from the Sakya school) and they brought their religion with them to their new homeland. Following the expansion of Russian borders during the reign of Catherine II they were gradually brought within the folds of the Russian Empire. Increasing Russification in the nineteenth century meant that contacts with Tibet gradually diminished and although Kalmyks still made pilgrimages to Tibet the administration of their religion came under the control of the Russian Tsars. See: John Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia: the story of Agvan Dorzhiev, Lhasa's emissary to the Tsar* (Longmead, Element Books, 1993), 55-58 and Eva Jane Neumann Fridman, *Sacred Geography: Shamanism among the Buddhist peoples of Russia* (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2004), 32-33.

²⁹⁰ Khosheutovski Kurul was built in 1814 as a monument honouring the assistance given by Kalmyks to the Tsar in driving Napoleon back to France. While most Kalmyk temples were constructed out of wood, Khosheutovski Kurul was built in stone and bears a strong resemblance to the Russian Orthodox Cathedral Our Lady of Kazan in St. Petersburg. See: Fridman, *Sacred Geography*, 34.

²⁹¹ Christopher Hale, *Himmler's Crusade: the true story of the 1938 Nazi expedition to Tibet* (Great Britain: Bantam Press, 2003), 53.

upbringing Blavatsky developed a strong interest in the paranormal and the exotic which followed her into adulthood.²⁹² Choosing to live a rather bohemian lifestyle she did not remain confined to Russia but also lived in Paris before eventually settling in New York.²⁹³

Blavatsky managed to convince Olcott that she had been sent to America by the 'Masters' in order to teach Spiritualists the truth about their practices.²⁹⁴ Blavatsky claimed that Spiritualist mediums were in fact not making contact with the dead. Instead the spectacular results which took place during Spiritualist séances were in fact displays of the psychic works of the Masters.²⁹⁵ Persuaded by this argument, Olcott decided to join with Blavatsky to reform Spiritualism.²⁹⁶ In keeping with the post-millennial idea of scientific and religious unity, Olcott's reformed version of Spiritualism would use scientific investigations in order to gain credibility.²⁹⁷

Announced in 1875 as the Theosophical Society, it made no claims of dogmatic truth and allowed its members to hold a variety of private beliefs.²⁹⁸ Olcott believed that through scientific investigation the laws of the universe would be revealed and as a result humanity, regardless of individual religious belief, could be united through an understanding of this singular, rational law.²⁹⁹ This truth would then lead to both individuals and societies as a

²⁹² Hale, *Himmler's Crusade*, 54.

²⁹³ Hale, *Himmler's Crusade*, 54

²⁹⁴ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 43.

²⁹⁵ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 43.

²⁹⁶ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 44.

²⁹⁷ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 49.

²⁹⁸ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 49.

²⁹⁹ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 51.

whole to attain moral perfection.³⁰⁰ This viewpoint echoes both not only the ideals of post-millennialism but also Kant's viewpoint of a moral and rational true religion.

Despite such aspirations, the Theosophical Society failed to establish these ideals in the United States.³⁰¹ With Blavatsky being unwilling to offer any proof of her powers, many followers began to consider her to be a charlatan and left the society.³⁰² In an effort to maintain the status of the society both of its leaders looked beyond Spiritualism for inspiration.³⁰³ In 1877 Olcott entered into correspondence with Moljee Thackeray, an Indian who he had become acquainted with on a voyage to London and who also belonged to a reformed sect of Hinduism known as Arya Samaj.³⁰⁴ After learning about the Arya Samaj Olcott came to believe that it held the same views as the Theosophical Society.³⁰⁵ This notion was reinforced by Blavatsky's claim that the leaders of Arya Samaj were secretly in contact with the "Masters" she had met during her time in the Himalayas.³⁰⁶

It was at this time that the Theosophical Society entered a new phase. No longer did it claim to be a reformed version of Spiritualism. Instead it was now an organisation that set out "to promote the study of esoteric religious philosophies of the East."³⁰⁷ Yet not only did it seek to appropriate Eastern religious beliefs but at the same time it took on a strong anti-Christian,

³⁰⁰ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 51.

³⁰¹ Rick Fields, *How the swans came to the lake: a narrative history of Buddhism in America*, (Boston, Mass.: Shambhala Publications, 1992), 92.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Fields, *How the swans came to the lake*, 92.

³⁰⁴ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 63.

³⁰⁵ Fields, *How the swans came to the lake*, 93.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 64.

anti-missionary stance.³⁰⁸ Having already learned of Miguttavatte Gunananda's victory over the Christian missionaries at the Pandura debate in 1873, Olcott also started to enter into correspondence with the monk.³⁰⁹ In one of his letters to Gunananda he wrote:

We the leaders of the Theosophical Society believe in the Incomprehensible Principle and the Divine Philosophy taught by Sakya Muni. With all my heart and soul I accept and profess the philosophy and try to act up to the precepts of Gautama Buddha.³¹⁰

Without having left America Olcott was already constructing his own idealised form of Buddhism.³¹¹ This Buddhism appeared to be a blend of his own liberal Protestant beliefs, the teachings of the Theosophical Society and what little he knew of Therāvada Buddhism.³¹² Because his perception of Christianity as a whole had been prejudiced by his rigid Calvinistic upbringing he had come to believe that it was an intolerant religion which was incompatible with his liberal ideals.³¹³ With the Pandura debate having shown that Buddhism could stand its ground against Christianity, Olcott must have seen it as a solid vessel onto which he could project his own ideals. Therefore it was this newly constructed Buddhism with its focus on wisdom and tolerance that would provide the alternative to Christianity.³¹⁴

After arriving in Ceylon in 1880, Olcott and Blavatsky visited Wijananda Monastery where they knelt before an image of the Buddha and recited the Buddhist vows in Pāli.³¹⁵ While

³⁰⁸ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 65.

³⁰⁹ Fields, *How the swans came to the lake*, 93.

³¹⁰ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 66.

³¹¹ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 69.

³¹² Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 66.

³¹³ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 67.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 95.

Blavatsky's interest in the Buddhism of Ceylon would eventually fade, Olcott was determined to propagate his form of Buddhism to both indigenous Buddhists and Westerners.³¹⁶ For Olcott, his Buddhism was the true teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama, an ancient set of laws which had remained uncorrupted by dogma and sectarian disputes.³¹⁷ However the Buddhism in Ceylon, as practiced by the Sinhalese, was a corruption of these true teachings.³¹⁸ With this belief in mind, Olcott saw it as his mission to revive the 'true' Buddhism and considered himself as a teacher to the Sinhalese rather than their student.³¹⁹

Although he scorned Christianity and saw his own form of Buddhism as being an ancient truth, the reality was that Olcott's Buddhism was incredibly modern and Protestant.³²⁰ Olcott believed that the true teachings of the Buddha had become overshadowed by the use of rituals and sectarian differences.³²¹ As with the Evangelical missionaries who preceded him, Olcott was only interested in the teachings which came from the ancient scriptures.³²² All the external trappings of Buddhism that had evolved over time were little more than corrupt distractions.³²³ It was only in the personage of Siddhārtha Gautama himself, who taught self reliance and offered non-dogmatic teachings, that the true essence of Buddhism could be found.³²⁴

³¹⁶ McMahan, *Buddhist Modernism*, 98.

³¹⁷ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 96.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 98.

³²⁰ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 97.

³²¹ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 97.

³²² Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 100.

³²³ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 100.

³²⁴ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 97.

In order to propagate the ‘true’ Buddhism, Olcott also used Christian methods, one of which was catechism.³²⁵ In these tracts which he distributed, Olcott presented what he believed were the genuine features of Buddhism by using Christian terminology.³²⁶ Emphasis was placed on the authoritative word of Siddhārtha Gautama, rituals and superstitious elements were overlooked, the reliance on of priests was criticised and individual rationality was praised.³²⁷ In order to ensure its compatibility with modernity, Olcott also attempted to define the common ground between science and Buddhism.³²⁸

Despite becoming a popular figure among the Sinhalese Buddhists for his efforts to defend Buddhism against Christian missionaries, Olcott was not content for his reformation to remain confined to Ceylon.³²⁹ As with his hope for Spiritualism, Olcott wished to help uplift and unify humanity so that it might proceed on the path to world harmony. While he believed that no singular religion held a claim on the ultimate truth, Olcott saw his form of Buddhism as being the most accurate route on the path to truth.³³⁰ He therefore wanted to create a unified Buddhist world where Buddhists from the different nations of Asia would work together in order to propagate the true essence of Buddhism.³³¹ In order to promote this ‘United Buddhist World’ he created the international Buddhist flag which he believed would serve, like the Christian Cross, as a symbol around which all Buddhists could rally.³³²

³²⁵ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 102.

³²⁶ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 102.

³²⁷ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 104.

³²⁸ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 99.

³²⁹ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 115.

³³⁰ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 109.

³³¹ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 115.

³³² Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 116.

In order to establish a universal Buddhism Olcott needed to unite the creeds of both Therāvada Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism.³³³ In 1888 he was invited by Zenshiro Nogouchi, a Japanese Buddhist, to assist with the revival of Buddhism in Japan.³³⁴ Despite facing sectarian differences among Japanese Buddhists during his 1889 tour of the country, Olcott continued with his efforts to create a Buddhist world. In 1890 he held a convention in Adyar, India, where he announced his desire to create a common doctrine which all Buddhists, regardless of national and sectarian difference, could accept.³³⁵ From there, Olcott would be able to guide the revival of Buddhism in Asia and its introduction into Western society.³³⁶

Despite his efforts, Olcott's attempts to unify the Buddhist world through a modern Protestant reinterpretation of Buddhism ultimately did not succeed.³³⁷ This no doubt would have been partly due to his assumptions that he knew what the true essence of Buddhism was, while the indigenous practitioners had lost their way. By using a Protestant model of *sola scriptura*, Olcott was removing the popular traditions such as rituals and superstition which, for indigenous Buddhists, were inseparable from the Buddha's teachings.³³⁸ However the idea of a rational Buddhism that was compatible with modernity did not go unnoticed. Westerners were not the only ones who were able to present Buddhism as a suitable alternative to Christianity. Indigenous practitioners who had encountered Olcott's message began to re-examine their faith and use his tactics to help ensure Buddhism's place in the modern world.

³³³ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 124.

³³⁴ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 123-124.

³³⁵ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 127.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Prothero, "Henry Olcott Steel," 285.

³³⁸ Lai and von Bruck, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 46.

Anagarika Dharmapala and the World Parliament of Religions

While Buddhism in nineteenth century Ceylon was able to hold its ground in theological debates, it was unable to maintain its influence in the sphere of education.³³⁹ Although Buddhist monks ran temples schools for local children, the education imparted there was traditional and not in keeping with the modern world.³⁴⁰ By the late nineteenth century there were only four Buddhist schools that received government support in comparison to the remaining 1,196 schools that offered a Western education.³⁴¹ It was in these government sponsored mission schools that Sinhalese children were given not only Christian religious education but also a modern, scientific education.³⁴² Therefore Sinhalese who wanted their children to gain prominent positions in a colonial world chose to send them to the schools run by Christian missionaries rather than the village monks.³⁴³

One Sinhalese individual who received such an education was David Hewavitarane (1864-1933). He was born to a father who, despite his heritage as both a Buddhist and a member of the *goyigama* (farmer) caste, had left behind his traditional lifestyle and had chosen to integrate himself into the Protestant society of Ceylon's capital Colombo.³⁴⁴ Since his father wished for his children to have a modern education Hewavitarane spent most of his youth in a variety of Christian schools, including Catholic, Methodist and Anglican.³⁴⁵ Despite being

³³⁹ Gananath Obeyesekere, "Personal identity and cultural crisis: the case of Anagarika Dharmapala of Sri Lanka," in *The biographical process: studies in the history and psychology of religion*, ed. Frank Reynolds and Donald Capps, (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 237.

³⁴⁰ Obeyesekere, "Personal identity," 237.

³⁴¹ Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 86.

³⁴² Prothero, *White Buddhist*, 86.

³⁴³ Obeyesekere, "Personal identity," 237.

³⁴⁴ Obeyesekere, "Personal identity," 227.

³⁴⁵ Obeyesekere, "Personal identity," 227.

exposed to Western philosophy and Christianity, Hewavitarane still practiced Buddhism at home.³⁴⁶ This was the orthodox Buddhism of his parents, who were connected to the monks at the head of the Buddhist revival in Ceylon, and as a result he came to know Gunananda.³⁴⁷

Despite his Christian education Hewavitarane felt constantly drawn to the Buddhism of his parents.³⁴⁸ As a result of this he began to search for Buddhist masters who had either become Arhats or who possessed *abhijna*, the psychic powers that developed through secret yogic practices.³⁴⁹ Although he never found any such masters, his interest in spiritual practices led him to a book by A.P. Sinnett entitled *Occult World*.³⁵⁰ It was in this book that he came across mention of the Theosophical Society and the Himalayan School of Adepts.³⁵¹

Believing that the School of Adepts would help revive the esoteric practices that had been lost in Ceylon, Hewavitarane wrote to the Theosophical Society which had established itself in Adyar, India, and asked to be admitted.³⁵²

In 1884, when Olcott and Blavatsky arrived in Ceylon on their second tour, they met with Hewavitarane and initiated him into the Theosophical Society.³⁵³ During this time Blavatsky taught him about the existence of the Himalayan Masters and how they wished to revive Buddhism.³⁵⁴ Initially Blavatsky claimed that she had been directed by the Masters to bring

³⁴⁶ Obeyesekere, "Personal identity," 228.

³⁴⁷ Obeyesekere, "Personal identity," p.232.

³⁴⁸ Johnson, *Initiates*, 115.

³⁴⁹ Johnson, *Initiates*, 115.

³⁵⁰ Fields, *How the swans*, 100.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Obeyesekere, "Personal identity," 238.

³⁵⁴ Johnson, *Initiates*, 115.

Hewavitarane back to India in order for him to train under their guidance.³⁵⁵ However Blavatsky quickly changed her mind and told Hewavitarane to remain in Ceylon and devote himself to studying the Pāli scriptures, as it was there that he would find the key to reviving Buddhism.³⁵⁶

From 1884 through to 1890, Hewavitarane remained a devoted follower of the Theosophical Society.³⁵⁷ However at the same time he was working to reinvent himself as a new champion for the Buddhist revival. Taking on a new name, he chose to call himself Anagarika Dharmapala.³⁵⁸ It was at this time that he gradually began to shift away from Theosophical Buddhism and work towards creating a pan-Asian Buddhism that would be more in keeping with the indigenous traditions.³⁵⁹ After attending the 1890 convention in Adyar at which Olcott attempted to try and create a common doctrine for all Buddhists, Dharmapala travelled through India in the company of a Japanese Buddhist Kozen Gunaratna, visiting sites that were of significance to Buddhists.³⁶⁰

After reading an article written by Sir Edwin Arnold, the author of *The Light of Asia*, Dharmapala was inspired to visit Bodh Gaya, the Buddhist ruins that were brought to the attention of the British through the writings of Francis Buchanan.³⁶¹ Dismayed by the condition that Bodh Gaya was in, Arnold had joined with the Sinhalese monk Sri Sumangala in petitioning the British government in India to purchase the site from the current Mahant

³⁵⁵ Johnson, *Initiates*, 115.

³⁵⁶ Johnson, *Initiates*, 115.

³⁵⁷ Obeyesekere, "Personal identity," p.238.

³⁵⁸ Obeyesekere, "Personal identity," p.238. *Anagarika* being a person who has renounced the lay lifestyle and *dharmapala* meaning a protector of the Dharma. See: Lai and von Bruck, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 45.

³⁵⁹ Obeyesekere, "Personal identity," 238.

³⁶⁰ Fields, *How the swans*, 114.

³⁶¹ Fields, *How the swans*, 114-115.

and help preserve it.³⁶² During his time at Bodh Gaya Dharmapala realised that in order for such a petition to be successful, money and public support would be required.³⁶³ In 1891 he founded the Bodh-Gaya Maha Bodhi Society which aimed at returning the site to Buddhism and establishing there a college which would be staffed by monks from the various Buddhist traditions across Asia.³⁶⁴ In order to raise awareness, the Maha Bodhi Society propagated its cause in the *Maha Bodhi Journal* which Dharmapala edited.³⁶⁵ A copy of the journal eventually found its way into the hands of an American, Dr. John Henry Barrows.³⁶⁶

A liberal Protestant minister, Barrows was one of the organisers behind a visionary event which was to take place at the 1893 Chicago World Columbian Exposition.³⁶⁷ Billed as the World's Parliament of Religions, the event was an exercise in comparative religion. While formulated within a Christian framework, the parliament aimed at discovering the truth behind all forms of 'Religion.'³⁶⁸ As stated in the charter for the Parliament, the reason for this search for the truth was so that the religions of the world could unite against the looming threat of 'irreligion.'³⁶⁹ Barrows described religion as being akin to a heavenly light which had been broken into many colours through the 'prisms of men.'³⁷⁰ Through the work of missionaries, the scriptures of various religions had been introduced to Western audiences

³⁶² Fields, *How the swans*, 115.

³⁶³ Fields, *How the swans*, 115.

³⁶⁴ Johnson, *Initiates*, 120.

³⁶⁵ Fields, *How the swans*, 117.

³⁶⁶ Fields, *How the swans*, 118.

³⁶⁷ Fields, *How the swans*, 119.

³⁶⁸ Fields, *How the swans*, 121.

³⁶⁹ John R. McRae, "Oriental verities on the American frontier: the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions and the Thought of Masao Abe," *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 11, (1991), 13.

³⁷⁰ Fields, *How the swans*, 121.

and as a result the scope of human history had been widened.³⁷¹ The parliament therefore would work to turn the fragmented rays into the singular ray of ‘heavenly truth.’³⁷²

However not all who attended the Parliament held the belief that their religion was on the same level as others. The Christians, who made up the largest percentage of participants, still maintained that their faith was the one true religion.³⁷³ To these Christian exclusionists, the Parliament was seen as a means of Christianity asserting its superiority over the other religious traditions of the world.³⁷⁴ The exclusionists made the argument that while other religions were bound to geographic locations and cultural traditions, Christianity was instead a universal faith which crossed ethnic and national boundaries.³⁷⁵ Christian exclusionism based the strength of their argument on the concept of Revelation.³⁷⁶ For them religion has its origins in God, not in human societies and therefore since God only revealed Himself through Christ, it was Christianity which was the true universal religion of Revelation.³⁷⁷

Expressed in opposition to this was the view of inclusionism. The inclusionists took on an almost Kantian approach to religion in that they believed there was a one true religion but it had not yet been conceived.³⁷⁸ Instead this one true religion would slowly evolve from the many faiths of humanity, taking from each that which could benefit the world.³⁷⁹ One of the

³⁷¹ Fields, *How the swans*, 119.

³⁷² Fields, *How the swans*, 121.

³⁷³ Fields, *How the swans*, 120.

³⁷⁴ Donald H. Bishop, “Religious confrontation, a case study: the 1893 Parliament of Religions,” in *Numen* 16:1, (1969), 63.

³⁷⁵ Bishop, “Religious confrontation,” 64.

³⁷⁶ Bishop, “Religious confrontation,” 74.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Bishop, “Religious confrontation,” 68.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

Parliament's attendees, Dr. Hirsch, a Jewish liberal, stated that since God was the God of the universe he spoke to all of humanity.³⁸⁰ He argued that religions which were geographically and culturally located were no longer relevant to humanity and that there should instead be a faith which could unite the world.³⁸¹ The inclusionists countered the argument of the Christian exclusionists by pointing out that Christianity could not be the end of the religious development since the progress of religious history has constantly been one of smaller traditions being amalgamated into larger ones.³⁸² Christianity therefore was simply one of the many traditions which will eventually be absorbed into the final true religion.³⁸³

The inclusionists were motivated by the idea of religion being a universal concept.³⁸⁴ For them religion was like science in that the benefits it offered should not be limited to a certain time or place.³⁸⁵ It needed to be applicable to any ethnic group and any location.³⁸⁶ While the exclusionists believed that truth was revealed by God, the inclusionists held that truth was acquired by individuals.³⁸⁷ Humanity is slowly searching for truth and through the course of history it has gradually amassed a wealth of knowledge for the final truth has not yet been reached.³⁸⁸ Instead individuals must continually keep searching, for the knowledge which leads towards this truth can be acquired by anyone.³⁸⁹ Therefore it is the religious traditions

³⁸⁰ Bishop, "Religious confrontation," 68.

³⁸¹ Bishop, "Religious confrontation," 69

³⁸² Bishop, "Religious confrontation," 70.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Bishop, "Religious confrontation," 70.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Bishop, "Religious confrontation," 75.

³⁸⁸ Bishop, "Religious confrontation," 75.

³⁸⁹ Bishop, "Religious confrontation," 75.

which can apply themselves universally and that are open to progress which will assist in the development of the ‘true religion.’

Invited by Barrows, Dharmapala attended the Parliament on behalf of Sinhalese Buddhists. One of the problems that Dharmapala and the other Buddhists faced was that, although their beliefs were treated with respect by liberal Christians, as non-Christians their faith was still relegated to a lesser status on the model of religious progress.³⁹⁰ Wishing to gain support for Buddhism and the Maha Bodhi Society, Dharmapala was therefore faced with the task of making Buddhism applicable to a modern, Western society. While the Christians claimed that Christianity was the first true universal religion, Dharmapala countered this by saying that this honour in fact belonged to Buddhism.³⁹¹

In order to give legitimacy to Buddhism, Dharmapala relied upon the preconceived notions that had already been established in the West by the Orientalists.³⁹² He admitted that while the current state of Buddhism had declined into superstition and ignorance, the original teachings of the Buddha, as recorded in the scriptures, were rational and compatible with scientific thinking.³⁹³ Buddhism, as Dharmapala presented it, was in keeping with the values of the modern nineteenth century.³⁹⁴ He portrayed the Buddha as a religious teacher who rejected priests and rituals and as a leader who insisted on democracy and the importance of an individual’s own use of reason.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁰ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 92.

³⁹¹ McRae, “Oriental verities,” 22.

³⁹² McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 95.

³⁹³ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 95.

³⁹⁴ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 95.

³⁹⁵ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 95.

The final blow to Christianity came when Dharmapala announced that Buddhism had no God or original Creator.³⁹⁶ By doing so Dharmapala was aligning Buddhism with that which stood in opposition to Christianity; science.³⁹⁷ In order to show that Buddhism had no need for superstitious beliefs Dharmapala made use of scientific terms such as evolution and the law of cause and effect.³⁹⁸ By doing so Dharmapala was simply building on the preconceptions already held by Westerners about the role of God in Buddhism.

While the first half of the nineteenth century had been dedicated to the ‘creation’ of Buddhism as a religion, the second half saw Western scholars and missionaries beginning to question whether Buddhism was a religion or in fact a philosophy.³⁹⁹ In an article written in the same year as the conference the German Orientalist, Max Müller had argued that since religion acted as a “bridge...between the human and divine, true Buddhism would be no religion at all; for it knows nothing invisible, nothing eternal; it knows no God, in our sense of the word.”⁴⁰⁰

Part of this assumption of atheism is due to the fact that for many Orientalists their understanding of Buddhism was derived from the Pāli scriptures of the Therāvada tradition.⁴⁰¹ Because there was a Protestant attitude of *sola scriptura*, the later Sanskrit texts of the Mahāyāna traditions which dealt with supernatural beings such as gods and bodhisattvas were ignored.⁴⁰² Rather than pay attention to the Sanskrit based traditions,

³⁹⁶ Fields, *How the swans came to the lake*, 126.

³⁹⁷ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 92.

³⁹⁸ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 93.

³⁹⁹ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 94.

⁴⁰⁰ Max Müller, “A Bishop on Buddhism,” *The New Review*, 8, (1893), 109, as quoted in Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 94.

⁴⁰¹ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 95.

⁴⁰² Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 95.

Western scholars such as Rhys Davids instead condemned Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism as being corrupted forms of Buddhism.⁴⁰³ Since Dharmapala was of the Therāvada tradition, he no doubt wished to present his Buddhism as the ‘pure Buddhism’ which was based on the original Pāli texts and which had not undergone superstitious corruption.

Therefore in his view Buddhism was the religion which was best suited to the environment of nineteenth century Western society because not only was it universal but it also offered a path in which spirituality and rational science could be combined. However what Dharmapala was offering was not the indigenous Buddhism of Ceylon but a reinterpreted form that blended the Buddhism of his youth with the Protestant Buddhism of the Theosophical Society.

Dharmapala then catered this new Buddhism to the needs of his Western audience and presented a Buddhism that could replace the irrationality and outdated modes of Christianity.

Dharmapala’s speeches at the World Parliament of Religions impacted on those Western members of the audience who were undergoing the Victorian ‘Crisis of Faith.’ Faced with an ever growing number of competing Christian sects and knowledge regarding non-Christian beliefs, Westerners of the nineteenth century began to suffer from a spiritual crisis that arose from an inner conflict between their faith and rational science.⁴⁰⁴ This crisis of faith was only exacerbated by Evangelical Christianity which demanded that people live an outward Christian lifestyle.⁴⁰⁵ With science continually making claims through use of evidence, Victorians became lost and confused in their search for the path to Truth.⁴⁰⁶ To those who were suffering from this crisis of faith, the Buddhism offered by Dharmapala seemed the perfect solution.

⁴⁰³ Harris, *Theravada Buddhism*, 95.

⁴⁰⁴ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 108-109.

⁴⁰⁵ Timothy Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt: honest faith in nineteenth century England* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 12.

⁴⁰⁶ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 107.

One such individual was Paul Carus, a German immigrant to the United States who was searching for a new, purified religion that would be compatible with science.⁴⁰⁷ After hearing Dharmapala's talk at the Parliament, Carus felt that Buddhism was the answer to his spiritual crisis.⁴⁰⁸ Carus went on to write *The Gospel of Buddhism* which became an influential work in 'reforming' Buddhism to the standards of modernity.⁴⁰⁹ Like Dharmapala, he presented only those aspects of Buddhism which were compatible with modernity and therefore was creating his own version of it, a Buddhism that would ultimately lead towards the final, true religion.⁴¹⁰

This encounter between Dharmapala's reformed Buddhism and disenfranchised Western spiritual seekers who were looking for a modern path to the higher truth has left the West with the form of Buddhism it knows best, Modern Buddhism. Yet rather than being a tradition located within a particular culture or place Modern Buddhism transcends ethnicity and geographic boundaries and therefore it can be used by anyone as a vehicle to discover the final universal truth.⁴¹¹ By being stripped of indigenous practices that focus on rituals, worship and superstition, Modern Buddhism, with its focus on the rational and individual path to truth, allows its followers to remain modern and maintain their sense of Western identity.

However at the same time it is also not the indigenous Buddhism which is to be found in Asia. Many Westerners are shocked to discover that Buddhist traditions, such as those of Tibet, are at odds with their conception of Buddhism. With its hosts of wrathful deities, gods

⁴⁰⁷ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 101-102.

⁴⁰⁸ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 103.

⁴⁰⁹ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 103.

⁴¹⁰ McMahan, *Buddhist modernism*, 106.

⁴¹¹ McMahan, *Buddhist Modernism*, 109-110.

and ghosts, emphasis on ritual and pilgrimage, Tibetan Buddhism stands at the opposite end of the scale from Modern Buddhism.

Chapter Three

Marxism and the critique of religion

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.¹

So wrote Karl Marx in his 1843 paper entitled *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Constructing his theories in a post-Enlightenment society, Marx was continuing a dialogue that involved the critique of religion through philosophical enquiry, a dialogue that had been taking place in Germany since the writings of Immanuel Kant first established critical philosophy.² At first glance the social environment of nineteenth century Prussia, into which Marx was born in 1818, might appear not so different from that of Tibet. Both were realms in which the figure of the king and the state religion played a strong role in exercising authority over the population. In the case of Tibet, these two forms of authority were found in the figure of the Dalai Lama and the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism. With the Enlightenment having given birth to the idea of the emancipation of man, German philosophers began to challenge the rule of both church and king and sought to discover whether religion was a path to liberation or enslavement. If we are to try and understand whether Marx's critique of religion is applicable to Tibetan Buddhism we must first begin with an examination of how Marx perceived the notion of 'religion.' Yet can a theory which had evolved from an understanding of Protestant German society be applied to that of Tibet?

¹ Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", ed. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Marx and Engels: On Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 42

² James Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist 'Scientific Atheism' and the Study of Religion and Atheism in the USSR*, (Berlin; New York: Mouton, 1983), 4.

Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx

German philosophers prior to Marx had attempted to produce a synthesis from the clash between the authority of religion and the idea of human emancipation. Immanuel Kant was one of the first to argue for the autonomy of man.³ As we have already established, Kant claimed that since humanity was incapable of ever truly comprehending God, the true religion was one of morality and reason which remains as a distant goal towards which humanity must strive. Kant argued that rather than seeking for reason and morality in a divine 'other,' humanity should instead realise that these divine values are located within its self.⁴ In Kant's view, humanity therefore must utilise its own cognitive resources in order to progress towards an understanding of its true nature. It is this journey of self discovery which will eventually result in the freedom of the human race.⁵ This Kantian inversion was expanded upon by Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831)⁶ and Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872).

It has been argued that Hegel's reasons for choosing Kant as his model was because Kantian philosophy was being used by his own teachers to reinforce their conformist ideology, an ideology which was opposed to Hegel's very own mode of thought.⁷ Hegel believed that religion could be divided into two hemispheres, objective religion, in which man's faith was

³ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist*, 4.

⁴ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist*, 5.

⁵ Leszek Kolakowski, *Main currents of Marxism: the founders, the golden age, the breakdown* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 43.

⁶ The first person to apply Hegel's theories to Tibet and the Dalai Lama was none other than Hegel himself. In *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* Hegel uses the Dalai Lama as an example of the embodiment of *Geist*. He argues that the Dalai Lama as a person is not God but rather that *Geist* uses the body of the Dalai Lama to make itself known to the general populace who are unaware that they too are vessels for *Geist*. See: George Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (London : Bell, 1914), 178.

⁷ Elie Kedourie, *Hegel and Marx: Introductory Lectures*, (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1995), 92.

governed by ordered systems, and subjective religion, in which man comes to know his God through a personal understanding of himself and his world.⁸ For Hegel, objective religion was a static and decaying mode of faith, while subjective was alive and constantly reengaging.⁹

In Hegel's view the message of Christ had originally began as a subjective religion in that the Christian God was a God of love who resided within an individual and who could come to be known through following Christ's teachings of morality.¹⁰ However the early Church had instead turned Christ's teachings into an objective religion by becoming an institution which imposing laws.¹¹ These regulations turned the loving relationship between an individual and God into one where, through servitude, the individual had eventually become dislocated from God.¹² Although I have already argued for the ways in which Christianity allowed itself to become compatible with Gentile societies, Hegel claimed that it was this importation into the wider, non-Christian society of the Roman Empire, with its established laws and figures of authority, that caused the Christian religion to fail due to its inability to reconcile itself between the private and the public.

While he believed that the ideas of human freedom and love were central tenants to the original teachings of Jesus Christ, Hegel felt that these ideals were unable to be applied to the broader public.¹³ Rejected by their fellow Jews and living in a state in which the authority was that of the Roman emperor and not the moral teachings of Christ, the early Christians

⁸ Kedourie, *Hegel and Marx*, 78.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol.3 (Doubleday, New York, 1985), 164.

¹¹ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist*, 6

¹² Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, 163.

¹³ Kedourie, *Hegel and Marx*, 85.

had turned inward and become selective.¹⁴ The Kingdom of Heaven became more important than the kingdom of man, thus creating a world denying religion.

Hegel believed that prior to the introduction of Christianity, the pagan religions of Rome and Greece had fulfilled man's need through their role as a subjective faith. Rather than being personalised the worship of the deities was tied up to a broader sense of community and social responsibility.¹⁵ However the increase in wealth through trade and war led to the rise of a bureaucracy whose desire to further their own personal interests led to a decline in communal religion.¹⁶ It was at this time that Christianity appeared and because of its focus on a private relation with God, Hegel theorised that it appealed to those who wished to separate themselves from the masses.¹⁷ As a result man allowed his personal morals to be dictated by a distant God who resided in heaven and was separated from mankind and society.¹⁸

Thus, through institutionalisation, religion had enslaved man by using a strict regime of morals that separated man from knowledge of his true self. For Hegel knowledge of this true self and therefore knowledge of the true meaning of Christianity were found through discovering the concept of pure love.¹⁹ This love was one that had no polar opposites. It was without boundaries or restrictions and therefore moved beyond the concept of objectivity which caused religion to die.²⁰ It was this love which would eventually encompass all of

¹⁴ Kedourie, *Hegel and Marx*, 86.

¹⁵ Kedourie, *Hegel and Marx*, 83.

¹⁶ Kedourie, *Hegel and Marx*, 84.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist* 6.

²⁰ A.R. Bjerke, "Hegel and the Concept of Love," *The Heythrop Journal*, 52:1 (2011), 77.

creation and as a result lead man to realise that he was not an entity that was separate from the divine, but a being that was part of the larger conceptualisation of the universe.²¹

Hegel believed that once an individual had discovered that he was not a finite entity separated from the infinite, then they would, through the science of rationalisation, come to see that they were playing a part in a larger universal process which would end in the ultimate liberation of humanity.²² For Hegel the process of history is not a sequence of random, illogical events but rather an interconnected pattern that is gradually unfolding along a course of rationality.²³ This historical process was being driven by that which Hegel termed *Geist*, a German word which has a rough English equivalent of ‘Spirit’ or ‘Consciousness.’²⁴ Hegel did not mean *Geist* to be the human soul²⁵ or an entity apart from man, but rather a collective consciousness that was common to all of mankind.²⁶ As a universal aspect, *Geist* therefore dispels the notion of master and slave which Hegel believed dominated both human social interactions and man’s relationship with a distant God and placed all of creation as part of a universal Absolute.²⁷

Since *Geist* is the driving power behind the universe, and is composed of both the finite and the infinite, it is through a constant interaction of these two compositions that *Geist* finally comes to understand itself.²⁸ This interaction is what other philosophers posthumously termed

²¹ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist* 6.

²² Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist*, 9-10.

²³ Kolakowski, *Main Currents*, 60-61.

²⁴ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist* 7.

²⁵ R.C. Solomon, “Hegel’s Concept of Geist,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, 23:4 (1970), 646.

²⁶ Solomon, “Hegel’s Concept,” 642.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist* 7.

a Hegelian dialectic. The dialectic is a conflict which ultimately deconstructs the two opposing forces, the thesis and the antithesis, and then creates a synthesis from their interaction.²⁹ This synthesis, which contains the elements of both the previous thesis and antithesis, then proceeds to act as a new thesis, which will eventually collide with another antithesis to create a new synthesis. The dialectical process then continues until there is nothing left to resolve.

Man, as part of the universe, was an actor being driven by *Geist* on the historical path towards human autonomy. For Hegel history was a course that was constantly undergoing change through humans following their own individual passions.³⁰ Conflicts were resolved and from the resolution new confrontations were eventually born. Therefore history, as a dialectal process, does not unfold in a random, meaningless manner, but on a constant path which Hegel believed would eventually end with the ultimate liberation for humanity.³¹

Like Hegel, Feuerbach believed that the concept of religion was holding man back from achieving an understanding of his true self. However where Feuerbach and Hegel differ is that Feuerbach had no belief in a divine essence. Nor did Feuerbach believe in the existence of an immortal human soul that survived death. Instead he believed that after our bodily death we are survived only by our noble achievements which we pass onto the next generation as part of the historical process which will eventually culminate with human liberation.³² In his essay *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach argues that God is nothing more than a creation upon which man has fixed his own noble aspirations.³³ However rather than continue with

²⁹ William Desmond, "Hegel, Dialectic and Deconstruction," *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 18:4 (1985), 256.

³⁰ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist*, 9.

³¹ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist*, 10.

³² Kedourie, *Hegel and Marx*, 153-154.

³³ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1957), 18.

deluding himself by believing that he can never be as pure as God, man needs, states Feuerbach, to recognise that the noble qualities of God are inherent within himself. Therefore freedom and the possibility of the unlimited are discovered when man throws away the concept of religion and an authoritarian creator God and comes to realise that he is in fact the master of his own universe.³⁴

Marx took Feuerbach's idea of humanity gaining liberation from the delusion of religion and used it to critique Hegel's theories regarding the course of history. Since Hegel understood ideas to be a form of *Geist*, this meant that the different forms of knowledge by which humanity used to understand the surrounding world and which were continually conflicting, were ways by which the divine power behind *Geist* was coming to know itself. Rather than seeing ideas as the cause behind history, Marx instead believed that ideas were simply the result of historical process.³⁵ In this view, ideas are removed from the realm of spirituality and come to be seen as creations of humanity.

Furthermore, since the conflict of ideas could no longer be considered the driving force behind history, Marx claimed that it was instead the conflict created by material production and consumption, with its creation of unequal wealth and class systems, which was responsible for determining the course of human history.³⁶ In this view all human societies were destined to unfold along a similar course. From their initial beginnings with primitive communism they would then evolve into slave economies which would progress into feudalism, followed by bourgeoisie capitalism which would then finally collapse and give

³⁴ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 5.

³⁵ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist*, 57.

³⁶ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist*, 57.

way to communism.³⁷ Since humanity is behind the production and consumption of material goods, it is humanity, not God, which has the power to determine the course of history.

Due to this secularised reinterpretation of Hegel's theory of dialectical interaction, Marx believed that religion was already facing its own inevitable extinction.³⁸ For Marx the slow death of religion had been announced by the birth of modernity. As we have already established, the process of modernity can be interpreted in multiple ways. For Marx, modernity did not begin with Christianity or the Enlightenment but rather with the development of capital in medieval Western Europe, as it was this decisive phase which signified the release of society from the bonds of religious authority.

Feudalism

Prior to the rise of the modern society, the structure of Western Europe was governed by a system which modern historians have since termed feudalism.³⁹ Depending on a historian's particular argument, the modern interpretation of feudalism can differ, with some choosing to see it as a political and social structure while others have defined it as a stage of economic development.⁴⁰ Regardless of historical interpretation, the system originated in West Francia during the ninth and tenth centuries which, following the death of Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Emperor, was a time of great social uncertainty.⁴¹ With Charlemagne's former

³⁷ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist*, 57.

³⁸ N. Lobkowitz, "Karl Marx's attitude toward religion," *The Review of Politics*, 26:3 (1964), 319.

³⁹ The term feudalism is a modern derivation of the Latin word for a fief, *feudum*. In reality a person in a medieval society would have used the term vassalage to describe their social structure. See: Bennett and Hollister, *Medieval Europe*, 136.

⁴⁰ Bennett and Hollister, *Medieval Europe*, 135.

⁴¹ Bennett and Hollister, *Medieval Europe*, 135.

kingdom having been split into rival duchies it no longer operated as a unified territory and the fragmented regions became targets of foreign invasion.⁴²

The social and political understanding of feudalism claims that this instability led to the weaker elements of society turning to the stronger elements for protection.⁴³ The need for increased protection by nobility led to the development of a professional class of soldier, the European knight, who in turn required payment and upkeep.⁴⁴ Since those who farmed the land could not afford to dedicate their life to warfare, they were granted protection by lords in return for their produce.⁴⁵ Those who offered their service to a higher lord in return for his protection were deemed vassals.⁴⁶ This led to the establishment of the fief, a tract of land granted to a knight by a nobleman in return for his professional service.⁴⁷ This led to a rise in economic production and as a result the rural farming populations became a fundamental part of society.⁴⁸ Although the Church had previously focused its attention on the nobility, due to their support of the developing monasteries, it now turned its attention to the villages which were forming in order to meet the needs of feudal production.⁴⁹ Since every village was required to have a church and priest, this led to the development of the parish, a region overseen by a priest and which required a religious form of taxation with biblical origins

⁴² MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 359.

⁴³ Bennett and Hollister, *Medieval Europe*, 135.

⁴⁴ Bennett and Hollister, *Medieval Europe*, 135.

⁴⁵ Bennett and Hollister, *Medieval Europe*, 135.

⁴⁶ Bennett and Hollister, *Medieval Europe*, 135.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 368.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

known as a tithe.⁵⁰ In this way the Church gained a superior position within the feudal system of medieval Europe.

In contrast to this is the economic understanding of feudalism which is the form taken by Marx and subsequent Marxist historians. For Marx the aristocracy owned the land and exploited the peasantry by demanding their produce and giving little in return.⁵¹ The peasantry were then held in their place by an ideology disseminated by the dominating classes (the aristocracy and Church) which legalised their exploitation.⁵² This ideology proclaimed that the king's right to rule was ordained by God and therefore the social system which governed an individual's daily life was also part of God's creation. With its educated clergy, ownership of land and status as the intermediary of Heaven, the Church was a most powerful institution and one whose authority was not to be questioned.

However this position of influence was soon challenged by the rise of a new mercantile class which had evolved alongside the development of the medieval city.⁵³ The opening of trade routes to new lands, such as America and the Indian subcontinent, led to an expansion of commercial enterprises.⁵⁴ Money soon came to be the tool through which social relations were established, as the nobility found they came to rely on goods that were manufactured in cities and the use of urban money lenders in order to purchase these commodities.⁵⁵ Without their position as the sole provider of food and protection, the nobility found themselves now

⁵⁰ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 369.

⁵¹ Martin A. Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism: the foundations of authority in Gelukpa monasticism* (Richmond: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 335.

⁵² Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 336.

⁵³ Frederick Engels, "The Decline of Feudalism and the Rise of the Bourgeoisie," Marxists Internet Archive, accessed February 13, 2012, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/decline/index.htm>.

⁵⁴ Karl Marx "The Communist Manifesto" in *Karl Marx Selected Works vol.1* (London, 1947), 112.

⁵⁵ Engels, "Decline of Feudalism."

competing with a new class of producers and consumers. Marx called this new class the *Bourgeoisie*.⁵⁶

Marx claims that it was from this constant desire for profit that the modern age was born.⁵⁷ In order to ensure that production and consumption take place on a profitable basis, there arose a need for rationality and logic to be applied to the science of commerce.⁵⁸ Technological progress equalled profits, especially when a machine could do the regular job of a hired labourer for free. Therefore development and new revolutions in ways of thinking were encouraged.⁵⁹ Money also changed the way in which an individual's role in society was understood. Since the trade and enterprise depended on mutual understandings and agreements, society started to focus on the right of the individual.⁶⁰ The German sociologist, Max Weber (1864-1920), even went so far as to argue that it was the Calvinistic notion of an individual living a rationalised and organised life dedicated to hard work which became the founding basis for Western capitalism.⁶¹

Therefore for Marx, it was this development of logic and reasoning which inevitably began to usher in the modern age and sounded the death knell for the authority of religion over everyday life. No longer would man be held back by claims of superstition. Instead, society could continue progressing through the use of reasoning until it reached a state of social utopia. However, living in a time when humanity had not yet reached that goal, Marx still saw the influence which religion had over society. Yet despite professing atheism he argued

⁵⁶ Frederick Engels, "Juristic Socialism," in Niebuhr, *On Religion*, 270.

⁵⁷ Ziyi Feng and Lijun Xing, "A Contemporary Interpretation of Marx's Thoughts on Modernity," in *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 1:2 (2006), 256.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, 113.

⁶⁰ Engels, "Juristic Socialism," 270.

⁶¹ See: Max Weber, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2005).

that there was no need for the dedicated revolutionary to take action against religion.⁶² His reasoning for this lies in the way in which he understood the place of religion in Western European society.

For Marx, religion was not the cause of suffering in society but rather the result of this suffering. In his view, religion has not always existed as an eternal essence that remains apart from the world but rather humanity has created religion in order to escape from the indignity and trials of human existence.⁶³ In his essay, *The Essence of Christianity*, Ludwig Feuerbach proposes the idea that religion and God are little more than the personal expressions of an individual who is too deluded to recognise their own true nature.⁶⁴ Marx, however, critiques this notion of individual delusion in the seventh thesis of his work *Theses on Feuerbach*. In this paragraph he claims that religion should not be understood as an individual malady but rather a social one.⁶⁵ Therefore rather than being a fixed, solid entity, religion was instead a fantasy projected by a social group that was mired in a swamp of misfortune.

Those who suffered the most and therefore depended upon the drug of religion were the working class whom Marx termed the *Proletariat*. While the bourgeoisie controlled the means of production, it was the proletariat who physically manufactured the goods through the use of their time and energy. In return for the work they put in the proletariat received payment from the bourgeoisie employer. Yet because profit continually drove the process of production, the proletariat came to be seen not as individuals but simply as another part of the larger commercial enterprise. In order to keep up with trade and competition, the role of the

⁶² Lobkowitz, "Karl Marx's attitude," 320.

⁶³ Karl Marx, "Contribution," 42.

⁶⁴ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 29-30.

⁶⁵ Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach, VII" in *Karl Marx Selected Works vol. I* (London, 1947), p.354.

worker was gradually dehumanised by the bourgeoisie employer. As a result of this they were forced to work in degrading conditions and were easily exploited.⁶⁶

Because of the nature of their menial existence, the proletariat no longer considered the possibility of finding happiness in their lifetime and dealt with their suffering by hoping for release from bondage in the afterlife as promised by religion. For Marx this was unacceptable. Unless the actual cause of a society's suffering was eliminated then religion could never truly be done away with.⁶⁷ Thus, it was because of this understanding of religion as a product rather than the source of suffering that Marx did not advocate a full, outright extermination of religious sentiment. To do so would simply be as effective as chasing phantoms.

The Russian Revolution and the rise of the Soviet Union

Rather than an outright attack on religion, Marx's solution for the elimination of society's suffering was through a full scale revolution led by the proletariat working class that would overthrow the bourgeoisie capitalists. Once overthrown, the workers would then establish a form of rule which Marx described as "the dictatorship of the proletariat."⁶⁸ Because society already existed under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, Marx viewed the dictatorship of the people as a necessary, albeit temporary, replacement in order to ensure that society started its transition.⁶⁹ Once the influence of the bourgeoisie had been eradicated, society would then progress onto Socialism, a form of government where the state controlled the distribution of goods. From there, society would eventually progress towards a utopian finale known as

⁶⁶ Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 121

⁶⁷ Lobkowicz, "Karl Marx's attitude," 322.

⁶⁸ Karl Marx, "The Class Struggles in France, 1849-1850, Part III, Consequences of June 13 1849" in *Karl Marx: Selected Works vol.2* (London, 1943), 289.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Communism in which the concept of class and private wealth would have disappeared completely.⁷⁰ This transition, a constant engagement of thesis and antithesis, bourgeoisie and proletariat, was the Hegelian dialectic process through which history was unfolding, ending with the culmination of the liberating synthesis of Communism.⁷¹ This would usher in a utopia and effectively the end of history since there would be no further synthesis.

For many social revolutionaries the theories of Marx, collectively known as Marxism, have promised a world of classless equality, a world where kings, priests, landlords and business owners can no longer exploit the working people.⁷² Marx himself initially believed that the first successful revolution of the proletariat would take place in Germany since it was in nineteenth century German society that the mix of both modernity and feudalism could be found.⁷³ Therefore if German society was able to produce a successful revolution then the rest of the world would surely be able to follow.⁷⁴ However the revolution did not take place in Marx's lifetime, nor did it take place in Germany. It wasn't until the Russian Revolution of 1917 that a successful revolution based on the tenets of Marxism was able to take place.

Prior to the Revolution the Russian Empire had been ruled by the autocratic figure of the Tsar. Accompanying the rule of the Tsar was the Russian Orthodox Church which saw itself as the Third Rome and heir to the Byzantine Empire.⁷⁵ Yet Russia differed from the Western

⁷⁰ Robert Service, *Comrades: a world history of Communism* (London: MacMillan, 2007), 27.

⁷¹ Marx, "Contribution," 42.

⁷² Service, *Comrades*, 2.

⁷³ Kolakowski, *Main currents*, 109.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ The formation of the Eastern Orthodox Church was the result of the Great Schism of 1054 in which the Christianity of the former Roman Empire became divided between the Pope in Rome and the Patriarch in Constantinople. While the history behind the schism is beyond the scope of this thesis, long standing disputes between the two competing centres of Roman Christianity came to a head in a debate over whether leavened or unleavened was the correct form that the Eucharist bread should take (the Roman argument was that unleavened bread meant that it was less prone to crumbling and thus falling onto the floor). The theological argument ended

European model of Church and State which had developed in the wake of the Thirty Years War in that the religious authorities were not independent but forced to act as a branch of the Tsar's rule.⁷⁶ The Russian Church had also developed along different lines from that of Western Christianity. Located in a landscape where villages remained largely isolated, their inhabitants poor and subject to inhospitable winters, the Russian faith played a more consolatory rather than intellectual role in the lives of ordinary people.⁷⁷ Due to the difficult elements of daily life the Church helped to reinforce the communal structures which made survival necessary through the use of liturgy and music.⁷⁸ This was an environment where individualism and questioning of tradition was considered detrimental to the well being of the wider society.⁷⁹ Therefore the ideas of an individual approach to God and an intellectual approach to the scriptures, which were essential to the Reformation and the later Enlightenment, did not develop within Russian Orthodoxy.

However while the faith was not subject to change from within, external influences from the West gradually began to infiltrate Russian society in the nineteenth century. The French Revolution of 1789, followed by the defeat of Russia in the Crimean War (1853-1856) made Russian officials aware that their autocratic regime was becoming outdated in a modern world.⁸⁰ Under Tsar Alexander II reforms were implemented which abolished serfdom and

with Pope Leo IX issuing an excommunication for the Oecumenical Patriarch Michael Keroularios which resulted in a split between the Latin and Greek speaking churches. See: MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 374.

⁷⁶ Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist*, 92. Church obedience to the tsar had been enforced by Peter I (1672-1725) who created the College for Spiritual Affairs (later renamed Holy Synod) in 1721, the aim of which was to remove the former authority of the patriarchs. This committee was overseen by a procurator appointed by the tsar. The Church was also ordered to act as an agent for the government by passing on any seditious information it might receive through confession, see: MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 542-543.

⁷⁷ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 518-519,

⁷⁸ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 519.

⁷⁹ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 518-519.

⁸⁰ David Priestland, *The Red Flag: a history of Communism* (Great Britain: Allen Lane, 2009), 65.

allowed for university attendance for students who weren't from the aristocracy.⁸¹ This era of reform, coupled with the influence of Western ideas, led to the development of *intelligentsia*. These educated individuals sought to implement the ideas of Western development in Russia in order to bring their country up to the same intellectual and social standards as the West.⁸² Despite these reforms Tsarist repression only increased following the assassination of Alexander II by anarchists.⁸³ The solution for the growing class of radicals was a revolution and it was Marxism which provided them with the guidelines for creating a new society that was modern and free from oppression.⁸⁴

One such individual who sought to use Marxism in order to free his country from Tsarist oppression was the revolutionary Vladimir Illyich Ulyanov (1870-1924).⁸⁵ After being exiled to Siberia from 1897-1900 for revolutionary activities Lenin formed the Bolshevik party in 1903.⁸⁶ In 1917 the Bolsheviks eventually took power from the Provisional Government, a

⁸¹ Priestland, *Red Flag*, 65-69

⁸² Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist*, 93.

⁸³ Priestland, *Red Flag*, 70.

⁸⁴ Priestland, *Red Flag*, 71.

⁸⁵ Lenin came from a rather eclectic background. His father, whose own mother was a Kalmyk, was an educated man who rose to become Director of Schools in Simbirsk. His mother was a Lutheran who came from a mixture of German, Swedish and Jewish heritage. Having received a broad education, Lenin became determined to overthrow the tsar after his brother Aleksandr was executed for terrorism. See: Priestland, *Red Flag*, 73-74 and Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *Lenin* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2001), 280.

⁸⁶ The formation of the Bolsheviks was the result of a split over policies regarding membership in the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. Lenin argued that membership should be restricted to those who actively took part in the party while his opponents believed that it should be extended to include a wider base of supporters. Since those who followed Lenin's view were initially in the minority they were called Bolsheviks from the Russian word *bolshinstvo* (minority) while their opponents were labelled the Mensheviks after the Russian word *menshinstvo* (majority). Despite these designations, the Bolsheviks won the majority vote after the Mensheviks walked out. See: Priestland, *Red Flag*, 77 and Kolakowski, *Main currents*, 670-671.

democratic body which had replaced the rule of Tsar Nicholas II following his abdication.⁸⁷ From this revolution the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was finally declared in 1922.⁸⁸

The Soviet Union and Buddhism

In his writings prior to the Revolution, Lenin held that religion should be a private matter and demanded that the State and Church, in this case the Russian Orthodox Church, be completely separated.⁸⁹ The reason the Church should be completely removed from politics, in Lenin's view, was that it served as an instrument for the ruling class to exploit the people.⁹⁰ While people would be free to practice their faith the Party would not encourage religion nor see it as the answer to social problems. Like Marx, Lenin believed that the proletariat must be freed from the 'fog of religion' and be given the chance to find happiness in their lifetime, rather than wait for an unscientifically proven paradisiacal afterlife.⁹¹ In order to liberate the people, the Party would launch an atheistic propaganda campaign in an attempt to disestablish any authority that religion might have.⁹² Intellectual compromise with religion was simply not possible and therefore any attempts to find a way in which Marxism and religion might co-exist were dismissed.⁹³

Although Lenin did not initially make an outright attack on religion, this was to change with the famine which struck the Soviet Union in 1921 as a result of poor harvests and acquisition

⁸⁷ Priestland, *Red Flag*, 87.

⁸⁸ Carrère d'Encausse, *Lenin*, 280.

⁸⁹ Vladimir Illyich Ulyanov, "Socialism and Religion," in *Novaya Zhizn*, no. 28, December 3, 1905. Marxists Internet Archive, accessed February 13 2012, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/dec/03.htm>.

⁹⁰ Carrère d'Encausse, *Lenin*, 297.

⁹¹ Ulyanov, "Socialism and Religion."

⁹² Carrère d'Encausse, *Lenin*, 297.

⁹³ Ibid.

of peasant grain by the government.⁹⁴ When church leaders tried to assist the famine victims, Lenin interceded and banned their efforts on the claim that religion should not intervene in what was clearly a state issue.⁹⁵ In order to finance famine relief, Lenin then ordered the confiscation of all religious items from the churches.⁹⁶ When priests resisted the confiscation Lenin used their efforts as an excuse to declare an open attack on religious institutions, stating in a letter: "...we can (and therefore must) carry out the confiscation of church valuables with the most savage and merciless energy."⁹⁷ What followed was a systematic massacre and as many as 8,000 members of the religious body were executed on Lenin's orders in 1922.⁹⁸

In this anti-religious climate leaders of faiths other than the Russian Orthodox Church began to realise that in order for them to survive they would have to adapt their faith to the tenants of Bolshevik ideology, a move which was easier for them since their faiths were not associated with the autocratic rule of the Tsars. One such religious leader was Agvan Dorzhiev, a Buryat lama from Siberia.⁹⁹ Prior to the Revolution, Dorzhiev had worked as an intermediary between Tsar Nicholas II and the thirteenth Dalai Lama Thubten Gyatso and as

⁹⁴ Priestland, *Red Flag*, 99.

⁹⁵ Carrère d'Encausse, *Lenin*, 298.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ The Buryats are a Mongolian people who have traditionally lived in the Lake Baikal region of Siberia. Buddhism is recorded as having officially reached them in the early eighteenth century when groups of mixed Tibetan and Mongol lamas started to introduce Tibetan Buddhism. Traditionally the Buryats, as with their Mongol neighbours, adhered to the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism. When the Russian Empire annexed the Buryat's lands they brought the Buddhist faith under their administration by creating the rank of Bandido Khambo Lama, which was first awarded by Catherine II in 1764 to the head lama of Tsongol *datsan* (monastery), Damba Darzha Zayayev (1710-1777). This institution was not like that of the Dalai Lamas in Tibet, in that the Bandido Khambo Lama was not a tulku, an incarnate lama. Therefore the title was not inherited by the lama's next incarnation but passed to a nominated successor. The creation of this institution, with its government support, allowed the Russian authorities to control Buryat Buddhism and separate it from the Gelugpa authorities in Mongolia and Tibet. See: Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia*, 4-6.

a result of his travels he had been exposed to European academics and orientalists.¹⁰⁰ One of those was the Russian Prince Esper Esperovich Ukhtomsky (1861-1921) whose interest in Buddhism had led him to travel among Russia's Buddhists and who also kept in correspondence with none other than Henry Steel Olcott and the Theosophical Society.¹⁰¹ With his knowledge of Western thought, Dorzhiev believed that Buddhism could be accommodated within the atheistic fold of Marxism.¹⁰² Writing in order to prevent discrimination against his fellow Buryats and other ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union that had traditionally practiced Tibetan Buddhism, Dorzhiev argued that Buddhism was different from other forms of religion in that it did not require blind faith and did not espouse a belief in a creator God.¹⁰³

Despite his efforts Dorzhiev was unable to hold back the tide of cultural genocide which the Russian Buddhists were to face under the reign of Ioseb Djughashvili, commonly known as Stalin (1878-1953), who rose to power following the death of Lenin in 1924.¹⁰⁴ Under Stalin

¹⁰⁰ After studying at monasteries in his native Siberia, Mongolia and the sacred mountain of Wutai Shan in China, Dorzhiev completed his studies at Gomang *trasang*, a 'college' at Drepung, one of the three great monastic seats of learning for the Gelugpa order in Lhasa, Tibet. In 1888 he came to the attention of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and because of his status as a citizen of the Russian Empire, was useful in helping the Dalai Lama maintain links with Russia. The reason for this was the 'Great Game,' a cold war that existed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century between the Russian and British Empires, the latter of which feared that the expansion of Russian territory into Central Asia would eventually culminate with an invasion of British India. Since Tibet bordered northern India the British feared that if it fell under Russian influence it would become a staging point for invasion. This led to the British pre-emptive invasion of 1903-1904 by Francis Younghusband and in response the thirteenth Dalai Lama fled into exile in Mongolia and China. Even when the Great Game abated, Dorzhiev still maintained links with the Tsar and was given permission to construct a Buddhist temple in St Petersburg, complete with resident lamas, which was consecrated in 1915. See: Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia*.

¹⁰¹ Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia*, 46-48.

¹⁰² Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia*, 205

¹⁰³ Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia*, 205.

¹⁰⁴ Born to an impoverished cobbler in Georgia, a region in the Caucasus Mountains which had been annexed by the Russian Empire at the start of the nineteenth century, Stalin received his education at a Russian Orthodox seminary which discouraged Georgian language and culture. As a child he idealised the bandits who lurked in the Georgian mountains and fought against their Russian overlords. Beaten as a child by his alcoholic father, he possessed a rebellious streak which, when coupled with his exposure to Marxism during his time at the seminary, led him to develop a hatred for those who he felt regarded themselves as his superiors. See: Priestland, *Red Flag*, 135-138.

the previous statements of Lenin, that religion could be practiced freely but privately, were done away with. Stalin dismissed the notion that atheistic Buddhism could be compatible with the militant atheism of Communism.¹⁰⁵ While Lenin's approach to Marxism had been economic, with an ideology of 'organisation' which was based around the worker and the factory, Stalin took a more militaristic approach.¹⁰⁶ In his view the Party was the centre of purity and all that surrounded it (both geographically and socially) was contaminated by foreign bourgeois and reactionary influence and therefore the use of military violence was required in order to spread his adaptation of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine to the most remote corners of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁷

In the 1930s Stalin then launched a systematic purge against Buddhism in the Soviet Union. In areas such as the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the Kalmyk Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic lamas and monks were denounced, executed or sent to labour camps and their monasteries destroyed.¹⁰⁸ When Dorzhiev returned to Buryatia in 1921 he was told by the then Bandido Khambo Lama, Dashi-Dorzhio Itigelov (1852-1927), to flee as he had predicted that the Soviet authorities would implement a mass purge of Buddhists in Russia. Sadly Dorzhiev did not take this advice and he died in 1937 as an inmate in a prison hospital.¹⁰⁹ The purges against Buddhism continued into the 1940s and spread into

¹⁰⁵ Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia*, 234.

¹⁰⁶ Priestland, *Red Flag*, 138-139.

¹⁰⁷ Priestland, *Red Flag*, 139.

¹⁰⁸ Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia*, 243.

¹⁰⁹ In 1927, after having given his followers instructions to exhume his body thirty years later, Itigelov died while in a state of meditation. As Itigelov predicted, Stalin's campaigns against Buddhism in Russia involved mass arrests and executions which culminated in 1937. In 1955 and 1973 Itigelov's body was exhumed, as according to his instructions, and was found to have remained in a state of preservation. Today, after its final exhumation in 2002, it has remained on display at Ivolginsk datsan in Buryatia. The lamas there claim that, since Itigelov's body has not decayed or succumb to rigor mortis, he did not die and is currently residing in a state of suspended animation. See: Anya Bernstein, "Religious Bodies Politic: rituals of sovereignty in Buryat Buddhism," (PhD diss., New York University, 2010), 128-129.

Tuva, a Mongolian region of the former Qing Empire which fell under Soviet influence in the 1920 and was finally incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1944.¹¹⁰ The Kalmyk population also suffered from mass deportations to Siberia in 1943 in response to some factions of the Kalmyks populace choosing to fight on the side of the invading Germans.¹¹¹ The State repression of Buddhism only lessened following the death of Stalin in 1953 and those among the Kalmyk populace who survived the deportation to Siberia were not allowed to return to Kalmykia until 1956.¹¹² Despite this it wasn't until after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 that Kalmyks, Buryats and Tuvans were free to openly practice Buddhism once more.

Mao Zedong and the People's Republic of China

In 1932 the Thirteenth Dalai Lama wrote his final testament, in which he stated his fears of Communism and the threat it posed towards Tibetan Buddhism:

In particular we must guard ourselves against the barbaric red communists who carry terror and destruction with them wherever they go. They are the worst of the worst. Already they have consumed much of Mongolia, where they outlawed the search for the reincarnation of Jetsun Dampa, the incarnate head of the country.¹¹³ They have

¹¹⁰ The Tuvans are a Turkic people who have practiced Tibetan Buddhism following its introduction by the Mongolian Altan Khan in the 16th century. However in the 18th century the region was brought into the Qing Empire and Mongolian lamas of the Gelugpa school were instrumental in establishing khurés (monasteries) which were governed by the Mongolian Buddhist authorities in Urga. See: Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia*, 255, Fridman, *Sacred Geography*, 233 and N.L Zhukovskaia, "Lamaism in Tuva," in *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, 39:4 (2001), 48-49.

¹¹¹ Following their penetration into southern Russia in 1942, the German Wehrmacht, on the advice of their military intelligence and the Kalmyk National Committee in Berlin, raised seven Kalmyk units to serve with their divisions. Collectively these units became the Kalmyk Cavalry Corps and were divided into twenty four squadrons. The Kalmyk Cavalry Corps retreated with the Germans in 1943, acting as rear line protection. See: Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia*, 256 and J.Otto Pohl, *Ethnic cleansing in the USSR 1937-1949* (Greenwood Press, Westport CT, 1999), 61-69.

¹¹² Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia*, 259.

¹¹³ The Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu was the spiritual leader of the Gelugpa school in Mongolia. The lineage of his incarnations originated with the Mongolian prince Zanabazar (1635-1723), who was said to be the reincarnation of Taranatha (1575-1634) the former leader of the Jonagpa school of Tibetan Buddhism which had been declared heterodox by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama. Following a failed Mongolian rebellion against their

robbed and destroyed the monasteries...They have destroyed religion wherever they've encountered it, and not even the name of Buddhadharma is allowed to remain in their wake...It will not be long before we find the red onslaught at our own front door.¹¹⁴

Regardless of his efforts, the thirteenth Dalai Lama's words went unheeded following his death in 1933. However when Tibet finally did find itself confronting communism it was not the Soviet brand of Leninism or even Stalinism, but rather the new form of Maoism which originated in neighbouring China.

Maoism and the Cultural Revolution

Ever since the Manchus had overthrown the Ming Dynasty in 1644 the Chinese people had been ruled by a dynasty of foreigners who expanded the borders of their empire, the Qing, to include much of the territory which today comprises the modern People's Republic of China and beyond.¹¹⁵ However by the mid nineteenth century the Qing Dynasty gradually began to lose control over its own territory.

Manchu overlords in 1756, the Qing Emperors ensured that all the following incarnations of the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu were to be found in Tibet. The last Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu (1870-1924), also known as the Bogd Khan, was born in Tibet and ruled Mongolia as both its spiritual and temporal leader following the collapse of the Qing Dynasty. He was a rather lecherous figure who was not above murdering those who disagreed with his rule. He was well known for his vices, for not only did he smoke, drink and hold parties but he was also married and took homosexual partners of all ages and as a result of this he contracted syphilis which left him blind in his later years. See: Snelling, *Buddhism in Russia*, 19-20, James Palmer, *The Bloody White Baron* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2008), 53-56 and Agata Bareja-Starzynska, "The Mongolian Incarnation of Jo nang pa Tāranātha Kun dga' snying po: Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1635-1723): A case study of the Tibeto-Mongolian Relationship," in *The Tibet Journal*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 3 & 4 / Vol. XXXV, No.1 & 2 (2010), 243.

¹¹⁴ Glenn. H. Mullin, *The Fourteen Dalai Lamas: a sacred legacy of reincarnation* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishing, 2001), 438.

¹¹⁵ Originally the term Manchu was the name for a collection of Jurchen tribes from northeast China and Siberia who were unified under Nurhaci (1559-1626). However under his son Hong Taiji (1592-1643) it later came to be an appellation for all the people who were organised under the military system known as the Eight Banners, of which the Manchus were the integral banner. After overthrowing the Ming Dynasty the Qing had sought to use Tibetan Buddhism as a means to unify their diverse empire. Over time the Qing emperors even came to be regarded as an incarnation of Mañjuśrī (the bodhisattva of wisdom) and this was reinforced by the visits of emperors to Wutai Shan, a mountain range which was dedicated to the bodhisattva. Natalie Köhle,

After a series of defeats by the British during the First Opium War (1839-1942), the Qing were forced to sign the Treaty of Nanjing which allowed Western powers to create treaty ports where Western merchants could settle and trade freely with inner China.¹¹⁶ However merchants were not the only Westerners to settle in the treaty ports. Clauses in the treaties also allowed Christian missionaries to take up residence there, with over seventy percent of them being Protestants from the USA, Britain and Germany.¹¹⁷ Along with preaching Christianity the missionaries also began to open Christian schools so that they could offer their converts a Western education.¹¹⁸

After having firmly established themselves, the communities in the treaty ports gradually began to have an effect on the Chinese who dealt with them.¹¹⁹ The increase in trade saw a chance for the Chinese gentry, who acted as middle men between the ports and inner China, to take advantage of the situation in order to further their own wealth.¹²⁰ This willingness to engage with the foreign merchants led to a change in Chinese society as it saw an influential class develop who started to adopt Western practices and modes of thinking.¹²¹ Those who converted to Christianity took on significant roles within this new society and many began to adopt the Western political ideals that were being introduced by American missionaries.¹²²

“Why Did the Kangxi Emperor Go to Wutai Shan? Patronage, Pilgrimage, and the Place of Tibetan Buddhism at the Early Qing Court” in *Late Imperial China*, 29:1 (2008), 73-119, Erberto Lo Bue, and Edward J.M. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han: Ethnic relations and political power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 11.

¹¹⁶ J.A.G. Roberts, *A History of China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 165.

¹¹⁷ J.A.G. Roberts, *The Complete History of China* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), 313.

¹¹⁸ Roberts, *Complete History*, 314.

¹¹⁹ Michael Dillon, *China: a Modern History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 108.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Roberts, *History of China*, 204.

¹²² Roberts, *History of China*, 206.

The impact of Western ideas on Chinese was such that by the beginning of the twentieth century there were elements of Chinese society who wanted to see the Qing Dynasty overthrown and replaced with a modern, Han Chinese government based on a Western model.¹²³ After a series of internal troubles, the Qing Dynasty was no longer able to maintain its rule and on 12th February 1912 the last Manchu emperor, the five year old Pu Yi abdicated the throne.¹²⁴ In place of the dynasty which had ruled China since 1644, efforts were now being made by revolutionaries to establish a republic that was nationalistic in its outlook. What followed was a turbulent time for China, where rivalling political factions fought amongst themselves and warlords gained control of territories.

Those who had been influenced by modern Western ideas and who sought to establish a republic realised that they could not rely on religion as one of the factors to provide a national Han Chinese identity.¹²⁵ Christianity, as presented by the missionaries, was incompatible with the idea of a modern Chinese state since it was based on evangelical conversion and therefore would not tolerate the customary interaction that existed between the various religions of China.¹²⁶ Confucianism and Buddhism were also practiced by Imperial Japan, a nation which was seeking to occupy regions of China.¹²⁷ Because these faiths were not particular to China they also could not act as a unifying identity for an independent China.¹²⁸ China therefore needed a modern ideology which allowed for a harmonious society that was strongly

¹²³ Dillon, *China*, 140.

¹²⁴ Dillon, *China*, 147.

¹²⁵ Lai and von Brück, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 68.

¹²⁶ Lai and von Brück, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 68.

¹²⁷ Lai and von Brück, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 68.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

independent but also able to cooperate and interact with other nations.¹²⁹ Because of this, they chose the modern theories that had been produced by the Enlightenment.¹³⁰

One such theory was Marxism, the appeal of which was improved by the Soviet Union's decision to rescind all Russian attempts to annex areas of China.¹³¹ After a long struggle against the Nationalists, the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP), led by Mao Zedong, finally triumphed and officially declared the formation of the People's Republic of China (hereafter PRC).¹³² Mao, like Stalin, was less interested in an urban workers revolution and instead saw the Chinese peasantry as the heart of his revolution.¹³³ For Mao, China, as a result of the foreign occupations that had taken place between the Opium Wars and the Japanese invasions, had existed in a semi-feudal state in which the peasantry were kept in a feudal state by landlords who worked with imperialist powers.¹³⁴

Like the previous Nationalist government, the CCP saw Tibet as an integral part of the Chinese motherland.¹³⁵ Therefore in 1950 the People's Liberation Army marched into Tibet

¹²⁹ Despite the aversion towards the Chinese schools of Buddhism (such as Chan and Pure Land), which were also practiced in Japan, the Nationalist government was interested in using Tibetan Buddhism as a means of creating a form of pan-Buddhist state ideology which would help to ease Tibet's transition into the Republic of China. See: Gray Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists in the making of modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

¹³⁰ Lai and von Brück, *Christianity and Buddhism*, 68.

¹³¹ Priestland, *The Red Flag*, 242.

¹³² Priestland, *The Red Flag*, 266.

¹³³ Priestland, *The Red Flag*, 252.

¹³⁴ Mao Zedong, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," Marxists Internet Archive, accessed February 13 2012, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_23.htm.

¹³⁵ In June 1912, following the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama announced that Tibet was an independent nation and without the spiritual priest-patron relationship which had existed between the former Qing emperors and the Dalai Lamas, there was no need for Tibet to maintain such relations with the secular Chinese Republic. See: Thomas Laird, *The Story of Tibet: conversations with the Dalai Lama* (Great Britain: Atlantic Books, 2007), 238

and annexed it to the PRC.¹³⁶ The CCP justified their annexation with the claim that the common people of Tibet had been exploited by a feudal structure where the religious authorities and nobility.¹³⁷ At the top of this feudal class structure were the figures of the Dalai Lama and his government of Gelugpa authorities.¹³⁸ Tibet therefore was a backward, religious feudal land where religion oppressed the peasantry through their dominating ideology and prevented the people from forming their own class conscious ideology.

Realising that the way to control the Tibetan people was through the figure of the Dalai Lama the Chinese sought to bring him into the fold of Marxism.¹³⁹ Indeed this Marxist-Buddhist dialogue was initially welcomed by Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, who believed that Marxism and Buddhism were compatible due to their desire to end exploitation and liberate people from suffering.¹⁴⁰ Yet when it became clear that religion held no permanent place in the future of a Communist Tibet, and receiving no support from other nations against what he saw as Chinese aggression, the Dalai Lama was forced to reconsider his options. In 1959, after all attempts at mediation had been exhausted, he fled into exile in India.¹⁴¹

Mao considered religion to be one of the Four Olds (old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits) and therefore it had to be destroyed in order to make way for progress.¹⁴²

Therefore when Mao unleashed the Cultural Revolution upon China (1966-1976) religion systematically came under attack from a purge which was designed to fully wipe religious

¹³⁶ Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 329.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 332.

¹³⁹ Tenzin Gyatso, *Freedom in Exile: the autobiography of the Dalai Lama of Tibet*, (London:Abacus, 1998), 98.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 201.

¹⁴² Service, *Comrades*, 335.

ideas and practices from public awareness.¹⁴³ Along with Taoism and Christianity, Buddhism, both in its Chinese and Tibetan variants were to suffer at the hands of Mao's Red Guards in a manner similar to the Soviet purges in Russia and Mongolia.

In the decades following the death of Mao in 1976, many of the restrictions that the Cultural Revolution placed on religion have been lifted and instead a semi-tolerance of its practice has appeared.¹⁴⁴ However this does not mean that religion is encouraged. Scientific atheism is a required belief for all those who wish to join the CCP. One of the side effects of the Cultural Revolution was that its violence and destructive measures caused religion to be driven underground rather than simply be eradicated.¹⁴⁵ As a result of this the CCP no longer was able to exercise control over religious practices. Therefore new reforms were initiated by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s.¹⁴⁶ These reforms allowed religion to once more return to the public sphere, but only so that it might be monitored and controlled by the state.¹⁴⁷ Rather than seek to destroy religion through violence, the CCP follows the view of Marx that scientific thinking is the only way forward for society. Thus, the most suitable science to understand the social problem of religion is Marxism.¹⁴⁸ For once the social sources which keep religion alive are properly understood, only then can it truly disappear from society.

¹⁴³ Pitman B. Potter, "Belief in control: Regulation of Religion in China," in *The China Quarterly*, 174, (2003), 317.

¹⁴⁴ Potter, "Belief in Control," 317.

¹⁴⁵ Merle Goldman, "Religion in Post Mao China," in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 483 (1986), 146.

¹⁴⁶ Part of the reason for this was Deng's United Front Policy which sought to modernise China through the use of Chinese intellectuals who had fled the PRC due to ideological persecution. By ending religious persecution Deng hoped that the ex-pat intellectuals would see that China had now entered a new era of tolerance and was willing to work with them in order to help the nation strive. See: Beatrice Leung, "China's Religious Freedom Policy: The Art of Managing Religious Activity," in *The China Quarterly*, 184 (2005), 902.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Donald S. Sutton, "Recasting Religion and Ethnicity: Tourism and Socialism in Northern Sichuan, 1992-2005," in *Casting Faiths: Imperialism and the Transformation of Religion in East and South East Asia*, ed. Thomas David DuBois (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2009), 193.

Yet is Marxism really such an effective science for analysing religion in China, particularly that of Tibetan Buddhism? As a Western philosophy, Marxism was developed to combat the social issues that were particular to Western industrialised societies, especially those in Germany. One of the faults which lie at the heart of Marx's analysis of religion is that he fails to recognise that the concept of religion itself is an invention of the modern Christian West. This Marxist, and inherently Protestant, conception of religion, along with the resulting exile of the Dalai Lama and his followers to the West, has forced Tibetan Buddhism to confront modernity and adapt itself to its definitions. As we shall see in the following chapter, it is this forced modernisation which has led to the division of Tibetan Buddhism in the West.

Chapter Four

Tibetan Buddhism versus Gelugpa Buddhism

Until the 1960s the term *Lamaism*¹ was still commonly used by Western scholars to describe the form of Buddhism that was practiced in Tibet and those regions of Inner Asia and Russia which had been influenced by Tibetan-Mongolian culture.² This changed with the exile of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in 1959. Aware that the Chinese justified their attacks on Tibetan Buddhism with the claim that it was not *true* Buddhism but a corruption, the Dalai Lama urged scholars to replace the term Lamaism with one that did not have such negative connotations.³ Instead, he suggested that scholars should use the terms Tibetan Buddhism, Mongolian Buddhism, Kalmyk Buddhism, Tuvan Buddhism and Buryat Buddhism.⁴

By replacing the outdated umbrella term of Lamaism with appellations which reflect the ethnic varieties of Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama was making a counterattack to the claim that Buddhism in Tibet was a degenerate faith which had corrupted the Buddha's

¹ The term Lamaism is derived from the Tibetan word *lama*, which is often given as the Tibetan equivalent of *guru*, the Sanskrit term for teacher. It is important to note that not all Tibetan monks are lamas. Within the Gelugpa school, which prior to 1959 encouraged mass monasticism, it was only the *pechawa*, the small number of literate monks who pursued scholastic courses who were capable of becoming teachers. When Tibetan Buddhism came under the patronage of the Manchus, the emperor Qianlong coined the term *Lama jiao*, meaning the teachings of the Lamas as opposed to *Fo jiao* (the teaching of the Buddha). However the first European use of Lamaism was made in 1769 by Peter Simon Pallas, a German naturalist who travelled among the Kalmyks in Russia. His works, in which he describes Kalmyk Buddhism as "the tenets of Lamaism" were later translated into English in 1788. Westerners soon chose to use this term for the form of Buddhism which they encountered in Tibet and in the eyes of Protestants it came to represent a degenerate form of Buddhism, one which, like Popish Catholicism, had become distorted due to superstition and ritual. Yet even though this term persisted well into the 20th century there were already scholars in the 19th century, such as Isaac Jacob Smith, who recognised that Lamaism was a European invention and did not accurately represent the Buddhism found in Tibet. See: Melvyn C. Goldstein, *Buddhism in contemporary Tibet: religious revival and cultural identity* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 15-21 and Donald S. Lopez Jr, *Prisoners of Shangri La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 15-25.

² N.L. Zhukovskaia, "Lamaism," in *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, 39: 4 (2001), 10

³ Ibid.

⁴ Zhukovskaia, "Lamaism," 11.

original teachings through superstition. In the Dalai Lama's view these forms of Buddhism may be ethnic variations but they are still Buddhism and therefore worthy of a place within the Western classification of religion. In this way the Dalai Lama was making the first steps towards modernising Tibetan Buddhism. In exile from the country he once ruled over as both its secular and temporal leader, the Dalai Lama recognised that in order for Tibetan Buddhism and its accompanying politics to survive in exile it needed to engage with modernity.

Yet there is tension at the heart of the Dalai Lama's engagement with modernity. In order to market awareness of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism to the West he has had to adopt a modern Buddhist approach.⁵ The image of Tibetan Buddhism which Westerners therefore receive from the Dalai Lama is one of compassion and wisdom, ideals which can be transplanted onto any culture and which are compatible with Western modernity.⁶ Therefore when the Dalai Lama engages with Westerners he is simply adapting the Buddhist mār̥ga (path) to the Western situation through the use of upāya (skilful means).⁷ While the teachings given by the Dalai Lama to Westerners involve messages which are inherent to Tibetan Buddhism they do not represent Tibetan Buddhism as a whole. Absent are the rituals, the offerings to local spirits and use of oracles for divination.

Prior to the 1970s the Dalai Lama initially showed an interest in removing the traditional aspects of Tibetan Buddhism which some might have considered as being unnecessary

⁵ Georges Dreyfus, "From protective deities to international stardom: an analysis of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's stance towards Modernity and Buddhism," in *The Dalai Lamas: a visual history*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2005), 173.

⁶ Dreyfus, "From protective deities," 173.

⁷ Dreyfus, "From protective deities," 174.

superstition.⁸ However following a retreat in 1975-1976 his attitude changed and he began to take a more traditional approach to his religion.⁹ While he has since made use of modern ideals such as democracy in his efforts to reform Tibetan Buddhism in exile and thus refute the Chinese Marxist claim that Tibetan Buddhism was an oppressive feudal system, the Dalai Lama has also strengthened his reliance on the traditional protectors and oracles.¹⁰ This tension has since created a problematic split for Tibetan Buddhists in exile and those Westerners who adhere to its practice. In order to understand this tension it is important to examine the role that local deities play in the history of Tibetan Buddhism.

The development of Buddhism in Tibet

Traditional Tibetan histories place the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet during the reign of King Songsten Gampo (618-650).¹¹ The seventh century was a time of expansion for the Tibetan Empire, which had first originated with the Yarlung Dynasty in the sixth century, and under Songsten Gampo its borders reached as far east as China and south into Nepal.¹² In order to maintain political alliances, traditional histories record that Songsten Gampo took two brides; Bhṛkuṭī, the daughter of King Aṃśuvarman of Nepal and Wencheng, the daughter of emperor Taizong of the Chinese Tang Dynasty, both of whom were considered to be Buddhists.¹³ Despite the lack of historical evidence for the existence of Bhṛkuṭī and the religious zeal of Wencheng, Tibetan traditions claim that both women helped to propagate

⁸ Dreyfus, "From protective deities," 178.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Dreyfus, "From protective deities," 178.

¹¹ John Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 144.

¹² Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 143.

¹³ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 145.

Buddhism in Tibet.¹⁴ In time they came to be considered as manifestations of the female bodhisattva Tārā, who along with the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī (manifested as Taizong) and Avalokiteśvara (manifested as Songsten Gampo)¹⁵ were fulfilling their plan to bring Buddhism to the Tibetan people.¹⁶

Prior to the introduction of Buddhism the Tibetans had followed an animist folk religion known as *Bön* whose priests were responsible for performing rituals to contact gods, conduct animal sacrifices and guide the dead into the afterlife.¹⁷ However the early form of *Bön* was never a unified religion and only became so in order to compete with the newly introduced Buddhism.¹⁸ Yet Buddhism was initially confined to the court and nobility who recognised that its status as an international religion would allow Tibet to be considered as a civilised nation worthy of respect.¹⁹ Although the court sponsored the dissemination of Buddhism, the foreign religion still faced resistance from the ministers who followed *Bön*. After a series of natural disasters plagued the mission of Śāntarakṣita, the abbot of the Indian monastery Vikramaśīla who had been invited to Tibet by King Trisong Detsen (742-800), the ministers

¹⁴ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 146.

¹⁵ Tibetans consider the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Tib: Chenrezig) to be not only the guardian of Tibet (having been sent there by the Buddha to spread the dharma) but also the father of the Tibetan people, who, in the form of a monkey, mated with a lustful demoness and then helped to guide the offspring of this unusual couple through the stages of human evolution. Tibetans also consider the early kings of the Tibetan Empire to have been manifestations of Avalokiteśvara operating in his role as a guardian of the people. Yet Avalokiteśvara's work did not stop there and important religious figures from the various schools of Buddhism that evolved in Tibet were also later considered to be manifestations (such as Sakya Kunga Nyingpo (1092-1158) and Sakya Phagpa (1235-1280) of the Sakya School – the latter of which was instrumental in introducing Kublai Khan to Tibetan Buddhism and thus placing the seeds for Mongol patronage). See: Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 11-12, Mullin, *Fourteen Dalai Lamas*, 41-47 and Ishihama Yumiko "On the dissemination of the belief in the Dalai Lama as a manifestation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara," in *Acta Asiatica: Bulletin of The Institute of Eastern Culture (Japanese Studies in Tibetan History)*, 64, (1993), 38-56.

¹⁶ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 146.

¹⁷ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 497-498.

¹⁸ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 497.

¹⁹ Jacob P. Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons: violence and liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2011), 12.

attributed the natural disasters to the wrath of the indigenous gods.²⁰ In order to counter the influence of *Bön*, Śāntarakṣita then suggested that Trisong Detsen invite the renowned Indian sorcerer, Padmasambhava, to Tibet.²¹

The figure of Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, is important to the development of Tibetan Buddhism. Although much of what we know of Padmasambhava seems to be shrouded in myth, it is said that he came from Udiyana, a region which today is sometimes identified with the Swat valley in Pakistan or Afghanistan.²² He was not a monk but rather a siddha who practiced the tantras of Vajrayāna Buddhism in cemeteries and performed sexual yoga with female partners.²³ As I have shown in chapter two the siddha was one who operated on a local level and who was not bound by institutional scholasticism and clerical codes of conduct. It is because of this approach that Padmasambhava was more successful than his monastic predecessors since he worked with the indigenous culture and pre-established religion in order to propagate Buddhism from the ground upwards.

In order to understand Padmasambhava's methods it is necessary to consider the role which local gods and spirits play in the mindset of the Tibetans. By coming to understand the relationship which exists between Buddhism and the indigenous gods we are also able to see that the Marxist critique of Tibetan Buddhism as a 'feudal religion' is redundant.

Demons and Oracles

As I have established in chapter one, the Western concept of religion is a system where humanity stands apart from the unseen spiritual realm. God, while making His existence

²⁰ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 148.

²¹ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 54.

²² Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 57.

²³ Serenity Young, *Courtesans and Tantric consorts: sexualities in Buddhist narrative, iconography and ritual* (London: New York: Routledge, 2003), 149-155.

known through revelation, still remains at a distance from His creation. Therefore when applied to Tibetan Buddhism, the Western concept of religion becomes problematic. As has been noted in chapter two, Buddhism does not admit the existence of a single God who is behind all creation. There are, however, gods and supernatural beings. Yet they too are subject to the wheel of rebirth and therefore while their lifespan and powers may be greater than those of humanity, they must recognise the law of dharma and put the teachings of the Buddha into practice in order to avoid rebirth in a lower realm. The gods of Buddhism therefore face the possibility of being reborn as mere humans, while humans also have the possibility of eventually being reborn as gods.

As a modern religion Buddhism has been able to adapt itself to different cultures in which it has been transplanted through the incorporation of indigenous practices and folk religions. It is process of adaptation and adoption which allowed for it to become successfully implanted in Tibet. Situated on the edge of the Himalayan mountain range and with elevations reaching as high as 16,000 feet, it is a land of harsh climates and inhospitable terrain.²⁴ This landscape, in which life is a struggle against the elements, has given the Tibetan people a viewpoint where the surrounding world is a chaotic and dangerous realm inhabited by ghosts, demons and temperamental gods.²⁵

The indigenous Tibetan cosmology is divided into a three tier structure which also operates on a geographical level. The uppermost level of this structure is the *stenglha*, the upper region of the *lha* (gods) who reside within the highest mountains.²⁶ These *lha* remain without

²⁴ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 138.

²⁵ Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan societies* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 161.

²⁶ Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 151. It should be noted that there is a differentiation between these worldly *lha*, who are Tibetan in origin, and the *lha* who are the gods of the Buddhist heavens and have their origins in Vedic cosmology. The latter reside upon the slopes of Mount Sumeru which lies at the centre of the

a physical form but can make contact with humanity through the possession of oracles.²⁷ It is from the *stenglha* that local area gods (*yulha*) preside over the regions which fall within their sphere of influence.²⁸ Beneath the *stenglha* is the *barsam*, the site of human habitation and the lesser *lha* who often make their home in rocks and trees.²⁹ It is here that spirits associated with human activities live.³⁰ The *barsam* is a dangerous zone to inhabit, as not only do Tibetans have to deal with the physical dangers of daily life but also those posed by spirits which lurk on the outskirts of human habitation.³¹ The malevolent spirits which inhabit this region may also act as attendants to the *yulha*.³² The lowest level of this three tier structure is the *yoglu*, the water realm where spirits such as *lu* reside in the waterways.³³ Since the *lha* are easily temperamental, care must be taken in order to ensure that an individual's actions do not cause them offence and thus bring on illness or a natural disaster as a result.³⁴

It was into this chaotic world that Padmasambhava found himself invited by King Trisong Detsen. As a siddha, he would have been familiar with the Vajrayāna rituals which would allow him to visualise himself as a divine ruler, a Buddha to whom the local gods must

universe and are ruled over by the god Indra. See: Gethin, "Cosmology," 184 and Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 163.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 151.

³⁰ Examples of this include the *sadag* (lords of the soil) and *Nyen* (tree spirits). Tibetans therefore take care to perform the appropriate rituals associated with these spirits before undertaking activities which may disrupt them such as ploughing or felling of trees. See: Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 162.

³¹ Examples of these threats include *tsen* (spirits of monks who have failed their vows) and *gongmo*, (witches). See: Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State* 151 and Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 162.

³² Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 167.

³³ Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 151.

³⁴ Alexander Norman, *The secret lives of the Dalai Lama: holder of the white lotus* (Great Britain: Abacus, 2008), 100-101.

submit to.³⁵ Tibetan tradition states Padmasambhava travelled across Tibet, confronting the local gods who were hostile to the presence of Buddhism and subjugating them through the use of tantric rituals.³⁶ These rituals were based around the principle of the vow, in which the volatile god submits, under the threat of violence, to the truth of Buddhism and swears to obey the siddha.³⁷ In performing this ritual the siddha is establishing a form of control over the chaotic world of everyday life.³⁸ Yet it should be noted that the siddha is not subservient to the god nor is the god subservient to the siddha. Instead it is a relationship between two beings, however turbulent, which both need the teachings of the Buddha in order to gain enlightenment. Therefore it is a relationship based ultimately on the principle of compassion.³⁹ The siddha is, in a sense, helping to guide the temperamental god towards the truth of Buddhism in the same way he might disseminate Buddhist teachings to fellow humans.

As part of their vow, after being converted to Buddhism, the native gods of Tibet swore to protect the new religion from its enemies.⁴⁰ In this way they were brought into the fold of a group of deities known as *chökyong*, a Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit *dharmapāla* (protector of the dharma).⁴¹ The category of *dharmapāla* is divided into two hemispheres: the worldly gods who, after conversion, protect Buddhism but cannot offer lesser beings enlightenment (Tib: *jig rten pa 'I lha*) and the supramundane protectors who are emanations

³⁵ Padmasambhava is considered to an emanation of the Buddha Amitābha, see: Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 58.

³⁶ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 66.

³⁷ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 60.

³⁸ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 62.

³⁹ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 60.

⁴⁰ Homayun Sidky, "The state oracle of Tibet, spirit possession, and shamanism," *Numen*, 58 (2011), 77.

⁴¹ Sidky, "The state oracle of Tibet," 76.

of already existing Buddhas (Tib: *`jig rten las 'das pa'I lha*).⁴² It is important to note that because they are already enlightened, the supramundane protectors do not intervene in human affairs, while the worldly protectors can do so through the medium of the human oracle.⁴³

Yet unlike their blissfully portrayed Buddha and bodhisattva counterparts, many of the *dharmapāla* are terrifying to behold. Their eyes bulge forth in anger; their fanged mouths are snarling and around their necks hang garlands of severed heads. Their twisted forms display exposed sexual organs and what clothes they do wear are often made from flayed skins. Multiple arms are common and their clawed fingers grasp either at weapons or blood filled cups made from human skulls. Without an understanding of the meaning of such tantric symbolism many Christians, especially Protestants, initially thought of Tibetans as demon worshippers.⁴⁴ Such is the awe that these deities invoke that their images are housed in a special chapel known as a *gönkhang*.⁴⁵ As terrifying as they are, it is thanks to the power and

⁴² Sidky, "The state oracle of Tibet," 76. The supramundane protectors have their origins in Indian Vajrayāna Buddhist appropriation of Indic deities. Therefore many of them have connections (at least in name) to existing Hindu gods. Examples of this include Yama Dharmaraja, the lord of death, Hayagrīva, whose name is also the appellation of the horse-headed avatar of the Hindu god Viṣṇu and Mahākāla, whose name is derived from a form taken by the Hindu god Śiva.

⁴³ René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: the cult and iconography of the Tibetan protective deities* (New York: Gordon Press, 1976), 3.

⁴⁴ Jacob P. Dalton addresses this issue in *The Taming of the Demons: violence and liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*. Here quotes L. Austine Waddell's critique of Tibetan Buddhism as a "sinister growth of poly-demonist superstition," from Waddell's publication *Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism, With Its Mystic Cults, Symbolism and Mythology* (New York: Dover Pub., 1972), 1.

⁴⁵ The Italian Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1984) once gave a vivid and claustrophobic description of a visit to a *gönkhang*:

The doors giving access to them are low and narrow. On the doors are painted monstrous faces. The visitor, even before entering, feels hesitating and lost in a half light which the feeble light of a lantern seems to make gigantic, plumbing its doubtful depths. The monks too are restless and anxious. The locks creak, keys are turned, the doors open. One has the impression of plunging headlong into bottomless night, into solidified darkness. Then the lamp, prevailing little by little over the gloom, sculpts and carves against the black background forms and aspects which do not belong to this world... The shrine proper is reached little by little, plodding and groping in the dark. All around, stuffed animals hand from the ceiling: dogs, yaks, horses, wolves; stiff, filled with straw, covered with the dust of centuries; their hair falls off and drops down every time a breath of air blows through the place. They are the *spyang zigs*, the god's messengers. All round, war trophies and remains of enemies and brigands, killed through the favour of the same deities who protect the temple... Meanwhile in that cave, which seems to sink into the abyss of the earth, deep thuds echo with a constant rhythm and are repeated by mysterious hollows. One advances in the anxious anticipation of being confronted at any

authority of those versed in the tantras as opposed to ordinary monks, which keep these turbulent forces at bay.

In his role as a siddha Padamsambhava set the precedence for Buddhism to evolve on a popular rather than institutional level in Tibet. The second factor which allowed for this evolution of popular Buddhism was the collapse of the Tibetan Empire in 842 following the assassination of King Lang Darma in 842.⁴⁶ The empire was split between rival contenders for the throne until eventually the political turmoil caused it to fragment into a series of independent kingdoms.⁴⁷ As a result of no longer receiving any consistent patronage from a centralised government, the monastic institutions, which according to Tibetan sources had already suffered under Lang Darma's pro-*Bön* policies, collapsed.⁴⁸ The result of this was a time of political and religious uncertainty which some scholars term either Tibet's 'dark age' or 'age of fragmentation.'⁴⁹

Traditional Tibetan accounts often depict this period of turmoil (which lasted until 986) as an age of heterodox practices.⁵⁰ With the collapse of systematic clerical authority Buddhism was no longer able to be controlled by an ordered hierarchy and therefore without guidance many

moment by something mysterious; one is led on by a resigned and awed curiosity; it is no longer possible to turn back. Little by little the thuds become nearer, until the *sancta sactorum* is reached, where a priest, squatting in the ritual pose, recites litanies and invocations in a monotonous voice, beating rhythmically on a large drum with a crooked drumstick. The dark and empty rooms multiply its echo. These priests pass their lives in the mGon k'an, voluntary comrades of the deities incumbering on all sides with their monstrous figures; they are buried in darkness, as though plunged into primordial chaos to live the drama of creation over again in that silence.

Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, translated by Virginia Vacca, volume 1, *Classification of the Tangkas* (Rome: la Libreria Dello Stato, 1949), section 5, 320-23 in Rob Linrothe and Jeff Watt, *Demonic Divine: Himalayan art and beyond* (New York: Serindia Publications, 2004), 39-41.

⁴⁶ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 48.

⁴⁷ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 48.

⁴⁸ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 47.

⁴⁹ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 7-8.

⁵⁰ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 13.

individuals failed to properly understand the tantric rituals.⁵¹ Although some cults did arise which involved hedonistic practices of sex, alcohol and occasional human sacrifice, as Jacob P. Dalton argues the age of fragmentation was not necessarily a heterodox age of corrupt religious practice. Instead, with Buddhism no longer confined to the monastic institutions it underwent an organic process of incorporation and adaptation of local Tibetan traditions which was guided by non-monastic adherents.⁵² Therefore it was not figures of political or religious authority who created 'Tibetan' Buddhism but rather ordinary people who operated on a local level. In a Marxist sense, this was a 'people's religion.'⁵³

Towards the end of the tenth century the political and religious turmoil which had marked the age fragmentation was gradually replaced by more centralised forms of authority. The King Yeshe Ö, a descendant of Songsten Gampo and whose forebears had escaped to Western Tibet in the chaos following Lang Darma's assassination, wished to establish a single Buddhism which was free from renegade tantric practice (which, due to its autonomous

⁵¹ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 74.

⁵² Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 13.

⁵³ In his study of Gelugpa monasticism in Ladakh, anthropologist Martin A. Mills argues that the Marxist critique of religion cannot be applied to Tibetan Buddhism without revealing its flaws as a western critique which originated in Protestant Europe. Mills shows that rather than being a religion which operates on a top-down order (as is the case in Christianity) where the voices of the people are oppressed by the ideology of the dominating class of priests and aristocracy, Tibetan Buddhism instead works from the ground up. Lamas and monks may be the voice of authority when it comes to scholastic texts and the appropriate path to enlightenment, however when it comes to the issues of daily life such as health and work (which are all represented by local gods and spirits), it is the ordinary people who have created the appropriate rituals which ensure their daily survival. Even though lamas work as intermediaries to ensure that the gods remain friendly to the local populace, their rituals are often dictated by the needs of the people. When local disasters occur, even if a god has already been placated, the voices of the people (often represented through oracles or non-monastic tantric practitioners such as *ngagpa*) decide that the ritual is obviously ineffective and that it must be altered to suit the new situation. Mills also shows that rather than humanity being separate from the local gods (as is the case of Christianity and which Marxism has inherited through the works of Hegel), the people are in fact on the same level of existence as the gods. Both are ultimately in need of the teachings of the Buddha to end the suffering of their existence. The gods and the people therefore must work in cooperation in order to ensure the harmony of the realm which they inhabit. For Mills, the Marxist critique of Tibetan Buddhism, which views it through the western lens of 'religion,' is in fact detrimental to ensuring that the voices of the people are heard. See: Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 329-347.

nature was anti-institutional) and therefore able to act as a source of unification and legitimisation for his kingdom.⁵⁴ To achieve this he invited Atiśa (980-1054), a famous teacher at the Indian monastic university Nālandā.⁵⁵ As a monk and scholar, Atiśa believed that the *vinaya*, the monastic code, was essential for those who claimed to use Buddhism in order to follow the path of the bodhisattva.⁵⁶ By promoting a clerical monasticism which was free from the corrupting influences, Atiśa was reaffirming the message imparted by the early proponents of the Mahāyāna viewpoint. Yet that is not to say that monks were forbidden to perform tantric rituals. However under the regulations instigated by Yeshe Ö and Atiśa these rituals were only to be performed within a strict monastic framework.⁵⁷ The visualisation of sexual intercourse, consumption of alcohol and drinking of blood replaced the actual physical acts.⁵⁸

The eleventh century returns to orthodox monastic ideals as outlined by imported Indian teachers led to the formation of new Tibetan schools such as the Sakyapa, the Kagyupa and the Kadampa, which were all collectively called *Sarma*, ‘the New Ones.’⁵⁹ In contrast to this, those who continued to follow the earlier form of Buddhism, which after having become localised during the age of fragmentation was maintained by lineages of married *tantrikas*, were called the Nyingmapa, the ‘Ancient Ones.’⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 99-101.

⁵⁵ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 157.

⁵⁶ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 158.

⁵⁷ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 105.

⁵⁸ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 81.

⁵⁹ Mullin, *Fourteen Dalai Lamas*, 11.

⁶⁰ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 76.

Of these *Sarma* schools it was the Kadampa who were to have the largest impact on Tibet's religious-political history. The tradition was founded by Dromtönpa (1005-1064), who was yet another figure in Tibetan history who was posthumously considered to have been an emanation of Avalokiteśvara.⁶¹ As a student of Atiśa, Dromtönpa ensured that the Kadampa maintained his teacher's adherence to the *vinaya* and regulation of tantric rituals.⁶² Another important teaching he inherited from Atiśa was the method of *lojong*, a meditational technique used to cultivate the mind in order to generate compassion and patience.⁶³ It is these essential elements of the Kadampa tradition which the current Dalai Lama believes exemplify the 'Tibetan' form of Buddhism.⁶⁴

Tsongkhapa and the Gelugpa

Although the Kadampa never prospered politically their teachings were inherited by Tsongkhapa, (1357-1419), an itinerant monk who studied under different teachers from the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism.⁶⁵ During his lifetime Tsongkhapa received visions of Mañjuśrī who offered him teachings and guided his path of study.⁶⁶ Although regarded as a brilliant scholar, Tsongkhapa was deeply troubled by the liberal practice of the tantras and lack of adherence to the *vinaya* which he encountered during his itinerant studies.⁶⁷ During

⁶¹ Leonard W.J van der Kuijp, "The Dalai Lamas and the origins of reincarnate lamas," in *The Dalai Lamas: a visual history*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serinda Publications, 2005), 21.

⁶² Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 80-81. Atiśa himself was said to have received *lojong* from his master Dharmakirti during his time in Indonesia.

⁶³ Mullin, *The fourteen Dalai Lamas*, 71-72.

⁶⁴ Mullin, *The fourteen Dalai Lamas*, 40.

⁶⁵ Rachel M. McCleary and Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "The market approach to the rise of the Geluk School, 1419-1642," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69:1 (2010), 162.

⁶⁶ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 470. Opponents of Tsongkhapa would later try to discredit him by claiming that his visions were not of Mañjuśrī but of a demon. See: McCleary and van der Kuijp, "market approach," 163.

⁶⁷ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 471.

his attempts to resolve this, he received yet another vision from Mañjuśrī who told him to impart teachings which were in accordance with the regulations of Atiśa.⁶⁸

Tsongkhapa did this by formulating a methodical path which involved a combination of intense scholasticism with meditative practice by which the individual gradually progresses through various levels of intellectual and spiritual attainment, each designed to remove ignorance and guide the practitioner towards enlightenment.⁶⁹ Inspired by visions of Atiśa, which he received while studying the former's works at Reting monastery (a Kadampa monastery founded by Dromtönpa), he refined Atiśa's *A Lamp for the Path to Awakening* by composing *The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path*.⁷⁰ This work offers a detailed explanation of the various stages through which one must pass on the journey to Buddhahood.⁷¹ This journey must be guided by an intention to become a bodhisattva in order to assist all beings and a proper understanding of emptiness, which in Tsongkhapa's view is that all phenomena are empty of inherent reality and are subject to constant change – it is only our mind which gives phenomena their meaning.⁷² It was only after gaining this crucial understanding of emptiness and developing the compassion needed to assist all beings that a student was able to study the tantras.⁷³

Because he drew on the Kadampa teachings the tradition which Tsongkhapa founded initially became known as the 'New Kadampa.'⁷⁴ Later they became known as the Gelugpa (Virtuous

⁶⁸ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 472.

⁶⁹ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 481-482.

⁷⁰ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 472.

⁷¹ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 483.

⁷² Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 482-483.

⁷³ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 483.

⁷⁴ Powers, *Tibetan Buddhism*, 483.

Ones) and eventually the former Kadampa monasteries were brought within the fold of this new tradition. After Tsongkhapa's death, his student Kedrup Geleg palzang po (1385-1438) took a rather conformist approach to his master's teachings and was instrumental in formulating the Gelugpa view that any deviation from Tsongkhapa's regulated doctrine was considered heterodox.⁷⁵ It was this sense of doctrinal purity which would later create a schism within the Gelugpa tradition.

It is important to recognise that in contrast to the Nyingmapa tradition, which, through its process of localisation had become firmly rooted within the Tibetan landscape, the Gelugpa's conception of themselves as the heirs to pure Buddhist teachings meant that they had the ability to export their tradition beyond the social and political world of Tibet. As I shall show in the following examination of the rise of the Gelugpa, the concept of doctrinal purity was central to their international mission and this sense of an 'international' as opposed to a 'Tibetan' Gelugpa has played a strong role in the schism between the current Dalai Lama and the New Kadampa Tradition.

The first foreigners to show an interest in the Gelugpa school were the Tümed, an Eastern Mongol group who, under Altan Khan (1507-1582), defeated the Western Mongols in 1571 and, through the threat of raids, had forced the Chinese Ming Dynasty to open their markets to his people.⁷⁶ Well aware of the reputation of Sönam Gyatso (1543-1588) the abbot of Drepung, the largest of the four central Gelugpa monasteries in Tibet, Altan Kahn invited the lama to meet with him.⁷⁷ The meeting took place in 1578 and after converting to Buddhism of the Gelugpa tradition and forcing his people to do the same, Altan Khan conferred the title of Dalai Lama onto Sönam Gyatso which was a Mongolian translation of his own Tibetan

⁷⁵ McClearly and van der Kuijp, "market approach," 162.

⁷⁶ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 141-142.

⁷⁷ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 142.

name Gyatso (ocean).⁷⁸ This title was also posthumously granted to the two previous incarnations of Sönam Gyatso, both of whom had been outstanding scholars of the Gelugpa order.⁷⁹ The Gelugpa's association with the Mongols was strengthened when the grandson of Altan Khan was discovered to be reincarnation of Sönam Gyatso.⁸⁰ Given the name Yonten Gyatso (1601-1617), the boy was later escorted to Tibet under the protection of Mongol cavalymen and installed as the Fourth Dalai Lama. It was this reliance on patronage beyond the political boundaries of Tibet would allow the Gelugpa to transcend Tibetan culture.

The Great Fifth

It was during the reign of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso that the Gelugpa were finally able to gain political control over Tibet and implement a campaign which would see their tradition becoming the dominant strand of Tibetan Buddhism not only in Tibet but throughout Inner Asia.⁸¹ It was also during the Great Fifth's rule that divisions within the Gelugpa tradition became evident.

⁷⁸ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 142-143.

⁷⁹ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 142.

⁸⁰ Mullin, *Fourteen Dalai Lamas*, 169.

⁸¹ A detailed examination of the Gelugpa seizure of power is beyond the scope of this thesis. Although the Gelugpa had initially distanced itself from the realm of politics it was inevitable that doctrinal attacks from other orders would force it to seek out patronage. Recognising the city of Lhasa as being a centre of commercial trade, Tsongkhapa, after gaining the patronage of the dominant political dynasty, the Phagmodru (1356-1493) ensured that the monasteries of his tradition were located in this region. At the end of the fifteenth century tensions began to grow between the Karma Kagyu (a subschool of the Kagyupa) and the Gelugpa over the prime positions of monasteries in this region. These tensions continued into the seventeenth century when insults passed between the Gyelwa Karmapa (the spiritual head of the Karmapa school) and the Fourth Dalai Lama turned physical. In 1610 the respective patrons of each side (the Phagmodru and the kings of Tsang) waged war against each other, with the Tsang-Kagyupa alliance triumphing over the Phagmodru and the Gelugpa. The bitter legacy continued into the early reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama and was exploited by his regent, Sönam Rabten, who instigated a war against the kings of Tsang and the Kagyupa. The result was that the Gelugpa were forced to seek assistance from Gushri Khan (1582-1655), the leader of the Qoshot, Western Mongols who had replaced Altan Khan and the Tümed as the dominate Mongol power. In 1642 Gushri Khan defeated the Tsang-Kagyupa alliance and proclaimed himself as king of Tibet. As a gift he then offered the political rule of Tibet to the Fifth

The Fifth Dalai Lama came from a rather eclectic background. He was born in 1617 in the Yarlung valley near the tombs where the early kings of Tibet were buried.⁸² His father, Miwang Dudul Rabten Tricham Kunga Lhadzey was a chief of the Lukhang clan and claimed Zahori ancestry.⁸³ As well as being an aristocrat his father was also a Nyingmapa ngagpa, a non-celibate *tantrika* akin to the Indian siddha.⁸⁴ His mother on the other hand had connections to the Jonangpa tradition.⁸⁵ She also had a cousin who held an important position within the Drukpa (another subschool of the Kagyupa).⁸⁶ Even after he was recognised as the Fifth Dalai Lama and began his studies as a Gelugpa monk Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso showed a continuing interest in the Nyingmapa tradition of his father.⁸⁷ This interest eventuated with him becoming initiated into the Nyingmapa practice of Dzogchen at age nineteen.⁸⁸ Despite the disapproval of his Gelugpa teachers the Fifth continued to practice

Dalai Lama and his government, a rule which would last until 1959. See: McCleary and van der Kuijp, “market approach,” 149-180 and Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 146-161.

⁸² Mullin, *Fourteen Dalai Lamas*, 187.

⁸³ Zahori is a Bengali word and thus there was the claim that his family had Indian ancestry which gave them a sense of prestige. See: Mullin, *Fourteen Dalai Lamas*, 187.

⁸⁴ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 152.

⁸⁵ Samten Gyaltzen Karmay and Lionel Fournier, *Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama* (London: Serindia Publications, 1988), 6.

⁸⁶ Norman, *Secret lives*, 201.

⁸⁷ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 166.

⁸⁸ Karmay and Fournier, *Secret visions*, 7. Dzogchen, or “the Great Perfection,” is a philosophical system within the Nyingmapa tradition which was said to have been introduced to Tibet by Padmasambhava. The Dzogchen teachings claim that the true nature of the ultimate reality and of our Self (or mind) is a state of primordial enlightenment which is pure and unstained. Therefore in order to attain enlightenment, we need to simply ‘wake up’ and realised that our own mind is no different from the ultimate reality of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra. Rather than a graduated path of scholasticism, as practiced by the Gelugpa, Dzogchen relies less on texts and instead uses symbolic imagery to impart its teachings. The Gelugpa tradition considers Dzogchen to be heretical as its concept of an already existing ultimate reality contrasts with the Mādhyamaka philosophy taught by Tsongkhapa. Yet the current Dalai Lama sees Dzogchen as a universal practice which, because of its focus on an individual’s own pre-existing divine nature, can be undertaken by anyone regardless of their culture and denomination. See: Ian A. Baker and Thomas Laird, *The Dalai Lama’s secret temple: tantric wall painting from Tibet* (USA: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 113-115 and David Germano ‘Architecture and Absence in the Secret Tantric History of the Great Perfection’, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 17:2 (1994).

Nyingmapa teachings throughout his life – even going so far as using the morally ambiguous and violent ‘war magic’ against his enemies.⁸⁹

Although considered heterodox by the Gelugpa, the use of Nyingmapa rituals offered the Fifth a chance to consolidate his power and establish the Dalai Lama lineage and its accompanying government as the rightful rulers of Tibet.⁹⁰ The Fifth recognised that in order to promote his rule over this vast landscape he needed a unifying ideology, one which would appeal to not just those of the Gelugpa tradition but to all Tibetans. Contrary to popular perception, while Tibetans may have been united through a shared culture, religion and language, the greater Tibetan region has never been a modern centralised state answerable to a single authority.⁹¹ Historically, for a region as vast and as sparsely populated as Tibet, the ability to govern people’s lives from a single central authority was impractical.⁹² In many regions legal authority was largely located in the hands of the monastic estates, regardless of their religious affiliation, or local chiefs and landlords who operated in an autonomous manner.⁹³ The authority of the Dalai Lama’s therefore could not be based on a model which saw power flowing outward from a central figure and penetrating downwards to the lowest levels of society.⁹⁴ Instead, authority needed to be drawn to the centre from the outlying regions through the use of ‘ritualised loyalty.’⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 139-140.

⁹⁰ Amy Heller, “The protective deities of the Dalai Lamas,” in *The Dalai Lamas: a visual history*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serinda Publications, 2005), 212.

⁹¹ Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 142.

⁹² Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 338.

⁹³ Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 388.

⁹⁴ Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 339.

⁹⁵ Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 339.

To create a pan-Tibetan ideology the Fifth integrated the early Buddhist traditions of the Tibetan Empire, which later evolved into the Nyingmapa tradition, into the ritualised support for his government. As I have shown, the Tibetan understanding of their world is one which is volatile and therefore in order to prevent chaos it requires the constant maintenance of good relations with the local gods and Dharma protectors. The institution of the Dalai Lama is no different. It requires the support of local gods and protectors in order for it to be successful. Therefore by integrating Nyingmapa traditions into his government the Dalai Lama was accomplishing three things: establishing a connection with the previous Tibetan Empire, gaining the loyalty of outlying regions where the Nyingmapa tradition was practiced and, perhaps most importantly, gaining the protection of indigenous Tibetan gods who had been bound by Padmasambhava and whose loyalty was maintained through continual undertaking of Nyingmapa rituals.⁹⁶

It was the Fifth who was instrumental in acquiring the services of a local god, Dorje Drakden, also known as Nechung Chögyal, who is the emanation of yet another god, Pehar, in order to assist both himself and his government.⁹⁷ Pehar had originally been converted by Padmasambhava and assigned to protect Samyé, the first monastery to be built in Tibet, and therefore he became the protector of Buddhism in Tibet as a whole.⁹⁸ Since Pehar had been known to possess human oracles, the Fifth requested that he move from Samyé to Nechung monastery near Lhasa so that the god might act as a protector and a consultant for his newly formed government.⁹⁹ There, the god would take possession of a human oracle and through

⁹⁶ Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 169.

⁹⁷ Heller, "protective deities," 221.

⁹⁸ Sidky, "The state oracle of Tibet," 75. Sidky also notes that according to some legends that Pehar had originally brought to Tibet from Central Asia by Padmasambhava.

⁹⁹ Sidky, "The state oracle of Tibet," 81.

its mortal mouthpiece, give advice and answer questions regarding the welfare of both the Dalai Lamas and the Tibetan nation.¹⁰⁰

The Fifth would have also known that many other protectors associated with the Dalai Lama lineage had their origins in traditions established prior to the Gelugpa. The rituals for appropriating the goddess Palden Lhamo, who not only assists in the protection of the Dalai Lama lineage but whose sacred lake also reveals visions to those searching for the lineage's next incarnation, have their origins in the Sakyapa tradition from which they were passed on to the First Dalai Lama.¹⁰¹ The rituals for another protector, Bektse, also have their origins within the Sakyapa tradition and which were then passed from a Sakyapa lama to a lama of the Shang Kagyu tradition. This lama ensured that these rituals were passed from father to son and they were later inherited by his great grandson, the Second Dalai Lama.¹⁰²

While previous Dalai Lamas, such as the First, had occasionally been associated with Avalokiteśvara, the guardian bodhisattva of Tibet, it was the Fifth who was the first to

¹⁰⁰ During his time in Tibet, the Austrian explorer, Heinrich Harrer (1912-2006) wrote an account of this ritual:

Hollow, eerie music greeted us at the gate of the temple. Inside the spectacle was ghastly. From every wall looked down hideous, grimacing faces, and the air was filled with stifling fumes of incense. The young monk had just been led from his private quarters...No sound could be heard except the hollow music. He began to concentrate...He looked as if the life was fading out of him. Now he was perfectly motionless, his face a staring mask. Then suddenly, as if he had been struck by lightning, his body curved upward like a bow...The god was in possession. The medium began to tremble; his whole body shook and beads of sweat stood out on his forehead...The trembling became more violent. The medium's heavily laden head wavered from side to side, and his eyes stared from their sockets. His face was swollen and covered with patches of hectic red. Hissing sounds pierced through closed teeth...Save for the music, his groans and teeth-gnashings were the only sounds to be heard in the temple...

At the end of the experience Harrer states:

I left the temple and stood in the blinding sunlight feeling quite benumbed by what I had seen. My European mentality boggled at the experience.

See: Heinrich Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet* (Flamingo, London, 1997), 180-182.

¹⁰¹ Heller, "protective deities," 220.

¹⁰² Heller, "protective deities," 221.

actively promote this connection.¹⁰³ Since Avalokiteśvara had previously manifested as the emperors of the Tibetan Empire and as earlier Dalai Lamas, this meant that the Fifth, as yet another manifestation, was continuing Avalokiteśvara's role as the rightful guardian of the Tibetan people.¹⁰⁴ In order to reinforce the notion that he was both Avalokiteśvara and the former emperors, the Fifth ordered the construction of a new palace for his seat of government. This palace was built on Marpori hill in Lhasa, which was already the site of Songsten Gampo's ruined palace and a temple dedicated to Avalokiteśvara.¹⁰⁵ The result was the building which today symbolises Tibet, the Potala. By choosing such a location and naming the palace after the mountain in South India, where Avalokiteśvara is said to reside, the Fifth had created a permanent reminder of his authority.¹⁰⁶

It is therefore in the figure of the Fifth and his conception of the Dalai Lama lineage in which we see another issue with the Marxist critique of the 'religion' of Tibet. Although he was considered the ultimate ruler of Tibet, the Dalai Lama's authority did not rest on a system which saw his power directed outwards from his person. Rather, his authority was constructed literally from the ground up. As we have already seen, the local spirits which inhabit rocks and trees and who symbolise the voices of the 'people' all work in the service of lesser gods whose relationships with humans are then maintained through the rituals performed by lamas. These lesser gods are then bound to the service of the Dharma protectors such as Palden Lhamo and Bektse who inhabit specific geographic areas (in their case, lakes) and have their origins in rituals which had been established outside of clerical monasticism (since, like the Nyingmapa, the Sakyapa tradition allows for lamas to marry and have

¹⁰³ Yumiko, "On the dissemination," 44.

¹⁰⁴ Yumiko, "On the dissemination," 44.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 177.

families). Therefore in order to ensure that the Dalai Lama's authority stretched across the Tibetan cultural region the institution needed to incorporate the voices of the people, even if they weren't members of the Gelugpa tradition. Yet as we shall see, this sense of incorporation from outside of the Gelugpa would cause a split to occur within the tradition.

Yet despite the victory of the Gelugpa and their ascendancy to power, not all members of the tradition were content with the figure of the Dalai Lama and his government. Many disagreed with his use of Nyingmapa rituals, which conflicted with the doctrinal purity of Tsongkhapa, and his commitment to a pan-Tibetan ideology as opposed to a centralised Gelugpa ideology.¹⁰⁷ Because the teachings of Tsongkhapa were considered the most authentic transmission of Buddhism available, there were members within the Gelugpa tradition who felt that it was important for their school to be the single authority in Tibet.¹⁰⁸ In the eyes of these zealous Gelugpa, the Fifth and his eclectic approach to the Nyingmapa tradition were limiting their efforts to propagate the Gelugpa tradition as an international religion.¹⁰⁹

One such critic of the Fifth's policies was an abbot of Drepung monastery, Dragpa Gyaltsen (1619-1657). His outspoken views naturally caused tension between the Gelugpa and the Fifth's government and as a result of this he met his demise by suffocating on prayer scarves which had been forced down his throat either through suicide or murder.¹¹⁰ The effects of his

¹⁰⁷ Nikolai Tsyrempilov, "Dge lugs pa divided: some aspects of the political role of Tibetan Buddhism in the expansion of the Qing Dynasty," in *Power, Politics and the Reinvention of tradition: Tibet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; PIATS 200 : Tibetan studies : proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, ed. Bryan J. Cuevas and Kurtis R. Schaeffer (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 53.

¹⁰⁸ Tsyrempilov, "Dge lugs pa divided," 56.

¹⁰⁹ Tsyrempilov, "Dge lugs pa divided," 58-59.

¹¹⁰ Martin A. Mills, "Charting the Shugden interdiction in the western Himalaya," in *Mountains, Monasteries and Mosques: recent research on Ladakh and the western Himalaya*, ed. John Bray and Elena de Rossi Filibeck (Pisa & Rome: Sapienza, 2009), 255.

death have led to a matter which today has split the Gelugpa tradition between the current Dalai Lama and those who wish for a more orthodox adherence to Tsongkhapa's lineage.¹¹¹

This opinion was bolstered when the newly formed Qing Empire of the Manchus began to show an interest in the Dalai Lama and the Gelugpa tradition. From the time of Nurhaci the Manchus had cultivated a relationship with Tibetan Buddhism which was formalised in 1653 when the Fifth Dalai Lama met the Emperor Shunzhi in Beijing.¹¹² With the aim of expanding their new empire the Qing court recognised that they needed a unifying ideology which would bring the autonomous Mongols into their sphere of influence.¹¹³ They recognised that the various regional forms of Buddhism which were developing amongst the Mongols, each with their own leader, had the potential to create independent states.¹¹⁴ This threat was evident in the missionary activities of a Mongolian lama, Neichi Toin, whose unconventional approaches to teaching were threatening to destabilise the authority of the Lhasa authorities and the expanding Qing.¹¹⁵ Recognising the threat which Neichi Toin posed and after being requested by the Qing authorities to judge the matter, the Fifth ordered him to be punished.¹¹⁶ The result of this showed the Qing that the Dalai Lama institution and

¹¹¹ Following the death of Dragpa Gyaltsen a series of strange events began to plague the Fifth Dalai Lama – during meal times his dishes were often upset and loud crashing sounds came from the roof of his palace. The country was also struck by disasters which, along with the supernatural events, came to be seen as evidence that the spirit of the wronged Dragpa Gyaltsen was seeking revenge. Accounts differ as to how the matter was dealt with, but most explain that the Fifth held an exorcism ritual which placated the troubled spirit and bound it to become a protector of the Gelugpa order. This spirit then became known as Dorje Shugden. See: Mills, “Charting the Shugden interdiction,” 255-256, Norman, *Secret Lives*, 234, David N. Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism in Britain: transplantation, development and adaptation* (New York, NY: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p.46 and Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons*, 134-135.

¹¹² Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 173.

¹¹³ Tsyrempilov, “Dge lugs pa divided,” 49.

¹¹⁴ Johan Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: the Mongols, Buddhism and the state in late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 104

¹¹⁵ Elverskog, *Our Great Qing*, 105.

¹¹⁶ Elverskog, *Our Great Qing*, 106.

a universal, rather than solely Tibetan, Gelugpa orthodoxy could act as trans-ethnic religion which would assist in stabilising their expanding empire.¹¹⁷

In order to do promote this unifying religion the Qing knew that they needed to also bring the Dalai Lama institution under their control.¹¹⁸ Although they could not do this during the reign of the Fifth, many of the succeeding Dalai Lamas found their authority subject to interference from the Qing.¹¹⁹ The succession of ineffectual Dalai Lamas which followed the Fifth worked to the advantage of those sectarian Gelugpas who assisted the Qing in promoting their tradition as a trans-ethnic, rather than Tibetan, religion.

To assist them in their promotion of a ‘Qing’ trans-ethnic form of Gelugpa Buddhism the Manchus enlisted the aid of Gelugpa lamas who traditionally came from the north Tibetan region of Amdo.¹²⁰ Amdo was not only the birthplace of Tsongkhapa and home to the important Gelugpa monastery of Kumbum, it was also a multiethnic region due to its position

¹¹⁷ Elverskog, *Our Great Qing*, 107.

¹¹⁸ Tsyrempilov, “Dge lugs pa divided,” 50.

¹¹⁹ Following the Fifth Dalai Lama’s wishes, his regent concealed his death in 1682 from the public for fourteen years. In order to maintain this ruse his successor, Tsangyang Gyatso (1683-1706) was raised in secret as a layman and was not proclaimed to be the Dalai Lama until he was fifteen. As a result of this he had developed a taste for women and drinking, and rather than taken his monastic vows he chose to grow his hair long and spend his time in the taverns and brothels of Lhasa. Offended by the regent’s deception, his alliance with the anti-Qing Dzungars (Western Mongols) and the unconventional lifestyle of the Sixth, the Qing Emperor Kangxi ordered his Mongol ally Lhazang Khan to depose the Sixth and bring him to Beijing. In 1706, while on route to Beijing the Sixth died in mysterious circumstances. Unhappy with the Manchu’s installation of an alternative ‘true’ Sixth Dalai Lama, the members of the Dalai Lama’s government who resented Lhazang Khan asked his enemies, the Dzungars, for assistance in ridding Lhasa of Manchu influence and securing the safety of a young boy who had secretly been discovered to be the Seventh Dalai Lama. In 1717 the Dzungars managed to defeat Lhazang Khan but their brutal occupation of Lhasa earned them the resentment of the Tibetans. The Manchus used this as an opportunity to further intervene and they despatched a Qing army to Tibet to defeat the Dzungars and to ensure the coronation of the newly discovered Seventh Dalai Lama Kalzang Gyatso (1708-1757). The Qing emperors used the political instability which plagued the reigns of the Seventh and Eight Dalai Lamas to continue to interfere with the governing of Tibet. It was during the lifetime of the Eight Dalai Lama Jampel Gyatso (1758-1804) that they introduced an urn into which the names of the child candidates for the position of the Dalai Lama were to be entered and then drawn by a Manchu representative of the emperor. From the time of the Ninth Dalai Lama Lungtok Gyatso (1805-1815) through to the Twelfth Trinley Gyatso (1856-1875) the Dalai Lamas all died before they could reach the age of twenty one and thus attain their political power. The Great Thirteenth Dalai Lama was the first to survive into adulthood and the first since the Great Fifth to consolidate his power. See: Laird, *Story of Tibet* and Mullin, *Fourteen Dalai Lamas*.

¹²⁰ Tsyrempilov, “Dge lugs pa divided,” 60.

on the borders of China and proximity to Mongolia.¹²¹ Because Amdo was a multiethnic region and so far from Lhasa, this meant that the Gelugpa monks recruited by the Qing were less likely to be loyal to the government of Central Tibet.¹²² After incorporating these Gelugpa lamas into their administration, the Qing then used them to turn the Qing court into the new centre for the Gelugpa tradition as opposed to Lhasa.¹²³ In order to do this the Qing financed the construction of Gelugpa publishing houses and monasteries in their capital of Beijing.¹²⁴ One such important Beijing monastery was Yonghegong where Mongol, Manchu and Chinese monks studied in the Gelugpa tradition.¹²⁵ Although the Dalai Lama still appointed Tibetan lamas to serve in Beijing, many of the important Gelugpa intermediaries between the Qing court and Lhasa were Amdo lamas, such as the Changkya Khutukhtu lineage, whose foremost loyalty were to the Qing.¹²⁶ This sense of loyalty to the Qing as the true protector of the Gelugpa tradition rather than the Dalai Lama trickled back to Lhasa

¹²¹ The current Dalai Lama was born in Takster, a village in Amdo on the Chinese border which was at the time ruled by Ma Pu-fang, a Muslim warlord who governed the region on behalf of the Chinese Nationalists. Therefore because of the location of his birthplace, Dalai Lama initially spoke a dialect of Xining Chinese during his formative years as opposed to Tibetan. See: Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 261-262.

¹²² Tsyrempilov, “Dge lugs pa divided,” 60. Amdo was also home to the Monguor people who were descended from Yuan Dynasty Mongols who had originally been posted to the region. Over the centuries the Monguors had adopted Tibetan culture while their affairs remained under the control of China. They were therefore able to act as intermediaries between the cultures of Tibet, Mongolia and China. See: Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists*, 76.

¹²³ Tsyrempilov, “Dge lugs pa divided,” 60.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists*, 20.

¹²⁶ Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists*, 20. The second Changkya Khutukhtu, Changkya Rolpai Dorje (1717-1786) was born in Amdo and taken to the Qing court in Beijing as a child in order to receive his training. There he became a close confidant of Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799) and served as an intermediary between the Qing and the government of the Seventh Dalai Lama. See: Xiangyun Wang, “The Qing court’s Tibet connection: Lcang skya Rol pa’I rdo rje and the Qianlong Emperor,” in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 60:1 (2000), 125-163.

through lamas from Amdo, such as Jamyang Zhepa Ngawang Tsondru (1648-1721), who were instrumental in disseminating such beliefs.¹²⁷

The Thirteenth and Phabongkhapa

As I have noted, from the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama onwards there was increasing opposition towards the lineage from Qing orientated Gelugpa who wished for their tradition to be disassociated from the impurities of other Tibetan traditions and to act as a universal religion rather than be subservient to the Dalai Lama and his Tibetan government. It was during this time that the Gelugpa tradition also took hold in lands beyond the Qing Empire such as Russia. With a succession of politically weak Dalai Lamas following the reign of the Fifth, the Manchus, through their use of lamas from Tibetan border regions, were able to promote this trans-ethnic Gelugpa ideology with its focus on Beijing as opposed to Lhasa. This allowed them to not only intervene in Tibetan affairs but also bring troublesome neighbours such as the Mongols into the fold of their empire.

However this ideology was once again faced with the threat of a renewal of the Fifth's policies when the Thirteenth Dalai Lama survived into adulthood and after an attempt on his life managed to attain his political power. Like the previous Dalai Lamas his reign was not peaceful. Twice he was forced into exile, first by the British when they invaded in 1903-1904 and second when the Chinese invaded in 1910. Because of this he spent many years in exile – his first exile being spent in Mongolia and at the Qing court, and the second in British India.

¹²⁷ Tsyrempilov, "Dge lugs pa divided," 58. Jamyang Zhepa Ngawang Tsondru was also a student of the first Changkya Khutukhtu and in turn one of his own students, Sumpa Khenpo Yeshe Peljor (1704 -1788), a Monguor, would also express his doubts that Dragpa Gyeltsen, the critic of the Fifth Dalai Lama, had turned into a vengeful spirit, believing this to be 'hateful speech'. See: Tsyrempilov, "Dge lugs pa divided," 60 footnote 24 and Sum pa Mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *Dpag-bsam ljon-bzang* (Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1959), 70-71 as quoted in Lindsay G. McCune, "Tales of intrigue from Tibet's holy city: the historical underpinnings of a modern Buddhist crisis," (MA diss., Florida State University, 2007), 66.

As a result he was introduced to the modern world and he became aware of the dangers both Tibet and his lineage faced due to their incompatibility with modernity.¹²⁸ His journeys abroad also gave him moments to question the traditional aspects of his religion.¹²⁹

Like the Fifth, the Thirteenth also practiced the Nyingmapa tradition.¹³⁰ The encounter with the modern world gave the Thirteenth cause for concern in regards to the defence and independence of his nation. As the first Dalai Lama to attain political power in nearly a century, he no doubt would have looked back to the Fifth Dalai Lama as a model of authority.¹³¹ As I have established, the Fifth's use of Nyingmapa traditions allowed him to promote his reign as a continuum of the Tibetan Empire, and therefore it made sense for the Thirteenth to do the same. Since his reign saw Tibet constantly threatened by invasion, the Thirteenth, like the Fifth, also made use of the Nyingmapa tradition's ritual war magic in order to protect Tibet's borderlands.¹³² As Jacob P. Dalton has already established in *The Taming of the Demons*, Tibetans have traditionally viewed their borderlands as akin to the

¹²⁸ Tsering Shakya, "The Thirteenth Dalai Lama Thubten Gyatso," in *The Dalai Lamas: a visual history*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2005), 146.

¹²⁹ Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 233. He was clearly disappointed with his fellow incarnated bodhisattvas within the Gelugpa hierarchy. During his time in Mongolia he was greatly offended by the sordid lifestyle of the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, who had the audacity to smoke in his presence. His meeting with the Qing Emperor Guangxu in 1908 also unsettled him. The emperor spent most his days in an opiate induced stupor and this was evident at a banquet held in the Dalai Lama's honour where the emperor was so inebriated that his wives had to not only prop him up as he walked but also feed him. This sight must have had a lasting impact on the Thirteenth as he is later recorded by Charles Bell, a British political officer, as having been unimpressed by the Emperor Guangxu and doubted the emperor's status as an incarnation of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. See: Charles Bell, *Portrait of a Dalai Lama: the life and times of the Great Thirteenth* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), 85, Norman, *Secret Lives*, 341 and Tsepon Wangchuk Deden Shakabpa, *One Hundred Thousand Moons: an advanced political history of Tibet*, 2 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 700.

¹³⁰ Mullin, *Fourteen Dalai Lamas*, 393.

¹³¹ Once, when the Thirteenth tried to change the administration of the Great Prayer Festival he was challenged by the monks who insisted that, since the festival's administration had originally been organised by the Fifth Dalai Lama, it could not be altered. In response to this the Thirteenth replied "And who is the Fifth Dalai Lama today?" see: Mullin, *Fourteen Dalai Lamas*, 422-423.

¹³² Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 155.

outer circle of the maṇḍala.¹³³ Therefore they are considered to be chaotic regions where demons and non-Buddhist barbarians live.¹³⁴ By the time of the Thirteenth, many regions bordering Central Tibet had broken away from the authority of Lhasa and therefore, while ethnically and culturally Tibetan, their allegiance to the Thirteenth's Tibetan state was ambiguous. Through the use of ritual magic directed towards the borderlands, the Thirteenth no doubt believed that, not only would he be able to protect Tibet from his enemies but he would be able to gain the support of the gods and demons which inhabited those liminal regions and bring them back into the fold of the reunified Tibetan state which he was working to secure.

Yet like the Fifth, the Thirteenth was criticised by orthodox Gelugpa for his use of the Nyingmapa tradition to reinforce his role as the leader of a unified Tibet. These same Gelugpa also felt threatened by the rise of a new eclectic movement known as Rimé.¹³⁵ In Eastern Tibet, the region where Rimé had the strongest following, the orthodox Gelugpa found that their monasteries were also in poor condition in comparison to those in Amdo and Central Tibet.¹³⁶ For many orthodox Gelugpa the Thirteenth's incorporation of various non-Gelugpa traditions into his own practice and the pan-Tibetan Rimé movement's popularity in the border regions were seen as threats which undermined the authority and purity of their tradition.

¹³³ Dalton, *Taming of the Demons*, 152.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Originating in Eastern Tibet in the nineteenth century, the Rimé movement was an approach by which practitioners incorporated the teachings of various Tibetan Buddhist traditions. It did not favour one tradition over another nor did it have its own monastic institution. Followers were encouraged to study under lamas from differing traditions in order to gain a broad understanding since Enlightenment itself is an unlimited state. See: Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 535-543.

¹³⁶ Georges Dreyfus, 'The Shuk-den Affair: History and nature of a quarrel', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 21:2 (1998), 253.

One such orthodox Gelugpa was Phabongkhapa Dechen Nyingpo (1878-1941).¹³⁷

Phabongkhapa came from a family which had a history of worshiping Dorje Shugden, the spirit of the murdered monk Dragpa Gyeltsen, who was considered by the Gelugpa to protect its tradition from impurities.¹³⁸ He also received teachings on Shugden while studying under his master, Jampel Tenpai Ngodrub (1876-1922).¹³⁹ Despite this his early education was eclectic and he practiced Dzogchen until a serious illness caused him to believe that he had earned Shugden's displeasure.¹⁴⁰ As a result of this experience he abandoned incorporating other traditions into his own and became a strong advocate of Gelugpa sectarianism.¹⁴¹ After witnessing the state of degeneration taking place within the Gelugpa monasteries in Eastern Tibet and their loss of prominence due to the popularity of Rimé, Phabongkhapa began to promote a strong sectarian form of the Gelugpa tradition which was presented as a revival of Tsongkhapa's original tradition.¹⁴²

Yet despite his claim to be reviving the original teachings, Phabongkhapa altered the traditional practices which had been founded by Tsongkhapa. While Tsongkhapa had originally established a practice which placed Yamāntaka, Guhyasamāja and Cakrasaṃvara as the main meditational deities, Phabongkhapa replaced these with the single deity of

¹³⁷ According to Rilbur Rinpoche, a student of Phabongkhapa, his master was considered to be an emanation of second Changkya Khutukhtu, Changkya Rolpai Dorje, the very same lama from Amdo who was a close confidant of the Qing emperor. See: Pabongka Rinpoche and Michael Richards, *Liberation in the palm of your hands: a concise discourse on the path to enlightenment* (Boston, Wisdom Publications, 1997), 10. If this is so then we can already see a connection between Phabongkhapa and those orthodox Gelugpa from the Amdo region who followed the teachings of the first Changkya Khutukhtu and were against the Fifth Dalai Lama's practice of the Nyingmapa tradition.

¹³⁸ Denma Losang Dorje, *Biography of Phabongkhapa Dechen Nyingpo* (Nyimo Publisher Palden), 471-472 as quoted on His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, accessed March 16, 2012 <http://www.dalailama.com/messages/dolgyal-shugden/historical-references#phabongkhapa>.

¹³⁹ The Treasury of Lives: biographies of Himalayan religious masters, accessed March 16, 2012, <http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Takpu-06-Pemavajra-Jampel-Tenpai-Ngodrub/4000>.

¹⁴⁰ Dreyfus, 'Shuk-den Affair,' 252.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Dreyfus, 'Shuk-den Affair,' 246.

Vajrayoginī.¹⁴³ Instead of Tsongkhapa, he replaced the central guru figure with himself and the main protector of the Gelugpa, the Dharma-King Damchen Chögyal (Skt: Yama Dharmaraja), was replaced with Dorje Shugden.¹⁴⁴

The Thirteenth was unhappy with Phabongkhapa's propagation of Shugden, especially when there were moves to remove Nechung from his role as the protector of Drepung monastery and the Tibetan government and replace him with Shugden.¹⁴⁵ It is possible that, since Nechung had Nyingmapa origins, Phabongkhapa was wishing to replace the state oracle with a purely Gelugpa one. Although he obeyed the Thirteenth's orders to cease his propagation, Phabongkhapa was still able to transmit his teachings and the practice of Dorje Shugden worship onto his students.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps the most famous of his students to receive initiations into this worship was Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso (1901-1981), also known as Trijang Rinpoche, who became a tutor to the current Dalai Lama.¹⁴⁷ Trijang therefore was instrumental in passing on the worship of Shugden to not only the Dalai Lama but also another student of his, Kelsang Gyatso (1931-).

Although both were students of Trijang, the Dalai Lama and Kelsang Gyatso would eventually lead Tibetan Buddhism in two different directions.

¹⁴³ Dreyfus, 'Shuk-den Affair,' 246.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Dreyfus, 'Shuk-den Affair,' 244.

¹⁴⁶ Dreyfus, 'Shuk-den Affair,' 254.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Chapter Five

The New Kadampa Tradition – an alternative Buddhist modernism?

As I have already shown in the encounter which took place between disillusioned nineteenth century Protestant Americans and Buddhists in Sri Lanka, the East has been considered a place where spiritual knowledge, free from the trappings of modernity, could be found. This romantic perception of the East perhaps reached its peak in the early 1960s when a counter-culture revolution arose among disenchanted Westerners, especially those from the United States.¹ Ideas of equality and liberation from the traditional social structures of church and family caused many young people to look elsewhere than their own Western backgrounds for a new sense of self location.² Some were drawn to Zen Buddhism while others followed the hippy trail to India where they encountered the Tibetan Buddhists in exile.³ Upon realising that foreigners were interested in receiving their teachings, many Tibetan lamas, including the Dalai Lama agreed to embrace their new followers.⁴ Yet the result of this interaction with Western modernity has only served to widen the already present rift within the Gelugpa tradition.

Some lamas, especially the Dalai Lama, use *upāya* in order to adapt their religion to suit the needs of their modern Western audiences. Therefore when engaging with Westerners the Dalai Lama chooses to focus on the very same elements of Buddhist Modernism which

¹ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, 985.

² David N. Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 7.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Robert Thurman, the Je Tsongkhapa Professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies at Columbia University and Georges Dreyfus, the Jackson Professor of Religion at Williams College, were part of this counter culture movement and were among some of the first westerners to become monks within the Gelugpa order. Dreyfus recounts some of the initial problems he faced as a westerner, among them his inability to understand the use of ritual in a religion which he had originally perceived as being based on rational study and meditation in: *The sound of two hands clapping: the education of a Tibetan Buddhist monk* (University of California, 2003), 32-33.

disenchanted nineteenth century Protestants found appealing. The Buddhism which presents to the West is one based on compassion and rational thinking. For those Westerners who are not only seeking an alternative to their own religious traditions but also solace from the spiritual confusion brought about by modernity's critique of religion, a universal religion of compassion and nonviolence, which still allows them to remain Westerners, is appealing. However when giving his public talks to Western audiences the Dalai Lama usually does not talk about the use of ritual and the worship of local Tibetan gods. As Dreyfus points out, when dealing with Westerners the Dalai Lama whittles away the cultural aspects of Tibetan Buddhism in order to present a universal Buddhism which can appeal to modern Westerners regardless of their ethnicity and gender.⁵

Yet it is not only to Western audiences to whom the Dalai Lama wishes to present his faith as being compatible with modernity. As previously mentioned, the Dalai Lama, through his early interactions with Western scholars, has sought to remove Tibetan Buddhism from its earlier Western incarnation of *Lamaism*, the corrupt priestly superstition. As I have shown, Marxism views religion as a false ideology, a human construct which oppresses the people. However even though freedom of religion is allowed with the PRC, for Chinese Marxists superstitions which consist of local gods and spirits are not worthy of being afforded the same protection as religion.⁶ Therefore in order for Tibetan Buddhism to receive the protection of the Chinese government, the Dalai Lama must present it, both to the West and Chinese, both within and outside the PRC, as a universal religion, a form of Buddhism which

⁵ Dreyfus, 'From protective deities,' 177.

⁶ This process of categorising faith systems into either false superstition or true religion was first officially practiced by the Nationalist Government. Since many of the Nationalist government's members had been educated by European Protestant missionaries they had inherited the post-Enlightenment view of 'true religion' as opposed to 'false religion.' Their government, which was founded on the Western ideals of science and democracy, sought to limit the excesses of religion amongst the people by portraying local religions as being no more than ignorant superstitions. See: David L. Wank and Yoshiko Ashiwa, *Making religion, making the state: the politics of religion in modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 49-51.

is no different from the other Buddhist traditions found in Asia and not just a corrupted regional superstition.

This view became further entrenched after he undertook a retreat in the winter of 1975-76.⁷

During this year a text called the *Yellow Book* was published by a Gelugpa lama Zime Rinpoche (1927-1996).⁸ Written as a commentary on Trijang Rinpoche's own works regarding Phabongkhapa and Dorje Shugden, the *Yellow Book* discusses certain Gelugpa lamas who practiced Nyingmapa teachings and died prematurely as a result.⁹ Following his winter retreat, the Dalai Lama increased his focus on ensuring the wellbeing of the Nechung oracle and the other protectors of his lineage.¹⁰ Although he was initiated into the worship of Shugden by Trijang, as the leader of a people in exile he has often looked to the inclusive Fifth and Thirteenth Dalai Lamas as a model of authority.¹¹ The Dalai Lama argues that a unified Tibetan ideology is better than a sectarian one since it was sectarian Gelugpa ideology which thwarted the Thirteenth's attempts to modernise and create defences for his nation and which resulted in the eventual loss of Tibetan independence.¹² The Dalai Lama has attributed

⁷ Dreyfus, "From protective deities," 178.

⁸ Dreyfus, 'Shuk-den Affair,' 255.

⁹ Dreyfus, 'Shuk-den Affair,' 256.

¹⁰ Dreyfus, "From protective deities," 178.

¹¹ The current Dalai Lama has stated that while he feels a strong connection to the Fifth and Thirteenth Dalai Lamas (especially through dreams) he does not feel the same connection with some of the other Dalai Lamas. In the West it is commonly understood that the Dalai Lama is the continuous reincarnation of a single 'soul.' However, since there is no concept of a soul within Buddhism, this is not the case. As I have previously shown, a bodhisattva such as Avalokiteśvara is capable of manifesting in various forms. Therefore instead of there being on single consciousness there are multiple consciousnesses which have played the role of the Dalai Lama. These consciousness are all manifestations of Avalokiteśvara but the roles they play may differ in each lifetime. Thus, while in one life a consciousness may play the role of a Dalai Lama, in its next incarnation that consciousness might be an attendant to the following Dalai Lama. So while the consciousness of the current Dalai Lama, as a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara may have previously existed as the Fifth and Thirteenth Dalai Lamas, other consciousnesses may have played the roles of other Dalai Lamas. See: Laird, *Story of Tibet*, 24-25 and Martin Brauen 'Introduction and interview with His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama,' in *The Dalai Lamas: a visual history*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2005), 10-11.

¹² Dreyfus, 'Shuk-den Affair,' 263.

to this loss partly to the undermining of the ritual system which supports the Dalai Lama institution.¹³

To the Dalai Lama it is clear that the worship of Dorje Shugden only serves to harm the unification of the Tibetan people and the lineage of the Dalai Lamas.¹⁴ Since Dorje Shugden is hostile to all elements of the Nyingmapa tradition, including the Nechung oracle and Padmasambhava, his anger is therefore directed at the Dalai Lama's use of these traditions to maintain his ritualised authority and the unification of his people. Recognising the risk of maintaining a relationship with such a deity, the Dalai Lama formally renounced his ties to Dorje Shugden in 1977.¹⁵ Since then he has repeatedly called for Tibetans to abandon the worship of Dorje Shugden, especially those who follow his teachings.¹⁶

However the loudest voice of opposition to the Dalai Lama and his imposed ban does not come from Tibetans but from Westerners who follow a form of the Gelugpa tradition which has been made compatible with modernity.

The ghost of a dead lama or a world saviour?

The increasing Western interest in Tibetan Buddhism during the 1970s led to Westerners inviting exiled lamas residing in Nepal and India to return with them to Britain and America in order to promote Buddhism there. In 1975 Thubten Yeshe (1935-1984), a student of Trijang Rinpoche, along with Zopa Rinpoche (1946 -) established the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition,¹⁷ an organisation which was to oversee this

¹³ Dreyfus, 'Shuk-den Affair,' 262.

¹⁴ "His Holiness the Dalai Lama's advice concerning Dolgyal (Shugden)," accessed March 26, 2012. <http://www.dalailama.com/messages/dolgyal-shugden/his-holiness-advice>.

¹⁵ Dreyfus, 'Shuk-den Affair,' 259.

¹⁶ Mills, "Charting the Shugden interdiction," 252.

¹⁷ Hereafter FPMT.

transmission of Tibetan Buddhism to the West.¹⁸ In this same year, during a trip to Britain they purchased a property in Cumbria and set up the Manjushri Institute.¹⁹ Since it was customary for every centre to be given a protector deity, Thubten Yeshe assigned Dorje Shugden to be the guardian of the Manjushri Institute.²⁰

Because the Institute was to be administered by the FPMT from Kopan monastery in Nepal, Thubten Yeshe asked Kelsang Gyatso to immigrate to Britain in order to become the centre's resident spiritual teacher.²¹ Although they both shared the same teacher, Kelsang Gyatso's strict scriptural approach to the Gelugpa tradition, which he had inherited as a lineage holder of Phabongkhapa's teachings, differed from Thubten Yeshe's own liberal inclusiveness.²² The tension between these two approaches soon became evident in 1979 when Kelsang Gyatso opened another centre, the Madhyamaka Centre, without seeking permission from the FPMT.²³ Despite being asked to resign, Kelsang Gyatso was able to remain the resident teacher at the Institute due to his popularity with its students.²⁴ Following the death of Thubten Yeshe in 1984 the FPMT eventually began to distance itself from the Manjushri Institute.²⁵ In 1991 the split between the two became official when Kelsang Gyatso was able to gain control of the Manjushri Institute due to a legal technicality.²⁶ It was in this same year

¹⁸ Robert Bluck, *British Buddhism: teachings, practice and development* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 129.

¹⁹ Bluck, *British Buddhism*, 129.

²⁰ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 70.

²¹ Bluck, *British Buddhism*, p.129. 65.

²² Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 65.

²³ Bluck, *British Buddhism*, 130.

²⁴ Bluck, *British Buddhism*, 130.

²⁵ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 63.

²⁶ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 64.

that he was able to establish the New Kadampa Tradition,²⁷ a movement which was the culmination of his efforts to distance himself from the FPMT.²⁸

Kelsang Gyatso's gradual disassociation from the larger ethnic Tibetan religious community would have been driven by his own ties to Dorje Shugden. Despite the Dalai Lama's own call for Tibetans to renounce all ties to Dorje Shugden, Kelsang Gyatso had remained a firm adherent of the deity.²⁹ This was possibly due to two reasons:

The first is his family's connection to Dorje Shugden. His uncle is the Kuten Lama, the oracle of Dorje Shugden. The Kuten Lama also belongs to the Gelugpa monastery of Ganden (now based in India) which is vocal in its opposition to the Dalai Lama's own renunciation of Dorje Shugden.³⁰ These ties would have been strengthened when in 1987 Kelsang Gyatso entered into a three year retreat, an undertaking which would have been sanctioned through the use of an oracle.³¹

The second is his own position as a holder of Phabongkhapa's lineage. Since the lineage of a lama's teachers is an important qualification, the Dalai Lama's criticism of Phabongkhapa's strict sectarian approach would have been regarded by Kelsang Gyatso as an attack on his own status as an heir to Phabongkhapa's teachings.³²

As the leader of the Tibetans in exile and as a significant teacher within the Gelugpa tradition, the Dalai Lama's opinion on Dorje Shugden would carry more weight among the

²⁷ Hereafter NKT.

²⁸ Bluck, *British Buddhism*, 130.

²⁹ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 72.

³⁰ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 74.

³¹ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 74.

³² Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 73.

Tibetan community than those Gelugpa who remained ardent sectarians. Since he was a follower of Dorje Shugden, Kelsang Gyatso would have felt bound by oath to preserve the purity of Tsongkhapa's teachings. This preservation would require him to critique the Dalai Lama since it was the Dalai Lama's Rimé approach which was corrupting the Gelugpa tradition.³³ However this would not be possible among ethnic Tibetans whose loyalty is to the Dalai Lama. Therefore Kelsang Gyatso would have found himself becoming gradually isolated from the broader Tibetan community in India. Yet as the dispute with the FPMT showed, Kelsang Gyatso remained popular with his Western students in Britain and so it was there that he decided that his revival of Tsongkhapa's tradition must begin. The foundation of the NKT therefore is presented by Kelsang Gyatso as a response to degeneration taking place within the Gelugpa tradition, a degeneration which has its origins within the corrupting world of Tibetan politics and culture.³⁴

The removal from the world of Tibetan culture has allowed Kelsang Gyatso to present the NKT as a modern form of Buddhism which can be practiced regardless of one's own ethnicity. The modern aspects of the NKT are evident in the fact that it has removed any unnecessary Tibetan cultural features. The Dalai Lama is no longer revered and his image is not displayed in any NKT centres.³⁵ Liturgies are no longer conducted in Tibetan but are instead composed in the language of the society in which the centre is based.³⁶ Even the artwork of NKT *thangkas* has become largely distanced from its Tibetan origins and has started to take on a more Westernised style.³⁷ Teachers are not required to become ordained

³³ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 87.

³⁴ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 87.

³⁵ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 76.

³⁶ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 100.

³⁷ Bluck, *British Buddhism*, 149.

monks and many are in fact lay followers.³⁸ In this way Kelsang Gyatso has divorced Tsongkhapa's teachings from their origin within Tibetan society and has been able to present them as a modern religion which is compatible with modernity. Those who choose to follow his teachings are not required to give up their Western heritage or the trappings of Western lifestyle. The missionary aspect of the NKT is evident by the fact that it has established over 1100 centres throughout the Western world.³⁹

Another modern aspect of the NKT is its focus on a worldwide saviour figure. For the NKT this saviour figure is Dorje Shugden. Like Phabongkhapa, Kelsang Gyatso does not view Dorje Shugden as a mere worldly deity but rather as a fully enlightened buddha.⁴⁰ Instead of being the wrathful ghost of the murdered Dragpa Gyeltsen, Kelsang Gyatso presents Dorje Shugden as an emanation of Mañjuśrī.⁴¹ For the NKT, Dorje Shugden not only works to protect Buddhist practitioners but all sentient beings.⁴² As I have shown this re-conceptualisation of a religious figure into a world saviour is one of the elements which allows a religion to move beyond its cultural origins and become a 'modern' religion.

Yet within the Tibetan tradition this re-conceptualisation of Dorje Shugden as a world buddha is contradicted by the fact that communication with the deity has traditionally taken place through the medium of an oracle, a form of contact for worldly spirits but not buddhas

³⁸ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 99.

³⁹ When using the "Find a center" search on the website www.kadampa.org, the search button brings up a list of nations. These are all primarily western. The list includes the USA, the UK, most Western European nations, South American nations such as Brazil and Chile, and Pacific nations such as Australia and New Zealand. While there are entries for Malaysia and Taiwan, there are none listed for India. Kadampa Centers Map, accessed April 2, 2012, <http://kadampa.org/en/map/>

⁴⁰ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 102.

⁴¹ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 101.

⁴² The Dharma Protector, accessed April 2, 2012, <http://kadampa.org/en/buddhism/the-dharma-protector/>

and bodhisattvas.⁴³ In order to deal with this issue Kelsang Gyatso has downplayed the use of the Kuten Lama in his promotion of Dorje Shugden.⁴⁴ It has also been suggested that Kelsang Gyatso did this to make Dorje Shugden less ‘Tibetan’ and therefore less exotic to the Western mind.⁴⁵ As I have already shown through quotes by Tucci and Harrer, the Western encounter with the Tibetan worship of protector spirits through the use of gloomy chapels and oracles can be both confusing and terrifying. Because Dorje Shugden is now considered to be a fully enlightened being, the individual practitioner can make contact with him through their own spiritual activities without the use of the oracle. This almost Protestant approach to Dorje Shugden is no doubt more appealing to the modern Western mindset with its distrust of rituals and priestly intercession.

Yet the emphasis placed upon Dorje Shugden by the NKT has drawn criticism from the Dalai Lama who has also resorted to modern religious terminology when discussing the deity. In the 1998 BBC documentary “An Unholy Row,” he considers the worship of Dorje Shugden to not be worthy of the epithet ‘religion’ and instead simply dismisses it as ‘spirit worship.’⁴⁶ In this sense he is engaging with the Western dialogue which makes a differentiation between ‘true religion’ and ‘superstition.’

However while the NKT may be ‘modern’ in the sense that it is able to transcend its Tibetan cultural origins it also can be viewed as a movement which, for its members, offers a sense of security against the pluralism of modernity. This viewpoint is given by David N. Kay, who references the American psychiatrist Robert Lifton’s *The Protean Self: Human reliance in an*

⁴³ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 102.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ BBC: An Unholy Row – New Kadampa Tradition and Dorje Shugden – Documentary 1998 – Part 3, accessed April 2, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkqpECpPYu4>

age of fragmentation. Lifton argues that the pluralistic and inclusive attitude of modernity causes individuals reacting in two ways. The first is the Protean Self whereby individuals, through their encounter with multiple traditions, critical thinking and freedom to choose, have become dislocated from their cultural origins and therefore take a more personalised approach to spirituality which allows them to decide which doctrines to follow and which to discard.⁴⁷ The second approach is where the individual, through a sense of dislocation and inability to reconcile the multiple choices available to them, become fearful and require a single narrative by which to ground themselves.⁴⁸ In Lifton's view, this fear leads to the totalism of fundamentalism.⁴⁹

One of Kelsang Gyatso's reasons for founding the NKT was his concern for the undermining of Tsongkhapa's teachings by other traditions. For him, this undermining was taking place as a result of the Dalai Lama's promotion of Rimé among Westerners. The Rimé certainly appeals to modern Western approach to religion as it allows them to pick and choose which elements suit the individual's own spiritual needs.⁵⁰ Yet as Lifton shows this attitude of pick and choose can lead to a sense of uncertainty. Therefore the NKT, with its sole focus on the Gelugpa tradition as interpreted by Kelsang Gyatso and his established doctrine, offers those who feel lost and overwhelmed by pluralism a sense of security.⁵¹ However as Kay points out, this is not necessarily a reaction against modernity by Kelsang Gyatso, as he is simply following the pre-modern tradition of Gelugpa exclusivism.⁵² Instead it is those Westerners

⁴⁷ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 109.

⁴⁸ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 109.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 88.

⁵¹ Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 112.

⁵² Kay, *Tibetan and Zen Buddhism*, 112.

who have been brought up in a modern, post Enlightenment Western society and have become disillusioned by it who are seeking a return to fundamental religion.

In conclusion I would argue that the encounter of Tibetan Buddhism with modernity has led to a tripartite split. Two branches of this split are those which are within the control of the Dalai Lama. The first branch is that of 'Tibetan' Buddhism as it is practiced both in Tibet and in exile and which maintains its use of ritual and worship of local gods. The second branch is that of Buddhism Modernism which the Dalai Lama uses to present Buddhism to Westerners. The third branch which has grown outside of the control of Tibet and the Dalai Lama is that which is best represented by the New Kadampa Tradition. However the last two branches intertwine to form what could be termed a 'universal' religion. Both are removed from their Tibetan origins and are able to be practiced by Westerners regardless of their nationality or language. In my view the problem Tibetan Buddhism faces in the West is when the size of these two intertwined branches gradually starts to obscure and dominate the single branch of 'Tibetan' Buddhism.

Conclusion

This thesis has been an examination of the issues which have arisen as a result of Protestant Modernity being applied to Tibetan Buddhism in the West. As I showed in Chapter One, modernity is not a historical process which is unique to the West. As a critique, modernity is a universal element of any human society. However the difference between the various modernities can be found in where and when these critiques begin. I would agree with Gustavo Benavides' claim that Buddhism embodies modernity for as I have shown in Chapter Two Buddhism has constantly critiqued itself and adapted itself to survive in cultures other than that of post Vedic India. This critique has been an ongoing process. In this thesis I have shown how the continual critique (beginning with Mahāyāna to Vajrayāna and finally Tsongkhapa's Gelugpa) has led to Tibetan Buddhism and its ability to spread beyond Tibet, both geographically and culturally.

The problem which Tibetan Buddhism has faced in the twentieth century is its sudden collision with Western modernity. As I have shown in Chapter One, Western modernity is the result of the Reformation and the Enlightenment's critique of Christianity. This critique has entrenched ideas of what religion is in the Western mindset. With the rise of secularism religion has come to be seen as a private affair, a relationship between humanity and the divine which should not cross into the public sphere. In this view humanity is forever separated from an unknown God with whom individuals strive for union. With the Protestant emphasis on rational thinking Westerners have come to dismiss actions such as ritual as mere superstition. This individualistic idea of religion also seeped into Western economic development and gave rise to capitalism and its focus on salvation through the accumulation of wealth. These two factors of Western modernity – humanity being forever separated from a source of divinity and capitalism also gave birth to the critique of Marxism.

It is against these factors which Tibetan Buddhism has been forced to defend itself. Chinese Marxism, having inherited its idea of religion from Protestant Germany, has labelled Tibetan Buddhism as feudal superstition which oppresses the people. In response, the Dalai Lama has defended Tibetan Buddhism by incorporating yet another Protestant ideology which has its origins in nineteenth century colonialism, Buddhist Modernism. By focusing on the meditational and rational aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama has managed to promote a religion which is considered to be in keeping with the Enlightenment ideals of human progress. However this encounter with the West has only served to widen a centuries old rift within Tibetan Buddhism. In keeping with both his own traditional views and those of western modernity, the Dalai Lama has promoted a universal form of Buddhism. The response to this has been the formation of the New Kadampa Tradition, a form of the Gelugpa tradition which has responded with its own sectarian view of Buddhist Modernism.

Individualism has been the gift of modernity to the Western world. However I would argue that this individualism has created a conundrum for Westerners. Rather than free us the Protestant idea of individualism has led to the formation of ideologies which keep us enslaved. The most prominent example of this is capitalism which is subliminally driven by a Calvinist doctrine whereby the individual is reassured that they have received salvation from God through the accumulation of their wealth. However rather than offering us happiness this world of interest rates, corporate banks and job insecurity has instead kept us trapped in a mechanised process whereby we work gruelling hours to purchase material products in order to reassure ourselves that we have the good life, that we have in fact been saved. The worth of our lives has become reduced to being measured by how much capital we can produce.

Modernity, with its Judaeo-Christian concept of time as being linear, is constantly striving towards the future, to an 'End of Days' when humanity will live in a utopian society.

However the offspring of Protestantism, both capitalism and its antithesis of Marxism, have

failed to deliver these utopian worlds. This disillusionment, coupled with the crisis of faith brought about by scientific developments, has led to Westerners seeking an alternative to Protestant modernity. For many this alternative comes in the form of Western Buddhism or Buddhist Modernism. However, as Slavoj Žižek argues, Western Buddhism isn't a solution to capitalism. Instead it is simply a sedative which dulls the pain.¹

For Žižek Western Buddhism is a fetish in that it allows Westerners to momentarily escape from the realities of capitalism. Western Buddhism, with its focus on meditation and tranquillity works perfectly as this fetish.² It allows the individual to remain within the capitalist world and ignore the actions they commit within it by telling them that none of it matters – what really matters is their own individual peace which they can find through meditation. The Western Buddhist is therefore free to live the modern life by working in a corporate environment, consuming material goods and remaining focused on their own self. When all of these daily trappings become too overwhelming they can then briefly escape from the hectic rush of life through meditation which allows them to 'renounce' the materialist world.

Perhaps this is what Sven, the lifestyle Buddhist commentator on *Stuff* really meant. For him, Buddhism in its Western form was a lifestyle in that it allows Westerners to participate in modernity without resorting to those so called 'religious' elements such as priests and ritual. The Western Buddhist is free to drive a Mercedes on their way to a business meeting because they believe that they are actually 'beyond' material possessions.

¹ Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief (Thinking in action)*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 12.

² Žižek, *On Belief*, 14.

In analysing Western Buddhism and its relation to capitalism Žižek refers to Marx's claim that religion is the opiate of the people.³ I would have to agree. Western Buddhism is simply a band aid applied on top of a gaping wound – a temporary fixture to ease the pain of a problem which will not heal. However I do not agree with Marx's claim that religion is the opiate of the people. Instead I would align myself with Martin A. Mills and argue that the elements of religion which Protestantism and modernity have sought to remove, both from Christianity and Buddhism, are in fact elements which are in the hands of the people as opposed to the dominating echelons of society. My thesis differs from Mills' original argument in that I have examined what happens when Buddhist ritual and local gods, which express the voices of the people, are denied to Westerners through Buddhist Modernism.

It is here that we see a form of religion which is different from the individual, yet universal method of modernity which allows a person to be 'religious' but also operate autonomously from a group or hierarchy. This other is the form which localises itself. Due to human activity certain areas become sacred and legends develop. People are given a sense of location and their world becomes imbued with meaning. Rather than numbing people to the suffering of life, this ritualisation of the surrounding world allows people to recreate their world and bind themselves together. In effect they take control over the elements which are chaotic. I would argue that modern religions eventually evolve (or de-evolve) to take this form. The example I have chosen to examine in this thesis is Tibetan Buddhism.

As I have shown Tibetan Buddhism is a form of Buddhism which localised itself in Tibet through the incorporation of local deities. For nineteenth century scholars, operating within a Protestant lens, this form of Buddhism was seen a corruption of the Buddha's teachings. The Marxist critique continues this by labelling local deity worship as feudal superstition.

³ Žižek, *On Belief*, 13.

However as Mills has shown the local deities are actually the voices of the common people. Through the use of tantric rituals and the intermediary figures of lamas and oracles, the people are able to gain control over the otherwise seemingly chaotic elements of life. These local gods dictate how society should operate, yet they are not the voices of the dominating lamas, they are the voices of the commoners.

Can this traditional form of Tibetan Buddhism be applied to the West? I would argue that it can. If Western Buddhism is nothing more than an opiate for people to deal with the chaotic elements of Western modernity then people need a form of Buddhism which gives them control over their daily life. In our Western secular society our lives are controlled by forces which appear beyond our control such banks, insurance companies and stock markets – modern factors which are created by Protestant capitalism. We worship these factors and believe that they are higher powers but as Marx has shown they are in fact the voices of those who dominate us. However Marxism has failed in its attempt to eradicate capitalism since it failed to truly understand religion and the role which it plays in human society.

It is perhaps ironic that many Westerners choose to call themselves ‘Tibetan’ Buddhists simply because of a fascination with the Dalai Lama yet choose to ignore the worship of deities which grant the Dalai Lama his ritualised authority. To simply follow teachings on developing patience and compassion is a form of Buddhist Modernism. However for the individual to be a ‘Tibetan’ Buddhist this means that they must embrace what appear to be pre-modern traditions – ritual, pilgrimage, saints and demons. To many modern Westerners this may appear ridiculous. However these elements were once part of the West’s own collective Christian heritage and are still present in the Roman and Orthodox traditions.

The way in which Christianity, as a modern religion, was introduced to Europe was through the same means undertaken by Vajrayāna siddhas such as Padmasambhava. Trees, wells and

rocks which were once dedicated to pagan gods became associated with local saints and traditional practices were reinterpreted with Christian meaning. In this way pre-medieval Christianity became localised in Europe and therefore Roman Christianity in Ireland would have been vastly different from Christianity as practiced by Nestorian Christianity in Mongolia. This adaptation of Buddhism to local geography and culture has taken place in the West but not in the same sense. Modernity removed our need to ritualise the landscape and to rely on tradition. Instead we are now dislocated and drift aimlessly in a world which revolves around speed and capital gain. By simply focusing on the individual mind all Buddhist Modernism does is allow for brief moments of escapism.

I would argue that Tibetan Buddhism in the West needs to retain its 'Tibetan' aspects while integrating on a more localised level. In my coverage of Gelugpa expansion into Mongolia and Russia I already have shown that it is possible for Tibetan Buddhism to move beyond its cultural homeland and still maintain the ritual elements which developed in Tibet. If modernity has failed us through only offering us secular capitalism and Marxism as a means to happiness then perhaps Buddhism in the West needs to take a pre-modern approach. This is where the figure of the siddha is crucial. This siddha integrates with the local people, harnesses their voices and gives them a physical expression through ritualising their landscape. The siddha then hands the control over these chaotic elements to the people who maintain their control through the use of ritual. In this way people are given a chance to find meaning in their surroundings and to take control over the elements in life which are threatening.

The question I would ask, and one which is waiting to be answered, is can a siddha gain control over the chaotic elements of our modern society? Can the forces of capitalism be

bound through the voices of the people to serve the teachings of the Buddha rather than the individual accumulation of wealth?⁴

This localisation would work to counter the two main problems that I believe Tibetan Buddhism faces in the West as a result of taking a Buddhist Modernism form. First of all it would stop it from being reduced to a fetish. By becoming localised it would re-enchant the surrounding landscape and therefore give the individual a sense of purpose and meaning in the exterior elements of their life, they would no longer have to retreat inside their mind (the disenchantment of an individual's world being once more a symptom of Western modernity). Second, by creating a recognisable tradition it would remove the pluralistic confusion which modernity has created and therefore reduce the need to turn to a narrow and fundamentalist path such as that taken by the New Kadampa Tradition.

Religion is a difficult and problematic concept in the West. It is even more problematic when dealing with a tradition which has originated elsewhere than Western Europe. However if we wish to make an effort to overcome these issues then we need to make a detailed examination of not only how our own modern society has evolved but also that of others. The Buddha often likened himself to a doctor and his teachings as a cure. However as we have seen there are different forms of Buddhism which have evolved to deal with different cultural crises. Therefore, as with medicine, we should not simply assume that one watered down prescription will cure all ailments. Rather than immediately asking 'what is the cure?' and applying Buddhist Modernism as a top down solution to our society's woes, we should instead ask 'what are the symptoms?' This was perhaps the same view that siddhas such as

⁴ In *Red Shambhala: magic, prophecy, and geopolitics in the heart of Asia* (Wheaton, Quest Books, 2011), Andrei Znamenski mentions how, in 1920, the propaganda of Communism by Mongolian Communists received the 'blessings' of a local Buddhist oracle Gutembe. This oracle told them that because society had become corrupted the deity would assist the Communists in spreading their message. In using Mills' analysis, one can look at this as the oracle voicing the concerns of the local people and their approval of Communism. See: Znamenski, *Red Shambhala*, 135.

Padmasambhava took when seeking to propagate Vajrayāna Buddhism. Only then, from the ground up, can we work to create a cure.

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