how Buddhist discourse may be shaped by political agendas. Moreover, the last section of Matsumoto's essay "The *Lotus Sutra* and Japanese Culture" (388–403) should be required in courses on Japanese religions if only to counter romanticized views such as those presented in D. T. Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture*. As an aside, the provocative tone both Matsumoto and Hakamaya assume (it comes through even in translation and is somewhat reminiscent of neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty) makes for an amusing read.

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Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West. **By Donald S. Lopez, Jr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. ISBN 0-2264-9310-5. Pp. 283.**

> Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism have long been objects of Western fantasy. Since the earliest encounters of Venetian travelers and Catholic missionaries with Tibetan monks at the Mongol court, tales of the mysteries their mountain homeland and the magic of their strange—yet strangely familiar—religion have had a peculiar hold on the Western imagination. During the last two centuries, the valuation of Tibetan society and, particularly, its religion, has fluctuated wildly. Tibetan Buddhism has been portrayed sometimes as the most corrupt deviation from Buddha's true dharma, sometimes as its most direct descendant. These fluctuations have occurred over the course of this century, at its beginning as Tibet resisted the colonial ambitions of a European power and at its end as it succumbed to the colonial ambitions of an Asian power (3).

The Western world's relationship with Tibet has been a passionate one. Serving variously as the last preserve of mystical purity, the last society uncontaminated by contact with the West, and recently as the most just political cause around, Tibet has been asked to fulfil many roles for the outsider. In his latest book, Donald Lopez examines this complex construction westerners refer to as "Tibet" and, finally, breaks the news as gently as he can: Tibet, as the Western imagination conceives of it, does not exist.

Prisoners of Shangri-La is a daring book because it deals with a subject that cannot help but be political as well as intellectual. In it, we witness the disarmament of an unexpected occupying force; namely, the Western desire for a pure and purely "other." When Edward Said dismantled "The Orient" in *Orientalism*, the only thing at stake was a mode of Western thought whose time had come. Not so in the case of Tibet. While the exercise is the same, there seems to be much more at stake—in this case, an occupied territory that the world fears to designate as a "country" where the native inhabitants are having their culture, language, religion and, in many cases, lives unceremoniously erased. If Tibet, as Westerners like to imagine it, does not exist, what is there, after all, to preserve?

Lopez is careful to maintain his position that he is neither lashing out at Tibet support groups nor at the "justness" of the Tibetan cause. To his credit, he does not allow this political sensitivity to prevent a thorough deconstruction of "Tibet." Nor does it mitigate his academic rigour.

There are seven chapters to *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, each of which tackles the "problem" of Tibet from a different perspective. In the chapter entitled, "The Spell," for example, Lopez examines the mantra *om mani padme hum*. He traces its encounter with the West from 1626, when the Portuguese Jesuit Andrade commented on it in a report of his mission to Tibet, to the present day, when even now scholars try to decipher its meaning. It has been interpreted to mean everything from, "God, thou knowest" (116) to an invocation to "the deity of the clitoris-vagina" (133). Explaining how it has come to be understood in so many different ways, and illuminating the strange process by which Tibetans at times internalize Western analyses of their own culture and present it as their own, the reader will be captivated by the history of these six syllables.

In other chapters, adorned with such titles as "The Book," "The Eye," and "The Art," Lopez analyses the history and implications of terms, texts, ideas and characters who fill the record books of the West's encounter with the Land of Snows.

In general, this work is dynamic, engaging and enlightening. Clearly written and meticulously documented, it reads at times like a story by Borges and at times like a philological study. For anyone who has ever felt the allure of Tibet—that means scholars as much as (if not more) than anyone else—*Prisoners of Shangri-La* is an important book because it illuminates the history of the concept of "Tibet" and introduces the reader to the less mythically satisfying but nonetheless existent "real" thing. It also forces readers to examine their own presuppositions; an exercise worth the effort for anyone who hopes to engage Tibet instead of Shangri-La.

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The Bible As It Was. **By James L. Kugel. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997. ISBN 0-6740-6940-4. Pp. xvii+680.**

Ancient interpretation of the Hebrew Bible can be studied two ways. The first focuses on interpretative documents and their distinctive treatments of the part(s) of the Bible to which they relate. The second gathers the different interpretations around the Bible texts and scrutinizes their interpretative data to demonstrate how they treat the Bible. Kugel's massive opus is a ground breaking effort of the second type, but the concept underlying the first is never far from his interest and demonstrates his full mastery of the literature.

In twenty-five chapters, he examines numerous fascinating passages from the Bible (not only those suggested by the chapter titles) and how they were