



**Smithsonian Institution**

*Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*

## **The People of India, Volume One**

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## TIBETAN. - BHOTIAS.

general character of Lamaism is less fanatical than that of most superstitions, and under its influence the terrible Moguls and other Tartars have become a comparatively mild and peaceable race. The increase of population is much checked by the enormous proportion of persons devoted to the service of religion (who are so numerous, that two-thirds of the productive lands are appropriated to their support), and all of whom, whether lamas or secular clergy, gelongs or monks, or anis or nuns profess celibacy. Some resemblance has been traced in Lamaism to the characteristics of the Romish Church in such points as the existence of monastic establishments for both sexes, the acknowledgment of a supreme infallible head of the whole religious community, and the adoption of pageantry in public worship, as well as in other matters; it has also been observed that the dress of the lamas of high rank (that of the Grand Lama is yellow) closely resembles that of cardinals both in colour and general appearance. Advantage has been taken of these fortuitous resemblances, to insinuate that Christianity was derived from Buddhism. But the late Cardinal Wiseman, in an able memoir on the subject (*Lectures on the Connexion between Science and Revealed Religion*, Lecture 11, vol. ii., p. 270) quoted by Vigne, justly repudiates the idea, and adduces strong grounds for considering Buddhism "but an attempted imitation" of Christianity, observing, that "at the time when the Buddhist patriarchs first established themselves in Tibet, that country was," owing to the Nestorian missions in Tartary, and to religious embassies from the Pope and St. Louis of France, "in immediate contact with Christianity."

The general mode of disposing of the dead in Tibet is not unlike that of the Parsees in Western India, the corpse being exposed in the open air, and left to be devoured by carnivorous birds. Turner describes a place set apart for this purpose. The funeral rites of the great Lamas are more solemnly performed. As soon as the soul of Buddha has left the Grand Lama to inhabit the person of his successor, the body is placed upright in an attitude of devotion, with the legs folded under it, and in this position is deposited in its shrine, over which a splendid mausoleum is usually erected. Inferior Lamas have their bodies burned, and the ashes either scattered or deposited in small metallic idols.

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