

# The Lama Wearing Trousers: Notes on an Iron Statue in a German Private Collection<sup>1</sup>

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The recent publication of an article discussing an iron statue with an apparently Tibetan motive has spurred an extensive, partly sensationalist media coverage. A group of researchers from mineralogy, planetology and related fields analyzed the said statue's material and identified it as meteoric iron, more precisely meteoric iron stemming from the Siberian-Mongolian borderlands. Rather than this peculiar chemical analysis alone, it was the statue's alleged association with ancient Tibet, German expeditions to Tibet during in the 1930s, and its featuring a svastika in prominent position that has brought it to large-scale public attention. In this article, I point out a number of stylistic features that undoubtedly identify this statue as a European-made imitation of Tibetan art. Furthermore, I address the unclear provenance of this statue on the German antique market and add some reflections on the role of Tibetology and Buddhist Studies in popular discourse.

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## *Introduction*

When the article "Buddha from space -- An ancient object of art made of a Chinga iron meteorite",<sup>2</sup> appeared in the September 2012 issue of *Meteoritics & Planetary Science*, its abstract contained the caveat, "the ethnological and art historical details of the 'iron man' sculpture, as well as the time of sculpturing, currently remain speculative."<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, within a few weeks after its electronic publication on September 14, this article received wide coverage in prominent media such as the internet portals of the Discovery Channel (September 26, "German scientists have discovered an ancient Buddhist statue of extraterrestrial origin. Depicting Vaishravana, the Buddhist god of

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<sup>1</sup> Quote as: Bayer, Achim. 2012. *The Lama Wearing Trousers: Notes on an Iron Statue in a German Private Collection*. Hamburg: Zentrum für Buddhismuskunde. I would like to thank Christoph Bayer, Henk Blezer, Elmar Buchner, Isrun Engelhardt, John Huntington, Kazushi Iwao, Matthew Kapstein, Elizabeth Kenney, Heyryun Koh, Ralf Kramer, Robert Kritzer, Carmen Meinert, Iain Sinclair and Henrik Sørensen for their prompt feedback on this issue. While I was writing this article, several of these experts, most notably John Huntington, have issued statements on the authenticity of the statue and come to conclusions very similar to mine.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Buchner et al., "Buddha from Space," in the bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> Buchner et al, "Buddha from Space," p. 1495. See also *ibid*, p. 1495: "the origin and age of the 'iron man' meteorite [are] still a matter of speculation."

wealth or war, the statue..."),<sup>4</sup> the *Spiegel* (September 27), the *Guardian* (September 28, "Relic taken by SS in 1930s analysed by researchers...")<sup>5</sup> and so on.

While any expert for Tibetan art can easily identify the typical pseudo-Tibetan features of this statue, Buchner et al. did not seriously consider the possibility or an imitation, and their warning as to the "details" was either silently passed over or condemned to the less prominent sections of the news reports, which focused more on the "buddha from space", the "ancient object of art" and the Schäfer-svastika amalgam. At the time of writing "the Buddha from Space", the authors, experts from various fields of natural sciences, contacted several persons with a background in Tibetan Buddhism, ethnology and similar fields, but did not mention the view of an established academic researcher specializing in Tibetan or Buddhist culture in their paper. It further seems as if, as a rule, such experts were not contacted by the journalists rephrasing the results of the research paper, either. This, I think, bears some serious implications for our field.

In the course of this paper, I would first like to describe the statue as depicted by Buchner et al. and point out the features that identify it as a pseudo-Tibeticum. Since the statue has been brought into connection with the Schäfer expeditions to Tibet, I will further discuss some possible scenarios for provenance of the statue, among which a connection to Schäfer is unlikely. Ultimately, I will reflect upon the role of Tibetology and academic Buddhist studies in this public discourse.

### *1. A Word on the Absence of Scholarly Discord*

Although this paper is addressed to a specialized academic audience, I would like to briefly address readers from outside our field and clarify that there is not any controversy among experts about the authenticity of the statue, the "lama wearing trousers", as I would like to call it. Up to date, no acknowledged authority in the field of Tibetan or Mongolian art has publicly deemed the statue authentic and the issue has to be considered uncontroversial.

The eight authors of Buchner et al. ("Buddha from Space") come from fields like mineralogy and planetology and they have included a call for feedback from experts in cultural matters.<sup>6</sup> I am happy to provide such information, while, at the same time, I am in no position to judge the geochemical findings.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Lorenzi, "Ancient Buddha" (unpaginated).

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, "Priceless Tibetan Buddha" (unpaginated).

<sup>6</sup> Buchner et al, "Buddha from Space," p. 1498.

<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, since this paper addresses a specialist audience I do not list well-known academic research dealing with the myth of Tibet and the Schäfer expeditions. For such sources, kindly consult the bibliography of Engelhardt, "Nazis of Tibet".

## 2. *Pseudo-Tibetan Features of the "Lama Wearing Trousers"*

The non-Asian features of the "lama wearing trousers" should be immediately obvious to any scholar in the field. Nonetheless, I would first like to verbalize the obvious and name the thirteen most salient points:

1. The lama is neither barefoot nor does he wear traditional boots.<sup>8</sup> The shoes cover the feet, like European shoes, up to the ankles and no further.
2. Obviously, the trousers worn by the lama do not resemble anything seen in Tibetan or Mongolian sculpture. Traditional statues feature robes, occasionally armour at the shins, but never trousers. The slits at the end of the trousers are probably meant to make a vaguely oriental, mediaeval or pastoral impression.
3. The right knee points directly to the side and right foot is almost straight below the trunk, giving a rather two-dimensional impression. One would expect the foot either in front or more stretched out to the right.
4. The right hand has, compared to original Tibetan or Mongolian statues, rather inelegant short and thick fingers and the lines in the palm are clearly visible.
5. The left hand is equally bulky and in a rounded position.
6. The arms are covered in tube-shaped sleeves resembling pullover sleeves, as different from the long sleeves of a traditional man's *chu pa*.
7. At the sleeves, the garment is adorned by something like a chain.
8. The style of the full beard makes a rather European impression. In Tibetan and Mongolian art, a similar beard can only be expected in depictions of specific Siddhas, while the beard of a deity is rather thin.
9. The single earring is extremely unusual and the ears are not symmetrical.
10. The curved shape of the eyes quite certainly goes back to a failed attempt to copy the distinctive curving of eyes in Tibetan art.
11. The scholar's hat is not prolonged at on top, barely reaches the forehead and does not cover the ears. It could be an adaptation of a peculiar helmet.
12. The halos behind the head and the body are completely unadorned, let alone the fact that metal statues a rule have no halo, or a halo as a separate piece.
13. The cape is knotted before the chest, which is so far not unusual. Nonetheless, the knot is rather thick and to overall fit resembles a Roman cape much more than the light cape usually worn by Vaiśravaṇa and other deities.

In an open letter which I sent to Dr. Buchner and his team, as well as to the internet forum of the *Spiegel* magazine on 28 September 2012, I considered it "probable" that the statue was an imitation. "Probable", because I saw an extremely faint possibility that the statue had been produced in the western parts Inner Asia. Nonetheless, the production of an iron statue of this quality (in terms of fine crafting of hands, earring and face) would presuppose the existence of other works of art of the same style in more workable materials. My own research has not yielded a single even remotely similar object, which let me to conclude that the statue is in fact a European counterfeit, and I was encouraged to take this conclusion by several colleagues I contacted. While no such artefacts exist in Inner Asia, artefacts of the pseudo-Tibetan style exist in

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Bunce, *Dictionary of Buddhist and Hindu Iconography*, p. 161.

abundance, produced as home decoration, for film sets and the like. Any, highly improbable, claim to the opposite would have to carry burden of proof.

As for the technical process of production, I further find it remarkable that both halos are almost perfectly circular, while the statue, seen from the back, makes a rather raw impression. According to Buchner et al. ("Buddha from Space," p. 1496), the statue was "forged at the edges and at the basis." Lacking a side view and a view from the bottom, it is in fact difficult to imagine the process of forging, at least for the layman in this particular craft.

### 3. *Whom Does the Statue Depict?*

In addition to the features mentioned above, the fine working of facial features, hand lines etc. rule it out that the statue was produced by a rural Tibetan or Mongolian blacksmith who had no training in traditional iconography and technique. Rather, it seems as if an original Tibetan statue, or an image of such a statue, has been liberally copied by a well-trained western sculptor who had no background in traditional Tibetan art.

Compared to the above observations, the question which person or deity the original depicts adds little to our understanding of the issue. Nonetheless, I would like to state my own observations here in order to shed light on the process of copying. While there are good reasons to assume that the original was a statue of Vaiśravaṇa, the primary candidate named by Buchner et al.,<sup>9</sup> I see several features which could indicate either details from either a single depiction of Padmasambhava, or from the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava were added here into a peculiar combination. While this section may be irrelevant to the historian of Tibetan art, a comparison of details is helpful in order to understand the production of this particular statue, and possible future research into the principles and history of pseudo-Tibetica.

The position of legs and feet are remnant not only of Vaiśravaṇa (in one of his many forms),<sup>10</sup> but also of Padmasambhava in his form of "Subjugating the World of Appearances" (Nangsi-Zilnön, sNang srid zil gnon), as well as, of course, numerous other deities.<sup>11</sup> Besides the position of the legs, it is in fact the massive double halo that suggests one or several two-dimensional originals for the production of this statue.

The strongest indication of Vaiśravaṇa is the cape knotted before the chest,<sup>12</sup> which also can be seen in Padmasambhava's manifestation as Lodän Chogsé (Blo ldan mchog sred)<sup>13</sup> and accompanying figures such as Pälgyi Senge (dPal gyi seng ge), but not Nangsi Zilnön.<sup>14</sup>

The apparent scholar's hat can be quite misleading, for it rather seems to be an adaptation of a peculiar type of helmet worn by Vaiśravaṇa, which, nonetheless,

<sup>9</sup> Buchner et al., "Buddha from Space," p. 1495: "The sculpture possibly portrays the Buddhist god Vaiśravaṇa (Michel, personal communication)."

<sup>10</sup> See Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography*, p. 3840.

<sup>11</sup> See O-rgyan-'jigs-med-chos-kyi-dbang-po, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, p. iii.

<sup>12</sup> See Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography*, pp. 3840, 3842. See also Bunce, *Dictionary of Buddhist and Hindu Iconography*, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> See Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography*, p. 2517.

<sup>14</sup> See Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography*, p. 2523.

definitely covers the ears.<sup>15</sup> Possibly, helmet and hat were conflated by the copyist, or, even more probably, the hat was simply crafted according to prevalent Western imaginations of a Tibetan lama's hat.<sup>16</sup> Padmasambhava wears a scholar's hat in his manifestation as Pema Jungnä (Padma 'byung gnas) which is at times even shown with hand and feet in the same position as Nangsi-Zilnön.<sup>17</sup> Nangsi-Zilnön, on the other hand, as a rule wears the specific fivefold lotus hat.

Pema Jungnä, though, wears only one kind of robes, the monk's robes, as different from mixed clothing of the "lama wearing trousers." Multiple types of robes are worn, one above the other, by Padmasambhava Nangsi-Zilnön, who wears three kinds of robes identifying him as a follower of the Three Vehicles.<sup>18</sup>

The clunky vase or bag held by the lama could be an imitation of an original vase of long life. Its awkward shape could indicate that the statue derives from a sketch drawing or photograph in which the shape of the vase was blurred. The original may even have featured a vase within a skull cup, an arrangement not understood by the copyist. This, or an original mongoose, the common attribute of Vaiśravaṇa<sup>19</sup> could have been the original underlying the lama.<sup>20</sup> Padmasambhava Nangsi-Zilnön usually holds a vase and/or skull cup, but also forms of Vaiśravaṇa holding a vase are known.<sup>21</sup>

The right-hand attribute of the original was probably not understood by the copyist, or impossible to produce out of iron. In the case of in the case of Vaiśravaṇa, this is usually a staff<sup>22</sup> or banner,<sup>23</sup> in the case of Nangsi Zilnön, a vajra. Instead, the left hand is depicted in what looks like the gesture of giving.<sup>24</sup> I see no indication that an attribute was ever affixed to the hand. Buchner et al. ("Buddha from Space," p. 1496) further state that it is "uncertain whether the 'iron man' was originally equipped with a flaming trident that got lost in the course of time", for which I see no indication, either.

As for the beard, Vaiśravaṇa is often depicted with a full beard, which Padmasambhava only features in some wrathful manifestations.<sup>25</sup> In neither case is it

<sup>15</sup> See Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography*, p. 3840. See also Willson and Brauen, eds., *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, nos. 310, 313 for more usual forms of this helmet.

<sup>16</sup> See also the illustrations section, below.

<sup>17</sup> See Singh, *Buddhist Tantra*, plate no. 9. See also O-rgyan-'jigs-med-chos-kyi-dbang-po, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, p. xxiv. Generally, the name Pema Jungnä is simply the Tibetan equivalent of Sanskrit "Padmasambhava", it signifies his depiction in the form of a scholar in the context of the "Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche."

<sup>18</sup> See O-rgyan-'jigs-med-chos-kyi-dbang-po, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, p. 178.

<sup>19</sup> See Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography*, p. 3840.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Bunce, *Dictionary of Buddhist and Hindu Iconography*, p. 161 on the bag or purse associated with *Kubera*. See also *ibid.*, p. 9 for the *amṛta* vase. Buchner et al. ("Buddha from Space," p. 1496) rightly state that "Vaiśravaṇa as a god of [wealth] usually holds a symbol of richness in the left hand, which can be represented by a little moneybag, a cup for alms, or the jambhara-lemon."

<sup>21</sup> See Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography*, p. 3841.

<sup>22</sup> See Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography*, p. 3840.

<sup>23</sup> See Willson and Brauen, eds., *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Willson and Brauen, eds., *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 321, for deities associated with Jambhala showing the gesture of giving.

<sup>25</sup> See Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography*, p. 2523.

similar to the lama, whose dense full beard rather complies to European "standards", so to say. Nangsi-Zilnön wears no more than a particular thin beard at the upper and lower lip, so it is more likely that Vaiśravaṇa here served as the model. Nonetheless, since I take the piece to be a rather free variation on an Asian theme, the beard could have been just as freely added as the trousers, single earring, chain collar and the like, to give the statue a more hermit-like look. The siddha-like earring resembles those of the lama in J.L. Kipling's illustrations. In illustration no. 1 (see below), the earrings and the svastika-adorned begging bowl are in fact the only unrealistic feature of the lama's dress and attributes, while hands and face make a markedly European impression.

Although the harness basically resembles that of Vaiśravaṇa, it differs in so far from standard depictions as it covers chest and belly exclusively, not the shoulders.<sup>26</sup> I would not like to speculate on its origin for the time being, since I vaguely remember having seen an image of Padmasambhava Nangsi-Zilnön wearing a similar harness under his robes (albeit without a svastika) during fieldwork. Since I cannot provide a reliable answer to this question, it has to be postponed for later research. For the time being, I think it is at least *possible* that the element of the harness has not been adapted from a form of Vaiśravaṇa from an original Nangsi-Zilnön.

As for the svastika, Buchner et al. are surely right in stating that it is more commonly used in the Bon tradition than in Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>27</sup> Still, I rather assume that it was placed at the harness under the influence of Chinese Buddhas featuring a svastika in this size and position.<sup>28</sup> It may well have been an explicit wish on the side of the purchaser with no correspondence in the original. The svastika on the harness faces to the left, as different from the official flag of the NS regime which features a right-facing svastika. This is by no means evidence for of the statue's originality, for we can safely assume that the sculptor or his commissioner knew that the svastika mostly faces left in Asia.

### 3. Hypotheses on the Provenance of the Statue on the German Antique Market

About the provenance of the statue, the authors of "Buddha from Space" state, "to our knowledge, the statue was brought to Germany by a Tibet expedition in the years 1938-1939, guided by Ernst Schäfer ... by order of the German National Socialist government."<sup>29</sup> From my communications with Elmar Buchner, I gather that no reliable documentation of this provenance has been yet been found. When I contacted Isrun Engelhardt, who is known for her serious research on Schäfer expeditions, I

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Willson and Brauen, eds., *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, nos. 310, 312, 313. Cf. also the full-body armor of Apsé in Kværne, *The Bon Religion of Tibet*, p. 114.

<sup>27</sup> Buchner et al., "Buddha from Space," p. 1496: "The Swastika prominently displayed on the cuirass ... was a symbol frequently used by the nature-based pre-Buddhist Bon (Bön) religion." Of course, "nature-based" and "pre-Buddhist" can be quite misleading in this context. The symbolism of the *svastika* is explained in Kværne, *The Bon Religion of Tibet*, p. 11. It is, nonetheless, to simple to say that "the Bonpo swastika ... turns to the left, while the Buddhist version turns to the right" (*ibid.*).

<sup>28</sup> See also Buchner et al., "Buddha from Space," p. 1495.

<sup>29</sup> Buchner et al., "Buddha from Space," p. 1495. It is astounding that the lack of a source reference for this claim has not been criticized by the peer reviewers of *Meteoritics & Planetary Science*, who could have rightly demanded the addition of "oral information, anonymous" or whatever may have been the source.

found that she had already been investigating this issue systematically and thinks it highly unlikely that the said expeditions have more than a fictitious connection to the lama wearing trousers.

Out of the innumerable ways in which this statue could have been produced, I would like to propose only two hypotheses. In either case, I think we can safely assume the statue was made at some point between 1910 and 1970. In this period, while the fascination for Tibetica was strong, European artists had to rely on their own techniques when reproducing Tibetan art,<sup>30</sup> and consumers did mostly not know how to distinguish between original and counterfeit. Furthermore, I assume that neither the Roman cape nor the dwarfish trousers would match the post-1970 image of mythical Tibet, when more details of original Tibetan art gained wide dissipation.

In my original open letter to Buchner et al., I considered the possibility that the statue was produced in connection with one of the Schäfer expeditions, maybe even commissioned by Schäfer himself, in order to impress the political elite and assure further funding of his institute. The function of the svastika would be evident in this case. Nonetheless, at the time of writing this letter, I was not aware of the complete lack of documentation for the putative connection with the Schäfer expeditions so that I have in the meantime dismissed this idea. The burden of proof would, again, rest with those who wish to maintain such a connection, and it would need some explanation why an imitation should have been used by a team in possession of originals. Hypothetically, I would like to propose that the statue was produced in Germany for one of two possible markets:

1. The statue was produced for the general antique and curio market, with the svastika and the raw material features used for general curiosity. Even under these presuppositions, it may be brought into circulation with an alleged connection to the Schäfer expeditions, which would have added to its mystery.<sup>31</sup>
2. It was made, more specifically, for the lucrative market of Nazi memorabilia, in this case probably sold with a claimed connection to the Schäfer expeditions.

As to the raw material itself, Buchner et al. state that their geochemical evidence "strongly points to the Tanna-Tuva region in the border area of eastern Sibiria and Mongolia,"<sup>32</sup> which lies around halfway between Ulaanbaatar and Novosibirsk. I am in no position to comment upon the geochemical findings. If the material in question actually comes from this area, I would assume that it reached Germany in its raw form. In that case, it should be evident that there are a number of possible ways in which a transfer to Germany could have happened, with not necessity to involve the Schäfer expeditions.

#### *4. The Myth of Tibet and the Myth of Tibetology*

A most stunning phenomenon in this process is the silence of Tibetologists and Buddhologist. Although Buchner et al. have contacted museums and private persons,

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, plates 252 and 382 in Hedin, *Transhimalaya*, vol. 2.

<sup>31</sup> On the general fascination of NS mysteries, even beyond that ideological ilk, see for example Engelhardt, "Nazis of Tibet," p. 63ff.

<sup>32</sup> Buchner et al, "Buddha from Space," p. 1498.

not a single Tibetologist established at an academic faculty is referred to in the article. In the section on "ethnologic aspects" of their paper, the authors state: "We hereby would like to encourage our colleagues (in particular archeologists and ethnologists) to communicate any cognitions or ideas to us with regard to the identity, age, provenance, and religious role of the 'iron man' sculpture."<sup>33</sup> Strikingly, this request does not mention the fields of Tibetology or Buddhist Studies. One of the authors in fact works at the University of Vienna, home to a strong tradition of Tibetology. In the course of their research have been in some form of contact with Alexander Berzin,<sup>34</sup> and they have utilized standard sources such as Snellgrove's *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*.<sup>35</sup> Still, it seems that until I contacted Dr. Buchner, chairs for Tibetology or Buddhist Studies did not play a role in this issue and the possibility of a counterfeit remained out of question.

I wonder what we as specialized researchers on Tibet an/or Buddhism can learn from this chain of events. How can it be that researchers in want of reliable information do not know where to turn to and that journalists bypass the important resource of academia? Demanding more outreach of the scientific community into the general audience is nothing new, of course, but in practice, cooperating with the media can be a highly time-consuming and unrewarding undertaking. The recent years have certainly seen some improvements. The ability and willingness to hold public lectures, for example, has gained more weight in a personal résumé research institutes have become more conscious about their public appearance and evening lectures for general audiences have become rather common.

Since the 1990s, the "myth of Tibet" has become a legitimate field of Tibetologist research, regarded as much more than just scientific waste management. In the same way, subjective Orientalism on the part of researchers has received the attention it deserves. In order to take this one step further, I would like to encourage researchers to address "the myth of Tibetology" as a subject in its own right, which means, in less poetic phrasing, "Tibetology in public perception." It might further be worthwhile to address this issue in the undergraduate introductions to Tibetology.

We can safely assume that, should a Tibetologist claim to have found a raw diamond in the sand of the Brahmaputra, at least a significant part of the media would ask for a geologist's expertise in order to make sure it is not glass. Quite to the contrary, a huge percentage of natural scientists and journalists is not aware of the fact that Tibetology is a science with a methodology just as rigid as any other. As in any other fields of science, the more abstract an expert's statement, the less rigidly can it be established. And still there seems to be some misperception of the Tibet expert who, no matter of academic record, has opinions about Tibet which may easily be falsified by a new sensational discovery.

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<sup>33</sup> Buchner et al, "Buddha from Space," p. 1498.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander Berzin is an independent Buddhist scholar with a PhD from the Departments of Far Eastern Languages and Sanskrit and Indian Studies at Harvard University in 1972. Even though Dr. Berzin is since long not established at an academic institution, it is still surprising that he did apparently not encourage Buchner et al. to consider the possibility of a European-made imitation. The exact nature of the exchange between Berzin and Buchner et al. is, again, not known to me.

<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, Buchner et al, did not take notice of Snellgrove's historical remarks on the Bon tradition (most distinctly: *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 387) but rather hold that "The Bon religion had its own literature and art that was continuously absorbed into ... Tibetan Buddhism." (p. 1496).



A couple of years ago, I was contacted by a well-known explorers magazine and asked for my opinion on a Tibet-related article. Disappointingly, another author claimed to have found the actual location to which the Shangri-La myth refers. As a matter of course, I told the editor that this article can be reduced to the simple formula "whatever is accurate is not new, and whatever is new is not accurate," like so much sensationalist writing on Tibet. Unexpectedly, the editor seriously wanted to engage me in a controversial discussion about this researchers "discovery", which I declined for lack of time. Though not pleased with my opinion, the editor did not try to solicit another Tibetologist's view, at least not at my university. Rather, the Shangri-La story was published in book form by the publishing house associated with the said magazine.

I assume that most researchers in our field privately hold one or the other anecdote of this kind. It might be a worthwhile undertaking, at least for once, to analyze the role (or absence thereof), and the image of Tibetology in such constructions of the myth of Tibet, as well as in sensationalist deconstructions of the myth of Tibet.<sup>36</sup>

### *5. Concluding Reflections*

So far, the extraordinary career of the "lama wearing trousers" has been a play in two acts: the first act is not clearly known to us, but seems to contain the production of a statue associated with such emotionalizing features as extraterrestrial material, ambiguous Nazi symbolism and Tibetan iconography, deemed to be archaic, followed to this statue's entrance into the market. In the second act, this production became a global media sensation, due to the potent mixture of curiosities conceived by its original creator(s). The academic disciplines of Tibetology and Buddhist Studies, though, have so far played only minor supporting roles.

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<sup>36</sup> A good example of the obscure expert in the myth of Tibet can be found in Schell, *Virtual Tibet*, p. 289, speaking of "Ernst Schafer (sic), whom one scholar of the period has dubbed 'a Nazi Indiana Jones.'" Lacking a source reference, the identity of this prosaic "scholar of the period" will probably remain shrouded in history. In the same context, on the same page, Schell informs his readers of "the idea that Sanskrit was somehow linguistically connected to Latin, Greek, and even German." At the time of writing, Schell acted as dean of the Graduate School of Journalism, University of California, Berkeley.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Kim and his lama (of Such-zen Monastery in the Western Himalayas). Illustration by John Lockwood Kipling, father of Rudyard Kipling, in the original 1901 edition of *Kim*. The *siddha*-like earrings resemble the lama wearing trousers.<sup>37</sup>

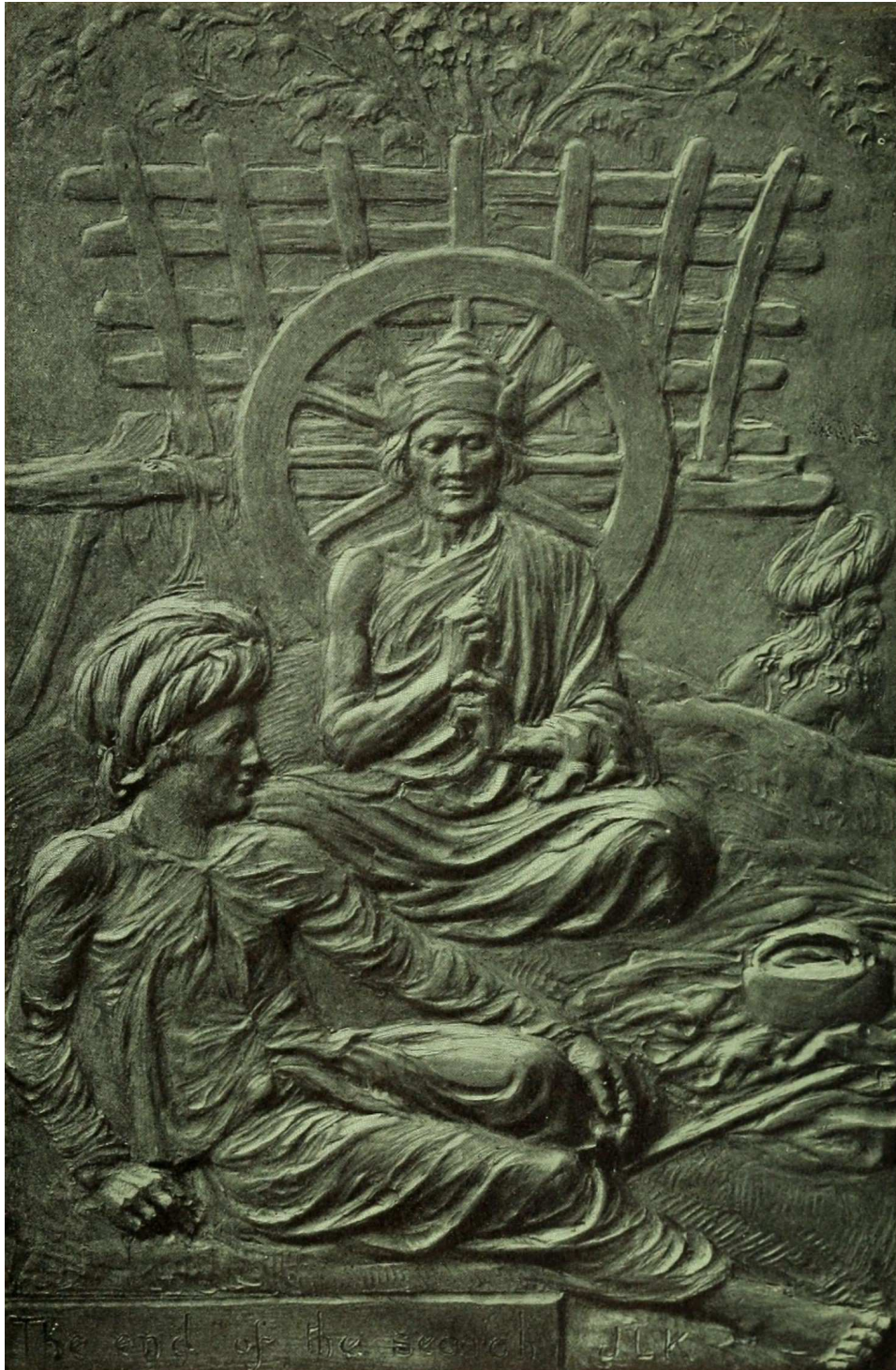


3. Rudyard Kipling's seal as shown in *Kim*.



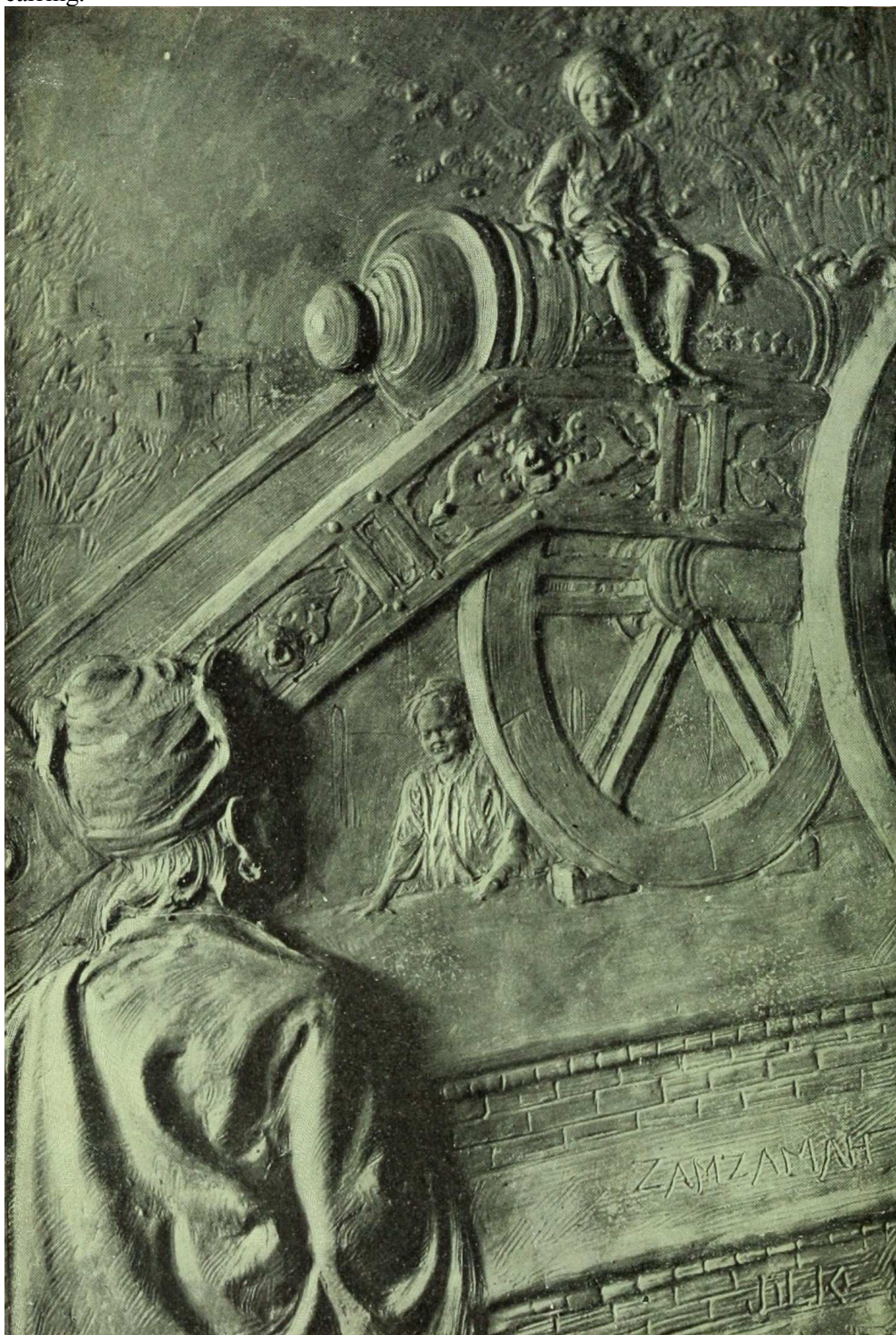
<sup>37</sup> Source for all illustrations: [www.commonswikimedia.org](http://www.commonswikimedia.org).

3. "The End of the Search," by John Lockwood Kipling in the original 1901 edition of Kipling, *Kim*. This hand gesture of Vairocana (Jp. *chiken-in*) is more common in Japanese art than in Tibetan figures. It was probably not wholly understood by J.L. Kipling, who, as curator of the Lahore Museum might have relied on two-dimensional illustrations of Japanese art. Japanese influence is evident from the opening verses of *Kim* (p. 1): *Oh ye who tread the Narrow Way, By Tophet-flare to Judgement Day, Be gentle when the heathen pray, To Buddha at Kamakura!* The word *Kamakura* is here obviously assumed to rhyme with *the heathen pray*.

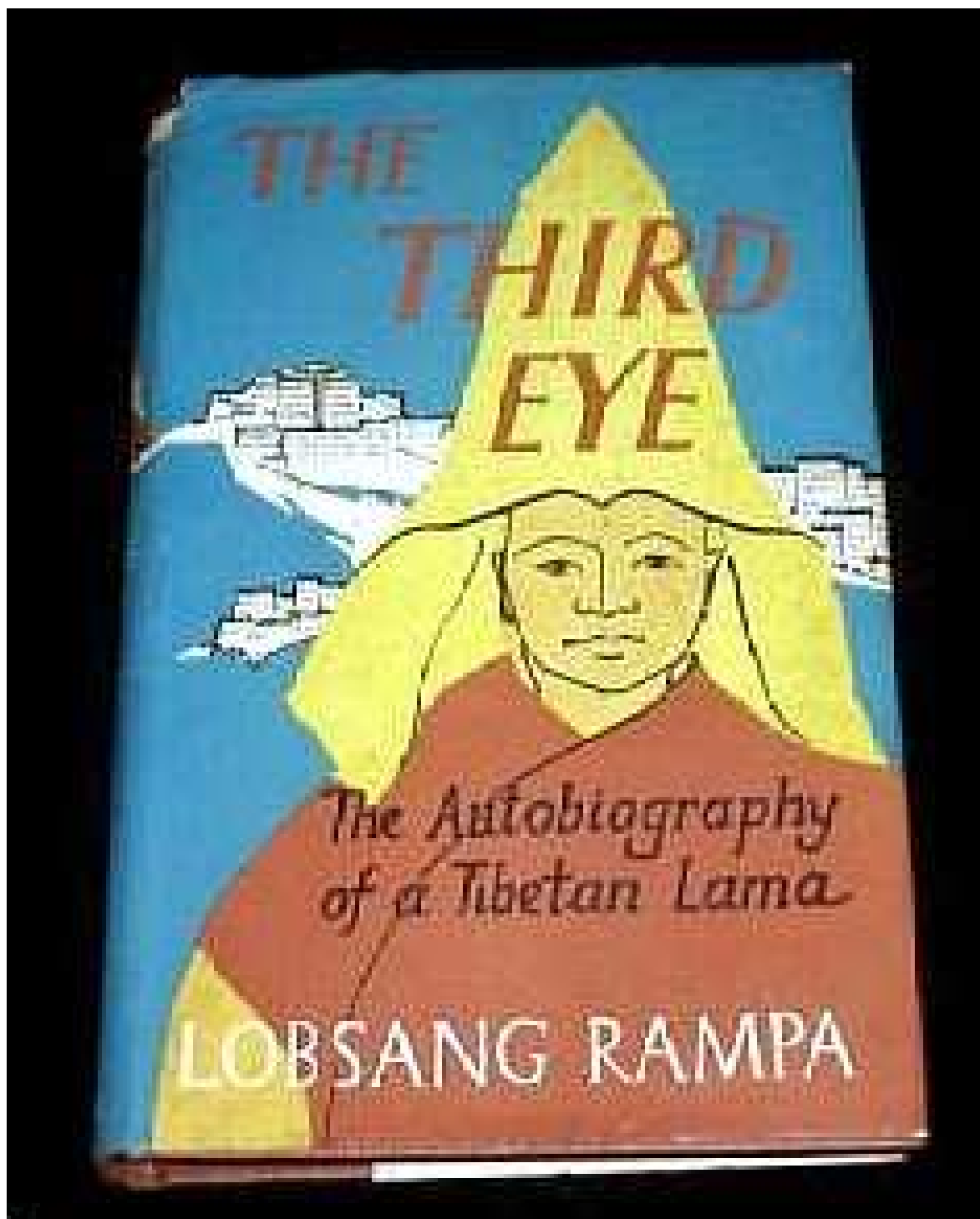




4. Kim meets his lama at the cannon in front of the Lahore museum. A good view of the earring.



5. Title page of *The Third Eye* showing a misshaped lama hat.

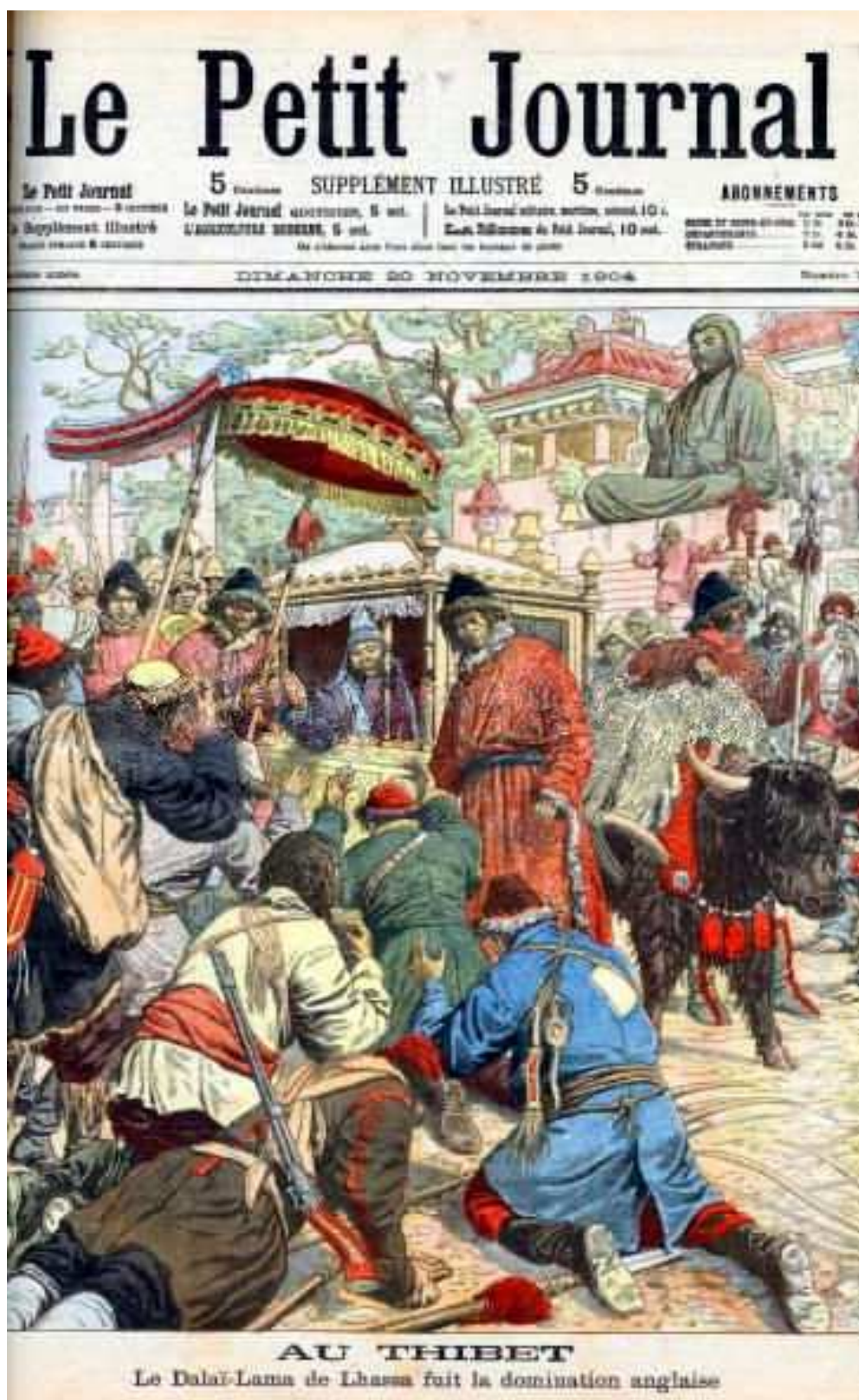


6. Lama Yongden, adopted son of Alexandra David-Néel.



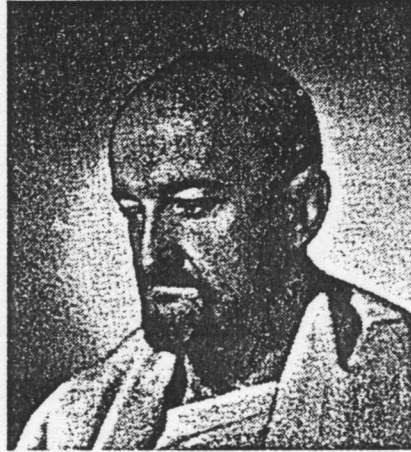


6. French illustration of 1904. Both the priest's hat and the Buddha in Japanese style. The Buddha's hair was probably understood as a hat or wig.



6. Advertisement for extraterrestrial adventures of Lobsang Rampa.

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