Western and Japanese scholars generally hold that the usage BLA-MA is not as ancient as the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet (c. 7th century A.C.), and that the word became current long after the assassination of Glang-dar-ma (c. 842 A.C.) and long after the final victory of Buddhism. The earliest chronicles which did not undergo my revision, parings and interpolations in later times as the contemporary inscriptions of the Chos-rnal period do not use the word BLA-MA. The words used are Ban-de, Slob-dpon, Rab-byiung, Mkhan-po or Rin-po-che.

In an article in this Bulletin, Vol. V, No. 2, p. 41, I wrote “No epigraphic or contemporary evidence is available so far to vouch for the usage Lama (bla ma) in the seventh century and even in the eighth”. Several epigraphists and linguists have enquired whether I have any evidence for the usage in the ninth century. I do not read the ancient documents, literary or epigraphic and thus submit my affirmative answer on corroborative but unimpeachable data.

The word Bla-ma occurs in several different contexts in the Mahayana-pa, a word admitted to have been completed in the reign of Ral-po-can, that is, first quarter of the ninth century. The diverse contexts make clear that like its Sanskrit prototype (Bhu) the Tibetan form (Bla-ma) was an onomatus word not unknown to scholar and translators of the time. A careful notice of these (given below) rules out interpolations in later time.

उत्तर:  
उत्तर-प्रभ:  
उत्तर-तन्त्रम:  
उत्तर-मनुष्य-भाष-प्राकाय:  
उत्तर-मनुष्य-थर्मोशननाम:  
वक्त-मनुष्य-प्राय-युक्तात्सलोकसंविदान:  
गुरु-म्निक:  

5
If the word Bla-ma is not derived from Sanskrit BrahmayBrahmana and is of indigenous origin (1), there is more reason to believe that the Indian Pandita and the Tibetan Lo-tsa-va agreed to have a current (indigenous) term for Brahman/Brahmana in the sense of Guru with the well-known permissive 'r' for 'r'. For tracing the history of the word Bla-ma the etymology of Brahman/Brahmana has to be studied as much as that of Bla-ma. In Buddhism, notwithstanding its opinion about Brahman as a caste, the word Brahmana was an honorific usage. Brahmana was the holy man or the teacher and even Buddha called himself a Brahmana (2). In Saka-Khotanese languages words cognate with Brahmana were used to denote Buddha (3). This is not surprising in view of the wide circulation in Central Asia of Sanskrit Tilamaprapta (Tilamaprapta), the earliest Buddhist treatise in elogia of Brahmana, the holy man (4). I am inclined to accept the usage of Bla-ma for Buddha, Brahman or Guru sometime after the ordination of the first Lamas by Santarakshita and Padmasambhava towards the end of the eighth century. Indian Buddhist diction has an important example of change of spelling and change of meaning in Dipa/Dvispa, Tibetan Buddhist diction is not free from mystic forms.

If Buddha and Brahman Sangs-gyes and Bla-ma, are synonymous, the occurrence of the word Bla-ma descriptive of the ordained monk may be dated sometime after the Ordination. Once an equivalent of Guru/Uttara was found the word was handy for the different contexts as in Mahayansvatita.

When Tibet's own ordained monk expounded the teachings of Buddha, Buddha was no longer an unknown stranger; སྐབས་ལམ་ བོད་དང་ བསྐོད་པར་

I am not a specialist in linguistics but as a reader of history I trace the origin of the saying "When there was no Lama the name of Buddha was not known even" to the intervening period between the Ordination (c. 780 A.C.) and the succession of Rab-pa-chan (c. 815 A.C.) in super-session of the claims of the anti-Buddhist lobar Glang-dar-ma. The historical significance of the historic text, as I have submitted here, cannot be overlooked in tracing the antiquity of the word Bla-ma.

2. *Prolegomena to Lamaist Polity* (Calcutta 1969) may be seen.


4. Standard editions (and translations) are those of P. Steinthal (London 1886), D.M. Strong (London 1902), K. Seidenstucker (Berlin 1920) and N.P. Chakravarti (Paris 1930) besides notices in journals by B.C. Mazumder, Pischel, Sylvain Levi and La Vallée Poussin. Tibetan translation of *Chokten norbu ga* is incorporated both in *Kenjor* (Mdo-khe) and Tanjur (Mgon-pa'i). The Tibetan *Udumaryurpa* was translated into English by W.W. Hewitt (1883) and the Khotanese *Dharmapala* by A.W. Bailey (1945).