

# The Myth of Shangri-La

Tibet, Travel Writing  
and the Western Creation  
of Sacred Landscape

Peter Bishop





# The Myth of Shangri-La

Tibet, Travel Writing  
and the Western Creation  
of Sacred Landscape

Peter Bishop

Shangri-La. An arcadia hidden in a remote, secluded valley. A vast, wind-swept plain cradled among the far-away peaks of the Orient. Tibet. Beginning almost as a mere rumor in the mid-eighteenth century, the Tibet of Western imagination evolved over the next century of industrialization into one of the last great sacred places of Victorian romanticism, taking on much of the mystery, power, and ambiguity of more traditional sacred spaces. In this masterful study Peter Bishop examines Western travel writings on Tibet to trace the creation, fulfillment, and decline of the sacred landscape of this fantastic place.

Bishop shows that travel does not discover worlds but rather constructs them. He takes the Jungian stance that each Tibet has been the creation of the unconscious at work in the individuals of an era, an imaginative act coming to be understood as truth—truth subject to repeated revision. Each generation of writers reveals preoccupations, unfulfilled wishes, fears, and hopes as the unconscious is made conscious by its projection onto Tibet. By following the trail left by Western botanists, missionaries, soldiers, diplomats, mystics,

# The Myth of Shangri-La

**To my Mother and Father**

# The Myth of Shangri-La

Tibet, Travel Writing and the  
Western Creation  
of Sacred Landscape



PETER BISHOP

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS  
Berkeley and Los Angeles

This One



K8J3-QLR-H3CZ

Materiale protetto da copyright

University of California Press  
Berkeley and Los Angeles, California

©1989 by Peter Bishop

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*  
Available on request

ISBN 0-520-06686-3

Printed in Great Britain  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9