

Governing “Lamaism” on the “Frontier”

Buddhism and Law in Early Twentieth-Century Inner Mongolia

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15.1 THE CASE OF INNER MONGOLIA IN THE STUDY OF BUDDHISM AND LAW¹

Since Rebecca French declared Buddhist legal studies a “missing discipline” in 2004, this interdisciplinary subfield has been slowly but surely growing. However, as Benjamin Schonthal and Tom Ginsburg have pointed out, most of these advances focus on the ancient, premodern, and early modern periods, and on Buddhist sources relating to Buddhist conduct (Schonthal and Ginsburg 2016). This chapter addresses this gap in the “missing discipline” by focussing on the state regulations of Buddhism in Inner Mongolia in the early twentieth century.

The early twentieth-century regimes considered in this chapter are the Republic of China (1912–49), the Japanese puppet states of Manchukuo (1932–45), and the Mengjiang United Autonomous Government (1939–45). These three modern states competed to make claims of sovereignty over Inner Mongolia, the southern half of Qing-era Mongolia after the northern half (Outer Mongolia) declared independence under the Bogda Khan² government in 1911. Under the leadership of Bogda

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¹ By “Inner Mongolia” (M: *Dotogadu Monggol*, and later 1947, *Öbör Monggol*, C: *neimenggu* 内蒙古, J: *uchi mongoru* 内モンゴル), this chapter refers mostly to the geographical regions included in Qing-era Inner Mongolia. The idea of “Inner Mongolia” however, has taken on different shapes and forms in the various spatial imaginations of modern states since the Qing, resulting in different systems of administrative divisions.

² In this chapter, all terms in Mongolian have been transliterated according to the system used in Christopher P. Atwood’s *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (2004), except for

Khan, who was also the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutugtu³ (1870–1924), Outer Mongolia operated as a theocratic state until the establishment of the socialist Mongolian People's Republic in 1924.⁴ Inner Mongolia, on the other hand, never became politically independent and was subject to the influences of the competing nation-building and empire-building projects of modern China and the Japanese empire. This period between the fall of the Qing empire (1912) and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949) was formative not only for the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region as we know it today, but also for the state regulations of Buddhism in the region. During this period, Chinese and Japanese policymakers considered the Buddhist tradition in Inner Mongolia as ethnically and geopolitically relevant for their frontier policies. In the same way that Buddhism was understood to be the solution to the “Tibetan Problem” for the Republic of China (Tuttle 2005, 11), Buddhism was also taken as the key to winning the support of Inner Mongolia and beyond for nation-building and empire-building projects.

This chapter argues that early twentieth-century Inner Mongolia makes a fascinating case for the study of Buddhism and law in the modern East Asian context because it was governed by multiple states and empires, which drew upon parallel and overlapping policies toward Buddhism as part of their competing projects of nation-state construction and imperialism. As a religion that is neither fully foreign nor domestic for the Chinese and Japanese policymakers, Buddhism in Inner Mongolia also provides an important case study for the understanding of how religions on the “ethnic frontier” were understood and governed by modern East Asian nation-states that were built on ethno-nationalist foundations. While Buddhism and law in Asia is often discussed in national terms, the Inner Mongolia case exposes the fact that different legal structures sometimes exist for people of different ethnic groups belonging to different Buddhist traditions living under one nation or empire, and that legal practices directed at the peripheries may look very different from those directed at the center.

One reflection of this distinctive context is that the terms used to discuss Buddhism in Inner Mongolia in the legal discourses of the Republic of China, Manchukuo, and Mengjiang were not *fojiao* or *bukkyō*, terms more commonly used

the term “Jebtsundamba,” as this spelling has become more commonly used than “Jibzundamba.”

³ The Jebtsundamba Khutugtus belong to a lineage of incarnate lamas in Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism and were one of the most revered Buddhist leaders among the Khalkha Mongols in Qing Outer Mongolia, comparable to the Dalai Lamas in Tibet. The Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutugtu (1870–1924) was born in Tibet into the family of an official of the Dalai Lama's estate. Despite his Tibetan birth, the Jebtsundamba identified strongly with Khalkha Mongolia and consistently supported Mongolian independence from the Qing. On the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu and his lineage, see “Jibzundamba Khutugtu” in Atwood's *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (2004).

⁴ By “theocratic state,” this chapter refers to the fact that the Eighth Jebtsundamba was proclaimed the “holy emperor” (Bogda Khan) and “dual ruler of religion and state” on December 29, 1911.

to refer to Buddhism in the Chinese and Japanese languages. Instead, the type of Buddhism in Inner Mongolia was mostly referred to as “Lamaism” (C: *lamajiao*; J: *ramakyō*),⁵ or sometimes as “Mongolian-Tibetan Buddhism” (C: *mengzang fojiao*), or “Manchu-Mongolian Buddhism” (J: *manmō bukyō*).⁶ In contrast to the Buddhist traditions of China and Japan, “Lamaism” was understood as spatially, temporally, racially, and morally distinct in the legal languages of these modern East Asian states. More specifically speaking, “Lamaism” was imagined to be an “exotic” Buddhism practiced by ethnic groups on the “frontiers” of nations and empires built on Sinocentric and Japan-centric foundations. “Lamaism,” with its maintenance of the reincarnated lamas and traditional monasticism, was deemed “backwards,” “superstitious,” and even morally “degenerate” for the modern nation-state, when compared to Chinese and Japanese Buddhism that had been open to modern reforms.

Situating this “Lamaism” on a spatial and temporal frontier, the legal practices of the three modern states of Republican China, Manchukuo, and Mengjiang aimed to exploit Buddhism in Inner Mongolia for their multiethnic nation-building and empire-building projects and strived to discipline the religion as a political-economic issue that needed to be depoliticized, modernized, and reformed. On the one hand, these three modern states supported Buddhism and the *tulku* system of reincarnated lamas under “religious freedom” legislated in their constitutions and emphasized Buddhism as a commonly shared heritage that could link culturally diverse regions in post-Qing Inner and East Asia together into new modern nation-states. In these discourses, the three modern states would replace the Manchu rulers of the Qing empire as the new patrons in the priest-patron relationship with the *tulkus* of Inner Mongolia. These renewed alliances would not only help justify the three modern states’ claims over disputed land on the “frontiers” of post-Qing Inner Mongolia, but they would also help to create coalitions to combat Soviet influences and Euro-American imperialism.

⁵ Donald S. Lopez, Jr. has written on the history of the term “Lamaism” in “‘Lamaism’ and the Disappearance of Tibet” (1996) and in *Prisoners of Shangri-la* (1998). He points out that the first official usage of the Chinese term *lamajiao* 喇嘛教 to talk about Tibetan Buddhism can be dated to 1775 during the reign of the Qing Qianlong emperor and argues that the later European usages of the term “Lamaism” served as a trope in the Orientalist historicism of late Victorian colonialism. How the post-Qing Chinese states and modern Japan came to use the term (喇嘛教・ラマ教), however, is not discussed in Lopez’s works. The author of this chapter finds that the usages of “Lamaism” in the early twentieth-century East Asian context offers two additional points to consider: first, “Lamaism” in modern China and Japan referred not only to Tibetan Buddhism, but to Buddhism in Mongolia and Manchuria as well; second, the Orientalist usages of the term in modern East Asian discourses suggest that modern East Asian states and empires similarly engaged with colonialist imaginations toward the “Other.” Jason Ānanda Josephson has argued that although Japanese scholars writing about Asia and its religions could position themselves as liberating Asian religions from European colonialism, they did so as the colonizer rather than the colonized (Josephson 2012, 247).

⁶ 蒙藏佛教; 滿蒙仏教.

On the other hand, in the actual articles of the regulations, Buddhism in Inner Mongolia was governed and disciplined as a political-economic issue. Politically, “Lamaism” in Inner Mongolia and the substantial authority of its *tulku* system was deemed inappropriate for the modern states that operated on centralized power. Thus, monastic involvement in politics was restricted in legislations that attempted to challenge existing Buddhist structures. The management of monastic affairs, such as reincarnations and monastic exams, became centralized, and monastic organizations were restructured with new centers of authority. Economically, “Lamaist” monasticism in Inner Mongolia was understood to be one of the major causes of the decline in population in the region and the culprit for the shrinkage of prime-age male labor forces. Laws were thus created to curb the growth of monasticism so that an “unproductive” male population could be redirected toward more economically “productive” endeavors. It also became necessary for monastic assets, such as land, property, monastic population, and lay subjects, to be regularly registered with and surveilled by the central governments.

This rather contradictory promotion and limitation of Buddhism in Inner Mongolia in the laws of the Republic of China, Manchukuo, and Mengjiang shows that instead of completely revoking the Qing policies on Buddhism among the Mongols, the modern East Asian states chose to maintain a certain kind of continuity with Qing-era practices so that they could continue to make claims of sovereignty over Qing-occupied territories. As Gray Tuttle has argued for modern Tibet, the Inner Mongolia case examined in this chapter also shows us that religion can serve as “a crucial link between the social organization of dynastic empire and that of the nation-state” (2005, 3). The Inner Mongolia case examined in this chapter demonstrates that Buddhism indeed served as a “crucial link” through which the three modern East Asian states competed to make sense of remnant ethnopolitical, economic, and labor structures from the Qing era. This formative period between the fall of the Qing to the end of World War II eventually established a legacy of governance and legal precedents on which the People’s Republic of China’s frontier policies would be built later.

15.2 BUDDHISM IN INNER MONGOLIA AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Similar to Tibet, Inner Mongolia at the turn of the twentieth century was a significantly Buddhist society. Toward the end of the Qing era, there were around 1,600 monasteries and temples and 100,000 Buddhist monks in the region, which comprised around 10 percent of the entire male population (Delege 1998, 452). In certain regions, this percentage was even higher: in the Xilingol League, for example, in the 1940s the total monastic population was 20 percent of the entire population in the region and 42 percent of the entire male population (Delege 1998, 219). On the steppes of Inner Mongolia, where life remained largely nomadic for

centuries, Buddhist monasteries were often the only architectural structures that dotted the landscape. Many of the larger monastic institutions also functioned as colleges that taught languages, medicine, and astrology. For centuries, monasteries in these regions of Mongolia were the sole providers of education, health care, and social mobility.

In Inner Mongolia, as was in the case of Tibet, Buddhism was intimately linked with political power. Since the second conversion of the Mongols to Buddhism in the late sixteenth century, Mongolian society operated under the principle of dual law (*qoyar yosu*, Tib., *lugs gnyis*), which maintained that both the state and the Buddha Dharma were fundamental sources of spiritual refuge and the most sacred domains of one's social duties (Wallace 2014, 321). This principle of dual law was said to have originated in India and refers to the conjoining of Dharma and rule (Tib., *chos srid zun 'brel*) and the sharing of authority between religion and the state. Buddhist teachings and state laws were regarded as complementary and equal, occupying distinct social domains. However, under certain circumstances one or the other could be regarded as preeminent, and in some cases both orders could be concentrated in a single person (Ruegg 2014, 68). Under this principle, both the Buddha Dharma and the state would endure as long as they continued to be consolidated and interdependent; conversely, crimes committed against either the state or Buddhism entailed serious karmic consequences (Wallace 2014, 321). This system of dual law encouraged the formation of priest–patron relationships between powerful rulers and monastic networks not only in Inner Mongolia, but all across Inner Asia.⁷ In this relationship, the lama, especially incarnate ones, served as the donee (*takhil-un oron*, Tib., *mchod gnas*), while the state ruler served as the donor (*öglige-yin ejen*, Tib., *yon bdag*). The lama offered religious teachings and spiritual protection for the state, and the state ruler promised to defend monastic properties and the socioeconomic privileges of the lamas. In this arrangement, offenses committed against the state entailed serious karmic consequences; on the other hand, the state also had the duty to regulate the conduct of the monastic community and their interactions with lay communities and state authorities (Wallace 2014, 324).

Economically, Buddhist institutions in the Mongolian regions in the Qing period also possessed enormous wealth. Monasteries, especially the larger ones, and the incarnate lamas received sizeable incomes through donations and contributions from elite patrons and *shabinar* – lay disciples and subjects of a monastery, or a reincarnated lama. The *shabinar* were required to pay services, such as corvee labor to maintain temples and monasteries, as well as taxes in kind and in currency (Moses 1977, 131–32). For example, in 1918, the Eighth Jebtsundampa Khutugtu had 8,833 *shabinar* families, 21,180 lamas, for a total of 49,878 individuals under his jurisdiction (Moses 1977, 127). The annual tax income from the *shabinar* subjects alone for the

⁷ On these monastic networks in Inner Asia and their political history, see Sullivan 2021.

Jebtsundamba ranged from 500,000 to one million *lans*⁸ of silver per year (Moses 1977, 132). The total wealth of the Jebtsundamba's personal estate was estimated at 57 million gold rubles or one fifth of the total wealth of Outer Mongolia in 1921 (Moses 1977, 125). Although the khutugtus of Inner Mongolia were not as wealthy as the Eighth Jebtsundamba at the turn of the twentieth century, they similarly received significant donations and contributions from patrons and *shabinar* subjects, in addition to accumulating wealth from herds, land, land rentals, and money lending (Miller 1959, 97–105). For example, in some regions of Inner Mongolia, such as in the Jalaid banner,⁹ the lamas (4 percent of the population) reportedly held 7 percent to 23 percent of the cattle and horses in the entire banner (Miller 1959, 116). Monasteries in the Kharachin banner alone were able to collect at least 100 million *wen*¹⁰ from their hundreds of *qing*¹¹ of leased land in 1835 (Huricha 2013, 230). Being the only permanent structures on the vast steppes in Inner Mongolia also allowed the monasteries to become trade centers and key economic hubs. Often located on major trade routes, the monasteries held regular fairs where markets, trade, and large-scale public rituals took place (Miller 1959, 109; Huricha 2009, 202–3).

Therefore, to say that Buddhism was a formidable political, social, and economic force in Inner Mongolia at the turn of the twentieth century is an understatement. The power of the tradition of dual law and the influence of Buddhist economy in both local and transregional terms was not lost on the modern states and empires in the post-Qing that were vying to gain control of the region for their nation-building and empire-building projects. It is their attempts at governing the powerful Buddhist institution in Inner Mongolia that is the focus of this chapter.

15.3 QING REGULATION OF BUDDHISM IN INNER MONGOLIA

Prior to the twentieth century, Mongolian society operated under a kind of legal pluralism in addition to the dual law tradition that allowed the regulation of Buddhism to be managed from afar, regionally, and within specific monastic settings. In the Yuan period (1271–1368), the administration of local religious affairs in the empire was delegated by the Khan to Tibetan clerics (Barrett 2014, 214). After the second conversion of the Mongols to Buddhism in the late sixteenth century, multiple types of laws were instituted within Mongolian territories to regulate Buddhism,

⁸ According to the Mongolbank, the central bank of Mongolia, *lan* was introduced as a temporary monetary unit to function as a medium of exchange in August 1921. One *lan* equaled one Chinese silver *Yanchaan* and 1.42 Russian gold coins. See “History of Mongolian currency,” (Mongolbank n.d.). www.mongolbank.mn/eng/listbanknote.aspx?id=15

⁹ A banner (*khoshuu*) is an administrative division first used in Inner Mongolia in the Qing. The banner system remained the basis for local administrative units under the Republic of China.

¹⁰ *Wen* 文 is a standard unit of currency used in the Qing period. Approximately 1,000 *wens* equals one *liang* 兩 (tael of silver) (Harris 2018, IX).

¹¹ *Qing* 頃 is a unit of area for measuring land in the Qing period. One *qing* is approximately 16 acres (Harris 2018, IX).

including banner laws, state laws, the laws of individual monasteries, and the laws of governing the Great Shabi (Ikh Shav'), the personal estate of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtus (Wallace 2014, 320). Buddhist monasteries, especially the large network of Geluk Buddhist monasteries in Inner Mongolia, also had their own internal monastic regulations in the form of *bca' yig*, or monastic constitutions that instituted administrative procedures, curricula, and financial protocols, among other things.¹²

During the Qing period, Mongolia was understood by the Mongols to be a constituent realm or *ulus* within the Qing empire that existed not as a part of but alongside China (*Khitad*) and Tibet (*Töbed*), so in this view, Mongolia had its distinctive way of life and government system that the Manchu Qing rulers preserved and nourished (Atwood 2002, 37–38). Governed separately from the rest of Qing China, Buddhist affairs in Mongolia were regulated from Beijing by the Lifanyuan, or the Court of Colonial Affairs that oversaw issues of the Qing Empire's frontiers. In governing Buddhism in Inner Mongolia, the Lifanyuan acted on behalf of the Manchu emperors in the dual law structure and was mostly responsible for codifying and promulgating regulations that were intended to bind all Buddhist monastics throughout Mongolia. Among other things, these regulations established administrative posts for monasteries, managed their salary schedules, handled requests that the emperor grant a name to a temple or contribute toward a temple's repair, planned visits of high-level lamas to the capital, regulated pilgrimages, prohibited certain groups of Mongols from becoming lamas, and restricted the right of lamas to be buried at the sacred site of Mount Wutai (Miller 1959, 76). The Lifanyuan also managed the titles and positions of prominent Mongolian and Tibetan Buddhist monastics, and even prevented high-level incarnate lamas from being identified among the Mongols, in order to curb their influence, although Mongolian incarnate lamas became more common in the late Qing (Atwood 2002, 36). As we will see in the next paragraphs, the regulation of Buddhism in the post-Qing attempted to preserve and maintain these Qing-era policies based on the dual law and priest–patron arrangements before more intrusive reforms were introduced.

15.4 REPUBLICAN CHINA'S REGULATIONS OF BUDDHISM IN INNER MONGOLIA

With the fall of the Qing empire in 1912, the Lifanyuan was abolished. Taking its place to govern the religious affairs of Inner Mongolia was the Mengzangju (Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Bureau) of the Republic of China, which was later reorganized into the Mengzangyuan (Mongolian and Tibetan Ministry) in 1914 (Lin 2006, 32). This time, instead of a government agency managing the affairs of the Mongols and the Tibetans for the multicultural Manchu Qing empire, the Mengzangju and Mengzangyuan were agencies that served a modern nation-state

¹² On *bca' yig*, see Jansen 2018 and Sullivan 2021.

built on Sun Yat-sen's vision of "Five Races Under One Union" (*wuzu gonghe*). Under this vision, the Republic of China connoted a single nation formed through the union of the Han Chinese, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Tibetans, and the Muslims. Unlike the Qing Manchus that had created racial hierarchies that placed themselves at the top, the Republic of China pledged to treat all five races as equal before the law, eliminate any special status, and represent all five races in the new parliament (Atwood 2002, 39). However, in practice, the new Republic did not dare to eliminate the special ethno-legal statuses that these different ethnic groups had enjoyed under Qing rule (Atwood 2002, 40). To woo the support of the Inner Mongolia nobility, the President of the Republic, Yuan Shikai (1859–1916), maintained the privileges that the Mongol nobles had enjoyed in the Qing period, increased their salaries, and gave them prestigious posts in the capital (Atwood 2002, 40). For high-ranking Buddhist lamas, the same strategy of preserving Qing-era treatment was deployed (Boyan Mandu 1979, 109).

On the other hand, the new Republic was also aware of the large monastic presence in Inner Mongolia, which posed potential threats to the central authority and placed economic strain on the nation. Considering this, members of the Mengzangyuan, or the Mongolian and Tibetan Ministry, proposed the "Legislation for Limiting Mongols on Becoming Lamas"¹³ in 1924. The six-article document proposed to prohibit the only child or the sole living heir of any given family from joining the Buddhist monastic order. Parents of children who did not wish to join the monastic order would be unable to force their children to become lamas, especially when they were underage. Those who wished to join the monastic order were required to report to their banner officials first and could only be ordained if the banner leaders had found that none of the articles had been violated (Mengzangyuan 1924, 43). This proposal expressed concern over the decline of the Mongols since the Qing and the decrease in population due the growth of Buddhist monasticism, and it argued that Buddhist monasticism must be limited if the Mongolian population was to bounce back (Mengzangyuan 1924, 42–43). A report carried out by the Mengzangyuan revealed that the proposal gained unanimous support within the Ministry, even though the Republic of China's Constitution at the time promised freedom of religion. On this point, the report explains that although the twelfth article of the Constitution of the Republic of China promised freedom of religion to its citizens, this proposed legislation was based on "the utmost of good intentions,"¹⁴ because it was aimed at preventing a further decrease in the Mongolian population (Mengzangyuan 1924, 44–45). The report also reminded members of the Ministry to "not openly limit" monasticism and instead use the words of "respect and support" (Mengzangyuan 1924, 45).¹⁵

¹³ 限制蒙人充當喇嘛案。

¹⁴ 用意至善。

¹⁵ 不必明白限制應改為尊崇黃教。Huangjiao 黃教, or "yellow religion," here refers to "Lamaist" Buddhism.

Similar limitations were imposed on Buddhist monasticism in Inner Mongolia when the Nationalist Government under Chiang Kai-shek was established, ushering in a period of political tutelage beginning in 1928. One of the first things that the Kuomintang (KMT) did when they came to power was to divide the central part of Inner Mongolia into the four new provinces of Rehe (Jehol), Chahar, Suiyuan, and Ningxia. Other Mongol regions were then incorporated into the provinces of Gansu, Ningxia, Heilongjiang, Liaoning, and Jilin (Lin 2006, 25). On this disfiguration of Inner Mongolia under the KMT, Hsiao-ting Lin writes, “The newly established provincial boundary cut ruthlessly across the traditional Mongol tribal and league or banner boundaries, contributing further to the Mongols’ disunity and facilitating their ultimate colonization by the Han Chinese” (2006, 25).

Unlike the treatment of Buddhism in Inner Mongolia during the Yuan Shikai period, the state regulation of Buddhism in the Republic of China after the KMT came into power was more intrusive. Buddhist affairs were managed by the Mengzang weiyuanhui (Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, MTAC), which had to approve most decisions, such as the appointment of important lamas’ reincarnations, the granting of monastic certifications, and the handling of *shabinar*. In June 1931, the KMT government issued the “Statutes for the Supervision of Mongolian Lama Monasteries”¹⁶ where it stated that all “Lama” monasteries in Inner Mongolia must release all *shabinar*¹⁷ from monastic possessions and that all monasteries report their registers and budgets annually to the MTAC (Wuliji 2015, 300–1). In December 1935, the “Statutes for the Management of Lama Monasteries”¹⁸ were announced by the Republican government. The statutes further required all “Lamaist” monasteries and lamas to register with the MTAC, and stipulated that only the reincarnation identifications, appointments, and remunerations approved by the MTAC would be recognized (Zhongguo di’er lishi dang’an guan 1994, 13). In a supplementary directive to the statutes announced in January 1936 and entitled, “Measures for the Awards and Punishments of Lamas,”¹⁹ lamas were rewarded with elevated titles and monetary prizes if “meritorious services”²⁰ were performed for the nation, and were punished through forced secularization, demotion of titles, and monetary fines if they did not register with the MTAC as prescribed (Zhongguo di’er lishi dang’an guan 1994, 14–16).

It is unclear whether these Republican Chinese regulations were enforced on the ground. Scholars of the Republic of China, such as Hsiao-ting Lin, have pointed out

¹⁶ 蒙古喇嘛寺廟監督條例.

¹⁷ *Shabinar* are referred to as “black disciples” 黑徒 in Chinese. In contrast to this legislation in Inner Mongolia, the Mongolian People’s Republic (Outer Mongolia) legislated to abolish the *shabinar* from the lama’s estates following the death of the lama-emperor Bodg Khan in 1924 (Atwood 2004, 47).

¹⁸ 管理喇嘛寺廟條例.

¹⁹ 喇嘛獎懲辦法.

²⁰ 有大勳勞於國家.

that it should not be assumed that Chiang Kai-shek's asserted policies on China's frontier and minority affairs reflected what he and his regime intended to achieve, especially given the fact that the Nationalist Government, which emerged as a localized regime in Nanking, only had alleged authority over the vast border regions of Qing China (Lin 2006, 32). Lin argues that the KMT's assertion of sovereignty over the frontier was based on a political imagination that was engineered to maintain its nationalist façade and legitimacy (Lin 2006, 13). In fact, Lin reminds us that frontier policies were more important for internal power struggles within the Nationalist Party and that "regional militarists and politicians also capitalized on frontier and ethnopolitical issues to criticize and oppose their political enemies in Nanking" (Lin 2006, 32). In any case, the regulation of Buddhism in Inner Mongolia merged with a much broader set of political goals emanating from Nanking, namely, to create the impression of taming the frontier in order to consolidate the nation.

15.5 MANCHUKUO REGULATIONS OF BUDDHISM IN INNER MONGOLIA

While Buddhism in Inner Mongolia was being regulated in the laws of the Republic of China, the Japanese puppet states of Manchukuo and Mengjiang were also drafting competing regulations of Buddhism for the area under their control. Although Manchukuo encompassed most of northeast China, a significant Mongol population lived in the eastern part of the state, especially the Xing'an Province, which the Republic of China also claimed for itself. According to a 1940s study, the Xing'an region included 32 percent of the geographical area of Manchukuo and contained 64 percent of the Mongol population in all of Manchukuo (Qi 2016, 14). Connecting Manchukuo with the Soviet Union, Outer Mongolia, and the northern part of the Republic of China, the Xing'an region was considered to be geopolitically critical to Manchukuo and the "lifeline" (J: *seimeisen*) of the Japanese Empire. In this crucial region, the presence of Mongolian Buddhism was dominant. Official statistics from the Manchukuo government records 29,697 lamas and 985 Buddhist monasteries in the region in the 1940s (Manzhou diguo zhengfu 1969, 830). A total of 61 percent²¹ of these lamas were located in the Xing'an area alone (Manzhou diguo zhengfu 1969, 828–29).

In contrast to Republican Chinese laws, Manchukuo regulations of Buddhism in its Mongol regions attempted to separate Buddhism from political activities to reform Buddhist monasticism and to create transnational Buddhist organizations

²¹ The population of lamas in the Xing'an region was as follows: Xing'an South Province 興安南省: 7,280; Xing'an West Province 興安西省: 7,566; Xing'an North Province 興安北省: 3,528. The total lama population in the Xing'an region was 18,374, which was 61.87 percent of the total lama population in Manchukuo, according to the statistics compiled by the Xing'an Bureau 興安局 in 1940.

and education programs. Nine months after the creation of Manchukuo, in December 1932, the Xing'an Provincial government issued a directive called "On the Prohibition of Lamas' Involvement in Politics."²² This directive stated that the practice of dual law in the Inner Asian Buddhist tradition was incompatible with the new nation-state of Manchukuo, which was built on the foundations of "scientific development"²³ (Guowuyuan fazhichu 1936, 2).²⁴ The directive recognized that although religion (C: *zongjiao*, J: *shūkyō*) offered moral teachings and bonded people for the unity of societies, it had only been necessary in the past when humanity was "ignorant,"²⁵ and lacked the organizational units of families and nations (C: *jiaguo*, J: *kakoku*). With the establishment of bureaucratic structures and legal processes, the directive contends, the nation was able to use politics (C: *zhengzhi*, J: *seiji*) to regulate morality and discipline wrongful behaviors, rendering religion relevant only in the realm of spiritual salvation (Guowuyuan fazhichu 1936, 2). Thus, for Manchukuo, a modern state operating under the ideology of the "kingly way"²⁶ (C: *wangdao*, J: *ōdō*), the mix of politics with "Lamaism" was considered to be not only inappropriate but an unacceptable "immoral practice"²⁷ (Guowuyuan fazhichu 1936, 2). In other words, the directive made it apparent that Manchukuo now operated under a centralized authority of the "kingly way" in the Confucian model of sage rulership, and not in the model of the dual law that had been supported by the Manchu rulers of the Qing.

In August 1940, the Manchukuo government issued another, more comprehensive collection of policies regarding the regulation of Buddhism. Entitled, "Outline for the Reformation of Lamaism,"²⁸ this document contained policies to address the "problems" of Lamaism for the welfare of the Mongolian people (Manzhou diguo zhengfu 1969, 825). These "problems" were the "low quality" of lamas, the heavy economic burdens that lamas and monasteries had created for the Mongolian people, and the issue of depopulation caused by regional overpopulation of monastics (Manzhou diguo zhengfu 1969, 825). To solve these "problems" of Mongolian Buddhism in Manchukuo, the Outline lists the following seven articles of reform.

The first article of reform was the creation of the Manchukuo Empire Lamaist Group²⁹ that would unite all the lamas in the nation under one organization. This

²² 關於禁止喇嘛干政之件/喇嘛ノ政治干涉禁止ニ関スル件。

²³ 科學發達。

²⁴ The specific location of this document in the *Manzhouguo faling jilan*, vol. 2 is in the fourth section on religion.

²⁵ 無知無識。

²⁶ The idea of the "kingly way" was based on the Confucian concept of sage rulership in which the ruler governed with the mandate of heaven. Policymakers of Manchukuo used the idea to justify the restoration of the last Qing emperor, Pu Yi (1906–67), as the emperor of the state (Young 1998, 286).

²⁷ 弊端。

²⁸ 喇嘛教整頓綱要/喇嘛教整備に就て。

²⁹ 滿洲帝國喇嘛教宗團/滿洲帝國喇嘛教宗團。

new organization would not only centralize followers of Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism into a nationwide religious reform movement, but it would also prevent “blind dependency”³⁰ on *khutugtus* from outside the nation.

The second article claimed to remedy the imputed fact that many of the 30,000 lamas within Manchukuo were uneducated, illiterate, and unaccomplished. In order to “improve” the situation, public secular education programs would be established within major monasteries and reeducation programs introduced for underage lamas. These public education programs were aimed at inserting modern knowledge into existing monastic curricula to cultivate the future leaders of Mongolian Buddhism. Monastic study-abroad programs were also initiated where young Mongolian lamas would be sent to Buddhist monasteries in Japan to study, where “the most correct Buddha Dharma flourished.”³¹

Third, the ranks, titles, and posts of Mongol lamas that had been preserved in the region needed to be organized and centralized under the approval of the Manchukuo Empire Lamaist Group, which implied yet another intervention at restructuring the monastic organization systems established since the Qing.

Although the Tibetan language was the *lingua franca* among Mongol Buddhists in the region, the fourth article encouraged Mongols to use Buddhist texts in Mongolian language in their daily practices and liturgies. Showing awareness that changing the language of religious rituals overnight is not an easy task, the article recommended a gradual promotion of Mongolian Buddhist texts.

Articles five and six addressed perceived deficiencies in monastic infrastructure. Article five promised that, in addition to establishing the Manchukuo Empire Lamaist Group, the Manchukuo government would found a national head temple (J: *sōhonzan*) for all the lamas of Manchukuo at a suitable location headed by a respectable *khutugtu*. Article six promised that the economic management of Buddhist monasteries in the state was to be systematized. Specifically, a clear financial management system needed to be set in place to oversee the assets of the monasteries and the daily spending of the monastic community.³²

Seventh, regarding the Mongol lay Buddhist population, an emphasis was put on the development of secular public education, especially for the cultivation of “a critical stance toward the superstitious elements within Lamaism”³³ (Manzhou diguo zhengfu 1969, 825–27). Interestingly, what entailed “superstitious elements” was not elaborated on in the document.

As with the regulation of Buddhism in Inner Mongolia under Republican Chinese laws, it is unclear how these Manchukuo policies directed at reforming Mongolian Buddhism were implemented on the ground. The Manchukuo Empire

³⁰ 盲目的依存性.

³¹ 世界に於て最も正法の興隆せる日本佛教.

³² Notably, in contrast to the Republican Chinese regulations of Buddhist assets in Inner Mongolia that prescribed the abolition of *shabimar* subjects, these Manchukuo articles did not.

³³ 喇嘛教が多分に有する迷信的要素に対する批判力の養成.

Lamaist Group was indeed created on December 5, 1940, in Xinjing, the capital of Manchukuo, and was headed by the Chagan Khutugtu, a high-ranking Mongolian lama, and the Japanese vice director Satō Tomie (Narangoa 2003, 501). About two hundred Mongol lamas were also sent to Japan to study between 1932 and 1945, funded by Japanese Buddhist organizations such as the Jōdo, Shingon, and Tendai schools (Narangoa 2003, 500). However, these policies did not seem to spark significant discussions of Buddhist reform among the Mongols themselves.³⁴ On the effects of these policies toward Mongolian Buddhism, Narangoa Li writes:

In general, the response of the Mongol leaders in Manchukuo to Japanese reform efforts was selective. They were happy with the introduction of modern facilities such as health care and medical training and they were generally willing to accept the broadening of the education system and the promotion of Mongol culture. But especially on more strictly doctrinal issues, the Mongolian lamas and politicians saw little reason to change their established beliefs and practices at the behest of the Japanese. (Narangoa 2003, 501)

Interestingly, Thomas DuBois has found that as in the case of codified laws of Manchukuo, case records were largely silent on the topic of Buddhism and religion in general (DuBois 2017, 126), which again raises the issue of the actual implementation and enforcement of Manchukuo regulations on Buddhism. DuBois adds, “such silence on the topic of religion notably contrasts not only with the activism displayed in government ordinances, but also with the pivotal role that other judiciaries have subsequently played in the interpretation of religion” (2017, 127–28). Similar to how Buddhism in Inner Mongolia was governed under the Republic of China with an “imagined sovereignty” over the frontier region, the Manchukuo policies were probably more active on paper than in practice.

15.6 MENGJIANG REGULATIONS OF BUDDHISM IN INNER MONGOLIA

As Japanese influence expanded from Manchuria to Inner Mongolia following the establishment of Manchukuo in 1932, the puppet state of the Mengjiang United Autonomous Government was created in 1941 under the military leadership of Demchugdongrub (1902–66), a Mongol prince who also spearheaded an independence movement in Inner Mongolia. At first, the same policies toward Buddhism created in Manchukuo were to be implemented in Mengjiang (Hirokawa 2007, 92). However, being a Qing-era Mongol noble and a devout Buddhist sandwiched between rising Chinese, Japanese, and Soviet powers, Demchugdongrub looked

³⁴ Narangoa contends that “Although many monasteries sent young lamas to Japan to study, most of the lamas remained faithful to their belief in the tenets of Mongolian Buddhism. Only a few of the lamas who studied in Japanese Buddhist temples and schools were attracted to the religious forms they were introduced to in Japan” (2003, 505).

to the past to the traditions of the Qing for inspiration in his management of Buddhist affairs in his state. As a result, the Office of Lama Seals and Services (C: *lama yinwuchu*), a Qing-era administrative agency overseeing Buddhist affairs in Mongolia and Tibet, was revived (Hirokawa 2007, 92). However, the prince was not unreceptive to the suggestions of modern reforms of Buddhism suggested by the policies of Manchukuo. As Hirokawa has pointed out, Demchugdongrub was supportive of the Buddhist reform measures aimed at solving the depopulation issue among his fellow Mongols (2007, 92). Thus, at the Xilingol League Conference of 1942, the administration under Prince Demchugdongrub promulgated regulations to limit monasticism. These regulations prohibited the only son of any family from joining the monastic order, and put a cap of four as the maximum number of monastics a given family could have (Narangoa 2003, 503).

By the end of 1942, qualifying monastic examinations were carried out in the various leagues in Mengjiang, promoting the secularization of Buddhist lamas in the region. For example, after lama qualifying examinations were instituted in the Ulanqab League, only 375 individuals out of 525 passed.³⁵ Out of the remaining 150 individuals, 55 joined the army, and 95 joined other forms of secular occupations (Hirokawa 2007, 92). In 1943, the Mengjiang government further tightened its grip on the growth of monasticism. Newspapers at this time began criticizing the tradition of child lamas and blamed Tibetan Buddhism for the decrease in the Mongolian population (Hirokawa 2007, 94).

As for how these reform policies toward Buddhism were received by the Mongols, Narangoa suggests that there was neither enthusiastic support nor significant protest. She argues that Mongolian Buddhist resistance to Japanese policies in the puppet states of Manchukuo and Mengjiang was weaker than that of colonial Korea, and there were no active Mongolian Buddhist attempts to protest Japanese invasion and war, nor cases of entire monasteries converting to Japanese Buddhism, as had occurred in colonial Korea and Taiwan (2003, 506).

15.7 GOVERNING BUDDHISM ON THE FRONTIERS OF THE NATION AND THE EMPIRE

To summarize, the regulation of Buddhism in Inner Mongolia in the post-Qing by the Republic of China, Manchukuo, and the Mengjiang governments began with a continuation of Qing-era policies. In the early years of the Republic of China, the socioeconomic statuses that high-level Buddhist leaders in Inner Mongolia had enjoyed in the Qing were maintained and even further elevated in service of political alliance-making. Considering the amount of political, religious, social, and even emotional capital that the Buddhist institution was able to maintain in Inner

³⁵ For these qualifying examinations, monastics were tested on their knowledge of Buddhist doctrines and practices.

Mongolia, all three of these modern East Asian states chose not to drastically disrupt the status quo of dual law that respected the Buddhist clergy as much as (if not more than) the state. As a result, although the policymakers of these modern states saw Buddhism in Inner Mongolia as an outdated “superstitious” institution that caused the decline of Mongolian society both demographically and economically, the reforms that they wanted to see had to be planned gradually and diplomatically.

Beginning in the mid-1920s, the policies of these three modern states toward Buddhism in Inner Mongolia began to limit monasticism and Mongolian Buddhist agency. To diminish the power of Buddhist monasticism in Inner Mongolia and to increase the non-monastic population in the form of mobilizable labor forces for the nation and the empire, the tradition of “monk taxes,” which required families sending at least one male child to the Buddhist monastic system, was restricted in various ways. As an alternative to the Buddhist monastery, which had served as one of the only venues for education in Qing Inner Mongolia, modern public secular education was offered to children and young adults, often on the sites of large monasteries. In the 1930s, Buddhism in Inner Mongolia was regulated to be separated from political involvement, and the management of monastic affairs was given to new structures of monastic organizations created by these modern states to deal specifically with ethnic religious matters on the frontiers. In this period, Buddhism in Inner Mongolia was increasingly the subject of biopolitics and governed as a political-economic issue for the state. Monastic assets, such as property, income, herds, and monastic population were required to be registered with the central government. The practice of holding *shabinar*, or lay subjects at monasteries for labor, was also abolished.

But as we have discussed in the previous paragraphs, how these regulations were implemented on the ground, if they were indeed implemented at all, is rather murky. Situating Buddhism in Inner Mongolia spatially on the frontiers of Sinocentric and Japan-centric nation-states, these regulations of Buddhism were mostly top-down elite legal practices directed from metropolitan centers at the periphery. As Hsiao-ting Lin has contended, frontier policy for the Republic of China was a form of “imagined sovereignty” (Lin 2006, 15), which I argue the Japanese puppet states of Manchukuo and Mengjiang similarly participated in, given the fact that both puppet states did not stay in power long enough for their policies to be implemented effectively on the ground. Observing how these post-Qing modern East Asian states made competing claims of “imagined sovereignty” over Inner Mongolia, we can see that overlapping legal structures were created that competed to govern Buddhism in the region. These competing regulations and frontier policies may have played a role in the internal power conflicts of these modern states, such as in the case of the Kuomintang, but they were also useful for nation-building and empire-building projects. For the policymakers of the Republic of China, Manchukuo, and Mengjiang, Buddhism was one of the only trans-Asian threads that could link ethnic groups with different languages and cultures together

under one nation and/or empire. Therefore, having the power to manage and govern Buddhist institutions meant the ability to tap into and mobilize the political, economic, and social capital of the religion, and to do so transnationally.

As tools of nation-building and empire-building, these elite regulations assumed a linear temporality and a teleology of “progress” and “modernization” for Inner Mongolian Buddhism deemed “unproductive” and “backwards.” I argue that this is a form of epistemic violence inflicted on the religious bodies (especially the non-tulku ones) on the peripheries of modern national and imperial projects. In her well-known essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gayatri Spivak states that “The clearest available example of such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other” (Spivak 2003). The state regulations of Buddhism in our Inner Mongolia case are examples of this colonial project remotely orchestrated to constitute the Other through competing and overlapping frontier policies.

It is important to remember that the practice of epistemic violence through legal processes preceded actual violence in the Mongolian case. In post-Qing Outer Mongolia, similar limitations were created to curb Buddhist monasticism in the region, especially after the fall of the theocratic Bogda Khan government when the socialist Mongolian People’s Republic (1924–92) came into power. Under the leadership of Khorloogiin Choibalsan (1895–1952), approximately 18,000 lamas were killed in a socialist purge lasting eighteen months from late 1937 to mid-1939, and all but a handful of Buddhist monasteries were destroyed across the country (Kaplonski 2014, 5). Before the carnage took place, however, modern legal and bureaucratic frameworks existed to “know and control the population and the lamas, to introduce measures of governmentality, and to rule through the economic deployment rather than the blunt application of power” (Kaplonski 2014, 226). As Christopher Kaplonski shows, for the Mongolian socialist state, the problem of the lamas was “not that they were religious but that they possessed substantial economic, political, and ideological power” (2014, 227). The way that the socialist state chose to solve this “lama question” was first through accommodation, symbolic violence, structural violence, and proactive measures before choosing direct physical violence (Kaplonski 2014, 226). Indeed, state violence for modern Mongolia was not an event but a process that involved multiple modes of violence.

In Inner Mongolia, although the Republic of China and the Japanese puppet states of Manchukuo and Mengjiang did not manage to stay in power long enough to purge Buddhism on a similarly massive scale,³⁶ their legacy of governing

³⁶ The monastic population in Inner Mongolia declined gradually throughout the decades after the fall of the Qing Empire. Compared to the Qing period which had about 100,000 lamas and 1,600 monasteries and temples in the region, there were about 60,000 lamas and 1,366 monasteries and temples after 1945 (Delege 1998, 452–53). This translates to an approximate 40 percent decrease in monastic population and a 15 percent decrease in Buddhist sites between 1912 and 1945.

Buddhism and the infliction of epistemic violence through legal practices would later be inherited by the Chinese Communist Party in its policies toward ethnic minorities' religions in the People's Republic of China. In May 1947, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region was established under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, two years before the establishment of the People's Republic of China itself in October 1949. In the "Policy Guidelines for the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Government,"³⁷ announced on April 27, 1947, "freedom of religion" was promised to the Mongols in the region. However, in the same document, "separation of religion from the state"³⁸ was to be instituted. Lamas were also persuaded to "voluntarily" participate in secular industries and join the larger labor force (*Zhonggong zhongyang tongzhanbu* 1991, 1111–13).³⁹

By the early 1960s, there were about 17,000 Buddhist monks in Inner Mongolia, compared to 100,000 at the end of the Qing period (Delege 1998, 761). According to a 1961 survey, 11,584 lamas out of 13,000 surveyed participated in forms of secular labor. Of these, 354 individuals were involved in mining, 2,330 in agriculture, 6,400 in husbandry, 1,200 in medicine, and 1,300 in other industries (Delege 1998, 761). During the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s and 1970s, Buddhism in Inner Mongolia experienced brutal repressions similar to that of the Mongolian People's Republic in the 1930s and was one of the worst affected areas within the People's Republic of China. According to official statistics, the Cultural Revolution resulted in over 22,000 deaths and 300,000 injuries in Inner Mongolia (Brown 2007). The Buddhist community was heavily affected in the campaign to remove "the Four Olds." It is unclear how many Buddhist monastics in Inner Mongolia were killed or injured during this period, but according to official statistics, only 5,000 lamas were found in the region after the Cultural Revolution in 1984, and 3,854 out of these 5,000 lamas reported no sources of income (Delege 1998, 779). The number of Buddhist monasteries still standing in the area was also reduced from at least 1,600 at the end of the Qing period to less than 500 after the storm of the Cultural Revolution (Delege 1998, 777). Only seventy-two monasteries received renovation funds from the government and were reopened to the public between 1985 and 1995 (Delege 1998, 777).

15.8 WHAT CAN THE INNER MONGOLIA CASE TELL US ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL LAW AND BUDDHISM?

The Inner Mongolia case discussed in this chapter can tell us at least four things about the relationship between constitutional law and Buddhism in the modern

³⁷ 內蒙古自治政府施政綱領.

³⁸ 實行信教自由與政教分立.

³⁹ 提倡喇嘛自願投資經營農工商業與各種合作事業, 獎勵喇嘛自願入學與參加勞動, 行醫, 識字.

East Asian context. First, although the constitutional practices of modern East Asian states were mostly influenced by western law,⁴⁰ they contained considerable continuities with the laws of imperial China when it came to the regulation of Buddhism in Inner Asia. Western constitutional ideas such as “freedom of religion” were present in the modern East Asian constitutional discourses discussed in this chapter, but they had to be mediated through previously existing political formations and structures, such as the tradition of dual law that allowed Buddhism to play key roles in legitimating or resisting political and legal orders.

Secondly, when we observe how Buddhism in Inner Mongolia was regulated in post-Qing East Asia, we begin to see that there were parallel, overlapping, and competing legal structures in place. Different laws were created to regulate different traditions of Buddhism in different geographical regions practiced by people of different ethnicities. This can be seen in the varieties of legal vocabulary developed to govern Buddhism. For example, while institutional Buddhism was regulated as *fojiao* in the Republic of China, Buddhism in Inner Mongolia was regulated as *lamajiao*, or “Lamaism,” which was understood as an ethnic religious tradition that needed uniquely designed modernizing reforms. Thus, the regulation of religion on the frontier regions, which was more often informed by frontier policies, can look very different from the regulation of religion in the rest of the nation. At the same time, the Inner Mongolia case shows that in the modern East Asian context, there could be overlapping and even competing legal structures – competing constitutions – operating simultaneously when it comes to the regulation of religion. Competing claims of sovereignty over the region of Inner Mongolia allowed modern states backed by very different political ideologies to “flex their legal muscles” in religion governance in overlapping and competing ways.

Thirdly, the state governance of religion in modern East Asia reveals its teleological dimension. Situating the region of Inner Mongolia and its people in a particular spatiality and temporality, namely, the “frontier” and the “pre-modern,” Buddhism and Buddhist monasticism in Inner Mongolia came to be understood as “uncivilized,” “backwards,” and even morally “degenerate” in the reform policies of the Republic of China and the Japanese puppet states of Manchukuo and Mengjiang. Following this logic, Buddhism in Inner Mongolia was governed and disciplined in these state regulations as a political-economic and biopolitical problem. As DuBois has pointed out in his study of religion in early twentieth-century northeast Asia, “[l]awmaking and social policy are not merely a passive platform for the expression of religious ideas, but a realm of ethical and theological exploration in their own right” (2017, 109).

⁴⁰ Maria Adele Carrai has shown in her work on the governance of Tibet in Republican China that strategies of empire are not only a prerogative of the West but were also adopted by both the Republican China and later the People’s Republic of China, to assert themselves in the international domain as sovereign states and pursue their fictional claims over Tibet (Carrai 2017, 801).

Lastly, these parallel, overlapping, and competing regulations of religion created paradigms of constitutional practice that created a legacy of religion governance and frontier policies that would be inherited by subsequent nation-states, even if the new state operated under a different political ideology. I argue that this legacy of the governance of religion on the frontiers exemplifies a legacy of epistemic violence carried out through the processes of law-making. This legacy has been passed on from the Qing to the People's Republic of China. As Ilana Feldman argued in her book *Governing Gaza*, the authority of any governmental bureaucracy is reiterative; it has to be enacted through practice as an ongoing process and cannot simply be established once and for all (2008, 15).⁴¹ Interestingly, the legacy of reiterative authority examined in this chapter only reveals the contingent nature of these modern East Asian states, be it the Republic of China, Manchukuo, Mengjiang, or the People's Republic of China.

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⁴¹ I am grateful for Kaplonski's *The Lama Question* (2014) for introducing me to Feldman's work.

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