



Between Patron and Priest: Amdo Tibet Under Qing Rule, 1792-1911

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**Between Patron and Priest:
Amdo Tibet under Qing Rule 1791-1911**

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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Abstract

In the late eighteenth century, a Qing-centered, pluralistic legal order emerged in the Tibetan regions of the Qing empire. In the Gansu borderlands known to Tibetans as “Amdo,” the Qing state established subprefectures to administer indigenous populations and prepare them for integration into the empire. In the 1790s, the Qianlong emperor asserted the dynasty’s sovereignty in central Tibet and embarked on a program to reform the Tibetan government. This dissertation examines the nineteenth-century legacy of these policies from the twin perspectives of the indigenous people of the region and the officials dispatched to manage them. On the basis of Manchu and Tibetan-language sources, Part One argues that the exercise of Qing sovereignty in central Tibet was connected to the Qianlong court’s desire to monopolize indigenous arts of divination, especially as they related to the identification of prominent reincarnations. The Qing court exported a Ming-era bureaucratic technology—a lottery, and repurposed it as a divination technology—the Golden Urn. The successful implementation of this new ritual, however, hinged on the astute use of legal cases and the intervention of Tibetan Buddhist elites, who found a home for the Urn within indigenous traditions.

Several Tibetans involved in the initial implementation of the Urn hailed from Amdo, and their knowledge of the Qing empire and Tibetan legal culture informs Part Two. Following Qing official critiques of Buddhist governance, these Tibetans reasserted the legitimacy of Buddhist jurisprudence and celebrated the rise of large monastic polities in Amdo. However, on the basis of the extant archives of a Qing subprefect in Amdo, I argue that Tibetan litigants also made extensive use of Qing institutions to resolve conflicts and the contingent adjudication of legal cases in Qing forums fundamentally shaped the growth of large monastic domains such as Labrang Monastery. Qing local officials served as the embodiment of a pluralistic legal order and the insistence that Qing officials exercise “Tibetan” jurisprudence resulted in the creation of a distinctive body of legal practices. The encounter between Qing officials and Tibetans in the course of legal proceedings, therefore, played an essential role in consolidating a fractious “Tibetan world.”

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Note on Transliteration and Nomenclature

The Qing-period encounter between Tibetans and agents of the Qing government unfolded in a variety of languages and dialects. For the purposes of this study, materials in three languages have been consulted: Manchu (Ma.), Tibetan (Tib.), and Chinese (Ch.).

Chinese words and names are transcribed in Pinyin and the original characters have been placed in parentheses after the first appearance of the word. Manchu words and names are transcribed according to the conventions of Jerry Norman's *Comprehensive Manchu-English Dictionary* (2013). Where only the Chinese version of a Manchu name is known, a hyphen separates syllables of the Pinyin romanization. Tibetan words and names are transcribed according to the conventions of the Tibetan and Himalayan Library Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan established by David Germano and Nicholas Tournadre (2003). A full Wylie transcription follows the first instance of each term, proper name, or title. Generally, I refer to individuals according to the standard English transcription of their name from their native language. Thus, the name of the Manchu frontier-troubleshooter Nayanceng is written according to the transcription of his Manchu name and not his Chinese name (Na-yan-cheng 那彥成).

Terms or titles that appear frequently in multiple languages have been rendered according to the standard Manchu-language transcription. Thus, the Mongol-language title for reincarnate lamas, *qutugtu* (meaning “holy” or “blessed-one”) is consistently rendered “kūtuktu” following the standard Manchu transcription. Similarly, the Mongol-language title “nomunkhan” is written in this dissertation using a slightly modified Manchu transcription: “nomunhan” (Ma. *nomun han*). While these decisions have

resulted in some perhaps ungainly combinations of Tibetan and Manchu (for example, the Démo Kūtuktu or Cagan Nomunhan Kūtuktu), it is hoped that the improved clarity and consistency of the text enhances the reading experience.



Figure 1: Album leaf, *Finding of a Dalai Lama*, Harvard Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Bequest of the Hofer Collection of the Arts of Asia, 1985.863.5. The album is undated. It probably depicts the identification of the ninth Dalai Lama in 1808. In this painting, Qing officials resident in Lhasa together with Tibetan monastic and lay authorities observe as the young candidate is asked to identify the possessions of the previous incarnation. A similar album, dated 1809, is held in the library of the Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, Paris. See, Isabelle Charleux and Gaëlle Lacaze, “L’intronisation du IXe Dalai lama vue par un prince mongol: un rouleau peint conservé à la bibliothèque de l’Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises,” *Arts Asiatique* 59 (2004): 30–57.

ய. ପାତ୍ରିତ୍ତିଶ୍ଵରଦିନାନ୍ଦନାକା ।
ମାତ୍ରେଷାଶବ୍ଦିନାନ୍ଦନାହଣାନ୍ତୁପରିମା ।
ମଧ୍ୟଦିନାନ୍ଦନାମାନାପାତ୍ରି ।
ମୁଖ୍ୟଦିନିଶ୍ଚିକୁପାରିଷାମିଥେବା ।

ଏକାର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟାପନେଷମିଶ୍ରିତା ।
ଏକାର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟାପର୍ବଦନ୍ତମିରକଣାପରା ।
ନାନାମାନାନାପକ୍ଷନାପାକା ।
ଶ୍ରୀକୁମରନାପରିକୃତ୍ସମାଧିକା ।

କୃତ୍ସମାଧିକାଗ୍ରୀପଲକାପରିକୃତ୍ସମାଧିକା
ମଧ୍ୟମିଥାକାକୁତ୍ସମାଧିକା

There are those who find a way to be free,
Yet some constantly suffer under the rule of others.
Oh, how the just is outweighed by the unjust,
And the sentient beings of this land can find no peace!

Keep [one's people] from mixing with one another,
And they will not bring injury upon each other.
Nurturing each separately without altering their customs,
That is the way for ruling the sentient beings.¹

¹ Selections from Ju Mipham Namgyel Gyatso (Tib. Ju mi pham rgya mtsho, 1846-1912), *Rgyal po lugs kyi bstan bcos sa gzhi skyong ba'i rgyan* (“An Ornament for Worldly Kings, A Treatise on the Way of the King”): 37ba, 38na.

Preface

In 1909, or roughly thereabouts, “constitutionalism” was in the air. Among the many odd and unexpected items that can be found in the archives of the “Subprefect for Pacifying the Tibetans” of Xunhua (循化撫番同知), a busy and troublesome post located on the Sino-Tibetan frontier in Gansu province, is a copy of the magistrate’s instructions to his runners concerning how to promote the benefits of “constitutional government (憲政).” The runners were told that, “Nowadays the political system of our country is changing and we must sincerely work together to establish a constitutional state. This is nothing like the authoritarian system of the country in the past and the people cannot be oppressed like they were before.”¹ This and a host of other instructions relating to the new system were to be explained to the Salars² and Tibetans of the subprefecture.

Qing officials stationed in other Tibetan regions were less sanguine about the prospects for constitutional government. In August of 1909, the Lhasa amban Lian-yu, argued in a memorial dispatched to the court that constitutional government and other forms of self-governance should not be pursued in Tibet. He argued that as “vassals (藩薯),” the Tibetans were not only different but morally inferior to the people of the

¹ QSDG 7-YJ-4715: 《循化廳為持票傳人給八工的諭》：“現在吾國政體變更，誠共和立憲政體國，非昔日專制之國，民亦非昔日壓制之民。” The document is undated but contains an internal reference to the beginning of the “New Policies” two years prior.

² The Salar (撒拉) are Turkic-speaking Muslims native to Xunhua subprefecture. See Ma Haiyun, “Fanhui or Huifan? Hanhui or Huimin? Salar Ethnic Identification and Qing Administrative Transformation in Eighteenth-century Gansu,” *Late Imperial China* 29.2 (December 2008): 1-36.

“interior provinces.” Therefore it was inappropriate to “rule them under one law together with the other people of China (中國).” Moreover, he warned the court that given the depth of Tibetan resentment of Qing rule, it was only the threat of force that had kept the Tibetans in check and “allowed us to live in peace with them.”³ Lian-yu’s argument rested, however, on a powerful analogy:

Consider all the powerful countries of the West: There are none among them who have ever instituted constitutional government among vassals who are of a different race (異種). In the case of England in India, America in the Philippines, France in Indochina, and Holland in Java, although all of them have established parliaments [in their home countries], the peoples of their vassal states still have not been able to participate in government or be informed about political affairs. I have heard that occasionally a viceroy will confer authority on one or two local representatives, but they have not granted permission for elections, or the right to consult in governance. [...] Our country has already borrowed law from Western Europe and is now establishing a constitution. Therefore in our treatment of vassals it seems there is no harm in imitating their policies.⁴

In the late 1890s and throughout the last decade of the the Qing dynasty (1636-1912), it was not uncommon to find Qing frontier officials discussing their administration of the dynasty’s Inner Asian “vassals” in parallel with contemporaneous Euro-American imperialism. The similarity did not go unobserved among western commentators either. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that contemporaneous European descriptions of Qing administration in Inner Asia labeled it “colonial.” In 1878, William Frederick Meyers noted that it had become commonplace to refer to the Qing court’s primary institution for governing the “outer regions”—the Lifanyuan (Ma. *tulergi golo be dasara jurgan*, 理藩

³ Wu Fengpei, ed., *Lianyu zhu Zang zougao* (Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe, 1979), 87.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

院), as the “Colonial Office” (an obvious reference to the British Colonial Office in London).⁵ Brunnert and Hagelstrom’s influential description of the Qing government similarly identified this agency as the “Court of Colonial Affairs.”⁶ During the twentieth century, however, reference to the Qing as a “colonial” empire gradually diminished. This was a testament to the persuasiveness of a particular strand of late-Qing Chinese nationalism that claimed all the constituent territories of the Qing to be integral and indivisible parts of the “Chinese nation”—a unified state whose size and diversity could be accounted for by the exceptional power of Chinese culture to peacefully attract and assimilate since time immemorial.⁷

In the last twenty years, following the revival of Manchu studies and the growing interest in the Qing’s Inner Asian possessions, it has again become fashionable to apply the adjective “colonial” to the Qing imperial order (although it must be noted that the analogy remains very much out of favor among the modern scholar-officials of the PRC).⁸ This time round, however, interpretations of “colonialism” have gone beyond

⁵ See, for instance, William Frederick Mayers, *The Chinese Government* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1897), 22.

⁶ H.S. Brunnert and V.V. Hagelstrom, *The Present Day Political Organization of China* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Limited, 1912), 160-161.

⁷ For summaries of this process, see: James Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism: How the Qing Frontier and its Indigenes Became Chinese* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and for later Guomindang and PRC reiterations, Thomas Mulaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011).

⁸ James Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 15-18; Peter Perdue, “Comparing Empires: Manchu Colonialism,” *The International History Review* 20, no. 2 (1998): 255-262; and Perdue, “China and Other Colonial Empires,” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 16 no. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2009), 85-103; Nicola Di Cosmo, “Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia,” *The International History Review* 20 no. 2 (June 1998): 287-309; and Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

defining the term solely in terms of the features that would have been most salient to Lian-yu and his Western contemporaries: European military domination for the sake of political security or economic exploitation. In contrast, building on subaltern studies and other recent reconsiderations of European colonial empires, definitions of colonialism have come to emphasize the processes of cultural domination and differentiation that accompanied and facilitated the political and economic domination of the metropole or a minority elite group over an indigenous majority.⁹ Partha Chatterjee in particular has noted the degree to which colonial rule rested not only on maintaining the superiority of the ruling elite, but also on reifying the separateness of ruled groups.¹⁰ Reconsiderations of colonialism have also increasingly focused on the role of indigenous elites in the creation of imperial systems. For Charles Maier in particular, it is the presence of indigenous collaborators who define empire as a distinctive form of political organization:

Empire does not mean just the accumulation of lands abroad by conquest. And it does not mean just the imposition of authoritarian regimes on overseas territories. Empire is a form of political organization in which the social elements that rule in the dominant state—the “mother country” or the “metropole”—create a network of allied elites in regions abroad who accept subordination in international affairs in return for the security of

⁹ See, for instance, Jürgen Osterhammel’s synthetic definition of colonialism: “Colonialism is a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropole. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule.” Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), 16-17.

¹⁰ For Partha Chatterjee’s “rule of colonial difference,” see *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post Colonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 16-27.

their position in their own administrative unit (the “colony” or, in spatial terms, the “periphery”).¹¹

As noted above, several Qing historians have seen these definitions as broadly applicable to the Qing case and thus begun to place the Qing empire in a comparative analysis with other contemporaneous colonial empires. Peter Perdue in particular has recently highlighted four characteristics of the Qing empire that resembled other colonial systems: the institution of separate administrative systems for different colonial regions, the cultivation of indigenous elites to serve in these separate administrations, careful management of immigration from China proper into the colonial territories (although this policy vastly expanded during the late Qing), and finally, extraction of natural resources and other local products, when possible.¹²

This dissertation concurs with these views that the Qing was a colonial empire. The utility of this analytical framework is that it draws attention to the contingent encounters between indigenous elites and representatives of the ruler. As James Hevia has aptly put it, Qing rule was a “continuing achievement” that hinged on the careful management of encounters between indigenous elites and Qing agents (and on a regular basis with the emperor himself) and the subsequent representation of these meetings in official and unofficial documents.¹³ For this reason, my study has focused on tracking relationships between individual Tibetan-Buddhists and Tibetan communities with Qing

¹¹ Charles Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 7.

¹² Perdue, “China and Other Colonial Empires,” 93.

¹³ James Hevia, “Lamas, Emperors and Rituals: Political implications in Qing imperial ceremonies,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 16 (1993): 247.

colonial agents over the long term. This narrow focus on specific and repeated encounters between Tibetan-Buddhists and Qing officials reveals the degree to which Qing colonial rule, much like that of other colonial regimes, was far from static. Over the period documented in this study, the agendas, goals, and even the vocabularies of these individuals changed dramatically, reshaping the politics of both the metropole and the periphery. Jürgen Osterhammel has written that, “colonialism is not just any relationship between masters and servants, but one in which an entire society is robbed of its historical line of development, *externally manipulated* and transformed according to the needs and interests of the colonial rulers.”¹⁴ Although such a statement might speak to the aspirations of Lian-yu in 1909, evidence from this study suggests that in both Amdo and central Tibet, far from arresting the development of Tibetan society, the Qing colonial context transformed it—and Tibetans, Chinese, Manchus, and a variety of other peoples played an integral part in the process.

The Qianlong Legacy Revisited

In the fall of 1792, in the aftermath of the Qing military’s successful expulsion of the Gurkha army from central Tibet, the Qianlong emperor (1711-1799) promulgated the tetraglot “Discourse on Lamas” in Chinese, Manchu, Mongol, and Tibetan. In the “Discourse,” the emperor examined the rationale for his massive expenditure of men and material on behalf of the Gelukpa school of Tibetan Buddhism. Although he stated that support for the church would continue, Qianlong argued that the moral failings and

¹⁴ Osterhammel, 15 (emphasis in original).

administrative ineptitude of Tibet's ecclesiastical rulers required drastic reforms and the formal imposition of his authority over the Tibetan central government. Yet Qianlong also recognized that there was subtle distinction between imposing sovereignty and imposing an alien culture. Towards the end of his proclamation he inserted the following precept drawn from the chapter on the "System of the King" in the *Book of Rites*: "One should restore their teachings, not replace their teachings. One should rectify their laws, not replace their traditions."¹⁵

This succinct formulation simultaneously captures a fundamental principle of Qianlong's governing agenda and encapsulates the underlying tension of Qing administration in its newly acquired territories. The emperor demanded a mode of colonial rule that was both highly interventionist and deeply conservative. But how would the diverging impulses of this axiom be reconciled in practice? Where did "adjustment" end and "replacement" begin? What degree of deference would be granted to indigenous customs and institutions? Moreover, the pedantic translation of this edict into Tibetan and its reliance on the authority of classical Chinese texts that few Tibetan readers were likely to recognize raises further questions about the effectiveness of official proclamations. To whom was the emperor speaking? What did Tibetan Buddhists make of it all? How would Qing officials, indigenous elites, and commoners navigate the space between "restoration" and "transformation"?

¹⁵ *Discourse on Lamas* (Tibetan version), Lines 30-31: "de'i bslab bya bcos dgos/ de'i bslab bya mi brje/ de'i khrims bcos dgos/ de'i lugs mi brje zhes yod/" The Chinese original reads: "修其教，不易其俗，齊其政，不易其宜。" My translation is based on the Tibetan text of the tetraglot *Discourse on Lamas* (*Lama Shuo 喇嘛說*) inscription at Yonghegong. Original text in O. Franke and B. Laufer, *Lamaistische Kloster-Inschriften aus Peking, Jehol und Si-ngan; mit Unterstützung der Hamburgischen Wissenschaftlichen Stiftung* (Hamburg: Verlag von Dietrich Reimer (Ernst Vohsen) in Berlin, 1914), plate 4.

Both Chinese and Western historians of Qing-period Tibet view the Qianlong reign as the high point in the dynasty's efforts to incorporate Tibetan regions into the Qing empire. In particular, these narratives hold that it was the court-directed reformation of central Tibetan administration in the aftermath of the Gurkha wars of 1789 and 1791 and the concurrent establishment of imperial oversight of the process of political succession via reincarnation that completed the Qing's imperial project. Luciano Petech has portrayed the following century as a period of "stagnation, with little apparent change" during which both local Tibetans and Qing agents slumbered in a "somnolent peace."¹⁶ This dissertation sees Qianlong's reforms not as the culmination, but rather as a tentative beginning of this project, the implications of which have yet to be addressed, in large measure because neither Western nor Chinese historians have taken the trouble to fully engage in the meaning of colonialism as an analytical framework for thinking about the Qing empire in Tibetan regions.

The dissertation investigates the practices and experiences of Qing colonialism from the twin perspectives of the indigenous people of the region and the officials dispatched to manage them. The broader scholarly agenda is not only to place nineteenth-

¹⁶ Lucciano Petech, *Aristocracy and Government in Tibet: 1728-1959* (Serie Orientale Roma 35. Rome: Instituto Italiano Per Il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1973), 4. Patricia Berger argues that the Vajrayāna Buddhist ritual institutions and practices developed during the Qianlong reign as part of his patronage of Tibetan Buddhist adepts such as Changkya Rolpé Dorjé, "faded into politically advantageous, rote usage by the end of the dynasty." See, Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 196-197. For decline and stagnation narratives of Qing rule in Tibetan regions (including Amdo), see also: Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 44; Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), 170; Lin Hsiao-ting, *Tibet and Nationalist China's Frontier: Intrigues and ethnopolitics, 1928-49* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 8; and Wu Fengpei and Zeng Guoqing, *Qingchao zhu zang dachen zhidu de jianli yu yangge* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1989), 76.

century Amdo within the broader context of Qing frontier administration, but also to examine generalizations about Qing patronage of Tibetan Buddhism. It has been well established in existing scholarship that the court's patronage and promotion of Tibetan Buddhism was a pillar of the dynasty's legitimacy in Inner Asia.¹⁷ But historians have only recently begun to consider the following questions: First, how did the dynasty attempt to consolidate the claims that the Qianlong emperor made on both the religious and political spheres of Tibetan society? Second, how did individual Qing colonial officials understand their place in the local order, and see Tibetan society more generally? Third, how did indigenous Tibetan discourses conceptualize the Qing polity? And fourth, how were indigenous political philosophies and identities transformed by Qing colonialism?

To answer these questions the dissertation identifies and explains two key changes in Tibetan regions that occurred in the aftermath of the Qing conquests. The first is the transformation of the political landscape of Amdo. Over the course of the nineteenth century, monastic domains displaced the principalities of the Mongol noble houses as centers of local authority. The second transformation lies in the intellectual realm of political philosophy: In response to the Qianlong emperor's explicit rejection of Buddhism as a legitimate foundation for rule, Tibetan scholars, primarily in the Amdo region, rearticulated the case for ecclesiastical rule. In so doing, they not only rationalized

¹⁷ See: Patricia Berger, (2003); Pamela Crossley, "The Rulerships of China," *American Historical Review* 97, 1468-1483; David Farquhar, "Emperor as Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Qing Empire" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 38.1 (June 1978): 5-34; James Hevia, "Lamas, Emperors and Rituals: Political implications in Qing imperial ceremonies" *Journal of the international association of Buddhist studies* 16 (1993): 243-278; Peter Perdue, *China Marches West* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Evelyn Rawski, *The Last Emperors* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and Vladimir Uspensky, *Prince Yunli* (Tokyo: Institute For the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1997.)

the emergence of major monastic polities in Amdo and Tibet more broadly, but also discarded the role of the lay patron, in this case, the Qing court. Thus this dissertation helps explain the emergence of the large ecclesiastical polities that would flourish under the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876-1933) and the collapse of the ideological framework that held Tibet and China together. Yet the expansion of these indigenous monastic polities and the Tibetan-language accounts of their expansion obscure an important paradox, which is that the role of Qing administrators in local Tibetan society had also expanded during the nineteenth century. Fractured by the capricious and often violent politics of incarnation and in competition for estates and subjects, Tibetan hierarchs and other indigenous leaders turned to Qing officials as judges of last (and sometimes first) resort, inviting Qing colonial agents and military forces into their communities to dispense justice. Thus, at the turn of the century, the son of the governor-general of Gansu province would warily refer to the monastic domains and confederations of central Tibet, Gansu, and Qinghai as the “Warring States.”¹⁸ The Qing court had served unintentionally as midwife at their birth and now could no longer extract itself from the burden of their litigiousness.

This argument represents not only a revision of early modern Tibetan history but also an attempt to link Tibetan studies more organically to recent scholarly trends in Chinese history. My dissertation stands in dialogue with older Sinocentric narratives of the expansion of the Qing frontier, as well as with recent studies of the British, Ottoman, and Russian empires that seek to explore the agency of indigenous peoples in colonial-type systems. For instance, the dynamic between local religious figures and Qing

¹⁸ Tao Baolian *Xingmao shixing ji* (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 2002 [1896]), 240.

imperial emissaries in Amdo finds parallels in the relationship between the muftiate and tsarist authorities in Russian Central Asia and in patterns of brokerage between local elites and the Ottoman sultan.¹⁹ The rise of large indigenous political domains at the interstice of Qing and British empires in Tibet resembles Pekka Hämäläinen's reconstruction of the Comanche empire, which flourished at the margins of several competing global empires.²⁰

By focusing on the formal and informal encounters of Qing officials and indigenous people on the grounds of the local yamen, market place, or monastery it is possible to move away from simplistic "impact-response" or "resistance-collaboration" models of social change during periods of imperial expansion and colonialism and appreciate the degree to which systems of local laws and administration were creatively produced on site at the colonial periphery. In this respect the most important theoretical context for this dissertation is the recent work on "legal pluralism" and "legal politics" in colonial systems pioneered by scholars of colonial law such as Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford.²¹ Much like colonial India, Gansu province in the nineteenth century contained

¹⁹ Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁰ Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

²¹ This literature is vast, but surprisingly includes very little about East Asia or China in particular. See for instance, Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Benton, "Forum on Law and Empire in Global Perspective: Introduction," *American Historical Review* 117.4 (October, 2012): 1092-1100; Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). A recent edited volume on the subject ignores East Asia: Lauren Benton and Richard J. Ross, "Empires and Legal Pluralism: Jurisdiction, Sovereignty, and Political Imagination in the Early Modern World," in *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500-1800*, ed. Lauren Benton and Richard Ross (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2013), 1-20.

multiple sources of legal authority, multiple traditions of jurisprudence, and, most importantly, multiple legal scripts. Tibetans made strategic use of all these resources as they sought the resolution of local conflicts. For instance, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven, like indigenous people elsewhere, in the colonial courtroom Tibetans could tactically speak either the language of the metropole (i.e. “talk Chinese”) or call on aspects of their cultural difference depending on their strategy for winning the case. Seen from a historical perspective, my dissertation comes to the conclusion that rather than the policies of Qing governors or court jurists, it was the day-to-day, year-to-year, process of litigation in frontier courts that drove the expansion of Qing jurisprudence into Tibetan regions and articulated Qing administrative jurisdictions and imperial sovereignty in ways that were meaningful to both indigenous peoples and Qing local officials.

In a recent discussion of Native American law prior to and during European colonization, Katherine Hermes has introduced the term “jurispractice” to describe indigenous legal traditions. For Hermes, jurispractice refers to a “legal mentalité” or established tradition of legal procedures and principles that does not amount to a “philosophy of law” or tradition of “jurisprudence.”²² This distinction is helpful in discussing legal culture in Tibet as well, although I define “jurispractic” somewhat differently and find that it is appropriate to speak of both jurisprudence and jurispractice in Qing-period Tibetan regions. As discussed in Chapter Four, scholars at Labrang monastery, for instance, did possess a theory of law as an objective category and discussed the origins and legitimacy of their own legal tradition in contrast to that of

²² Katherine A. Hermes, “The Law of Native Americans, to 1815,” in *The Cambridge History of Law in America, Vol. 1*, eds. Michael Grossberg and Christopher Tomlins (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 33-34.

other civilizations and kingdoms. I am also reluctant to assume that Tibetan and Mongol lay elites did not also possess or share in the discussion of Tibetan jurisprudence. However, the distinction between jurisprudence and jurispractice does permit us to discuss local practices of mediation, investigation, trial, and punishment separately from high, literary traditions of legal philosophy preserved and practiced by monastic authorities. Jurisprudence and jurispractice distinguish ways of speaking about the law from historically documented ways of acting legally. As used in this dissertation, the term “jurispractice” connotes also the fluidity and contingency of legal practices—practices that were often not necessarily dictated or defined by a particular tradition of jurisprudence. Moreover, it is worth mentioning the parallels between the histories of Native American and Tibetan jurispractices.

The most salient similarity is the shared an emphasis on reciprocity. For instance, parties to a conflict expected that crimes or wrongdoing would be addressed, but that this would ideally take the form of reparations, not forms of corporal punishment or incarceration. There was also a shared belief that this burden would not necessarily fall entirely on one individual—the community at large could be responsible for making just compensation. The mediation process was also guided by the understanding that all parties to the conflict should gain from the ultimate resolution.²³ Hermes also observes that Native American legal practices began to come under intense strain in the 1780s when colonial officials of the new United States began to take a more active interest in

²³ *Ibid.*, 34-40. For a useful discussion of Tibetan “jurispractices” in Amdo, see Robert Ekvall, “Peace and War Among the Tibetan Nomads,” *American Anthropologist* 66.5 (October 1964): 1119-1148.

overseeing, revising, and ultimately replacing Native American law.²⁴ A contemporaneous effort to incorporate Tibetan jurispractices into the Qing colonial administration, and then rectify, reform, and replace these laws, was undertaken by the Qianlong court.

The dissertation consists of two parts and seven chapters. Part One describes the process by which Qing colonial officials together with Tibetan elites from both central Tibet and Amdo gradually reformulated a Ming bureaucratic practice—a lottery for assigning official posts in China proper, into a Tibetan divination technology. Popularly referred to as the “Golden Urn Lottery,” I argue that lottery in its final form(s) was understood by contemporaries not as a randomized “lottery” but rather as a divination *ritual*. Chapter One explores the deliberative process that lay behind the introduction of the statute on the Golden Urn—a process that unfolded almost entirely in Manchu. The chapter describes how growing fears about the dangers of unsupervised divination led to the exportation of a new ritual procedure for identifying reincarnate lamas from China proper. The chapter then traces how discussions of Tibetan divination arts gradually shifted to talk of why Buddhist monks were unprepared to serve as political administrators and how indigenous traditions of Buddhist jurisprudence were an unstable foundation for Tibetan administration. Thus concerns with unregulated divination became intimately tied to a novel articulation of Qing sovereignty in Tibet—a formulation that was to have major implications for the administration of central Tibet.

Chapters Two and Three examine the Qing attempts to enforce the use of this new ritual from the perspective of Manchu and Tibetan sources. Chapter Two traces the promotion of the “Golden Urn” lottery, a process that entailed a simultaneous attack on

²⁴ Hermes, 61-62.

indigenous Tibetan divination technologies, in particular the oracles of central Tibet. Shortly after introducing the new procedure, the Qianlong emperor came to believe that indigenous technologies of divination had to be forcefully discredited and displaced before the new Qing ritual could take root. Chapter Three takes up the specific case of the third Jamyang Zhepa (1792-1855), a leading reincarnate monk from Amdo who was identified using the urn in 1796. This chapter relies on contemporaneous Tibetan-language biographies and local histories along with Manchu-language reports filed by the ambans in Lhasa and Xining. This historical record reveals a fascinating story, one that includes outright deceit and manipulation of reincarnation on the part of the Qing state as well as the absorption of Qing-invented rituals into indigenous religious culture and the ultimate acceptance of Qing meddling through the careful diplomacy of court-sponsored reincarnate monks. My contention in this first part of the dissertation is that the court's private and public attempts to legitimize its intervention, and the contemporaneous Tibetan responses to these efforts, produced new discursive frameworks by which Tibetans, Mongols and Manchus would subsequently understand the political and religious relationships between Tibetan individuals, communities, and the Qing state.

Part Two roots the dissertation more firmly in the soil of Amdo (*figure 2*). Here, I examine how indigenous and imperial knowledge of the Sino-Tibetan borderlands intersected and diverged. Chapter Four surveys the historical writings of a group of influential historians trained at Labrang monastery, the largest and most powerful monastery of the region. The founder of this lineage of historically-minded writers, the second Belmang Pandita Könchok Gyaltsen (Tib. Dbal mang Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, 1764-1863), had led the delegation from Amdo that had sought the reincarnation of the

second Jamyang Zhepa and witnessed the Qianlong emperor's actions to undermine ecclesiastical rule and Tibetan technologies of divination. I argue that the historical works he and his students composed upon return to Amdo were an effort not only to reassert indigenous notions of political legitimacy but also to make sense of the political power of Geluk monastic institutions within Qing society. Their writings were distinctive because although they turned to Tibetan history to illustrate the legitimacy of Buddhism-based administration and jurisprudence, their arguments were glossed in language and political conceptions unique to the Qing. Moreover, their sense of malaise regarding the long-term health of the Qing polity reveals the degree to which Tibetan elites were participating in a pan-empire conversation about statecraft. In Chapter Five, I argue that indigenous notions of political legitimacy also implied a particular understanding of the political geography of their Amdo homeland. This chapter explores how indigenous knowledge of place conflicted with those of Qing statesmen dispatched to govern Gansu Province and Kokonor (Qinghai). I note how large-scale grassland warfare of the first half of the nineteenth not only defied Qing attempts at comprehension and categorization, but also revealed the fragility and malleability of local community and ethnic identities.



Figure 2: The Amdo region relative to Asia

Chapters Six and Seven introduce the litigious world of the “Warring States” of the Sino-Tibetan frontier. During the Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns (1861-1908) chronic violence between Tibetan-Buddhist communities in Xunhua subprefecture combined with constant litigation in Qing courts gradually led to the creation of two major confederations of Gelukpa monasteries in Amdo. The Qing magistrate of Xunhua subprefecture ostensibly supervised the monasteries that headed these two confederations, Labrang and Rongwo, and the enormous extant archives of this office (perhaps 100,000 pages of documents) provide a detailed record of the conflict. Here I will discuss the process by which Tibetans sought Qing administrators and turned to the “Imperial” or “Royal” law (Ch. 王法, Tib. *rgyal khrims*) to resolve their problems. The pursuit of “imperial law” led paradoxically not to the importation of the laws of

China proper, but rather to the consolidation of a body of novel jurispractice known as the “Tibetan laws and statutes” (Ch. 番例番規). This Qing-period invention of a “traditional” legal tradition helped delimit a separate “Tibetan” legal structure and ethnic identity at the same time as Qing officials became embedded in the day to day disputes of indigenous communities. By the end of the Guangxu reign, a new body of “Qing” jurisprudence, centered on the yamen of the local Qing subprefects, had arisen from the contingent practice and implementation of disparate traditions of Tibetan, Mongol, Muslim, and Chinese of jurisprudence.

The local archival sources reveal that the war between Rongwo and Labrang was extremely violent. Despite the fact that these were both Gelukpa monasteries, their subordinates committed numerous atrocities that spared neither clergy nor lay people. The final chapter of the dissertation investigates this violence and the contemporary language used to justify it in Chinese and Tibetan sources. I find that Tibetan authors writing in Chinese manipulated notions of Tibetan “barbary” to convince Qing magistrates to act in certain ways. Meanwhile, from a Qing perspective, the chronic violence was evidence that Tibetans were unlikely to be assimilated and that high-ranking reincarnate lamas such as the Jamyang Zhepa, who was the head of Labrang, were no longer the essential allies they had once been. Instead, during the late 19th-century, Qing officials increasingly turned to Gansu Muslims to serve as intermediaries between the court and Tibetan populations. Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the classical formulation of Qing-Tibetan relations as “patron and priest,” was largely abandoned both in practice and in discourse. The legacy of violent local legal politicking,

however, would have profound implications for the construction of “Tibetan” identity in the twentieth century, both from Tibetan and Chinese perspectives.

Part One: Rectifying the Way of the Buddha: The Institution of the Golden Urn Ritual and its Legacy in Late Qing Tibet

Introduction:

When undertaking a great enterprise, one must not only [act] at the appropriate time and context but also in accord with what is just and brilliant. If opportunity presents itself, yet one is unable to make a just and brilliant decision, then it will not be accomplished. If one makes a just and brilliant decision, but at an inopportune moment, then it has been made in vain and nothing will come of it.

As for the recent establishment of a new procedure for the identification of tulku in the aftermath of the subjugation of the Gurkhas, it was easily accomplished because the moment was fortuitous. Eradicating the selfish desire of tulku to emanate among their kinsmen is in harmony with the wishes of both the outer and inner Mongols. Now I am in my eightieth year, and approach the end of my rule, yet I have accomplished this great undertaking and established peace in the region of Tsang. The restoration of the outer peoples and the happiness and welfare of the both the dynasty and each household—an enduring achievement, is the fulfillment of my desires and I am glad of heart.²⁵

With these words the Qianlong emperor (1711-1799, r. 1735-1796) concluded the Tibetan-language version of his *Discourse on Lamas*. The emperor's essay, composed in the winter of the fifty-seventh year of his reign, asserted his prerogative as a Qing emperor to subordinate the reincarnated buddhas and bodhisattvas of "Tibetan Buddhism" (Tib. *Bod chos*) to the laws of the dynasty and his own personal supervision. Such supervision was imperative, he argued, because the corruption of the process of recognizing rebirths in recent times had resulted in mistaken identifications. Not only did Qianlong hold these false lamas responsible for dragging the dynasty into two wars with

²⁵ *Discourse on Lamas* (Tibetan text), lines 32-36. See appendix for complete translation.

the Gurkhas of Nepal (1789 and 1791-1792), but he also feared that a general loss of faith in the authenticity of reincarnate lamas—a key component of the Qing-period governing structure in Inner Asia—would trigger an even graver crisis. The *Discourse* therefore introduced the practice of drawing lots from the “Golden Urn” (Tib. *gser bum*; Ma. *aisin bumba*, Ch. 金本巴瓶) as the mechanism by which the emperor intended not only to gain the ability to scrutinize possible candidates before they had been recognized by indigenous authorities, but also restore confidence in the recognition process and the reincarnate monks of the Gelukpa school more generally. Qianlong decreed:

When there is a search for the tülku of an important lama of Ü-Tsang, in accordance with their tradition, the whereabouts of the [incarnation] shall be identified by the special means of reciting scriptures and receiving [indications] from the Lamo Chökyong and the other four [protectors] when they descend to the medium. Rolls of paper with the name of each of the children shall be placed in a golden urn that will have been sent from the palace. Then, having chanted before the Jowo Sakyamuni, the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni, together with the appointed ambans, will jointly pick out a roll of paper. That will be the reincarnation. I have ordered that the identification occur in this manner. Although this may not entirely eliminate the evils of doing things according to their personal desires, [I] believe that this is better than letting them make a decision regarding the identification however they please.²⁶

Although at the time when Qianlong composed the *Discourse on Lamas* the idea for a Golden Urn had only been circulated among a handful of imperial confidants, the pride that Qianlong exuded for his new procedure was not misplaced. From the moment of the first usage of the Golden Urn three months after the proclamation of the *Discourse*, until its last Qing-period usage in 1908, the ritual remained a key step in the recognition

²⁶ *Discourse on Lamas*, lines 22-23.

process.²⁷ During the last thirty-six years of the dynasty alone, from 1875-1912, reincarnations of at least thirteen different lineages were recognized using the urn.

The scope of the regulation was broad. Where the *Discourse* decreed that all “reincarnations²⁸ of important lamas” should be subject to the Golden Urn lottery, the relevant “statute” among the regulations of the Court of Colonial Affairs (Ch. *Lifanyuan*) is even more ambitious, noting that it applied to “the Dalai Lama, Panchen [Lama] and all other reincarnations.”²⁹ In practice, the statute was generally applied to those lineages of reincarnate lamas who had been enrolled in the registers of the Lifanyuan and were eligible to receive the title of *kūtuktu* when they turned eighteen.³⁰ Altogether, by the end of the Qianlong reign the Lifanyuan ostensibly managed the affairs of 160 *kūtuktus*, including thirty lineages from Tibet proper (Ü –Tsang), seventy-six among the Mongol leagues, thirty-five in Kokonor, five in Khams and fourteen more in and around Beijing.³¹

²⁷ For a relatively complete list of reincarnation lineages that were subject to the law on the Golden Urn, see the list compiled by Tibetan authorities in Lhasa themselves during the early 19th century and reproduced in: *Bod kyi gal che'i lo rgyus yig cha bdams bsgrigs*, (Lha sa: Bod Ijongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1991), 281-369.

²⁸ “Reincarnations:” Tib. *sprul sku*; Ma. *hūbilgan*; Ch. 呼畢勒罕.

²⁹ *Qinding Daqing huidian shili lifanyuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe: 2007), 173. This edition of the Collected Statutes and Precedents of Great Qing dates to 1899. It is citing a statute dated to 1792 (QL 57).

³⁰ See also relevant regulations in the *Qinding Lifanbu zeli* (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1998 [1908]), 392-394. These regulations are from the 1908 redaction of the regulations, but quoted from previous 1817 and 1899 editions of the *Lifanyuan zeli*. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, In the reports of the Qianlong-period officials though, the fine legal distinction between *hūbilgan* and *kūtuktu* was often lost and they function as synonyms. In Tibetan translations of these texts, the Manchu title *kūtuktu* and the Manchu term for reincarnation *hūbilgan* are translated using the indigenous term for a reincarnation: *tülkü* (Tib. *sprul sku*).

³¹ H.S. Brunnert and V.V. Hagelstrom, *The Present Day Political Organization of China* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Limited, 1912), 474. Ning Chia, “The Lifanyuan in the Early Ch’ing Dynasty” (PhD diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1992), 213.

Still, the number of monks considered reincarnations (Tib. *sprul sku*) by Tibetans themselves always far outstripped the Qing lists of officially-sanctioned *hūbilgan*. Thus, despite continued expansion of the Lifanyuan's registry during the nineteenth century, there remained a large pool of tülku-hūbilgan who were potentially subject to the regulation but whose selection still took place beyond official purview. As I will discuss below, the Golden Urn regulation thus offered an opportunity for Qing officials to bring as-yet unsanctioned lineages onto the rolls and thus subject them to the scrutiny of the state. Seen from another angle, the same statute also made the Urn ritual accessible to lesser lineages, for whom imperial intervention might be advantageous.³²

Given the significance of the lottery, both in terms of its implications for the succession of political and religious authority in Tibet and Mongolia, and as an important moment when Qing officials and Tibetan elites met, it should not be surprising that there is no shortage of scholarship on the history of the ritual. Yet due to the manner in which twentieth-century Chinese and Tibetan historians have constructed the urn as a symbol of the Chinese nation-state's sovereignty over Tibet, the analysis of the ritual has been reduced to simple arguments about whether it was actually employed.³³ As a result, there has been little incentive on either side to search for the origins of the ritual or pose crucial questions either about where the idea came from or how it was received and understood in practice. Furthermore, because of the centrality of the figures of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama to the national identity of Tibet as it was reinvented in the twentieth

³² Only in the 1908 revamped regulations of the *Lifanbu* did the court formally attempt to delimit the use of the urn. These regulations state that only those kütuktu who had been explicitly mentioned in edicts prior to QL 58 as falling under the perview of the Golden Urn statute would be required to continue to use the urn. *Qinding Lifanbu zeli*, 413 (statute 839).

³³ Elliot Sperling, *The Tibet-China Conflict: History and Polemics* (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 28, 31.

century, research has focused almost exclusively on the whether the ritual was employed to recognize rebirths within these two lineages.³⁴

The lack of attention to these important questions can also be attributed to the fact that the standard source for understanding the motivations behind the institution of the Golden Urn Lottery in 1792—the *Discourse on Lamas*, hides the traces of its creation. The *Discourse on Lamas* is hardly representative of the range of ideas that were circulating between the court and its officials. It reflects an articulation of a particular message at a particular point in time. As such, it provides neither the last word on how the Golden Urn would be used, nor any indication of what types of further efforts the dynasty might make to exercise its prerogative of supervision in Tibet. Moreover, the *Discourse on Lamas*, even in its Tibetan-translation, did not circulate in central Tibet and thus provides few clues on what Tibetans would have learned about the urn. It would be nearly a year before a formal proclamation would be issued, translated, and distributed in central Tibet.³⁵

The major reason, however, for the current historical lacunae when it comes to the early deliberations surrounding the reforms is that the Chinese-language historical record itself only begins slightly less than two months before the composition of the *Discourse*

³⁴ See Lopez's critique of Tibetan exile nationalism in Donald S. Lopez Jr. *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 184. Interestingly, one can observe that the emphasis on the Dalai Lama as the sole locus of Tibetan sovereignty is not merely the result of discourses within the Tibetan exile community or Western scholarship. Within China as well, ongoing and shrill attempts to delegitimize the Dalai Lama or control him (through the Golden Urn ritual, for instance), have only further shored up the importance of the lineage.

³⁵ This would be the Tib. *Chu glung wang zhu* (Ch. 《水牛年文書》) of QL 58/09/15. In Chapter Three, I argue that the *Discourse on Lamas* text probably never circulated in Tibet. No record has yet been located in the First Historical Archives (FHA) that indicates that the Lhasa ambans received the document. The Qing colonial agents in Mongolia, however, all filed reports acknowledging receipt of the edict (See YHGSL vol. 14-16).

on Lamas decree (December 1792). It was not until after Fukanggan (福康安, 1754-1796),³⁶ the commander-in-chief of Qing military forces, had secured the surrender of the Gurkhas in September 1792 (QL 57/08/27) that the language of deliberations shifted from Manchu into Chinese. Prior to Fukanggan's return to Tibet from Nepal in November, 1792, the deliberations primarily involved the emperor, his closest advisors, Hešen (和珅, 1750-1799) and Agūi (阿桂, 1717-1797), and Hešen's younger brother, Heliyen (和琳, 1753-1796, Lhasa amban 1792-1795), who had been appointed chief amban in Lhasa, and were conducted entirely in Manchu. The vast majority of Fukanggan's memorials from the Gurkha campaign were composed in Chinese, probably on account of the fact that such a large and complex undertaking necessarily included a large number of Han officials, both in the field (such as Sun Shiyi 孫士毅 1720-1796, who was in charge of logistics 督理糧餉大臣) and in Beijing. Accordingly, the first mention of the new ritual in Chinese is in the court letter from the Grand Council containing Qianlong's command that Fukanggan take up the task of overseeing the reform of the Tibetan administration. Although Fukanggan would in subsequent reports elaborate on the Golden Urn ritual in important ways (which will be addressed in chapter two), this court letter already contained a rudimentary outline of the Golden Urn Ritual (closely resembling the description of the ritual in the *Discourse on Lamas*) and six other major proposals.³⁷ Over the next two months Fukanggan and the ambans Heliyen and Huilin jointly submitted a

³⁶ Ma. Fuk'anggan, 1754-1796. A survey of Fukanggan's archival record reveals very few Manchu-language memorials, suggesting either that his official portfolio of responsibilities included none that required the Manchu language or that he was simply not competent in Manchu.

³⁷ *Qinding Kuo'erka fanglüe* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2006), 622-626. Henceforth KKFL.

further twenty-two reform measures to the court. After they were approved, they were translated into Tibetan and forwarded onto the relevant Tibetan authorities for implementation on April 4, 1793 (QL 58/02/24).³⁸ The Tibetan-language compilation of these new measures, known as the *Twenty-nine Articles* (Tib. *sgrigs srol don tshan nyer dgu*) was discovered in the Tibetan archives in the 1980s, translated back into Chinese, and rechristened the “Imperially-sanctioned Twenty-nine Articles for the Reconstruction of Tibet” (《欽定藏內善後章程二十九條》).³⁹

Fukanggan’s departure from Lhasa the day after submitting these measures to the Dalai Lama also marked the end of the Chinese-language reports. As Heliyen and later Sungyun (松筠, 1752-1835, chief amban 1795-1800) undertook the task of implementing and enforcing the new statutes, including the new procedure for recognizing rebirths, their reports on the subject were consistently composed in Manchu, a precedent that would survive until the very end of the dynasty. Until 1911, matters that touched on the relationship between the Qing court and the ruling monastic elite, including the reincarnation, education, enthronement and general patronage of kūtuktu both by the dynasty and by the Mongol aristocracy of Kokonor, Inner and Outer Mongolia, and Ili, remained the purview of Manchu-language reports.

This chapter utilizes the full archival record, as well as contemporary Tibetan-language sources, to examine the history of the Golden Urn from its initial conception to its reception in Tibetan society, not only in Lhasa but also in Kham and Amdo. The

³⁸ Yuan yilai Xizang difang yu zhongyang zhengfu guanxi dang'an shiliao huibian (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1995), 821-822. Henceforth *Huibian*.

³⁹ Liao Zugui, Li Yongchang, and Li Pengnian, *Qingding zangnei shanhou zhangcheng ershijiutiao banben kaoli* [Philological research on the ‘Twenty-nine articles of reconstruction’] (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2006) 8-14. The first translation was published in Ya Hanzhang, *Dalai Lama zhuan* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984), 62-71.

Tibetan, Manchu and Chinese texts produced in the course of inventing and implementing the “tradition” of the Golden Urn in the 1790s constitute the most significant and sustained discussion of Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism, and the utility of Buddhist governance among mid-Qing officials. As such, the debates and concerns of these texts reveal the formation of a new set of frameworks and discourses concerning the position of Tibet Buddhists within the Qing empire. Among the emperor and his officials, a crisis of faith in the authenticity of a key component of Tibet’s governing class—in the kūtuktus, led to efforts to assert the dominance of the court in both politics and religion. As James Hevia has previously pointed out, the emperor’s *Discourse on Lamas* directly challenged the presumptions of the Gelukpa prelates who considered themselves at the very least as the spiritually superior “priests” of their Manchu “patrons.”⁴⁰ I find that Qianlong’s message was neither consistently delivered by his officials nor uniformly understood by Tibetan lama-officials. The behavior of Fukanggan, for instance, was interpreted in Tibetan sources as an expression of the renewal of traditional patron-priest relations, whereas the “arrogance” of Heliyen was merely ignored. Qianlong’s attempt to explicitly subjugate the Buddhist elite, what Hevia refers to as Qianlong’s “gesture of closure,” was reinterpreted by the Eighth Dalai Lama and his biographer, the Démo Kūtuktu, as an attempt to become one of them: Qianlong as a reincarnated Gelukpa lama sitting at the head of an theocracy.

It was the Golden Urn itself however, that underwent the most profound change between Beijing and Lhasa: A Ming-period administrative lottery for assigning posts within the bureaucracy became a legitimate Tibetan divination technology. The following

⁴⁰ James Hevia, “Lamas, Emperors and Rituals: Political Implications in Qing imperial Ceremonies” (*Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 16 1993, 243-278), 267.

three chapters analyze this process. The first chapter traces the inner court deliberations between Qianlong and his ministers that evolved into the famous statement on the court's relationship to Tibetan Buddhism and the institution of the Golden Urn. I find that, months before the court came to the consensus that a full-scale reform of Tibetan administration would be necessary, Qianlong had already begun to fear that a widespread crisis of faith was brewing among Tibetan Buddhists. Ultimately, Qianlong and his ministers came to the conclusion that it was the indigenous oracles and divination practices of central Tibet that had corrupted the process of recognizing kūtuktus. It was Qianlong's intention that the Golden Urn would replace the oracles as the penultimate stage in the identification of reincarnations.

Chapter Two examines the early introduction of the Golden Urn in Lhasa. To Qianlong's dismay, his officials soon reported that the local Tibetan population shared neither his sense of crisis nor his hostility to the oracles. Thus in order for the transplantation of the lottery to be successful, Qianlong's men in Lhasa were compelled to embark on an active campaign to discredit and displace indigenous divination practices. This campaign involved a mixture of coercion and persuasion that ultimately evolved into a full-scale assault on the credibility of the Dalai Lama, the governing ministers, and the central administration of Ganden Phodrang government more generally. Chapter Two concludes with an examination of first usage of the Golden Urn ritual in the recognition of a major kūtuktu, the Eighth Phagpa Lha (Tib. 'Phags pa lha, Ma. Pakbala Kūtuktu, 1795-1847) of the Chamdo region in Kham.

Just months after the identification of the Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu, the search for the rebirth of the Second Jamyang Zhepa (Tib. 'Jam byang bzhad pa, Ma. Jamyang Kūtuktu,

1728-1791), the most important lineage in the Amdo region, came to light at court. The passing of both the Phagpa Lha and the Jamyang Zhepa so soon after the institution of the Golden Urn represented a fortuitous opportunity for the court to promote their new procedure in two strategic regions far from central Tibet. Qianlong and the imperial residents in Xining and Lhasa therefore took great care handling these two searches.

The case of the Jamyang Zhepa, the topic of the third chapter, posed a major challenge to the court because popular opinion in the local community had already begun to coalesce around a single candidate before the lottery was held. The subsequent covert manipulation of the ritual by the amban Sungyun at the request of Qianlong ensured that the candidate favored by the public was *not* recognized as the rebirth. This intervention has until now been a secret of the Manchu-language archives. In this section I employ several Tibetan-language biographies of the Jamyang Zhepa and other local histories to explore how Tibetan observers explained the unexpected shift in fortunes. In this case, local sources, including the biography of the Third Jamyang Zhepa (1792-1855), reveal that the acceptance of the Golden Urn Lottery as a legitimate step in the recognition process was tenuous at best and required significant attention from influential kūtuktus allied to the Qianlong court. Ultimately, the ritual was legitimized and precedent was set for numerous future recognitions in the Amdo region. Yet Tibetans' interpretations of the ritual continued to diverge significantly from those of Qing officials. Where Qianlong saw old and corrupted traditions being replaced, Tibetan narratives describe the new ritual as a continuation of tradition and the fulfillment of indigenous prophecies. Where Qianlong saw the eradication of the old oracles, Tibetans saw the new ritual as fitting into previous traditions of requesting advice from oracles.

Chapter One: A Crisis of Faith and the Origins of the Golden Urn

Introduction: Tibet's Loss of "Toose"

It is no small irony of history that Sungyun, who had assisted in handling the affairs of Lord Macartney, the English ambassador whose refusal to perform the kowtow had caused so much trouble in Beijing in 1793, was himself given strict orders not to perform the kowtow when meeting the Eighth Dalai Lama less than a year later in December of 1794 (QL 59/11/13; 1794-12-05).⁴¹ In his instructions to Sungyun, the newly appointed chief Lhasa amban, the emperor was evidently concerned that the new custom of not prostrating before the Dalai Lama was still not well established. He feared that “Sungyun, a man of the Mongol banners who reveres the Yellow Teaching” might show weakness in the presence of the Dalai Lama and fail to uphold the precedent established by Heliyen, his predecessor.⁴² It appears that the refusal of the previous chief amban Heliyen to prostrate before the Dalai Lama had been an impromptu decision taken by Heliyen himself which was subsequently reported to Qianlong by the assistant amban, Cengde. Qianlong evidently approved and included a frank rationale for Sungyun’s edification:

⁴¹ Sungyung was ordered to accompany Macartney and his entourage for the first leg of their return journey from Beijing to Hangzhou in the fall of 1793. See James Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 197-202.

⁴² MWLF 159:1203.

Heliyen did not prostrate before the Dalai Lama, yet regardless they (the Tibetan elite) were extremely obedient and respectful to him. Although the Jirung and Dimu kūtuktus⁴³ did not kneel before him (Heliyen), I have received subsequent memorials reporting that all the others, from the kūtuktus to the g'ablon⁴⁴ knelt. Heliyen's behavior is very pleasing. If any ambans were to act in such haughty and arrogant manner in other places, I would probably find it unacceptable. Yet for the past several years the customs (*tacin*) of Tibet (*Dzang*) have been in decline. The only reason things are not completely in tatters is because in reality it is the ambans who have been entrusted with containing all the problems (the Tibetans) have encountered. Thus since the ambans have rectified matters, authority (*toose*) resides in them.⁴⁵ Since they have only just found a basis for managing affairs,⁴⁶ it is acceptable that they have not been able to pin [everything] down.⁴⁷

A more succinct encapsulation of the dramatic shift in political authority that occurred in Lhasa between 1791 and 1792 cannot be found in the archives. As he gazed back on the affairs of the proceeding three years, Qianlong clearly felt that they had culminated in the permanent transfer of sovereign authority (Ma. *toose*) to his appointees. Yet in this section I will argue that this profound shift in political authority to the Qing

⁴³ Ma. Jirung Kūtuktu, Ch. Ji-long Hu-tu-ke-tu 濟囉呼圖克圖 or Da-ca huofo 達擦活佛, Tib. Tatsak Rinpoche (*Rta tshag rje drung rin po che 08 Ye shes blo bzang bstan pa'i mgon po*, 1760-1810). From 1791-1804 served as the de-facto head of the Tibetan administration. In 1804 he officially became regent for the Ninth Dalai Lama. His seat at Kundeling Monastery in Lhasa was founded with donations from the Qing court in the aftermath of the second Gurkha War (1792). He received title of “Jirung” from the Qing court. Démo Kūtuktu: Ma. Dimu Kūtuktu, Ch. Di-mu hu-tu-ke-tu 第穆呼圖克圖, Tib. Démo Tülku (*De mo 08 ngag dbang thub bstan 'jigs med rgya mtsö*, 1778-1819) succeeded the Tatsak Rinpoche as regent in Tibet, 1810-1819. It is revealing that neither of these two lama-officials felt compelled to genuflect before the Qing ambans.

⁴⁴ Kalön: the Manchu transliteration of the title for the Tibetan state councilors who made up the Kashag. Tib. *zhabs pad* or *bka' blon*.

⁴⁵ Ma. “eiten baita teisulefi mayan tatabume. fuhali ambasai afabuha be dahame yaburakū turgunde. baita teni šašun akū de isinaha. uttu tuwancihiyah manggi. toose be ambasa de bici.”

⁴⁶ “yaya baita icihiyara de teni fakjin bahambime...” I interpret the *fakjin* (support, basis, foundation) as referring to the new statutes enacted by Fukanggan that provided the ambans with a new legal basis for asserting authority over the Tibetan central administration.

⁴⁷ MWLF 159:1202-1203.

court was neither inevitable nor was it initially the intention of Qing officialdom, even during the immediate aftermath of the Gurkha's attack on Tibet and the collapse of local defenses in the winter of 1791-92. This is particularly evident from the behavior of the Qing generalissimo Fuk'anngan when he arrived in Lhasa in QL 57/01/22), two months before Heliyen. The following brief discussion of Fukanggan's audience with the Eighth Dalai Lama helps establish not only the fact that Qing officials had not firmly decided to take the Dalai Lama's *toosa* for themselves, but also the degree to which Tibetan observers—at the very least the Dalai Lama's biographer, the Démo Kūtuktu—understood the general's arrival as an affirmation of the traditional patron-priest relationship.

Cooperation: The Qing War of Prayer Against the Gurkhas & the First Audience between Fukanggan and the Dalai Lama

Initially Qianlong and his ministers were impressed by the manner in which the Dalai Lama and the abbots of the major monasteries in Lhasa faced the threat of a Gurkha attack on Lhasa. In truth it was the apparent witlessness of the serving Lhasa ambans Bootai (保泰) and Yamantai (雅滿泰) that most vexed the court. As the Gurkha forces rolled across the Tibetan frontier and then sacked Trashi Lhünpo in the face of anemic defenses, the ambans urged the Dalai Lama to flee with the young Panchen Lama northeast to Amdo. The Dalai Lama resisted this suggestion and after traveling to the Jokhang cathedral to perform his own prognostication, announced that the Gurkhas would not make it to Lhasa. The biography of the Dalai Lama recalls that he informed the

ambans: “Since [you] ambans are commissioned at the command of the emperor, [your] judgments should be made according to the truth. However, due to the personal magnificence of the emperor (Tib. *gong ma chen po'i sku'i gzi byin la brten*), the Gurkha forces will not be able to arrive here. Yet I will continue to observe this matter. You two should not worry and must make a report to the emperor.”⁴⁸ Upon receiving the ambans’ report that the Dalai Lama had refused to budge from the Potala, Qianlong wrote, “It is fortunate that the Dalai Lama and the abbots are decisive and will tenaciously defend Buddhism. The people will be fortified through their unity and not take to flight at the slightest fright. This bestirs my heart, reward them!”⁴⁹ The ambans, however, were promptly cashiered.

Inspired by the Dalai Lama’s fortitude, representatives of the monastic community of Lhasa proposed opening a second front in the war against the Gurkhas: “If we are unable to destroy those demons of rage (the Gurkhas) who threaten the body of the Glorious Lama (the Dalai Lama) this will be a major sin against the jewel vehicle of us Buddhists (Tib: *nged chos pa*). We lamas by means of a violent device will cut [the Gurkhas] off from the deities who support their domain and visualize their painful death.”⁵⁰ The deployment of prayer against the Gurkhas quickly received the full support of the Qing court. Qianlong certainly assumed that the Gurkhas would bring to bear whatever magical weaponry they could muster. In this escalating prayer war, a flurry of

⁴⁸ Démo Kūtuktu, *'jam dpal rgya mtsho'i rnam thar* (Lhasa: Drépung Monastery, 1811; TIBRC W2CZ7847), 198ka.3. The term *gzi byin* is questionably translated here. Stein notes that this is a transliteration from a Chinese word, meaning “majesty, splendor, brilliance, or charisma,” but he does not include the original character. Need to check.

⁴⁹ KKFL (QL 56/09/20), 103.

⁵⁰ Démo Kūtuktu, 198ka.1.

communications passed between Qianlong, Agūi, Hešen, the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu,⁵¹ and the Dalai Lama concerning the sponsorship of major ceremonies in both central Tibet and in Beijing of the winter of 1791-2. In a court letter passed to the Dalai Lama via the Grand Councilors Agūi and Hešen, the emperor stressed the important contribution that “earnest and sincere recitation of sutras” (Ma. *hing sere unenggi gūnin i nomun hūlabume*) could have on the progress of the war. He already credited the work of the monks of Ü with “pinning down the squirming Gurkha bandits” when the latter’s campaign failed to reach Lhasa.⁵² He was particularly concerned about the abilities of the renegade Šamarba Lama (Tib. *Zhwa dmar bla ma*) who was living under the protection of the Gurkhas. He warned the Dalai Lama: “As for the Šamarba, he is an evil lama of the Red Hats, a deceitful person who is an expert at wielding harmful magic. At this time it cannot be predicted what sorts of vain magic there will be so [you] must be ready to intercept and repel.”⁵³

⁵¹ Ma. Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu. This lama appears to have been passed through the court, both in Chengde and Beijing during this year and may have been serving as the Seal-holding-lama at Yonghegong. However this Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu should not be confused with a similarly named kūtuktu based at Lamo Dechen and Labrang monasteries who also occasionally resided in Beijing during the 18th century. According to Sangyé Rinchen, the fourth Ganden Siretu Kūtuktu of Lamo Dechen was only 19 years old in 1792 and residing in Qinghai. See, Sangs rgyas rin chen, “LAmo bde chen dgon pa’i sku phyags gser khri rin po che’i sku phreng rim byon gyi lo rgyus mdo bsdsus ngo sprod zhu ba,” *Mdo smad zhib jug* 9, 113. In the Manchu-language archive, in the 1790s, the title seems to have been used as shorthand to refer to any lama who had served as the throne-holder at Gandan Monastery (also called the Ganden Tripa). From these documents it appears that the Dalai Lama sent his communications to the office of the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu who then forwarded them to the court if necessary.

⁵² MWLF 155:0243.

⁵³ MWLF 155:0244. These archival materials frequently mention several specific sutras or prayers about which I have yet to find the Tibetan-language equivalent. In particular, in the context of mustering prayer for martial usage, the (Ma.) *g’al mandal* (“gal mandala?”) and the *doksit nomun* (“doksit sutra”?) are often discussed. Qianlong also mentions the importance of assigning monks the task of reciting mantras (Ma. *k’or maktambi*), but specifics are not mentioned.

When Fukanggan and the vanguard of the Qing expeditionary force arrived in Lhasa on February 14, 1792 (QL 57/01/22), Fukanggan and Qianlong were yet undecided about what degree of courtesy and what type of comportment would be appropriate when meeting the Dalai Lama. Fukanggan wrote that he had received the following rather ambiguous instructions from the emperor:

Since you have the rank of general and are traveling to Tibet to settle affairs, when you first meet in order to convey my instructions, it is naturally not necessary to prostrate (行禮) before him. Yet the Fan of Tibet take etiquette seriously, therefore it is not inadvisable to show a bit of respect. You should deliberate on this matter and by your comportment make the right impression and preserve their system.⁵⁴

While it is clear from these instructions that privately Qianlong believed that his general outranked the Dalai Lama, they do not imply that at that time the emperor envisioned the transfer of indigenous authority to court-appointed officials in the way that he would several years later. And even if he did believe that the *toose* of Tibetan officials had shifted, then he certainly felt it was not yet the time to force the issue. Ultimately, both Fukanggan's relevant memorial and the *Biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama* state that Fukanggan had decided to prostrate yet the Dalai Lama graciously exempted him.

In their essentials, the two accounts of this audience, one composed by Fukanggan either the same day or shortly thereafter, and the other perhaps a decade or more later, resemble each other closely. And while the interpretive frameworks of each account differ, they both convey the impression that after this unprecedented and somewhat

⁵⁴ *Huibian* (《匯編》), 705-708: “前奉諭旨：以臣身為將軍，且為安輯衛藏前往，初次見面傳旨，自應無庸向其行禮，但藏內番眾素所敬重，亦未便不稍為加禮，令臣斟酌情形，以飾觀瞻而存體制。”

improvised exchange on the basis of two different ritual traditions, the lama and general had favorable impressions of one another. Fukanggan's report describes the Dalai Lama as a competent and loyal instrument of the emperor's will. The biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama examines the behavior of the general, whom the lama is quoted as addressing using his Manchu title—Aliha Da chenpo” (Tib. *A li ha dA chen po*, an interesting admixture of Manchu with Tibetan meaning “Great Grand Secretary”), in excruciating detail in order to demonstrate the process by which over the course of his stay in Lhasa Fukanggan was transformed into a sincere disciple of the Dalai Lama, laying the groundwork for a archetypical patron-priest relationship.⁵⁵

The Démo Kūtuktu's account presents the initial audience between Fukanggan and the Dalai Lama as a carefully scripted event, designed so that the basic framework of the ritual would serve to remind participants of the elevated status of the lama over the secular officer. Démo Kūtuktu commences his narrative by noting how the servants of the Dalai Lama had arranged three thrones on the north side of the hall, one each for the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, and a slightly lower throne for the general.⁵⁶ Yet within this framework, lama and general made a variety of spontaneous gestures and exchanges. Since such a meeting was clearly unprecedented, Démo Kūtuktu seems to be describing an event in which the participants were constructing the ritual as they went along. The implicit hierarchical arrangement of the setting allowed for some flexibility during the

⁵⁵ Fukanggan's memorials reporting his audiences with the Dalai Lama often note the presence of the Démo Kūtuktu, the author of the biography. Thus we have good evidence that Démo Kūtuktu witnessed many the events in question. It is no surprise then that he was able to discuss the relationship between Fukanggan and the Dalai Lama for nine full folio sheets (both recto and verso, a total of 18 pages of text!). This appears to be the most sustained discussion of any topic or event broached in the biography.

⁵⁶ Démo Kūtuktu, 201ka.01.

give and take of the audience. What follows is a paraphrase of the Tibetan original with translations when necessary.

When Fukanggan arrived at the door of the hall, the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama came forward to greet him at the entrance. There the Dalai Lama asked after the emperor. In return Fukanggan presented gifts and a ceremonial scarf on behalf of the emperor. The party then moved to the space before the thrones where the Dalai Lama and Fukanggan again exchanged ceremonial scarves “as equals.”⁵⁷ Fukanggan’s first statement in response to the Dalai Lama’s well wishes was an expression of faith in the Dalai Lama’s status as a true Buddha:

[Fukanggan] petitioned, ‘Upon this opportunity to meet the Buddha, may I prostrate in homage before you?’ Then he requested, ‘May the Dalai Lama resume his throne and enlighten [us].’

Dalai Lama forcefully responded, ‘The emperor is truly Manjusri, the father of all the Buddhas. Since you have come here like a fruit of his vision, and on behalf of the teaching of the direction of the setting sun (i.e the Western Teaching) and for the [benefit] of all sentient beings, a person such as yourself does not need to prostrate in the customary manner before a lama like me!’

The grand secretary⁵⁸ then continued, ‘Out of concern for the greatness of the personage of the emperor, Dalai Lama, you have refused my request to prostrate. This is a sign that you certainly are wise in the customs of the interior (Tib: *nang gi lugs srol mkhyen pa'i rtags yin*). Although you have in this circumstance dispensed with my prostration, henceforth it is appropriate that I perform it. The Dalai Lama truly is Buddha. He is the crown of all the incarnations (Tib. *ho thog tu*) and the lord even of those

⁵⁷ Démo Kūtuktu, 201ka.03.

⁵⁸ The “Grand Secretary:” Tib. *krung thang chen po*. An interesting phenomenon in the biography is that narrator, the Démo Tülku, consistently refers to Fukanggan using a Tibetan transliteration of the Chinese honorific term for a Grand Secretary: *zhongtang* (中堂), Tib. *krung thang chen po*. In quoted speech of the Dalai Lama however, Démo Tülku has the lama refer to the Grand Secretary using the Manchu title: Ma. *Aliha da*.

lamas who serve as preceptor to the emperor himself. Therefore if I take a seat on a throne like this, it will be harmful to making merit. So I insist that I definitely must sit on a inferior seat.'

In reply the Dalai Lama requested, 'My heart possesses great gratitude because the Manjusri emperor due to his kind and compassionate concern for the clergy, laity and all sentient beings throughout Tibet (Tib. *bod*), has dispatched you, a great minister who is like a second emperor (Tib. *gong ma gnyis pa lta bu'i blon chen*). It is a good arrangement for you, the minister of the emperor, to take a seat on this throne. If you do not take this throne, I will not be satisfied.'

This request and all of the [Dalai Lama's] words and instructions were effortlessly similar to the customs of the interior. Thus the faith and spirituality of the grand secretary increased even further. He grasped the hand of the Great Protector and placed it on his head. Subsequently, in private audiences, [Fukanggan] offered his head to the Great Protector and bowed (i.e. prostrated). On account of this [the Dalai Lama] knew him/knew his words [to be true/sincere].⁵⁹

From this dialogue, it would appear that Fukanggan arrived prepared to perform the kowtow, yet was restrained due to a special act of grace on the part of the Dalai Lama. What is remarkable about this audience is the exchange of "customs" (Tib. *lugs srol*). The Dalai Lama's gesture of not requiring Fukanggan to prostrate is construed as a sign of his knowledge of China. The transaction of customs is completed a moment later when in response to Fukanggan's request to hold a major "stability of life" (Tib. *zhabs brtan*) offering for the emperor, the Dalai Lama states that the desire to sponsor such a ceremony is in accord with "the customs of Tibet (Tib. *bod*) as a place that worships and protects the three jewels of the Dharma." This explicit exchange of "customs"—the gesture towards Qing political superiority in the context of the audience in exchange for an admission of the religious power of incarnate lamas, over the very lifespan of the emperor himself—implicitly establishes the parity of the two actors in the patron-priest

⁵⁹ Démo Kūtuktu, 201ka.06-201kha.04.

relationship. Shortly thereafter, on the date fixed by the Dalai Lama, a three-day-long “stability of life” ceremony was held for the emperor. The biography notes that on the last day of the ceremony Fukanggan personally sponsored a mass tea ceremony (Tib. *mang ja*) for five hundred monks. The author, the Démo Kūtuktu, states that through this Fukanggan established his “reverence for the his rightful privileges as a patron.”⁶⁰

Fukanggan’s own narrative of what transpired between arriving at the entrance to the audience hall and taking throne is quite different. Here, in between the well-wishing at the door and the discussion of prostration, Fukanggan reports that he has accomplished what for him was the most essential task of the audience—conveying the emperor’s edict to the Dalai Lama and other assembled dignitaries. The promulgation of this decree is not recorded in the Tibetan-language biography. The content of the edict sends a powerful, if ambiguous message. Qianlong first justifies again the purpose of the military expedition as an expression of his desire to protect the Dalai Lama and the Gelukpa more generally. Second, he contrasts the failings of the ambans with the presence of mind of the Dalai Lama, the latter of which he again wishes to reward. Finally, however, he notes that because “those people in Tibet who govern affairs are unable to think long-term and only concern themselves with the short-term”⁶¹ and the “Tibetan troops are much too cowardly,” in the future, “after the bandits have been pacified and eliminated, with regard to the matter of reconstruction, it will be necessary to design and establish new

⁶⁰ Démo Kūtuktu, 203ka.06: “*krung thang chen po yang sku ngos kyis yon mchod kyi go bab ma ‘dzol ba’i gus ‘dud tshad med/*”

⁶¹ “恐藏內辦事之人未能從長計畫，只顧目前。”

laws/regulations to ensure that the border is tranquil and there are no further disasters.”⁶² Qianlong concludes by stating that it will be the responsibility of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama to promulgate and enforce these future laws.

Having conveyed the emperor’s decree, the remaining task is to assess not only the degree to which the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama are willing to undertake future responsibilities, but also how capable they are of carrying them out successfully. Fukanggan reports favorably on both of these aspects. Thus, the Dalai Lama’s insistence that Fukanggan need not prostrate is not understood as an indulgence towards the “customs of the interior,” but rather as a frank admission that the general outranks him and an expression of his willingness to obey. Fukanggan records that the Dalai Lama stated, “A monk like myself will not accept being prostrated to by an unusually important official such as yourself.”⁶³ Fukanggan’s memorial also characterizes the Dalai Lama as an effective administrator. He commends, for instance, the Dalai Lama on his skill at organizing supplies for the military force. The general notes that the seat prepared for him “truly is exceedingly proper.”⁶⁴ Finally, Fukanggan even writes that he finds the ten-year-old Panchen Lama so attractive and charming that it is hard to believe he is not really a reincarnation.

The Démo Kūtuktu’s narrative of the initial audience and subsequent events presents Fukanggan as more than just the “second emperor.” Démo’s portrayal of Fukanggan is an unprecedented characterization of an individual Manchu official whose

⁶² “將來剿平賊匪後，一切善後事宜，必須另立章程，逐一籌辦，務使邊圉謐寧，永除後患。”

⁶³ *Huibian*, 707.

⁶⁴ *Huibian*, 708.

personal investment in the faith goes beyond merely representing the court. The general repeatedly sought teachings from the Dalai Lama and sponsored various ceremonies around the city. For instance, nearly a year after their first audience, when Fukanggan had returned from Nepal to supervise the reform process, the biography records that Fukanggan sponsored another major “stability of life” ceremony, this time for his own mother.⁶⁵ At the conclusion of the ceremony, as “they sat together in the private chamber [of the Dalai Lama] as priest and patron,” Fukanggan again states that having come to Tibetan he no longer wishes to leave.⁶⁶ The unprecedented personal bond between the Dalai Lama and Fukanggan appears most clearly in the multi-day ceremonies that accompanied the general’s final departure from Lhasa.

On Fukanggan’s day of departure, the Dalai Lama, responding to the general’s request for yet further instruction, established a tent at some distance from the town. There the two had a final conversation during which Fukanggan took the Dalai Lama as his personal object of devotion. The Dalai Lama exhorted him to take comfort:

‘You are a great official attached to the thoughts of the emperor.⁶⁷ Therefore, if you commit yourself to the worship of the superior deity, the venerable Manjusri,⁶⁸ the power of his blessing will be enormous. And, if you also propitiate the Wish-fulfilling Jewel Protector who is the manifestation of the deity of the powerful Avalokiteshvara (i.e. me, the DL), your achievements will be swift and great. Do that for the Gods!’

⁶⁵ The *Biography* notes the exceptional nature of this request. The general requested that the stability of life ritual be held during the Monlam ceremonies of the Tibetan New Year. Thus the Dalai Lama had to make a special dispensation of monks and material to hold the ceremony.

⁶⁶ Démo Kūtuktu, 205ka.06.

⁶⁷ I.e. in the service of the emperor.

⁶⁸ Tib. *rje btsun 'jam dbyangs*.

The Grand Secretary insisted, his voice hoarse from earnestness, ‘You are the sole Protector of all the sentient beings and in particular the thirteen myriarchies of Tibet.⁶⁹ Although we ourselves dwell in a distant land, you Dalai Lama exist in the center of our heart through our meditation. Regard us with compassion as a father does his son. We offer service out of the gratitude we have held in our hearts for all you have done *in the cause of the two traditions.*⁷⁰ Just as a master apportions [work] to his servants, command me [to take up] your happy affairs. In what remains of my life, I shall, by performing the Three Pleasing Actions, follow you appropriately as your student.’⁷¹

The elaborate depiction of Fukanggan is significant because it is the general’s personal sincerity that authenticates the larger patron-priest relationship between the Qing emperors and the kūtuktus of Tibetan Buddhism. Here, finally, is flesh-and-blood confirmation that the Qing court stands behind its expressions of faith for the Gelukpas. Moreover the Démo Kūtuktu’s narrative, by quoting Fukanggan’s memorials to the court and imagining the dialogue between the general and emperor during subsequent audiences in Beijing, proves to his readership that Fukanggan, as *witness* to the accomplishments of the Dalai Lama, has personally conveyed the *truth* to the Qianlong emperor. The biography records:

Later, in response to the emperor’s questions during an audience [Fukanggan] reported, ‘When seen clearly and in person the Dalai Lama is in fact a genuine Buddha in human form. He was able to answer other

⁶⁹ Tib. *bod khri skor bcu gsum gyi mgon po*. The “thirteen myriarchies” is a metaphorical reference to the territories granted to the first Sakya ruler in Dbus and Gtsang by Kublai Khan (Tib. *Se chen rgyal po*). So this statement draws a parallel to the Mongol period and the delegation of powers to the Sakya rulers.

⁷⁰ Italics added. Tib. “*lugs gnyis kyi las don*.” The expression, the “Two traditions (*lugs gnyis*)” refers to the religious (Tib. *chos*) and the political/secular (Tib. *srid*). Often expressed as *chos srid lugs gnyis*.

⁷¹ Démo Kūtuktu, 207kha.04-208kha.01.

[people's] questions with unobstructed wisdom. When we approached him with major unresolved debates among our officers and troops, he immediately solved them.'

At this the emperor rejoiced saying, 'You have honestly reported the attainments/wisdom of my Dalai Lama's body, speech and mind without concealment.' He then ordered the Grand Secretary to offer a khatak and other gifts to the [Dalai Lama].⁷²

As a final conclusion to this section it is necessary to point out that the Démo Kūtuktu does not characterize Fukanggan as having presided over the transfer of political authority (Ma. *toose*) from indigenous governors to the Qing ambans. The "Great Grand Secretary's" final words at departure quoted above imply the continuity of the Dalai Lama's authority over the "two traditions," referring to both politics and religion.⁷³ The Démo Kūtuktu's reconstruction of Fukanggan's report to the emperor also makes the case for the Dalai Lama's aptitude for handling worldly affairs. According to the author the war against the Gurkhas was if anything a joint affair. In terms of strategy and maintaining the morale of the Qing forces, Fukanggan was reliant on the Dalai Lama's wisdom.⁷⁴ After Fukanggan returned from the front, the Dalai Lama offered, "a prayer of thanks for the transformation of the Gurkha people and chiefs into servants of the religious domain by means of both the power of the majesty of the imperial patron and the various protector and guardian deities from the side of virtue."⁷⁵ The wording of this

⁷² Démo Kūtuktu, 203kha.05-06.

⁷³ Démo Kūtuktu, 208ka.01.

⁷⁴ Démo Kūtuktu, 202ka.01.

⁷⁵ Démo Kūtuktu, 206kha.01 (412). Here again we encounter the term "*gzi byin*" to refer to the emperor's majesty. There is also the important term "*mthu sdops*" conveying the notion of a particular kind of *magical* power. "*dus 'dir gong ma mchod yon gyi sku'i gzi byin dang / dkar*

prayer makes it clear that it took both the charisma of the emperor and the power of the deities summoned by the Tibetans to successfully conclude the war. Moreover, the prayer suggests that victory had reduced the Gurkhas not to the status of subject of the emperor, but rather servants of the “religious domain,” i.e. the estate of the Dalai Lamas and Buddhism.⁷⁶

If we recall for a moment the general’s own description of the initial audience, the fact that the Tibetan account lacks any mention of political transition does not seem so strange. The emperor’s own message, for instance, was itself vague: both the ambans and the indigenous secular governing elite (the kalöns) had been the target of the emperor’s withering criticism, not the Dalai Lama. Thus although Qianlong promised that the government would be reformed, it was not at all clear at that time the direction it would take. Moreover, in the same memorial that included Fukanggan’s description of his initial audience with the Dalai Lama, the general also explained to Qianlong that dealing with possible “reconstruction” reforms was “not an urgent matter at present.”⁷⁷ His request to postpone further discussion of reforms is a sign that at the very least he had not yet fixed ideas of what a post Gurkha-war Tibetan government would look like.

phyogs pa'i chos skyong srung ma rnams kyi mthu stobs la brten nasgor 'go dmangs lha 'bangs su tshud b'i gzab gsol gtang rag tu'

⁷⁶ It is also important to point out that in *both* Tibetan and Qing archival sources, the dispute between the Tibetan central government and the Gurkhas is consistently portrayed as between *Tibet* and Nepal, not between the Qing and Nepal. Similarly, Tibetan and Qing officials were charged with delimited the “Tibetan boundary,” not a “Qing boundary.” MWLF 155:0088.

⁷⁷ *Huibian*, 707.

Suspicions

The initial impetus for the urn ritual came not from a desire to assume the political authority of Tibetan Buddhist monks (this would come later and only in fits and starts) but from profound feelings of insecurity fed by the unpredictable nature of reincarnation and the seemingly capricious and unconstrained behavior of the oracles, those handful of individuals whose skills at spirit possession and divination frequently provided the final word on the identification of reincarnated lamas and even Tibetan government policy more generally. The idea for the urn arose first among Qianlong and his inner circle of advisors. This group included Hešen and his brother Heliyen, the old stalwart of the Qianlong reign, Agūi, and other trusted and influential lamas who resided in Beijing. When examining the origins of the Gurkha war they determined that the root cause was a scramble for wealth on the part of a corrupt group of interrelated nobles and reincarnated lamas. If these lamas were fraudulent, then the oracles who had identified them were clearly charlatans as well. Moreover, the court blamed defeatist divinations for the quick collapse of defenses around Trashi Lhünpo monastery. They worried that a political order that hinged on faith in reincarnation was fragile if the process of identification was not reliable. If the subject populations of the various monastic domains of Inner Asia started to doubt the legitimacy of their lama-lords, or, even worse, if conflict broke out between different parties supporting different candidates, there might be grievous strategic consequences for the dynasty. The Gurkha war was thus understood in the first as a crisis of faith and only secondarily as a crisis of governance. The latter followed naturally from the first, but it is highly indicative that the Qing reform efforts began by tackling what they perceived to be the core problem—restoring faith in the

authenticity of reincarnation. Only months later did the court begin pulling together a program for the reform of the Tibetan administration. As Fukanggan had pointed out, the superficial squabbles over trade and coinage were to be handled later. Understanding the motives of the Gurkhas and punishing their transgressions were a secondary concern to dealing with the seeming moral collapse of the Tibetan ecclesiastic elite.

Doubts about the ability of powerful Buddhist adepts to direct the course of their future reincarnation are probably as old as the claims themselves. The Qing court shared these doubts, although it is clear that Qianlong personally believed that there were real kūtuktu, his close friend and “state preceptor” (Tib. *gur gyi slob dpon*, Ch. 國師) Changkya Kūtuktu Rolpay Dorjé being the most famous example. As the case of the Šamarba lama (Tib. *Zhwa dmar bla ma*) demonstrates, Qianlong still feared the powers of even those lamas upon whom he publically cast aspersions.⁷⁸ Thus the important matter is not faith in reincarnation *per se* but the credibility of the recognition process. And there is good evidence that this issue had been a perennial concern of the emperor for several decades.

The best known precedent for an intervention into the recognition process was the 1758 decree that forbade the followers of the Jebtsundamba Kūtuktu from searching for his reincarnation among the aristocracy of Mongolia. Qianlong alludes to this precedent when he describes in *Discourse on Lamas* the prediction of the Tüsiyetü Khan that his wife’s unborn child would be the next Jebtsundamba and subsequent embarrassment when the child turned out to be a daughter. Peter Perdue has argued that the 1758 prohibition and the subsequent Golden Urn lottery were both motivated by the strategic

⁷⁸ MWLF 155:0244.

desire to head off the possibility that a powerful incarnation would emerge within the household of a great Mongol lord thus creating a potent challenge to the hegemony of the Qing emperors in Inner Asia.⁷⁹ I find that, while that might have been the case in 1758 and certainly a consideration in 1792, this line of reasoning does not appear in the deliberations between Qianlong and his ministers at this later period.

A court letter from Qianlong concerning the reincarnation of the Changkya Kūtuktu (QL 51/06/28; 1786-07-23) is perhaps an early articulation of the concerns that would become prominent in 1792. In the aftermath of Changkya Rolpay Dorjé's death in 1785, the bereaved emperor took great interest in the process of locating the kūtuktu's rebirth. Rolpay Dorjé had left instructions that his rebirth would occur in a place known as "Ralo" under the jurisdiction of the Xining amban. Thus Qianlong instructed Bufu, the Xining amban, to coordinate with the Chuzang Kūtuktu (Ma. Cūbdzang Kūtuktu, Tib. Chu bzang Ho thog thu, Changkya's younger brother) in the search. Qianlong warned the amban however, to beware of corruption: "When the rebirth emerges, it cannot be foreseen whether there will be petty quarrels over the which person it is. At the time when the kūtuktu's disciple (Ma.) Gelek Namk'a returns to the pastures, it is unacceptable for him to, having accepted any goods, come to an identification of the reincarnation according to his own feelings."⁸⁰ This represents the articulation of two concerns that would become more prominent over the next couple years: First, the emperor worried about the potential for local conflicts over different candidates. Second, he feared that those charged with assisting in the search could be corrupted by the potential for personal gain. A year-and-a-half later, Qianlong ordered that the name of the candidate located by

⁷⁹ Peter Perdue, *China Marches West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 279.

⁸⁰ MWJXD: 03-138-3-050.

Chuzang Kūtuktu be sent to Tibet for confirmation by the Lamo Chökyong oracle.⁸¹ In May of 1788, Qianlong received word that the oracle had sanctioned the child in question.⁸² Overall, the archival record from this period does not contain documents that suggest the emperor was particularly suspicious of the oracles or the prophetic arts of central Tibet at this time.

The Sack of Trashī Lhünpo & the “Concocted Prophecy”

The collapse of the defenses at Trashī Lhünpo monastery in Tsang and the subsequent plundering of the monastery provided the Qing dynasty not only with casus belli for launching an expeditionary force against Nepal, but also resulted in a key imperial pronouncement on divination and the position of lamas under Qing law that would shape the thinking behind the emperor’s *Discourse on Lamas*. The court’s search for culpability in the immediate aftermath of the debacle at Trashī Lhünpo resulted in the execution of an unlikely figure: a senior monk (Tib. *rje drung*, “jédrung”)⁸³—one of only nine monks who remained behind in the monastery to attempt to defend it from the Gurkhas.

The fall of Trashī Lhünpo was a major embarrassment for the court. Just two days before the Gurkhas captured the monastery, the chief amban Baotai who had arrived to

⁸¹ MWJXD: 03-139-2-078.

⁸² MWJXD: 03-139-3-032.

⁸³ The precise identity or position of this monk is unclear. “Jédrung” is an honorific title, synonymous with *zhabs drung*. See Zhang Yisun, “*rje drung*,” in *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* [Encyclopedic Tibetan-Chinese dictionary] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1993), 910.

escort the young Panchen Lama back to Lhasa filed a first-hand report from the front lines that, that although the situation was indeed desperate, the monastery was defensible. A little more than thirteen hundred soldiers had been collected, and the four thousand resident monks had been ordered to construct fortifications and otherwise prepare to defend the place. Baotai noted, however, that there were rumors that the leading reincarnate lama of the monastery, the Drungpa Kūtuktu, was preparing to flee. Therefore he had sent a letter to the lama ordering him to stay put and sustain the morale of the monks.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, after returning to Lhasa, Baotai was informed by the kalön that just three days after he had departed with the Panchen Lama, Drungpa slipped away, taking with him as much valuable treasure and he could carry and the morale of the remaining monks as well. The next day the monastery fell into the hands of the Gurkhas.⁸⁵

At first the wrath of the court fell squarely on the Drungpa Kūtuktu. When in QL 56/10/10 (November 5, 1791) the assistant amban Yamantai suggested permitting him to return to the monastery to assist in reorganizing the scattered monks, Qianlong ordered the lama sent to Beijing for trial and imprisonment. His indictment read as follows:

As soon as the Jungba Kūtuktu heard the news that bandits were coming to raid, he thought nothing of offering a stout defense and instead gathered what wealth he could carry and at the earliest possible moment fled, leaving the Jédrung Khenpo (Tib. rje drung mkhan po, Ch. 仔仲堪布) with nothing to rely on and the masses in a state of fright. Under the pretext of having performed a divination, [the Jédrung Khanpo] then spread lies and misled the people, causing the mass of lamas to scatter and flee. Thus by the time the bandits finally arrived at the Trashi Lhünpo, the majority of lamas had already been gone for days. If the Drungpa Kūtuktu

⁸⁴ *Huibian*, 667.

⁸⁵ *Huibian*, 672-3.

had only slightly understood the gravity of the situation and led the [monks] in a stalwart defense, how could the bandits have captured the place? The loss of Trashi Lhünpo is actually a case of them giving it away themselves! The Drungpa Kūtuktu is truly the chief villain in this case... He has forgotten his principles, betrayed his teachings and merely pursues whatever suits him. How could we have entrusted the Panchen Erdeni to him? From the standpoint of the laws of Buddhism (Ch. *fofa* 佛法), one should not value life any more than death. [One] should think nothing of laying down one's life for that which benefits Buddhism. Moreover, how can he so treasure these trifling objects? Truly the Drungpa Kūtuktu is motivated by selfish desires, craves life and turned his back on what was right. The nature of his offense is obvious. I have already instructed that in principle he should be executed for his crimes. Yet out of consideration for the fact that he is the cousin of the previous Panchen Lama, just have him brought to the capital to be confined in a temple.⁸⁶

Qianlong's indictment is based on the principle that all able-bodied monks have the obligation to protect Buddhism by whatever means necessary. This principle was not the idea of the court alone. At the height of the crisis in early October of 1791, when the Gurkhas were rumored to be approaching Lhasa from three directions and Qing reinforcements were still clambering their way across the mountains of Sichuan and Yunnan, a Manchu-language court letter was delivered to the Tatsak Rinpoche (Ma. Jirung Kūtuktu) ordering him to spread word among the high clergy of Lhasa that it would be necessary to take up arms. In the letter, Qianlong called upon the Tantric practice of "taming the demons" to justify breaking monastic vows.⁸⁷ According to the edict, the Tatsak Rinpoche was to explain that, "Although the Buddhist law prohibits killing, if the bandits arrive and we have not lent our energy to the defense, then everything will be harmed. Moreover, in the Buddhist texts there is the tradition of

⁸⁶ *Huibian*, 677-8.

⁸⁷ For a history of violence in Tantric Buddhism, see Jacob Paul Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

‘Taming the demons.’ If the Gurkhas unleash their violence, then they have become your demons. At this urgent juncture, become their subjugators.”⁸⁸ The vengeance of the emperor, however, would not end with the retroactive application of this principle to the Drungpa Kūtuktu.

As the investigation into the collapse of Trashi Lhünpo evolved over the following month, so did the Qing court’s interpretation of the crime. When Qing reinforcements under Cengde finally arrived in the region of Tsang, Qianlong ordered them to arrest the Jédrung Lobzang Danba and four other monks and bring them to Lhasa for questioning. The court located a new “chief villain” in Lobzang Danba.⁸⁹ These were the monks that the court deemed responsible for “using divination to mislead the people.”⁹⁰ On December 23, 1791, under Ohūi’s torture, these men all confessed to the charges that Qianlong leveled against them: making a divination before the image of Tara (Ch. 吉祥天母), recklessly claiming that it would be impossible to defeat the Gurkhas, confusing the morale of the people, and thus causing the monks to flee. Specifically, the chief abbot described how they had conducted a tsampa dough-ball investigation (Tib. *zan brtag*, “zentak”). Having encased the answers, “Yes, fight!” and “No, don’t fight!” in small balls of tsampa dough, they posed the relevant question to the deity and rolled the balls about on a pan until the answer, due to centrifugal force (or the intervention of the deity), rolled off. Having received the answer in the negative, they then (had the temerity!)

⁸⁸ MWLF (QL 56/09/25): 3-10-1757-5 (軍機大臣阿桂等寄信鄂輝等轉諭濟隆呼圖克圖率眾喇嘛協同官兵抵禦廓爾喀入侵). For Chinese translation, see KKFL, 107.

⁸⁹ *Huibian*, 689. Also, HWLF (QL 56/11/28, 1791-12-23): 157-7633-17 (鄂輝奏為查明占卜惑眾之喇嘛並將其分別審辦).

⁹⁰ “*Huibian*, 685-688: “占卜惑眾.”

to ask whether they should attempt to parley with the Gurkhas. The ritual was repeated. In this case, the deity indicated in the affirmative. Unfortunately, the monk sent to locate the Gurkha forces ran away. At the conclusion of his confession the abbot stated that despite this turn of events, he had remained in the monastery after the others had fled and attempted to do what he could to preserve its treasures.⁹¹ As a reward for his troubles, the abbot claimed that the Gurkhas had beaten him. Ohūi, “having gathered together a crowd including the kalön and the leading lamas of all the monasteries, had him defrocked and brought under guard to the market, where, before their eyes, he was beheaded.”⁹²

Both the Qing official who oversaw his execution, Ohūi, and later the Qianlong emperor, made extensive justifications for what they acknowledged was an unprecedented punishment. First, Ohūi noted that the inquisition was repeated three weeks later in the presence of the Tatsak Rinpoche, who, confirmed that the confessions were consistent. The rinpoche then “requested that cases of those who mislead the people (*huozhong*) be handled with severity.” Thus the governing elite of Lhasa, both lay and clerical, was also made complicit in his execution. Second, Ohūi explained that the punishments were an expression of the dynasty’s desire to protect the Buddhist teachings, which the lamas had violated. He reported to Qianlong that he had subsequently explained in private to the Dalai and Panchen lamas that Lobzang Danba had, “under the pretext of having made a divination betrayed the teaching and mislead the people. Not only was this difficult for the king’s law/royal law (Ch. *wangfa* 王法) to forgive, but it is something that the law of Buddhism cannot tolerate. In principle all five men should be

⁹¹ *Huibian*, 689-90.

⁹² *Huibian*, 690.

executed, yet out of respect for the recent edict, only the leader has been punished. The emperor's desire to protect the Yellow Teachings spares no detail.”⁹³

Ohūi's justification before the Dalai Lama reveals, however, one major innovation that sets it apart, even from the indictment of the Drungpa Kūtuktu a month earlier. The monk's “rash presumption to speak for the deities” (Ch. 竟敢妄稱神言) was no longer merely a crime against Buddhism, but it was now a crime against the “king's law” (Ch. 王法), the secular, universal law of the dynasty which was only now being extended to the Buddhist elite. In a separate edict approving Ohūi's actions, Qianlong succinctly restated this change: “These lamas have rebelled against their religion (教), which is difficult for the law of the king to forgive let alone for Buddhism (佛法) to tolerate.”⁹⁴ In other words, the emperor was expressing the will to use the laws—and punishments—of the secular code to enforce the Buddhist law. At the conclusion of his edict, Qianlong emphasizes the novelty of this situation by contrasting it with the state of affairs during the Mongol Yuan Dynasty:

I lovingly protect the Yellow Teachings and treat with special kindness those lamas who hold fast to the laws of the religion they revere. However, if there are those who cannot be pardoned for their failures and sins against the religion,⁹⁵ then they definitely will not be shielded from being promptly punished according to the law. Consider the manner in which the Yuan patronized lamas: They single-mindedly worshipped the

⁹³ *Huibian*, 690: “以占卜為詞，悖教惑眾，不特王法所難宥，抑且佛法所不容，本應將五人一併正法，今欽遵諭旨，只令將為首者從重辦理，仰見大皇帝保護黃教之心無微不至。”

⁹⁴ *Huibian*, 691. Also, 一史館藏內閣起居注, QL 56/12/25 (1792-01-18).

⁹⁵ This is phrased in the original as “教中敗類罪,” which may be a reference to violations of the Vinaya—the monastic code of conduct.

lamas and differentiated not [between right and wrong].⁹⁶ It reached the point where someone who insulted [a lama] would lose their tongue and someone who hit [a lama] would lose their arm, causing the lamas to know absolutely no restraint. How then could they recover their government system? I intend that this judgment concerning Lobzang Danba's use of divination to mislead the people, serve the purpose of clarifying the intention/purpose of the law with regards to our protection of the Yellow Teachings.⁹⁷

In this statement Qianlong is careful to justify the extension of the emperor's legal authority over Tibetan Buddhists not on the basis of imperial prerogative alone, but rather because it is necessary to ensure that monks keep their faith and act selflessly. The emperor reserves the right to judge who has violated Buddhist law on the basis of his position as a Buddhist who wishes to see the faith flourish. Thus the emperor felt he was fully within his rights to determine that the Jédrung Abbot Lobzang Danba's divination was nothing more than a false prophecy designed to obscure the truth about his own cowardice.⁹⁸ Moreover Qianlong argues that it is the right of the ruler to enforce Buddhist law and pass judgment on the Buddhist community that maintains the overall stability of the government.

⁹⁶ The last phrase in this sentence, “一意崇奉，漫無區別,” poses some difficulties. It may be possible to interpret this as the failure to distinguish between “right and wrong” or “rulers and ruled.”

⁹⁷ *Huibian*, 691: “朕於黃教索雖愛護，但必於奉教守法之喇嘛等方加以恩遇，若為教中敗類罪在不赦者，即當明正典刑，斷不稍有袒護。設如元季之供養喇嘛，一意崇奉，漫無區別，致有詈罵者刮舌、毆打者截手之事，令喇嘛等無所忌憚，尚復成何政體？此次辦理占卜惑眾之羅布藏丹巴一事，即於衛護黃教之中，示以彰明憲典之義。”

⁹⁸ Qing officialdom's rhetoric about Tibetan “cowardice” permeates nearly all of the communications concerning the Gurkha wars. One cannot help but consider to what degree the notion that Tibetans were inherently cowards made it easier for Qianlong and his ministers to decide that the results of “unfavorable” divinations were merely an attempt to legitimize cowardice.

Qianlong was satisfied with this formulation because he incorporated it into his *Discourse on Lamas* a year later. He evidently considered the execution of the Jédrung abbot a watershed moment, not only for his reign but for the history of the dynasty more generally. The forceful handling of this matter was proof that the achievements of the Qing would endure longer than those of the Mongol Yuan.⁹⁹ The case established two important precedents: First, lamas could be subjected to the full force of “king’s law.” Second the court had the right to supervise and authenticate indigenous divination practices. Of course it should be noted that in practice the extent of the “king’s law” would remain ambiguous. The fact that Qianlong stayed the axe when it came to the Drungpa Kūtuktu, the high-ranking reincarnation, demonstrated a continued deference to the Buddhist hierarchy. It was the misfortune of the Jédrung lama, perhaps one of the few monks courageous enough to face the Gurkhas, that proved true the adage that some are more equal than others. It is an astonishing fact that in the years following the collapse of Trashi Lhünpo, among those Qing and Tibetan officials who fell under the scrutiny of the court, including those Manchu officials discovered as complicit in making secret arrangements with the Gurkhas in defiance of the court, only the Jédrung Lama was executed.

The Oracles of Central Tibet and the Recognition of False Lamas

⁹⁹ *Discourse on Lamas*, lines 13-13, 29-30.

In late March of 1792, a little over a month after Fukanggan had arrived in Lhasa, Qianlong decided to dispatch Heliyen to serve as the chief amban in the city.¹⁰⁰ This move reflected not only the gravity with which Qianlong viewed the situation, but also indicated that the emperor desired an unusual degree of frankness, oversight and discretion in dealing with Tibetan internal affairs. Subsequently many communications between the Heliyen and the emperor were conveyed within Manchu-language letters between the amban and his elder brother, the chief grand councilor Hešen. In fact, it appears that these brothers made use of the palace memorial system to exchange numerous private messages concerning Tibetan affairs, thus to some degree Tibet policy for the next several years would become a family affair.¹⁰¹ The archives even contain several letters from Tibetan nobles and major incarnations that were sent directly to Hešen himself. For instance, an early 1792 (Qianlong 57) letter from the young Panchen Lama to Hešen requested that the latter intercede to ensure that the Drungba Kūtuktu, who had just been dispatched to Beijing, be treated leniently and permitted to return to Tibet as soon as possible.¹⁰² Heliyen's arrival in Lhasa corresponds with a shift in tone away from that which had characterized the communications between Fukanggan and Qianlong.

When Heliyen arrived in Lhasa in early June of 1792, Fukanggan had already departed and was in the Tibetan border district of Kyirong (Tib. Skyid grong) preparing

¹⁰⁰ *Huibian*, 729.

¹⁰¹ Hešen's letters seem to have come to light and been placed in the Grand Council archives when the Jiaqing emperor ordered the investigation of the former grand councilor following the death of Qianlong. MWLF 167:0339 and neighboring documents are a good example of these letters, specifically relating to the grand councilor's potential mishandling of subsequent tribute missions from the Gurkhas.

¹⁰² MWLF 155: 0047.

to launch the punitive expedition into Gurkha territory.¹⁰³ Heliyen's investigations, his chasing of whispers across Lhasa, and his overall suspicions of the Tibetan elites and their governing capabilities seems to have led to an aggressive effort to limit and constrain the power of the Tibetan nobility and even began to undermine the legitimacy of the Dalai Lama himself. At the same time as Heliyen was getting a handle on affairs in Tibet, the Drungba Kūtuktu had arrived in Beijing for questioning. Qianlong's evolving pronouncements on Tibet is most likely attributable to the arrival of new information that both confirmed old suspicions (that he probably had initially shared with Heliyen) and planted new ones. In a pronouncement dated June 18, 1792, the emperor rebuffed requests to have the Drungba Kūtuktu sent back to Tibet. Instead, the emperor criticized Tibetans for their reliance on divination and castigated their cowardice as behavior unbecoming of a Buddhist, noting that, "true Buddhists do not begrudge their own lives for the sake of other living creatures."¹⁰⁴

It was Heliyen's early reports on the activities of the family of the kalön Doring Tendzin Penjur (Tib. Rdo ring bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor, Ma. Danjin Banjur) that led to the emperor's first condemnation of the oracles of central Tibet. In August of 1791, in a brazen raid that marked the renewed outbreak of hostilities between Tibet and the Gurkhas, the latter captured both Doring Tendzin Penjur and a second kalön, Yutok Trashi Döndrup, in the Tibetan border market of Nyanang and took them as hostage back to Katmandu. The court found the circumstances of the ministers' abduction highly suspicious, not only because Tibetan officials had provided several different accounts of

¹⁰³ MWLF 153:2676. Heliyen met for the first time with the Dalai Lama on QL 57/04R/15 (1792-06-04).

¹⁰⁴ MWLF 154:0063 (QL 57/06/17; 1792-08-04).

why the minister was traveling in the border region (most recently two assistants of the Dalai Lama had told Fukanggan that the ministers were “traveling to inspect temples”), but also because the Šamarba Lama himself had originally claimed to have been abducted and now appeared to have taken the Gurkha’s side.¹⁰⁵ Upon arriving in Lhasa, Heliyen’s investigations revealed that the recently deceased father of Doring Tendzin Penjur had been arranging a secret ransom to secure the release of his son.¹⁰⁶ Of even greater concern to the court, however, was the news that the second son of Doring had been identified as the (Ma.) Samba Kūtuktu.¹⁰⁷ In his response composed on July 9, 1792 (QL 57/05/21), the emperor drew a line of causality between the oracles of central Tibet, most importantly the Lamo Chökyong, and the trend of identifying reincarnations among the scions of Tibetan noble households. Qianlong wrote to Heliyen:

It is said that [Doring] Tendzin Penjur’s second son is the Samba Kūtuktu. The Samba Kūtuktu is a major kūtuktu of Tibet (Ma. *Dzang*). Now the emergence within their family is like the selection of the kalön from the household of the Jungkor. Bandida¹⁰⁸ is an aristocratic family (Ma. *fujuri boo*) of Tibet. Tendzin Penjur is already the husband of the younger sister of the Dalai Lama and nephew by marriage of the Šamarba. If the son of Tendzin Penjur is also the Samba Kūtuktu, then it will be that a single

¹⁰⁵ The original report from Baotai contains the initial report from the kashag reporting that the kalön were merely in the region to inspect the border and deliver a letter to the Gurkhas. See MWLF 152:2295. The Dalai Lama astutely dispatched two attendants to intercept Fukanggan several days outside Lhasa in order to greet him and convey their side of the story. This tactic worked well. Fukanggan’s memorial is quite sympathetic to the Dalai Lama and the case laid before him by the two attendants. In his report he places blame falls squarely on the incompetence of the kalöns. See the Grand Council file-copy of Fukanggan’s Chinese-language memorial in *Huibian*, 695-699.

¹⁰⁶ MWLF 155:0207.

¹⁰⁷ The identity of this lama is unclear.

¹⁰⁸ “Bandida:” This name is used in Manchu-language texts to refer to both the household and father of Doring Tendzin Penjur. In Tibetan sources, however, the family name is “Gazhi” and the father of Doring held the title of “Pandita.” Tsepón Wangchuk Deden Shakabpa, *One Hundred Thousand Moons vol. 1*, trans. Derek F. Maher (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010), 536-538.

household has taken possession of all of the major posts (Ma. *tušan*) of Tibet. This matter cannot be true! This is definitely a case in which when it came time to identify the emergence of the *hūbilgan*, having planted preconceived notions in the minds of the Lamo Chökyong and the other [oracles], their divinations clearly pointed out the sons of noble families. If this was not the case, then how is it possible that the reincarnations (*hūbilgan*) of all the major kūtuktus of Tibet have come to appear only in the noble households? Nowadays the Panchen Erdeni, Jebsundamba Kūtuktu and even the Dalai Lama are all from one family.¹⁰⁹

The fact that the son of a potentially traitorous Tibetan noble still held hostage in Gurkha territory had been recognized as a major reincarnation without any knowledge on the part of the court clearly rankled. It led to the emperor's first articulation of doubt in the existing process of recognizing rebirths, in particular the practice of seeking final confirmation by soliciting prophecies (Tib. *lung dan*, Ma. *lungdan*) from the oracles. It also sparked to the first efforts of the court to modify the process of certifying reincarnations: "Therefore, henceforth whenever any kūtuktu passes into nirvana, when identifying the re-emergence of the rebirth, there certainly must be a true sign, or [the candidate] must be able to recognize objects owned by the previous generation. As for the Lamo Chökyong, it is not acceptable for him to identify reincarnations from among sons of the gentry families or the great clans (Ma. *mukūn*), or from among the cousins or brothers of the Dalai Lama or Panchen Erdeni, according to their own whim and on the

¹⁰⁹ MWLF 155:0207-0208. Qianlong's statement contains a degree of hyperbole. According to Petech, the Eighth Dalai Lama and the Fourth Jebsundamba were brothers. Their aristocratic house, the *lha klu*, does not seem to have supplied a Panchen Lama. Petech observes, however, that members of the family did have close relations with the sixth and seventh Panchen Lamas. The family appears to have attained its noble status on the basis of the recognition of the fourth Jebsundamba Kūtuktu. Luciano Petech, *Aristocracy and Government in Tibet: 1729-1959* (Serie Orientale Roma 35. Rome: Instituto Italiano Per Il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1973), 39-43.

pretext of their prophecies."¹¹⁰ Heliyen dutifully responded a month later that, "I will strictly see to it that, in accord with the imperial instructions, the existence of reincarnations (*hūbilgan*) will not be determined according to the writ of the self-motivated prophecies of the Lamo Chökyong. Furthermore, having entered this edict into the archives, I will ensure that this will become the precedent for subsequent generations of ambans."¹¹¹

This measure, however, was still limited in both scope and impact. It reflects an intermediate moment between the emperor's previous support for the oracles (recall Qianlong's support for the seeking the judgment of the Lamo Chökyong in the case of the Changkya Kūtuktu just four years earlier) and the attempt to radically replace these practices that is reflected in the *Discourse on Lamas* and the establishment of the Golden Urn ritual. In this decree Qianlong is still content to promote certain indigenous divination technologies over others. Thus instead of seeking confirmation from the oracles, Tibetans are required to limit themselves to interpreting portents and conducting trials of the candidate children. Still, the chief amban and the emperor were clearly building a rationale for further intervention. Their use of the term "post" (Ma. *tušan*) for instance, to refer to the status of kūtuktu-hood desacralizes it by placing it within the same category as secular administrative position, legitimizing the notion that far from possessing some inherent and inviolable nature, such status can be conferred externally at the discretion of the ruler. Moreover, from Heliyen's perspective the prevailing practices of recognizing rebirths and their resulting failures were manifestations of the fact that

¹¹⁰ MWLF 155:0208.

¹¹¹ MWLF 155:0209 (QL 57/06/17, 1792-08-04).

“the affairs of Tibet are entirely without fixed laws!”¹¹² This specific exclamation, with its implicit dismissal of indigenous legal structures and traditions, reverberates throughout the subsequent archival record. The emperor, Hešen, Fukanggan, and Agūi all deployed the phrase in later communications as they made the case for various programs of law making in Tibet.¹¹³ In his rescript to Heliyen’s report that he was preparing to implement the decree, the emperor indicated that he was already reconsidering the decree, stating, “For the time being, await [further instructions]!”

The Golden Urn

The emperor first broached the idea of establishing a lottery in a letter to the Grand Councilor Agūi dated August 17, 1792 (QL 57/06/30). In this letter, Qianlong’s suspicion of the oracles of Tibet, in particular the Lamo Chökyong, had evolved significantly since his previous letter to Heliyen. Here, Qianlong for the first time fully articulates his belief that the corruption of the oracles has led to a general crisis of faith in the kūtuktus of Tibet and that the Dalai Lama himself may have been complicit in this corruption:

Previously, the identity of the reincarnations of the Dalai Lama, Panchen Erdeni and all other kūtuktus has been determined by observing the prophecies made in person by the Lamo Chökyong. As for this, it is impossible that the [oracle’s] decisions have not been corrupted by having

¹¹² MWLF 155:0208-0209: “*Dzang ni baita fuhali toktoho kooli akū.*”

¹¹³ See for instance, use of the similar rhetoric in a memorial from Fukanggan dated QL 57/12/11 (*Huibian*, 795-83) and a later memorial from Agūi dated QL 57/12/28 (1793-02-08, *Huibian*, 803-808).

accepted goods in advance, from being willfully partial to his own relatives, or due to ideas that have been planted in his head by the Dalai Lama (having taken cues from the Dalai Lama). Not only has this made it impossible for the people to be convinced [in the authenticity of the kūtuktus], it is also not the way to ensure that the teachings flourish. As a result the Gurkha bandits fearlessly invaded and ran amok in Tibet. It is my intention that henceforth, when determining the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, Panchen Erdeni and all other major kūtuktu, observation of the divinations of the Lamo Chökyong will completely cease. Instead a golden vase will be dispatched to [Tibet] and set before the Buddha in the Jokhang temple. Having placed the names of the *hūbilgan* that have appeared inside, the resident ambans together with the Dalai Lama will observe as sutras are read and one [name] is selected from the urn. Only then will the true reincarnation have been identified.¹¹⁴

Qianlong's line of reasoning in this letter—that the root cause of the Gurkha invasion was the corruption of the oracles—was unprecedented. His crisis of faith argument is thus very different not only from the presentation of the situation by Tibet's governing ministers and lamas, but also from the diagnosis of Fukanggan just months earlier.

On the same day that he filed his account of his audience with the Dalai Lama, Fukanggan also composed a long account of the origins of the crisis. Fukanggan states that his account is largely based on statements made the Dalai Lama and his monk attendants and that their testament is credible since he has double-checked it with the information supplied by Cengde and Ohūi. Fukanggan blames the conflict first of all on the inherently base nature of the Gurkhas, who “as foreigners (外夷 *waiyi*), only lie in wait ready to pounce on the slightest opportunity for profit and gain.”¹¹⁵ Their opportunity came in the form of a dispute with the Tibetan government over exchange rates and information provided by the inscrutable Šamarba lama that Tibetan defenses

¹¹⁴ MWLF 154:0981-0982.

¹¹⁵ *Huibian*, 708.

were weak and disorganized. The general apportioned blame to the kalöns and chief amban Bajung as well, singling them out for spinelessness and for signing a separate and secret treaty with the Gurkhas that they clearly had no intention of following through on. Yet in Fukanggan's analysis the Dalai Lama emerged unscathed, a testament, perhaps, to the impression that the lama and his attendants had skillfully made on the general prior to and during his audience. Where the Dalai Lama and his advisors, especially the former regent Ngawang Tsültrim, were resolute, uncompromising, and willing to prosecute hostilities to their conclusion, Tibet's secular ruling elite were "cowardly and unable to think long-term about the implications of their decisions." Therefore Fukanggan suggests that the centerpiece of any reform effort must be to establish supervision over the council of ministers (the kashag).¹¹⁶

As Qianlong's rescripts on Fukanggan's report indicate, the emperor concurred with his general's conclusions.¹¹⁷ Fukanggan's analysis not only influenced the program of reform of Tibetan administration and especially the Kashag that would get underway seven months later in October, it also constitutes the foundation of most late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century Western interpretations of the war as well.¹¹⁸ Yet in his Manchu-language letters to his closest advisors, Hešen and Agūi, Qianlong probed

¹¹⁶ *Huibian*, 710.

¹¹⁷ *Huibian*, 711.

¹¹⁸ See, for instance: W.W. Rockhill, "The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa and their Relations With the Manchu Emperors of China: 1644-1908," *T'oung Pao*, XI (1910): 49-52; Hugh Richardson, *Ch'ing Dynasty Inscriptions at Lhasa* (Roma: Serie Orientalia, 1974), 29-48; Shakabpa, *Tibet, A Political History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 157-158. Fabienne Jagou, "Manzhou jiangjun Fu-kang-an: 1792 zhi 1793 nian Xizang zhengwu gaige de xianqu [The Manchu general Fukanggan: instigator of the reform of political affairs in Tibet from 1792-1793]," in *Bianchen yu jiangli*, ed. Li Guoqiang et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 147-151.

beyond Fukanggan's analysis of proximate causes, ultimately deciding that the crucial factor was the moral decay of the Geluk establishment itself.

This move towards placing the blame internally was a characteristic mode of thought in the late Qianlong reign. Qianlong's reasoning in this matter is perhaps best understood when placed in the context of his biography and the prejudices and fears expressed when dealing with prior matters involving clergy, divination and other magical arts. Qianlong's suspicion of Tibetan Buddhist monks and his shifting policies must therefore be considered within the broader context of how the court and its officials (not to mention other members of society more generally) perceived the clergy in other parts of the empire, most significantly, within China proper. In particular Qianlong's suspicions of the oracles and the Dalai Lama, as well as the extremely harsh punishment meted out on the Jédrung Lobzang Danba, recalls two aspects of the emperor's response to the soul-stealing crisis of 1768 as described by Philip Kuhn.¹¹⁹ First, by the mid-point in his reign Qianlong had already expressed on multiple occasions his distaste for the clergy of China proper. Kuhn writes that, "monk-bashing was a source of moral satisfaction for rulers who considered clergy to be mostly hypocrites and corrupters of the community."¹²⁰ Kuhn places this hostility in the context of concerns shared by both society and the Throne in the increasing numbers of mendicant monks thronging the roads and markets of the country. Qianlong was hostile to the growing numbers of

¹¹⁹ It might also be useful to consider Qianlong's treatment of Geluk monks in 1792 against the events of the two Jinchuan campaigns. In these wars the Qing forces also had to contend with suspect lamas and their potential magical powers. Much as in 1792, during the Jinchuan campaigns the court perceived itself as aligned with Gelukpa hierarchs against non-Gelukpa monks who were allied with "rebellious" Tibetans in Jinchuan. See Chapter Four for further discussion of Gelukpa perspectives on their contributions to Qing victory in Jinchuan.

¹²⁰ Philip Kuhn, *Soulstealers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 111.

Buddhist clergy both on Confucian grounds, as men who had abandoned their filial obligations to be productive members of both family and society, and because their numbers had long since escaped the abilities of the state to license them and the state-sanctioned temples to house them. It was the impossibility of knowing exactly who these people were and what they were doing that especially troubled the Throne.¹²¹

Among the behaviors the court worried about was the potential for these individuals to engage in communication with the spirit world and conduct divinations, thus usurping a role that the Qing code, like those of previous dynasties, had for strategic purposes reserved for the emperor and his authorized representatives. Statutes in the sections of the Qing code on sacrifices and ceremonies forbade shamanism and prognostication, particularly when the latter touched on future of the dynasty. Limiting knowledge about the future to the emperor and officialdom more generally was essential to social stability lest unauthorized fortunetellers delude the people with false tales of dynastic decline and collapse.¹²² This brings us to the second aspect of the situation in 1792 that resembles that of 1768. This is what Kuhn labels the “panic factor,” the “imperial belief that the credulous masses were ever on the brink of violent panicky reactions to hints of political crisis or cosmic disorder.”¹²³ In 1768, this belief underlay the emperor’s fear that rumors of sorcerers wandering the land stealing souls would trigger public disturbances—events that would surely be read as signs of the dynasty’s frailty. This belief also explains why in 1768 the emperor made debunking the

¹²¹ Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, 42-3, 45, 109-111.

¹²² Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, 86-87.

¹²³ Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, 64.

authenticity of claims of “soulstealing,” divining, and other black arts a priority for his officials.

In light of proscriptions against unauthorized divination in the Qing code, Qianlong’s desire to restrict the activities of the oracles of central Tibet does not seem so unprecedented. The events of the Gurkha war served as an unwelcome reminder that the court’s monopoly over forecasting the future was still incomplete. Moreover, a crisis of faith in the sanctity of kūtuktuhood, the lynchpin of governance throughout Tibetan regions, might easily set off the kind of panic that the Throne had feared in 1768. The Gurkha war, which was still very much underway when Qianlong first floated the idea of the urn among his confidants in August, 1792, had already provided the emperor evidence of the susceptibility of Tibetans to “panicky” reactions to “false” divinations, the evaporation of Tibetan defenses at Trashi Lhünpo being the case in point.

By means of this brief foray into the history of the emperor’s entanglements with the clergy of the interior, I wish to argue that neither Tibet policy nor policy for the rest of the empire’s Inner Asian domains for that matter was made in a vacuum. Not without reason, historians of the Golden Urn have seen this ritual primarily as an attempt to end the Buddhist establishment’s independent authority over reincarnation and thus finally exclude the possibility that a great incarnation would emerge as the heir of a great aristocratic house of Mongolia.¹²⁴ This perennial concern about the possible emergence of a new center of power in Mongolia could not have been far from the emperor’s mind. Yet in both the original mention of the urn in the confidential letter to Agūi in August and the famous promulgation of the new ritual in the *Discourse* in December, the stated

¹²⁴ Perdue, *China Marches West*, 440; and James Hevia, “Lamas, Emperors and Rituals: Political implications in Qing imperial ceremonies,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 16 (1993): 249.

reason is the desire to stamp out doubts in reincarnate lamas and shore up faith in the Geluk school. The Thone's intervention in the identification process was thus not simply an attempt to bring resolution to an old and thorny political problem unique to the court's management of Inner Asia. Rather, it was an attempt to eliminate the threat that unsupervised communication with the spirit world posed to faith in Tibetan Buddhism and the political order that the court believed hinged on that faith. It was a reflection of the fact that the issues and concerns that preoccupied the court in dealing with sustaining its rule over China were beginning to bleed into the way in which it thought about Inner Asia. The Gelukpa arts of divination were no longer any less dangerous than those of the sorcerers of the interior. Seen in this light, the Golden Urn lottery is a perfect symbol of this moment: a Ming ritual brought out to solve a crisis of Inner Asia. The Golden Urn was not a new solution to an old problem, it was and old solution to a new problem.

It is probably the lack of attention to the Throne's perception that a crisis of faith in reincarnation was spreading in Inner Asia that accounts for the failure of historians in both China and the West to ask the most basic questions about the urn ritual itself. Reduced to a cynical maneuver to assert the court's supremacy over the lay and clerical nobility of Inner Asia, there is little incentive to examine the origin of the ritual. From where did the idea come? How did the emperor and his officials rationalize and legitimize this intervention in the recognition process? Why did they think this ritual would lay questions of authenticity to rest? To this historian's relief, the emperor and his ministers left a number of remarkably frank and direct statements concerning the origins of the ritual and how it was to work in the archival record. Let us return again to the documents.

Among the Tibetan arts of divination, the Golden Urn lottery most closely resembles a category of practices generally referred to as “zentak” (Tib: *zan rtag*) or “zengyur” (Tib: *zan bsgyur*) respectively meaning “investigation with dough balls” or “dough ball transformation.” We have already been introduced to a version of this practice in the case of the Jédrung Lama Lobzang Danba who had encased various possible outcomes from the expected Gurkha attack within balls of tsampa, balanced them on a special plate and then gradually spun the plate until the correct answer fell off. This technology was widely known throughout Tibet and employed to assist with making a variety of decisions. The *Oceanic Book*, a major chronicle of the history of the Amdo region composed in the first half of the nineteenth century, describes numerous usages of the ritual, most frequently in the context of identifying the rebirths of tülku or assigning posts within the monastic bureaucracy. For example, the *Oceanic Book* records that in 1707 the first Jamyang Zhepa (1648-1721) supervised the search for the Mindröl incarnation of Amdo and that this search involved conducting a dough ball investigation at Drépung monastery.¹²⁵ It is important to note here that in this case, as in most other cases, the dough ball investigation was but the last of several divinations. Only when the outcome of the zentak, the divinations of the Lamo and Néchung (Tib: *La mo Gnas chung chos skyong*) oracles, and the advice of the Dalai and Panchen lamas concurred was the reincarnation conclusively confirmed. In another case, when asked to assign a lama as regent to the domain of the Mongol Qinwang of Kokonor in the mid 1700s, the

¹²⁵ The *Oceanic Book* is also known by the abbreviated title *History of the Faith in Amdo* (Tib. *Mdo smad chos 'byung*). Citations are from the recent PRC reprint under the latter title: Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (“Drakgönpa”), *Mdo smad chos 'byung* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1987 [1865]). This citation is from page 100. The full title of Drakgönpa’s work is *Yul mdo smad kyi ljongs su thub bstan rin po che ji ltar dar ba'i tshul gsal bar brjod pa Deb ther rgya mtsho*.

abbot of Labrang resorted to a *zentak* to determine whom to send. The abbot had first asked a certain qualified monk to take up the position. When the monk refused, the abbot performed a dough ball investigation. The divination confirmed that indeed the task should fall to that monk, yet he again rejected the appointment. Ultimately the abbot went in his stead. Shortly thereafter, the obstinate monk died, thus sending a warning that the results of the ritual were not to be taken lightly.¹²⁶ The biography of the Third Jamyang Zhepa (1792-1855) reports that a dough ball investigation (Tib: *zan bsgril kyis thag bcad pa*) had also been the penultimate step in the recognition of the Fifth Dalai Lama.¹²⁷

Although Tibetan authors would later refer to the Golden Urn lottery as a kind of *zentak*, the structure of the ritual was in significant ways qualitatively different from indigenous methods of performing dough ball investigations. As I will discuss below in chapters two and three, for this reason and others Tibetan authors clearly saw the ritual as a novel imposition on their own methods of divination. This is not to say that Tibetans rejected the ritual outright as a foreign institution, but it is a bridge too far to claim, as recent Chinese historians have, that because both the new ritual and indigenous tradition involved “lots (籤),” it was easily accepted and assimilated.¹²⁸ Just because China and

¹²⁶ *Oceanic Book*, 393-394.

¹²⁷ Mkhan po Ngag dbang thub bstan rgya mtsho, *Kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhed pa sku phreng gsum pa'i rnam thar* ([Qinghai]: krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1991), 37. The usage of the *zentak* to identify the fifth Dalai Lama seems to have been remarkable precisely because the technology was not widely used for locating reincarnations. Thus the Qing invention of the urn and the Tibetans’ reinterpretation of it as a *zentak* represented shift in divination culture. Post 1792, the use of dough-ball divinations for recognizing reincarnations became much more frequent, partially because, as will discussed below, Tibetans identified the Golden Urn ritual as a *zentak*.

¹²⁸ Yu Hong and Zhang Shuangzhi, “Jinping cheqian yu shenpan wenhua,” *Xizang yanjiu* no. 2 (2006): 48-49.

Tibet both possess divination traditions (Ch. 神判) does not mean that they constitute a *shared* tradition. Moreover, the archival record makes it clear that neither Qianlong nor his associates took into consideration the indigenous Tibetan traditions when casting the Golden Urn. Their inspiration lay elsewhere.

Qianlong himself states quite clearly that the idea for a lottery was borrowed from the Board of Civil Appointments, where drawing lots had been the standard method of appointing officials to open posts in the field administration of China since the late Ming. Among the emperor's commentaries appended to the 1794 publication of his *Collection of Poetry and Prose on the Ten Complete Victories* (《御製詩文十全集》) is the following explanation of the origins of the ritual and its purpose:

[The Golden Urn lottery] is similar to the manner in which lots are drawn in the boards of Civil Appointments and War. When established during the Ming, because it was like the tradition of using bamboo lots, there were those who mocked [the procedure], calling the Board of Civil Appointments the 'Board of Lots.' However if this matter had been entrusted to the ministers of those two boards, fair and honest ministers would have been unable to avoid pleasing some and offending others; self-interested ministers would ultimately have handed out posts according to what they took in! There was no alternative but to institute [the lottery] to eliminate these maladies. My decree that the lamas must also draw lots is truly a replication of this.¹²⁹

Qianlong's explanation directly references the controversy that erupted when Sun Peiyang (孫丕揚), the president of the Board of Civil Appointments, first introduced the practice of "drawing lots" (掣簽 or 拈鬮) in 1594. At the time, supporters of the measure

¹²⁹ Qianlong, *Yuzhi shiwen shiquanji* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1993 [reprint]), 642. “（金瓶掣簽）犹之吏、兵二部掣簽。在明创行时，即有作竹签传，又谓之签部以讥之者。但若付之二部堂官，公正者不免恩怨，行私者竟得高下其手。无可如何，不得不行如此以去弊。朕令喇嘛掣签，实仿此。”

argued that the lottery introduced fairness to the process of allocating administrative positions and eliminated the possibility that officials at the Board and candidates for office could collaborate in pursuit of their own “private interests.” Opponents feared that the lottery would make it difficult for the ministry to use its discretion to determine who was the right man for any given job.¹³⁰ As Pierre Etienne Will points out, however, by the late seventeenth century, this debate had largely subsided. The lottery had become an unremarkable and routine step in the appointment system and had even been imitated by other boards.¹³¹ Both the Qing *Huidian* and various late-seventeenth and early eighteenth-century magistrates’ manuals describe the basic procedure. First, before the assembled crowd of board officials and expectant magistrates, clerks of the board inscribed the various open positions on long bamboo slips. These lots were then placed in a tall, tube-like vase, scrambled, and placed on a high table. Next, the magistrate-to-be knelt before the table and, without looking up, felt for a lot and plucked it out. Pierre Etienne Will argues that the mid-Qing authors of these magistrates’ manuals, unlike their Ming predecessors, were quite convinced that the procedure had succeeded in bringing impartiality to the appointment process and that the outcome was relatively difficult to fix in advance.¹³²

¹³⁰ Pierre Etienne Will, “Creation, Conflict, and Routinization: The Appointment of Officials by Drawing Lots, 1594-1700” (unpublished manuscript shared with the author, June, 2009), 2.

¹³¹ Will, 17, 21.

¹³² Will, 16, 19. Will includes in his essay a long description of a lottery by the Portuguese Jesuit Gabriel de Magalhães who witnessed an instance of the ritual in 1669. Although he criticized the procedure as deeply corrupted, De Magalhães unintentionally backs up at least partially the opinions of the Qing observers cited above. According to de Magalhães, an expectant official bribed the ministers of the board to fix the lottery. Yet despite the expenditure of great wealth, the candidate still drew the wrong lot, condemning himself to a post in Guizhou when he thought he was about to draw a lucrative position in the Jiangnan region (Will, 18).

Given that Qianlong believed that personal greed and influence-peddling by the high lamas of Tibet had corrupted the recognition process, it is no surprise that he would turn to the administrative lottery of the Board of Civil Appointments—a measure that had been expressly designed to foil these sorts of human machinations. Qianlong’s mention of the old controversy is still striking however. Why would he want to remind his subjects that the magistrates’ lottery was initially unpopular? One could surmise that this is an admission by the emperor that he expected initial hostility to the new measure. However it is best understood as an expression of the Qianlong’s confidence: much as the merits of the lottery eventually won its widespread acceptance in the Chinese bureaucracy, he anticipated that the “lama lottery” would ultimately be embraced.

But what was the metaphysical underpinning of the procedure and how did the court expect the ritual to be understood in Tibet? In February of the winter of 1792-1793 (QL 57/12/29; 1793-02-09), four months after he had first been informed about the new ritual, Fukanggan submitted a memorial to the throne in which he recounted the reasoning he had used to justify the use of the Golden Urn to the Dalai Lama and other leading Tibetans. Fukanggan reported that he had discussed with the Tibetans the use of a lottery to make civil appointments in China proper and analogized it to the use of the Golden Urn. The memorial is significant also because it marks the first time that the connection between the two rituals is explicitly stated in a Qing government document. None of the palace memorials or court letters that I have read from the summer and fall of 1792, including the court letter in which Qianlong first introduces the Golden Urn, discuss its origins. It is still unclear, therefore, if the idea for a Golden Urn was Qianlong’s own, as he claimed in his commentary to his own poetry, or someone else’s.

Regardless, Fukanggan's opinions on the importation of the ritual to Tibet are important as they contain a rich metaphysical exegesis of the ritual and thus deserve to be quoted at length:

Your servants respectfully translated your edict. We compared the identification of reincarnations to the practice of drawing lots in the Board of Civil Appointments, which is truly an appropriate analogy. We observe that in the lotteries held by the Board of Civil Appointments the [expectant] officials (堂官) personally draw the lots, and although the clerks may attempt to indicate the post and cheat, only occasionally does this work and usually someone else gets the post. In fact the clerks really have little influence (權) and one can see that a man's glory or obscurity depends on his fate/destiny (命數). This should all the more hold true for the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni, who, as the leaders of the Yellow Teaching have jurisdiction over Tibet, and having received the emperor's munificent kindness from above and the faith of the Mongols and Tibetans from below, already possess an exceptional fate (福命) regardless of whether they truly possess that innate endowment (根氣) [of being reincarnated buddhas].¹³³

According to Fukanggan, there was little difference between a kūtuktu and a magistrate who drew a fat post in a prosperous corner of the empire—"fate" had looked favorably upon them both. The lottery then is understood as a moment for luck to intervene and reveal a man's fate. In the last sentence the general is remarkably direct: the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lamas may very well be charlatans, but they have still received a boon from destiny.

Fukanggan's explanation of the ritual reveals the degree to which the underlying Qing official understanding of the lottery could be at odds with the purpose the ritual had

¹³³ YHGSL 15:7 (《福康安奏為設立金本巴瓶確定呼畢勒罕事片》): “臣等敬譯聖諭，以指認呼畢勒罕與吏部掣簽相比，實為此事切喻。竊以吏部掣簽本系堂官親掣，即使書吏指缺撞騙，偶爾符合，亦系其人應得此缺，並非書吏有權，可見一命之榮胥關命數，何況達賴喇嘛、班禪額爾德尼等總領黃教，管轄衛藏，上受聖主優渥恩施，下為眾蒙古番民信奉，縱非實有根氣，其福命亦自不凡。”

to serve in a Tibetan Buddhist context. In the latter context, a divination ritual is not a testament to a man’s “fate” as Fukanggan implies. Instead it is a revelation that exposes a hidden and preexisting inner truth, a truth that has arisen dependent (Tib: *rten 'brel*) upon the chains of cause and effect that link all things and all generations of things. As I will discuss in greater detail in Part Three, Tibetan divination rituals were designed to provide beings possessing omniscience and keen foresight—either adept lamas and kūtuktus or deities and gods—with the opportunity to provide signs or indications of that truth. This difference is most obvious in the case of divining the location of a reincarnation. Although the early Manchu-language discussions of the urn often conflate all the candidates as “hūbilgan” (reincarnations),¹³⁴ Tibetan texts refer to them as “suspects” (Tib: *dogs gnas*, literally meaning “point of doubt”), among whom the “unmistaken” (Tib: *khrul med*) reincarnation had already taken rebirth.¹³⁵

Qing officials were not unaware of Tibetan understandings of reincarnation. Hening (1741-1821), the Mongol bannerman from Jiangnan (绍兴 Shaoxing, to be specific) who replaced Cengde as assistant amban in 1793 and resided in Lhasa until 1800 personally picked several lots from the urn. He was also a prolific writer. His literary corpus, published shortly after his death, *Collected Poems from the Yijian Studio* (《易簡齋詩鈔》), contains the following poem that illuminates the experience of participating in the urn ritual:

¹³⁴ MWLF 154:0982.

¹³⁵ See for example the *Biography of the Third Jamyang Zhepa* (JYZP03), 37, *passim*.

Drawing Lots from the Golden Urn to Locate the Hūbilgan

In ancient hall a golden vessel rests,
Propitious morn, let the search for the Buddha commence!
Where art thou bright and timely child,
Who entered the world through enlightenment's door?
Never having suffered the torments of Hell,
Thou relied only on the vehicle of the Six Virtues.
Blessed Karma has preordained thy birth,
Now trust my hand to pluck thee out!¹³⁶

《金本巴瓶簽掣呼畢勒罕》

古殿金瓶設，祥晨選佛開。
誰家聰齡子，出世法門胎。
未受三塗戒，先憑六度媒。
善緣生已定，信我手拈來。

In the amban's poem, his grasp of incarnation is roughly in accord with that of his Tibetan contemporaries. Hening recognizes that well before the ritual the bodhisattva has transmigrated and taken rebirth in the shape of a small child. The last line of the poem however, creates a powerful tension between that knowledge and the act of drawing a lot and thus reads like a riddle. Here, at the end of a profound chain of supernatural events lies the action of a very human, very mundane hand that leaves the reader wondering, “Why trust the hand? What guides it?” Hening is silent on this issue, attributing the

¹³⁶ Hening (和寧), *Yijian zhai shichao* (unpublished blockprint dated 1823, Harvard-Yenching Library). Hening, who towards the end of his life changed his name to Heying (和瑛) out of respect for a name taboo associated with the new Daoguang emperor, ended his career as Grand Councilor. Hening held a life-long interest in Tibet that began even prior to his assignment in Lhasa. Recent Chinese scholarship has identified him as the editor and author of much of the *Weizang tongzhi*. He also composed an epic prose-poem dedicated to Tibet, the *Xizang fu* (Ode to Tibet). Chi Wanxing, “Hening ji qi ‘Xizang fu’” (“和寧及其《西藏賦》”), *Jinan daxue xuebao shehuikexueban* (济南大学学报社会科学版) 18.4 (2008): 30-33.

selection neither to Fate nor to the intervention of the protector deities of Tibet. However, the challenge of reconciling the Golden Urn *lottery* with the indigenous tradition of *divination*—in other words, reconciling conceptions of fate with karma—would have to be surmounted by the court’s agents if they wanted to see Qianlong’s new measure accepted in Tibet.

A Doctrine for Governing the World

Let us return to the discussion that Qianlong had initiated with his officials when he first introduced the Golden Urn to the grand councilor Agūi in late August of 1792. When the emperor wrote to Agūi, the proposal for a Golden Urn lottery was more than tentative, yet still not fully formed. The throne was still looking for confirmation that its suspicions were correct and that the measure stood some chance of acceptance. In his letter, Qianlong directed Agūi, whom he flattered as “a man cognizant of opportunity and principle, possessing long experience with affairs,”¹³⁷ to “at his convenience” submit his opinion about whether the proposal had either “not gone far enough” or, to the contrary was ill-suited to the moment and also solicit thoughts from among the kūtuktus and other ranking *jasak lamas* of the capital.¹³⁸

Specifically, Agūi was asked to make inquiries of the Gomang Kūtuktu (Ma. G’umang Kūtuktu, Ch. 果蟒呼圖克圖 Guomang hutuketu) Gelek Namk’ā (Ma.), the

¹³⁷ Qianlong’s appeal to notions of “opportunity” and policy are littered throughout these texts. Recall the emperor’s definitive statement on “opportunity” in the *Discourse on Lamas* that I quoted at the beginning of this paper.

¹³⁸ MWLF 154:0982-0983.

second highest ranking lama residing in Beijing during the spring and summer of 1792.¹³⁹

The lama's opinion on the "matter of determining things by drawing wooden name-cards¹⁴⁰ from a golden urn," appears to have been attached to Agūi's memorial detailing his own thoughts on the issue. The kūtuktu reported to the grand councilor that, "while making inquiries [I] have heard that it is indeed the case that there exists corruption when observing the prophecies of the Lamo Chökyong."¹⁴¹ Although the Gomang Kūtuktu provided no examples of this corruption, with this statement the lama added a key voice from within the tradition confirming Qianlong's suspicions. It is perhaps ironic that this lama, here called on to testify about the corruption of the selection process, had himself been the subject of Qianlong's suspicions just a few years prior when he had been involved in the search for the reincarnation of his teacher, Changkya Rolpay Dorjé.¹⁴² Moreover, the lama continued to bring credibility to the new ritual by reporting that he had also heard that previously the Panchen Lama had drawn lots (Ma. šusihe tatafi tokto buhengge) to determine the rebirth of the Dalai Lama. Finally, the lama concluded

¹³⁹ A list of "sutra reading lamas" in residence at Yonghegong ("雍和宮念經喇嘛") dated QL 57/04R/05 is included among the documents of YHGSL 14:348. The list begins with the three leading kūtuktu currently in residence, listed according to rank: Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu (噶爾丹錫呼圖克圖), Gomang Kūtuktu (果蠻呼圖克圖), and Dongkor Kūtuktu (洞科爾呼圖克圖).

¹⁴⁰ In the early communications concerning the urn the Manchu word "šusihe," meaning a small square of wood, was used to refer to the lot. Later, as the vocabulary for the ritual became fixed, this term was replaced by "sibiya," referring to a more elongated "tally" stick. The shifting vocabulary probably reflected the shifting design for the ritual. From the beginning, Qianlong and his officials referred to the urn in Manchu as a "bum." This term is clearly borrowed from the Tibetan term for squat, bulbous vessels: "bum pa." In the Board of Civil Appointments, the lottery was conducted using a tall cylindrical vase (Ch. 筒). The fact that Qianlong and his officials selected a golden "bum" as opposed to a "tong" provides another argument for the case that the ritual was the product of close consultations with Tibetans in the capital.

¹⁴¹ MWLF 154:0978.

¹⁴² MWJXD: 03-138-3-050 (QL 51/06/28, 1786-07-23).

by expressing confidence that once the “Great Holy Lord Manjusri” (i.e. Qianlong) had dispatched the Golden Urn to Tibet (M. *Dzang*) “all sorts of corruptions would be completely eliminated.”¹⁴³

To this resounding endorsement, Agūi added his own, more nuanced assessment of the proposal in a separate memorial. The grand councilor raised the thorny question of what would happen if upon reaching adulthood, the child identified by the lottery proved to be “lacking in grandeur” (Ma. *yokcin akūngge*). “It cannot be predicted,” Agūi wrote, “if it will be possible to convince people.”¹⁴⁴ As he went through the implications of such a scenario, he warned that it would be “unbecoming” (Ma. *banjinarakū*) for the dynasty to backtrack on the results of the lottery. Therefore the court had to be prepared to remind the people that the original candidates had been their choice and that multiple investigations had revealed that all the children were “endowed with the fortune of intelligence and wisdom” (Ma. *sure ulhisu i hūturingga*).¹⁴⁵ Yet despite these reservations, Agūi concurred with the Throne that the time to act had arrived. In fact his diagnosis of the problem went much further back in time and higher up the hierarchy of the Geluk church.

Agūi placed before the emperor the argument that the Dalai Lama was more than just a weak ruler inclined to nepotism. Worse than this, the grand councilor reported that his inquiries revealed that the Eighth Dalai Lama (actually the Seventh Dalai Lama from the perspective of Qianlong-period officialdom) was in fact a false incarnation and the morally bankrupt core of an administration and religion in crisis. He wrote:

¹⁴³ MWLF 154:0979.

¹⁴⁴ MWLF 154:0985-0986.

¹⁴⁵ MWLF 154:0986.

The comportment and speech of the present Dalai Lama are incapable of inspiring feelings of respect among the people. This is because he possesses but meager fortune (Ma. *hūturi*). When he was selected, the matter was not handled seriously and cautiously.¹⁴⁶ Thus, the Gurkha bandits out of disrespect encroached on borders of Tibet like madmen. The Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni are great lamas to whom all the Mongols and Tibetans (Ma. *monggoso tanggut se*) sacrifice. Surely if [they] possessed a perfected fortune (Ma. *hūturi yongkiyame*) [consisting of] wisdom, perception and virtue these events would not have occurred and they would have been able to work for the benefit of the Yellow Teachings.¹⁴⁷

Here Agūi has turned back the clock to the contest surrounding the recognition of Eighth Dalai Lama in 1760, and, in an oblique criticism of Changkyā Kūtuktu Rolpay Dorjé who oversaw the recognition process together with the Sixth Panchen Lama, argues that the traditional methods located the wrong man.¹⁴⁸

As evidence he points to recent events as signs that the Dalai Lama lacks the requisite attribute of *hūturi*, usually translated as “good luck” or “fortune” (Ch. 福氣).¹⁴⁹

The Chinese translation of this term, 福氣 *fuqi*, implies a closer connection to the concept of fate/destiny (Ch. 命, Ma. *hešebun forgon*) than exists in the Manchu usage.¹⁵⁰ Whereas Fukanggan writing in Chinese argues that kūtuktuhood, genuine or not, is a function of an external fate (Ch. 命), *hūturi* is an internal quality and a measure of authenticity unique to

¹⁴⁶ This would be an allusion to the succession crisis that followed the death of the seventh Dalai Lama (d. 1757).

¹⁴⁷ MWLF 154:0984.

¹⁴⁸ For a description of the succession crisis that followed the death of the Seventh Dalai Lama see Chen Qingying, *Dalai lama zhuanshi ji lishi dingzhi* (Beijing: Wuzhou chuanbo chubanshe, 2003), 63-64.

¹⁴⁹ Jerry Norman, *Concise Manchu Lexicon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 141.

¹⁵⁰ Hu Zengyi, *Xin Manhan da cidian* (Urumchi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1994), 434.

the Manchu-language discourse. In the Manchu text of the tetraglot *Discourse on Lamas* Qianlong writes that, “A person must be found to have wisdom, intelligence and *hūturi* to be considered a reincarnation.”¹⁵¹ The Chinese and Tibetan versions of this text translate this term as “福相 *fuxiang*” and “sonam” (Tib. *bsod nams*), respectively. Both words can be conventionally translated as “fortune” or “luck,” but the Tibetan word has more nuanced implications. Rangjung Yeshe defines sonam as “merit, moral virtue, happiness,” and “the positive karmic result from meritorious actions.”¹⁵² The Tibetan gloss then also, in contrast to the Chinese, conveys the idea that *hūturi* is a reflection of inner qualities, not the blind will of fate.

I find the English word “genius” an apt interpretation of *hūturi* as it is deployed by Qianlong and his officials, especially in light of the word’s Latin etymology and early English usage. “Genius” originally referred to the spirit that accompanied a man into the world at birth and governed his character, temperament, intellectual capabilities and finally, his fortune. The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that by the nineteenth-century “the word had an especial fitness to denote that particular kind of intellectual power which has the appearance of proceeding from a supernatural inspiration or possession, and which seems to arrive at its results in an inexplicable and miraculous manner.”¹⁵³ In this context I advance that *hūturi* be similarly understood as that innate endowment of

¹⁵¹ Ma. “urunakū emu sure ulhisu hūturi bisire niyalma be baifi. hūbilgan obufi.” Qianlong *Discourse*, Manchu text, line 7.

¹⁵² “*bsod nams*,” Tibet and Himalaya Digital Library, Tibetan Translation Tool, Rangjung Yeshe gloss, accessed September 26, 2013, <http://www.thlib.org/reference/dictionaries/tibetan-dictionary/translate.php>.

¹⁵³ “Genius, n.” OED Online, Oxford University Press, accessed September 26, 2013, <http://www.oed.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/view/Entry/77607?redirectedFrom=genius>.

genius that defined a man's fundamental disposition and of which his behavior and speech, charisma and influence, success and failure were unconscious reflections. Thus Agūi finds both the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni to be lacking what one would expect from a birth attended by the *genius* of a Buddha.

The grand councilor also agreed with the emperor that the crisis of faith in reincarnation represented an opportunity for intervention. He wrote, "At this moment the Dalai Lama can no longer rely on the support of all Tibetans. If we pursue this opportunity and convincingly explain [things to the Tibetans], we can rectify [matters]. How can the Dalai Lama do anything but obey?"¹⁵⁴ Agūi is suggesting here that, with the Dalai Lama's political influence at its nadir his secular authority could be seized by the dynasty.

During the same month that Agūi submitted his opinion, Qianlong began to receive advice from other quarters via the efforts of the chief grand councilor Hešen. Among the early reports forwarded to the Throne was letter from the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu.¹⁵⁵ This lama's advice was evidently deemed significant as it was quoted in a

¹⁵⁴ MWLF 154:0984-0985.

¹⁵⁵ Ma. G'aldan Siretu Kūtuktu: I have yet to positively identify this lama. "G'aldan Siretu," meaning "golden-throne holder of Ganden [Monastery]," is a fairly generic title frequently attached to monks who had served as the chief throne-holder at Ganden Monastery in Lhasa (the "Ganden Tripa"), the highest position in the Geluk church. In the mid-late Qianlong reign it was customary for the government of the Dalai Lama to dispatch former "Golden-throne" holders from Lhasa to serve as chief of the Geluk mission in Beijing and minister to the Throne. These men are not to be confused with the similarly named (Ma:) "G'aldan Siretu Kūtuktu," a major reincarnate lineage from Amdo affiliated with Lamo Dechen and Labrang monasteries that maintained an estate in Beijing and whose "portfolio" traditionally included assisting with Buddhist projects in the capital and providing diplomatic services for the court in Amdo. In the early 1790s, the current incarnation of this lineage (Tib: Gser khri rin po che "Serkhri Rinpoché" 04 Ngag dbang thub bstan 'phrin las rgya mtsho, 1773-1815) was just emerging from childhood and therefore was in no position to serve as an advisor in Beijing. For more on this lineage, see

draft of the first Manchu-language court letter to bring the proposal for a Golden Urn to the attention of the court's chief officers in Tibet and Fukanggan, who at the time was still campaigning in Nepal. The Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu provides both a clarification for the emperor on the nature of the oracles of Central Tibet and a larger ritual context for the new urn ritual. Hešen's court letter quotes the lama as follows:

'The Lamo chökyong is a protector deity (Ma. *sakigūlsu enduri*)¹⁵⁶ and not at all human. In addition to the Lamo chökyong, there are also three other chökyong: the Néchung (Ma. *Neijung*), Gadong (Ma. *G'awadung*), and Samyé (Ma. *Samye*). Whenever an hūbilgan emerges, a prophecy will certainly be sought to determine his location. After the direction [in which the rebirth will be found] has been indicated, it is appropriate to conduct a detailed search. Henceforth, the matter of investigating and verifying where a hūbilgan has been born (i.e. identifying a rebirth), having been assigned to the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, good and virtuous mediums¹⁵⁷ having been selected, prophecies shall be sought successively from the chökyong. When the instructions of the oracles are all in accord, people shall be commissioned to search in those places. Once several places where hūbilgan [may] have emerged have been located and investigated, if the true year and month of their birth are suitably auspicious and lucky (Ma. *hūturi fengšen*), then their names should be written down and placed in a vase to be selected.'¹⁵⁸

Sangs rgyas rin chen, "Laa mo bde chen dgon pa'i sku phyag gser khri rin po che'i sku phreng rim byon gyi lo rgyus mdo bsdus ngo sprod," *Mdo smad zhib jug* 1 (1999): 108-118.

¹⁵⁶ Much like "kūtuktu" and "hūbilgan," the Manchu term "sakigūlsu enduri" (protector, guardian spirit or deity) was originally imported from Mongol. The original Mongol term is *sakigulsun*, Lessing, 662.

¹⁵⁷ Ma. *gurdemba*, Tib. *sku rten pa*: "Gurdemba" is the Manchu transliteration of the Tibetan word for the human medium that channels the instructions of the protector deity. As I will note later, Qing authors found this term roughly parallel to their own concept of "saman" (i.e. shaman). Their transliteration of this term, as well as numerous other Tibetan words, reflects an Amdo-based pronunciation, which makes sense given that the court's major Tibetan interlocutors primarily hailed from the Amdo region. A compelling case can be made therefore that the Qing's Manchu translators of Tibetan were most familiar with Amdo Tibetan.

¹⁵⁸ MWLF 154:0491-0492 (QL 57/07/25, 1792-09-11).

In this letter the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu sanctions the new ritual, yet avoids mentioning any culpability or corruption on the part of the oracles. On the contrary, his argument that the chökyong are in fact powerful deities reveals no loss of faith in the oracles and provides a counterpoint to Qianlong's argument that the oracles were merely self-interested humans. Moreover, although he consented to the urn as the penultimate step in the recognition process, he argued that the oracles and the involvement of the Dalai and Panchen lamas remain unavoidable and necessary aspects of the search. In this respect, the kūtuktu's letter posed an obstacle to the Throne's desire to see the oracles eliminated from the process. Yet the fact that Qianlong allowed this scenario to be incorporated into a court letter explaining the new procedure to his field officials in Lhasa reveals that the lama's letter was seen first and foremost as legitimizing the Golden Urn ritual and offering a way to incorporate it into a search process that met the emperor's basic requirement: that mechanisms to check the willful exercise of power and influence by the oracles and prelates of the Geluk school be established. Over the next several months, however, the Throne would continue to seek ways to completely eliminate oracles from the process.

At this critical juncture the Throne had amassed not only damning reports from its own officials as well as prelates of the Geluk Church attesting to the corruption of the Dalai Lama and the oracles and the spreading suspicions about the authenticity of major kūtuktu, but also support for a possible remedy. In the draft court letter, the emperor then paused to take stock of the underlying significance of the reform measure he was about to circulate to his officials. In the following quotation, I have underlined the sections that the emperor crossed out and placed his amendments to Hešen's draft in brackets.

Previously when identifying the hūbilgan of the Dalai Lama, Panchen Erdeni and all other kūtuktu, only the prophecies of the Lamo Chökyong were considered. The Buddhist [Edit: Tibet's (*wei dzang*) old] way (*doro*) was deliberately established and [Edit: for a long time until now] the Buddha's doctrine (Ma. *Fucihi doro*) alone was paramount [Edit: therefore the teaching (*tacin*) declined and corruption arose]: everything is emptiness, nothing exists, and there is nothing else. If one does good, that is good. If one does evil, that is also okay. As for people's personal behavior, it will of its own accord lead to rebirth. The Buddha does not restrain people at all (*umai darkū*).

The way of the emperor (*hūwangdi ojoro doro*) is different. He who does good will certainly be encouraged. He who does evil will be handled with punishments. [Edit: However] According to way of the Buddha one merely waits upon karma (*karulan*) to of its own accord mete out punishment or reward. This is improper. [Edit: Truly, not only did this give rise only to evil but, despite their best intentions, neither virtue nor sin ever received its just reward.] Therefore due to the raids committed by of the Gurkha bandits, a large army had to be quickly dispatched, which defeated and destroyed them. Similarly, it would not have been appropriate to, in the manner of the Buddha, do nothing to restrain them, and just wait for karma to act of its own accord [Edit: which would have been just like saying 'let's just wait and see what happens to everyone's virtue and sins.']. This matter was handled according to the way of ruling the world (*jalan be dasara doroi gamahabi*). If it was the case that the Buddha took care of everything, then how was it that the Šamarba was not killed and the Gurkha bandits were not stopped?¹⁵⁹

Unfortunately, our draft court letter is a fragment and cuts off shortly after the last sentence above. Yet the drift of the emperor's thinking is quite clear: One cannot expect to govern the temporal world by Buddhist principles alone. As a governing philosophy, the "way of the Buddha" is little more than a recipe for non-action. The "old way of U-Tsang," which Qianlong reduces to a near parody, is so enthralled with the theory of karma that the rulers have failed to establish laws and codes. Lacking immediate inducements or punishments, the people exist "untamed" (Ma. *darkū*) without moral

¹⁵⁹ MWLF 154:0492-0493.

guidance. Here then, Qianlong is offering a crucial explanation to his officials about why “Tibet is entirely without fixed laws,” as Heliyen had put it just a month earlier.¹⁶⁰ Ecclesiastic governments, Qianlong argues, by their very nature, do not produce laws. In contrast, the “way of the emperor” is a practical and tested “doctrine for ruling the world.”¹⁶¹ Thus Qianlong explicitly rejects and delegitimizes the underlying rationale behind the Buddhist government of the Dalai Lamas, paving the way not only for greater supervision of reincarnation but also the appropriation of the authority of the Ganden Podrang as suggested by Agūi.

Conclusion: “Improve their Laws, Don’t Replace their Traditions”

Fukanggan’s response to Qianlong’s proposal reveals how far his opinion had evolved since he first reported his impressions of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni seven months earlier. In his lone Manchu-language letter concerning this subject to the emperor, dated September twenty-fifth, 1792 (QL 57/08/10) the general wrote:

These days the long-held teachings (Ma. *inenggi goidafī tacin*) have fallen into decay. All reincarnations now (reappear) within their own [original] gentry families. Many [reincarnations] have emerged from the same clan (Ma. *mukūn*) of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni. As the edict has pointed out, in the first place, because the Lamo Chökyong grasps at material goods, [he] has become corrupt and now points out his own relatives. In the second, since the Dalai Lama himself is secretly pleased, it is impossible for him to think that these identifications are not entirely authentic (Ma. *dalai lama se jendu gūnin bahabuñi joribure be yargiyān i*

¹⁶⁰ MWLF 155:0209.

¹⁶¹ MWLF 154:0493.

gemu akū obume muterakū). Yet even having rooted out all these various corruptions, we certainly still must locate genuine reincarnations.¹⁶²

At the time of his first audience with the Dalai Lama, Fukanggan praised the Dalai Lama as possessing the “Buddha’s wisdom.”¹⁶³ Yet here Fukanggan impugns his Buddha nature by suggesting that the lama is not without attachment to friends and family. At least, however, Fukanggan’s paraphrase of the emperor’s decree implies that the Dalai Lama’s weakness for his relatives was unintentional and involuntary, whereas Qianlong’s original wording stated that the repeated recognition of fellow clansmen as was a result of the lama’s deliberate manipulation.¹⁶⁴

Regardless of the legitimacy of the current crop of kūtuktu, Fukanggan states explicitly that “genuine rebirths” do exist and that it is, “the [emperor’s] fundamental intention” to arrive at an effective way of locating them.¹⁶⁵ Both Qianlong and Fukanggan recognized, however, that how to do so was still subject to discussion. At this point the idea for a “lottery of hūbilgan” was merely a sketch. Who would draw the lots? Where would it occur? How were names to be located? What role were the oracles and the protectors to play? The fact that over the next several years the ritual would be performed in several different ways and in different locations demonstrates the degree to which the details and significance of the ritual was subject to negotiation, debate and re-interpretation by the court, its field officials and Tibetan elites. The Throne had instructed Fukanggan to not only discuss the proposal for the Golden Urn with the two other

¹⁶² MWLF 154:1352-1353.

¹⁶³ *Huibian*, 705-708.

¹⁶⁴ MWLF 154:0981-0982.

¹⁶⁵ MWLF 154:1352.

officials resident in Lhasa, Heliyen and Ohūi, but also consult with Tibetan elites. Qianlong wrote, “If after discussions with the Dalai Lama and Tatsak Rinpoche (Ma. *Jirung Kūtuktu*), it will be appropriate to handle things in this manner, then immediately promulgate the edict. If there are any aspects of this measure that are not suitable, then please compose a memorial informing me of the complete truth.”¹⁶⁶

It appears however, that Qianlong did not wait for further advice from his general before beginning the process of formalizing and promulgating his new ritual. On October 14, 1792 (QL 57/08/29), the Throne issued a formal decree in Manchu to the “inner and outer jasaks” (i.e. the Mongol aristocracy), appraising them of the new stance on the legitimacy of the major kūtuktus of the Geluk school, the prohibition against locating reincarnations within aristocratic households and the establishment of the Golden Urn lottery to supplant the oracles as the final step. This was the earliest public promulgation of the new ritual and predated the earliest Chinese-language proclamation, the famous *Discourse on Lamas*, by over two months. In this edict, Qianlong articulated in no uncertain terms both the importance he placed on the elimination of doubt in the authenticity of reincarnations and his conviction that the current generation of major kūtuktus were false:

Only if all the people are convinced that the hūbilgan of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni are definitively true will the Yellow Teaching flourish and spread. From the beginning, when identifying [possible] hūbilgan, only the prophecies of the oracles/protectors (Ma. *cuijung*) have been sought and those whom they have indicated have become hūbilgan. For the past several years, it has been impossible for the divine (Ma. *enduri*) to descend because the mediums (Ma. *gurdemba*) possess only ordinary abilities. The Dalai Lama, Panchen Erdeni and Jebtsundamba kūtuktu are all from one clan perhaps because, having accepted requests from various

¹⁶⁶ MWLF 154:1352.

people, [the oracles] falsely identify [hūbilgan]. In my opinion, because [they] have all appeared among close relatives, I cannot consider them to be genuine... Truly [this] joke has reached the point of destroying the Yellow teachings. In my opinion this is greatly unbearable.¹⁶⁷

Already these comments stand in stark contrast to official pronouncements made just a year earlier when the emperor praised the fortitude of the Dalai Lama and his closest advisors for their organization of the defense of Lhasa.¹⁶⁸ Yet Qianlong went further still, questioning the very legitimacy of reincarnation as embodied by the major kūtuktu of Tibet:

I have zealously examined the Buddha's sutras and thoroughly understand the way of the Buddha. The Buddha has neither going nor coming. Moreover, the existence of the oracles has never been proclaimed in the sutras (Ma. *inu umai cuijung bisire babe nomulahakū*). It has been written that even the Buddha is without achievements (*faśšan*) and that the root is emptiness and nothingness. It has been said [by the Buddha] that all exploits (*faśšan*) are but the deceits of dreams. Even though the oracles/protectors are meritorious (*faśšan*), the mediums then, on the pretext of channeling the instructions of the Protector, act corruptly. None of this is the way of the Buddha. However there is nothing we can do but carry on their old customs. We can only plan on suppressing their private corruptions. Similarly, it is naturally their private and public opinion that if there were no hūbilgan there would be no one to protect and govern the disciples of the Yellow Teaching.¹⁶⁹

Qianlong incorporated major elements of this Manchu-language proclamation into his more famous and polished *Discourse on Lamas*, most significantly his conviction, based on his claim of authoritative knowledge of Buddhism, that directed rebirth

¹⁶⁷ MWLF 155:2856-2857, 2859.

¹⁶⁸ KKFL, 102 (edict of QL 56/09/20).

¹⁶⁹ MWLF 155:2860-2861. The meaning of the Manchu term *faśšan* poses some translation issues here. It seems to stand for several different concepts in English.

(“tülkuhood”) was not part of the Buddha’s original teachings, as well as his resignation to the fact that it would be impolitic and un-pragmatic to attempt its full elimination. In the *Discourse* Qianlong wrote, “As for [our] high esteem for the Yellow Hat teaching, it is in accordance with the desires of the Mongols and is therefore not only important but also necessary.”¹⁷⁰

It is this tone of political expediency that has made the *Discourse on Lamas* such a familiar face to Qing historians.¹⁷¹ Few historians have failed to comment on the significance of Qing patronage of the Geluks with regards to the dynasty’s rule in Mongolia. Yet the singular focus of these early pronouncements on the Mongols has not been previously noted. It should not be surprising then that the Throne’s first public edicts on the Golden Urn were both addressed primarily to the Mongol aristocracy and the court officials charged with their supervision, not to the Tibetans. The degree to which the Geluk school, and Tibetans more generally, were important only as they related to the court’s strategic interests in Mongolia is readily apparent in both of these edicts. In the earlier of the two edicts, the Tibetans (*Ma. fandze*) are only mentioned once whereas the Mongols are mentioned five times. Similarly, despite the fact that the *Discourse* is “about lamas,” the most significant of whom reside in Tibet, “Tibetans” are explicitly referred to only once in contrast to seven mentions of the significance of the faith of the “Mongols.” In the latter document, the emperor partially justifies his new measures by explaining that they are “in harmony with the wishes of both the outer and

¹⁷⁰ *Discourse*, Tibetan, line 11.

¹⁷¹ See for instance comments on this aspect by Berger (2003, 35-36), Elverskog (2006, 3), and Rockhill (1910, 54).

inner Mongols.”¹⁷² For Qianlong, the primary strategic challenge the dynasty faced in 1791 was the potential political instability *in Mongolia* that would be the inevitable fallout from the spread of doubts in the authenticity of reincarnation. The predicament at hand seemed to the court to be brought about primarily due to the moral failings of its governing elite in Inner Asia, both lay and ecclesiastic. Thus the Gurkha invasion of Tibet was understood in the first as a symptom of a *personnel crisis*, not a crisis of sovereignty. From Qianlong’s own writing it appears that the military campaign against the Gurkhas was motivated neither by the cant of conquest nor by any fear that the Gurkhas represented a serious competitor to Qing interests in Tibet as had the Zunghar Mongols a generation earlier. Tibet, Tibetans, and their neighbors to the south, remained but an ancillary to the perennial concerns of the northwest.

The fact that directly controlling Tibet was not end in and of itself from the perspective of the Throne explains why Qianlong’s pledge to extend the application of the “king’s law” (Ma. *gurun i fafun*, Tib. *rgyal khrims*, Ch. 王法) to the elite of Tibet in 1792 was so novel, a situation that he himself recognized. The *Discourse*, as well as several other major imperially-sanctioned pronouncements issued in the immediate aftermath of the Qing intervention trace the relationship between the dynasty and Tibet back to the arrival of emissaries from the Fifth Dalai Lama at the court of Hung Taiji, prior even to the Qing conquest of China. The Qing reform of Tibetan governance in the 1790s coincided with a veritable explosion of writing including gazetteers, saga-length prose poems, and especially stele, the latter of which sought to inscribe the unprecedented Qing achievement permanently on the landscape of Lhasa. In the *Small*

¹⁷² *Discourse*, Tibetan, line 34.

Pox Stele (Ch. 《整飭西藏風俗碑》) erected outside the Jokhang in 1794, the chief amban Heliyen gushed in Chinese, “From the Tang and Song [dynasties] on, although [Tibet] had contact with China it was not part of the latter’s territory. During the time of emperor Taizong Wenhuangdi (Ma. Hung Taiji, r. 1626-1643) they sincerely returned, and over the past hundred-odd years, due to the influence of the imperial instruction, have gradually been transformed.”¹⁷³ But lest we misinterpret what were evidently overly enthusiastic and patriotic re-interpretations of the historical scope of the Qing domain, no one less than Qianlong himself provided an important corrective. Among the annotations to his poetry, the emperor offered the following information on Tibet: “Although [Tibet] came to an imperial audience during the Chongde reign (Chongde seven, 1642), their territory still was not ours... Even during the early Shunzhi reign when the Dalai Lama arrived for an audience and received his original golden seal [of office], their territory was still not possessed by China.”¹⁷⁴ Full control of Tibet had not been realized, Qianlong argued, until after the Gurkha War, when “everything is handled by [my] ministers and I have but to command and it will be obeyed.”¹⁷⁵ He contrasts this new state of affairs to that which prevailed even earlier in his own reign when the “resident ambans entrusted everything [to the kalöns] and took responsibility for nothing.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Reprinted in Zhang Yuxin, *Qing zhengfu yu lama jiao: fu Qingdai lama jiao beikelu* (Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe, 1988), 497: “唐宋以來，雖通中國，未隸版圖，自我朝太宗文皇帝時歸誠，迄今百有餘年，熏陶王教，漸臻於化矣。”

¹⁷⁴ Gaozong, *Shiquan*, 644: “崇德雖入觀。其地非我有...至順治初年。達賴喇嘛入觀。亦曾敕賜金冊印。雖時其地尚非中國所有也。”

¹⁷⁵ Gaozong, *Shiquan*, 644.

¹⁷⁶ Gaozong, *Shiquan*, 645: “向來藏中大小事務，均由噶布倫四人辦理，而駐藏大臣，一切付之不問。”

The discussion of the subjection of Tibetan lay and clerical officials to what the Tibetan version of the *Discourses on Lamas* identifies as the “king’s law,”¹⁷⁷ echoes previous statements we have already examined, most importantly the justification of the execution of the monk from Trashi Lhünpo and the draft court letter submitted by Hešen quoted at length above. In this treatise, the emperor makes the case that “the royal law is indispensable”¹⁷⁸ first because Buddhist codes alone have proven incapable of providing the necessary restraints on immoral self-interests (as we saw in the Hešen court letter)—thus Qianlong feels obliged to legislate a permanent prohibition on tülku taking rebirth among their relatives; and, second because setting anyone above the law, even monks, threatens the governing system as a whole, which is what the emperor states had brought down the Yuan.¹⁷⁹ Reflecting on the execution of the monk from Trashi Lhünpo, the Tibetan version of the *Discourse* has the emperor explain that, “Those who incite turmoil will be punished according to the law in the same manner as subjects of the interior (Tib. *nang gi 'bangs mi*).”¹⁸⁰ The Manchu version of this sentence is slightly different, noting

¹⁷⁷ Tib: *rgyal khrims*: “Royal law,” “king’s law,” or even “dynastic law” are all appropriate English translations of this term and closely match the connotation of the term in both Manchu (*gurun i fafun*, “law of the dynasty”) and Chinese (*wangfa*, “law of the king”). The Tibetan term also connotes “temporal law” as it is implicitly contrasted against religious law (Tib. *chos khrims*).

¹⁷⁸ *Discourse*, Tibetan, line 25: *sangs rgyas pa la rang don med/ rgyal khrims med mi rung* (“The Buddha had no concern for himself. The royal law is indispensable”). The Manchu text (line 13) reads slightly differently: *fucihi de ainahai cisu bini. tuttu fafularakū oci ojorakū* (“How can the Buddha have any self-interests? Thus it is not acceptable that [I] do not pass laws.”). The Chinese text reads: “佛岂有私？故不可不禁。”

¹⁷⁹ *Discourse*, Tibetan, line 29.

¹⁸⁰ *Discourse*, Tibetan, line 31: *de tsho 'khrug long bskyed yod na nang gi 'bangs mi dang 'dra bar khrims kyis 'da*. Ch: “而惑众乱法者，仍以王法治之，與内地齊民無異。” Ma. line 16: *ere dade. geren be hūlimbumefafun be facuhūrahangge be kemuni dorgi ba i irgen i emu adali gurun i fafun i gamahabi*. “From the first, those who disobey the law concerning deluding the people will have been dealt with according to the laws of the dynasty just like the people of the

that it is specifically the law against “misleading the people” (Ma. *geren be hūlimbume fafun*) that is now to be extended to Tibet and Tibetan divination practices. With this line, Qianlong established a legal precedent with enormous potential significance. The underlying principle here was that both Tibetan and Chinese subjects of the dynasty were to be universally under the authority of laws granted by the emperor and supervised by his appointees. It was this change that Qianlong later identified as the removal of *toose*—“sovereignty,” from the indigenous elite.¹⁸¹

It is important to clarify, however, that the Chinese, Manchu and Tibetan versions of the *Discourse on Lamas* discuss expanding the jurisdiction of the laws of the *dynasty* and not necessarily those of *China*. Although in the case of the Tibetan monk-diviners, Qianlong applied the law code of the interior (specifically the law on deluding the people) as his standard, it is evident that he is arguing for the universal application of his sovereignty, not the universal application of the codes of the interior. Yet this was a fine and often blurred distinction. The degree to which the goals of Qing sovereignty were to be defined in terms of Chinese content or “Chinese territories” (中國版圖) varied. The conflation of the boundaries of the Qing realm with “China” (Ch. 中國) that appears in the quotes from the emperor’s poetry and Heliyen’s stele text is quite exceptional. In all three versions of *Discourses*, the emperor is exclusively concerned with the relationship of this Inner Asian subjects—Mongol aristocrats, lamas, and to a lesser extent Tibetans, to the dynasty (Tib. *gur*, Ma. *gurun*, Ch. 朝). “China” is alluded to only as another

interior.” One wonders if the shift from “delude the people” to “incite turmoil” reflects the possibility that the criminal use of divination was not a readily understood category in Tibetan thought.

¹⁸¹ MWLF 159:1202.

subject of the dynasty.¹⁸² As we shall see in subsequent chapters, Tibetan texts from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries such as the *Biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama* are also quite consistent in maintaining this distinction between China and the emperor. Although Tibetan texts do frequently refer to the Qing state as “China”—in fact the term “Qing” is rarely used, the political relationship is with the emperor, not with “China.”

The Tibetan-language text of the *Small Pox Stele*, for instance, does not record Tibet as having “entered the map,” implying becoming part of the territory of China (Ch. *zhongguo*). Instead the Tibetan text explicitly states that Tibet has become subject/allied to the emperor. In contrast to the Chinese passage quoted above, the Tibetan-language version reads: “The land of Tibet (Tib. *bod gyi yul*) owed no allegiance (Tib. *chab 'bangs*) to the great royal house of the land of China during the times of the Tang and Song kings (Tib. *rgyal po*). During the time of our emperor (Tib. *gong ma chen po*) Taizong Wen, dependency (Tib. *chab 'bangs*) was established. Since then more than a hundred years have passed and everyone has come to understand the practices of the King's law.”¹⁸³ The Tibetan text, far from suggesting “return” and “transformation” to what are implicitly Chinese ways, conveys the idea that Tibetans have become familiar with imperial standards of law and order.

That emperor Qianlong recognized the delicate balance between imposing sovereignty and imposing an alien culture is evident from his careful use of a passage

¹⁸² *Discourse*, Tibetan, line 10.

¹⁸³ My translation based on transcription of the original Tibetan-language text in Hugh Richardson, *Ch'ing Dynasty Inscriptions at Lhasa* (Serie Orientale Roma 37. Rome: Instituto Italiano Per Il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1974), 56-57. One wonders why the Yuan and Ming periods were not mentioned in this abbreviated chronology.

from the *Book of Rites* (《禮記》) just prior to making his point that Tibetan hierarchs must be subject to imperial law:

Although I supported the teaching of the Yellow Hats, [I] have done so according to a passage that appears in the *System of the King*: “One should improve their teachings, not replace their teachings. One should improve their laws, not replace their traditions.”¹⁸⁴

The fact that he included this statement, and that Tibetan translations of these original Manchu or Chinese language pronouncements on Qing aims in the region distinguish so clearly between the emperor and China, suggest that the emperor (or perhaps his translators) was at least somewhat sensitive to their reception among the laity and clergy of Tibet.

Still, one cannot underestimate the difficulty of conveying the dynasty’s policies to the Inner Asian elite. Moreover, if the dictum from the *Book of Rites* was to be the guiding principle of Qing colonial rule, it was a highly subjective one. Fukanggan, for one, also noted the sensitivity of this task. Upon first learning of the new procedure for recognizing hūbilgan he wrote, “Just as we must locate people possessed of virtue and genius (Ma. *erdemungge hüturingga*) [who are hūbilgan], we must also persuade the honest clergy and laity.”¹⁸⁵ How were the emperor’s officials to explain to the ruling elite of Tibet, both lay and clerical, that dynasty’s goal was to locate genuine reincarnations without in the same breath insulting them? Thus, as the idea for the Golden Urn passed beyond the emperor’s inner circle of Manchu-speaking advisors into the wider world of

¹⁸⁴ *Discourse*, Tibetan, Lines 30-31. The *System of the King* is a chapter of the *Book of Rites*. The original reads as follows: “修其教，不易其俗，齊其政，不易其宜。”

¹⁸⁵ MWLF 154:1353.

the Qing dynasty's polyglot empire, the ritual faced two hurdles: Could an administrative lottery be re-interpreted as a moment of prophecy? And would Mongol and Tibetan elites adopt a ritual if it was proclaimed in edicts that expressly rejected their claims of Buddhist attainment?

Even Qianlong's own words posed a potential obstacle to their reception. How, for instance, was the Dalai Lama to reconcile the contradictory statements within both the *Discourse on Lamas* and its Manchu-language precursor? As we have seen, Qianlong's opinion of reincarnation was ambiguous at best. In both of these proclamations he simultaneously dismissed reincarnation as heterodoxy that should be eliminated and then claimed that his ultimate goal was the discovery of "genuine rebirths." The exact scope of his prohibition against reincarnation among the aristocracy is ambiguous as well. For one, the emperor sends different signals about whether it is the lay aristocracy that is manipulating the process or the tulkus themselves. He concludes the *Discourse* by stating that "eradicating the selfish desire of tülku to emanate among their kinsmen" has been his priority.¹⁸⁶ But the cases cited primarily involve the attempts of Mongol and Tibetan aristocrats to secure kūtuktuhoods for their sons. In order to prevent successive rebirths of hūbilgan within Mongol lineages, the emperor established an "avoidance clause:" "It is definitely unacceptable that the hūbilgan of the kūtuktu revered by a given tribe (Ma. *aiman*) shall emerge among the sons or grandsons of the jasak prince or duke of that tribe."¹⁸⁷ This phrasing seems to leave open the possibility however, that hūbilgan could be found among other noble lineages of other tribe. And finally, although Qianlong enumerated a list of the noble ranks that he believed had no right to "struggle for the

¹⁸⁶ *Discourse*, Tibetan, line 34.

¹⁸⁷ MWLF 155:2862.

fortune (Ma. *jabšan*) of the Yellow Teachings by taking possession of a hūbilgan within their household,” he did not do the same for the Tibetan aristocracy.¹⁸⁸ This was possibly a reflection of the continuing lack of knowledge about the Tibetan gentry. This lack of clarity about who actually fell under the jurisdiction of the prohibition led to serious confusion, most famously in the case of the search for the reincarnation of the Jamyang Zhepa in 1796.

While Qianlong’s *Discourse on Lamas* was certainly intended to put the Mongolian nobility and Geluk hierarchy on notice that the dynasty would no longer tolerate their cozy, nepotistic relationship, the wording of the piece poses yet one further challenge. In his efforts to convey a universal and simultaneous message to all his constituents, Qianlong chose the Chinese text as the master template. Although the text was designed for a Mongol, Manchu and Tibetan audience, the translations depart only in shades from a root Chinese text that was composed in a manner that reflected the assumptions and prejudices of a Chinese audience and a Chinese-literate author. The demands upon the translators to stay as close to the original as possible in order to convey a universal message to all the emperor’s subjects, unavoidably resulted in a disconnect between the intended audience and the actual content. This is most evident in the numerous annotated passages designed to elucidate strange and foreign aspects of “Tibetan Buddhism” (Ch. 番經 *fanjing*, Ma. *tanggūt nomun*, Tib. *bod chos*) to the Chinese readership. The result for a Tibetan or Mongol reader are frequent detours into pedantic and often mistaken explanations of Buddhist religious history and terminology that at best might have informed Tibetan Buddhists about how their tradition was

¹⁸⁸ MWLF 155:2860.

translated into Chinese and at worst could only have reminded them of the vast gulf that separated their tradition from that of the interior.

As will become apparent in the next chapter, the Tibetan reception of the Golden Urn policy did not rely on the translation of the *Discourse on Lamas*. Instead, the new policies were initially conveyed to the Tibetan elite in the form of oral instructions from officials such as Fukanggan and Heliyen on the basis of Manchu-language court letters and memorials such as the Manchu-language edict of October 14, 1792 (QL 57/08/29). Unlike the *Discourse on Lamas*, in this edict the Throne seemed to make a more sympathetic attempt to relate to the Inner Asian elite. In the unique conclusion to the edict, Qianlong humbly noted that he too obeyed what he preached. “My handling things in this manner is expressly for the protection of the Yellow Teachings. It is my desire that true hūbilgan be located. It is definitely not my intention to bring them grief. If I were to appoint one of my own sons a hūbilgan, I fear that as a matter of course this would be greatly derided by everyone and surely could not be carried out.”¹⁸⁹ What was absurd for the Mongol princes was equally so for the emperor (the crown prince Jia, be damned!).

Although the *Discourse of Lamas* was very much an omnibus of new policies that had gradually percolated through the court over the year of 1791-1792, the Throne did leave out an import detail in this proclamation. This penultimate statement establishing the Golden Urn did not mention the corruption of the Lamo Chökyong or the other oracles of central Tibet. Perhaps the court had resigned itself to the idea that the traditional divination arts would have to be included in the process and therefore felt it was a waste of effort to include these criticisms in the edict. Regardless, this omission has had a profound effect on modern scholarship. When analyzing the significance of the

¹⁸⁹ MWLF 155:2862.

Qianlong reforms in the aftermath of the Gurkha wars, historians have, unsurprisingly, understood the concerns of the court to be those of the famous tetraglot stele. Their attention has naturally been drawn therefore to Mongolia and the court's seemingly Machiavellian patronage of the Geluk school. As this chapter has shown, the Manchu-language record reveals that the court was as much concerned with the strategic implications of divination and faith as it was with the potential reemergence of challenges to its rule in Mongolia. As I turn to the reception and implementation of the Golden Urn lottery in the following sections, I will start with the previously unstudied campaign against the oracles that burned with intensity over the winter and spring of 1793.

Chapter Two: Shamanic Imperialism

Introduction: The Campaign to Discredit the Oracles

In the late fall of 1791, the monk Nawangdasi arrived in Lhasa from Mongolia to commence the search for the reincarnation of his master, the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu, a reincarnate lama whose home estate was located in the territory of the Sain Noyan tribe (Ma. *aiman*) of the Khalkha Mongols.¹⁹⁰ As steward (Ma. *šangjotba*, Tib. *phyag mdzod*, Ch. 商卓特巴) of the estate of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu, it was Nawangdasi's responsibility to supervise the search.

The steward would later explain to his interrogators in Beijing that the search had been complicated from the outset by the fact that his master had passed away without providing a clear testament concerning where he would be reborn. In such cases it was the custom to first travel to Tibet (Ma. *Dzang*) and request a divination from the Lamo Oracle (Ma. *Lamo cuijung*) concerning the location of the rebirth. Once the location was ascertained, candidate children could be identified and tested. Finally, the searchers would return once more to central Tibet to confirm their identification with the Dalai Lama and the Lamo Oracle. It was, "only at this point," stated the steward, that "everyone will believe [in the reincarnation]."¹⁹¹ Yet, as Qing investigators would later observe, the steward did not follow his own prescriptions.

¹⁹⁰ Ma. Nawangdasi; Tib. Nga dbang bkra shis; Ch. 那旺札什. Ma. Erdeni bandida kūtuktu; Tib. er de ni paNDi'i da ho thog thu; Ch. 額爾德尼班第達呼圖克圖.

¹⁹¹ MWLF 156:1399.

After arriving in Lhasa and attending a brief audience with the Eighth Dalai Lama, the steward proceeded to the monastery of the Lamo Oracle. There, he presented various gifts and then began making inquiries about the reincarnation of his master. The initial instructions from the oracle were not very satisfying. The Lamo Oracle merely told him to “recite the appropriate sutras” and that news would be forthcoming. Several months later, shortly after the start of the new year (QL 57/01, late January-early February, 1792) the steward visited the oracle again, presented gifts, and received a divination instructing him to seek out the rebirth of his master among commoner households (Ma. *an i jergi niyalmai boo*) in the eastern area of his tribe (Ma. *aiman*). According to the steward, this advice was also disappointing. He later told his interrogators that, having “squandered” over ten thousand in silver on a long journey to Tibet, he was disinclined to believe that his master had reincarnated among a non-noble family.¹⁹²

The steward resolved, therefore, to approach the Lamo Oracle a third time with the names of two candidate children who, although from noble families, had at least been born within the eastern districts of his tribe. Nawangdasi wrote the two names on separate slips of paper and presented them to the oracle. While possessed by the Lamo protector deity, the medium immediately placed a mark on the name of the son of Cedendorji, the Tüsiyetü Khan.¹⁹³ The Dalai Lama would later testify that, “having always found the speech of the Lamo oracle to be reliable,” he personally confirmed the authenticity of this

¹⁹² MWLF 156:1380-1381, 1401.

¹⁹³ MWLF 156:1402.

divination.¹⁹⁴ Thus considering the matter successfully and “truthfully” resolved, the steward returned to the Khalkha lands and reported the results of the search to his league head. The latter subsequently ordered Nawangdasi to submit a final report to the Lifanyuan in Beijing.¹⁹⁵

A year later, in the winter of 1792-1793, when Nawangdasi’s report eventually reached the Lifanyuan it encountered an environment that, as we have seen in Chapter One, had not only grown hostile to the oracles of central Tibet but had also proscribed the identification of kūtuktu among the sons of Mongol aristocrats such as Cedendorji, the Tüsiyetü Khan. In his own defense, the steward claimed that he was unaware of the new law concerning the use of the Golden Urn—an edict that had been promulgated well after he had departed central Tibet. Considering that Qing officials in outer Mongolia first began to report receipt of the *Discourse on Lamas* edict only in March of 1793, approximately five months after the first urn was dispatched from Beijing to Lhasa on October 25, 1792, it is easy to imagine that the steward knew nothing of the statute when he filed his report.¹⁹⁶ Yet the investigators were unswayed and found even the act of filing the report suspicious. They wrote, “After you returned from Tibet, in principle you could have not reported [to the Lifanyuan]. Instead, feigning ignorance, you wrote requesting that the old customs be [observed]. How can you say that [you] were not

¹⁹⁴ MWLF 156:1385-1386.

¹⁹⁵ MWLF 156:1404.

¹⁹⁶ The earliest report of receipt of the *Discourse on Lamas* edict was from the Qing official stationed in Uliasutai. The Uliasutai official filed his report on March 13, 1793 (QL 58/02/02). See, YHGSL 15:14 (doc. #5). Although the exact date that Nawangdasi’s petition arrived in the Lifanyuan is unknown, it was certainly no later than March 16, 1793, the day that the emperor ordered the investigation of the case (MWJXD 23:194-199).

seeking your own advantage?”¹⁹⁷ The lineage of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu was evidently one of many Mongol reincarnations that had not previously reported its rebirths to the Court of Colonial Affairs.

Upon receiving word of the steward’s request from the officials of the Lifanyuan, the emperor was immediately suspicious. In his first pronouncement on the case, enclosed in a court letter of March 16, 1793 (QL 58/02/05), the emperor opined that the Dalai Lama’s identification of the khan’s son as a kūtuktu was, “clearly the result of the bribery and corrupt actions of the khan Cedendorji and the steward Nawangdasi.”¹⁹⁸ The Throne’s suspicions were surely exacerbated by the unfortunate coincidence that in the edict promulgating the new Golden Urn lottery, the Qianlong emperor had singled out the father of the current Tüsiyetü Khan for ridicule. The *Discourse on Lamas* presented the failed attempt of the Tüsiyetü Khan to have his yet unborn child recognized as the Jebtsundamba Kūtuktu in 1758 as the case-in-point for how Mongol nobility had corrupted the recognition process.¹⁹⁹ Although the emperor was convinced that the recognition process had been corrupted, he could not definitively identify the source of the corruption. Was it the steward, the khan, or the Dalai Lama himself? The emperor queried:

Previously, when the steward arrived in Tibet, he repeatedly presented various gifts to the Dalai Lama. Was it Cedendorji who planted the idea of seeking out the Dalai Lama in the head of the steward and spoke to [the

¹⁹⁷ MWLF 156:1404.

¹⁹⁸ MWJXD 23:194-195.

¹⁹⁹ *Discourse on Lamas*, lines 19-21. In the 1750s the previous Tüsiyetü Khan, the father of Cedendorji, had publicly predicted that his pregnant wife would give birth to the reincarnation of the Jebtsundamba Kūtuktu. Thus subsequent birth of a daughter not only embarrassed the khan, but also served, as noted in Chapter One, as evidence for why the Qing court should prohibit the search for the Jebtsundamba Kūtuktu among noble Mongol families.

steward] of how to approach the Dalai Lama? Or was it the steward who sought to pass on his requests via the servants or close family members of the Dalai Lama? Or was it the Dalai Lama himself, who, because he wished to receive the usual alms from Cedendorji and had come to see the benefit in considering this [request], signaled that it was his son?²⁰⁰

Just three days later, the emperor received a transcript of the interrogation of Nawangdasi. On the basis of the interrogation, the emperor concluded that the idea to identify the Tüsiyetü Khan's son as the reincarnation of Erdeni Bandida originated with the khan himself. Yet according to the emperor, the testimony of Nawangdasi not only confirmed his preexisting suspicions that Mongol aristocrats had corrupted the search process, but it also revealed that Inner Asian elites possessed certain fixed notions that stood in the way of the successful implementation of his reform measures, most importantly the statute on the Golden Urn. Furthermore, the testimony of the steward revealed to the consternation of the Throne that faith in the efficacy of the oracles and the divination skills of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama remained strong and that the repeated reincarnation of kūtuktu and other influential lamas among the households of the Mongol or Tibetan aristocracy was not considered corrupt.²⁰¹ On the contrary, nobility, wealth, power, and religious attainment went hand-in-hand: If the wealth and status of the Inner Asian nobility could be attributed to the karma they had accrued by means of their meritorious activities on behalf of Buddhism, then it was but the natural order of things that they also produced miraculous offspring. In the course of his interrogation, the steward was brought to admit that indeed there was corruption among the Mongol nobles

²⁰⁰ MWJXD 23:195-196 (QL 58/02/05; 1793-03-16).

²⁰¹ MWJXD 23:200-206 (QL 58/02/08; 1793-03-19).

as a result of “struggles for profit and fortune,” and that the Golden Urn might suppress these conflicts, but he did not budge on the authenticity of his choice.²⁰²

When asked why he had followed neither his own original plan nor the prophecy of the Lamo oracle, the steward replied that it would be a waste of money to search for a child among commoners because the majority of the people would not believe in such a candidate. Nawangdasi testified:

The children of the common ranks are not as good as children from the lineages of the nobility (Ma. *taiji*). Among their children there are many who are intelligent and handsome. And after they become hūbilgan, every khan, prince, and so forth will prostrate before them. [However,] if the [child] is from the lineage of an ordinary family (Ma. *albatu*), it is impossible to predict whether everyone will be convinced and have faith in his authenticity.²⁰³

In response, Qianlong wrote:

Nawangdasi has stated in his deposition that, “the Mongols’ nature is such that they reverently believe that the emergence and identification of all reincarnations of kūtuktu in the households of great families is simply [a sign] of their innate endowment of genius and good fortune (*hūturi fengshen bimbime*).” Observing this, it would appear that the Dalai Lama must also hold similar opinions. Moreover, since Nawangdasi only reported the sons Cedendorji and Erincendorji, the Dalai Lama’s selection of the son of Cedendorji was merely a matter of calculating whose rank was higher.²⁰⁴

The Qianlong emperor rejected the steward Nawangdasi’s petition and launched an investigation of the case. The importance that the Throne placed on this matter was underscored by the dispatch of several high-ranking officials with expertise in Mongol

²⁰² MWLF 156:1403.

²⁰³ MWLF 156:1400-1401. This document is a Manchu-language transcript of a deposition of Nawangdasi conducted by officials of the Lifanyuan. The archive catalog dates this document to QL 58/06, yet evidence indicates that this document dates to QL 58/02 and is most likely the interrogation cited by Qianlong in his court letter dated QL 58/02/08.

²⁰⁴ MWJXD 23:202-203 (QL 58/02/08, 1793-03-19).

affairs. No less a personage than Sungyun, a vice-minister of the Board of Revenue recently appointed to the Grand Council, was ordered to personally travel to the pastures of the Tüsiyetü Khan to probe the origins of the relationship between the khan, the steward, and the Dalai Lama. Another Mongol bannerman, Kūišu (Ch. 奎舒, d. 1809), a vice-minister of the Lifanyuan who had previously served as Qinghai amban, together with a senior monk from the Gelukpa establishment in Beijing, Gelek Namka,²⁰⁵ were commissioned with the task of leading a new search for the reincarnation of the Erdeni Bandida Kütuktu. This time the emperor ordered that the child be recognized in accordance with his decree on the Golden Urn: Candidate children were to be identified among non-noble households in the nearby pastures and, because the estate of the kütuktu was located in Mongolia, the final lottery would be conducted not in Lhasa, but at the Gelukpa monastery at Yonghegong in Beijing.

Yet even though the Erdeni Bandida search involved Mongols and was to be resolved in Beijing, the emperor coordinated the prosecution of the affair closely with his chief representative in Lhasa, Heliyen. The emperor justified this in a Manchu-language letter to Heliyen, one of several he posted to Lhasa just days after the steward's petition reached Beijing. The emperor informed Heliyen that:

I have dispatched Kūišu and Gelek Namk'a and ordered them to locate several children in the vicinity of Erdeni Bandida Kütuktu and select one by drawing lots. [You] must devote great attention to this first case and resolutely uphold the law, punish these people, and identify this one reincarnation (*hūbilgan*) in exactly this [manner]. Afterwards, only when the corrupt habits of the Lamo Oracle have been rectified and the Dalai

²⁰⁵ As noted in Chapter One, Gelek Namka (Ma. *Gelek Namka*) was also involved in the search for the reincarnation of Changkyä Rolpay Dorjé in 1786 and seems to have been well-known to the emperor. Given his connections to the Chuzang Kütuktu, it is likely that this monk hailed from the Amdo region. If this is the case, then here again is a good example of the court making use of monks from the Amdo region to handle delicate matters that involved both Mongolia and Tibet.

Lama's independent authority over identification [of rebirths] removed, and we have elucidated the stupid and muddleheaded Mongols, will it be possible to consistently carry out this edict (i.e. the Golden Urn lottery).

Once an identification of a [kūtuktu] of a rank such as this has been successfully accomplished, in the future the Dalai Lama, Panchen Erdeni, and other major *hūbilgan* will have no need to seek divinations from the Lamo Oracle. Having entrusted [matters] to the ambans resident in Tibet, the names of all auspicious and miraculous children shall be collected from across Tibet and subjected to a lottery in the Jokhang. Thus at this point authority over all the affairs of Tibet will be consolidated in us.²⁰⁶

Even at this early stage in the investigation of the Tüsiyetü Khan case, it was apparent to the Qing court that introducing the new recognition procedure—the Golden Urn, and finding acceptance for the law among Mongols and Tibetans would be much harder than initially thought. As the quote from Qianlong's letter to Heliyen reveals, the emperor recognized that the act of promulgating the new statute was insufficient on its own. Moreover, the Golden Urn ritual could not merely be appended to the recognition process. The emerging details concerning the involvement of the Lamo Oracle and the Dalai Lama in the identification of the khan's son as a kūtuktu persuaded the emperor that the Golden Urn could not compliment or otherwise coexist with the existing tradition. So long as the oracles and the Dalai Lama remained credible prognosticators, the possibility remained that the indigenous leadership could settle on a final candidate without reference to Qianlong's new law. Therefore, to paraphrase Qianlong, if the

²⁰⁶ MWJXD 23:204-205: “Te Kūisu, Gelek Namk'a be unggifi Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu i hanci bade udu juse baifi, sibiya tatame toktobuki sehenge, cohōme fafun ilibure tuktan de teng seme gūnin jafafi, esebe weile arafi ere emu hūbilgan be uttu toktobuha manggi, lamu cūijung sei jemden yabure ejeha tacin be tuwancihiyafi, Dalai Lama i saligan i toktobure toose be maribusi, monggosoi hūlhi mentehun banin be neileme subufi sirame ere gesengge be teni uttu icihiyame mutembi. ere jeringgge be uttu toktobume mutehe sehede amaga inenggi uthai Dalai Lama, Bancen Erdeni jerji ambaka hūbilgan be lamu cūijung de lungdan tuwabure be baiburakū. Dzang de tehe abasa de afabuji bubci Dzang ni šurdeme bade fulu udu hūturingga juse baifi, amba joo de doboho bumba de sibiya tatame toktobume ohode, ere namašan de Dzang ni eiten baita toose be muse uthai salici ombo.”

dynasty was to have any success in meeting its goals of instituting the new law and reversing the loss of faith in the authenticity of the reincarnate lamas of the Geluk School, it would have to dislodge the indigenous tradition first. This would require an aggressive campaign to discredit the oracles and the Dalai Lama and persuade Tibetans and Mongolians that the Golden Urn was a more effective method. Moreover, this campaign would have to be carefully coordinated between Mongolia and Tibet.

This chapter will examine the court-orchestrated campaign to persuade Tibetan Buddhists to abandon the oracles in exchange for a new method drawn from the practices of the bureaucracy of China proper. This campaign was conducted over the spring and summer of 1793 and consisted of two critical components: First, the emperor ordered the careful management of the search for the reincarnation of the Erdeni Bandida in Khalkha Mongolia and the dissemination of incriminating evidence concerning the Tüsiyetü Khan's attempt to have his son recognized as a kūtuktu. The Throne hoped that the exposure of the collusion of the Tüsiyetü Khan and the steward as well as the influence of money and gifts on the decisions of the Dalai Lama and the oracles would persuade Tibetans and Mongols that the existing procedures were in need of reform. The eventual dissemination of news of the "successful" identification of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu would establish the legitimacy of the new law. Second, the emperor ordered his agents in Lhasa to organize a series of public tests and trials intended to discredit the claims of the oracles and undermine their reputation for accuracy.

Both elements of this campaign shared an overt concern with the arts of persuasion, or more specifically, a desire to achieve compliance not through force but by getting Tibetans to obey the new law on the basis of personal conviction. Letters

exchanged between the court and field officials in Tibet and Mongolia during this campaign convey this concern through their frequent discussion of whether witnesses at public spectacles were “genuinely convinced” or “genuinely persuaded,” expressions captured (perhaps interchangeably) by the Manchu phrases *gūnin dahambi* or *gūnin dahabumbi*, respectively.²⁰⁷ Similarly, the emperor hoped that the influence of the oracles would naturally fade away or “self-defeat” (Ma. *ini cisui duin cuijung ni gebu be šuwe manambuci ombikai*, or *ini cusui nakambi*, Ch. 自敗) once the Tibetans and Mongols had a chance to test the accuracy of the oracles against the Qing court’s divination technologies.²⁰⁸ What is significant about the deep interest in persuasion is that it was premised on the assumption that there were shared standards of evidence and understandings of divination, and that Manchus, Mongols and Tibetans could arrive at similar conclusions through a process of empirical investigation.

This chapter consists of five sections. Section one will begin the chapter by recounting how prior to the emergence of the scandal involving the Tüsiyetü Khan the emperor had been compelled by his advisors to accede to a continued role for the oracles in the recognition process. Section two describes how the Lhasa amban Heliyen orchestrated the public campaign to expose the oracles as frauds and charlatans. Simultaneously, Heliyen also began to assemble incriminating evidence concerning the involvement of the Dalai Lama in the original search for the reincarnation of the Erdeni

²⁰⁷ See for example the exchange of letters between Heliyen and Qianlong concerning the persuasion of the Dalai Lama: MWJXD 23:236-238 & YHGSL 15:281-283. While discussing the Tüsiyetü Khan case Qianlong also used the phrase *gūnin bahabufi*, which expresses the idea of “planting an idea in someone’s mind” (MWJXD 23:197).

²⁰⁸ YHGSL 15:85a (#28) (QL 58/03/15, 1793-04-25). Contemporaneous Manchu-language texts phrase this slightly differently: “The names of the four oracles will completely fade away of their own accord.” Ma. *ini cisui duin cuijung ni gebu be šuwe manambuci ombikai*, MWJXD 23:262 (QL 58/04/01, 1793-5-10). For “*ini cisui nakambi*” see MWLF 156:0050 (QL 58/04/19).

Bandida Kūtuktu. This evidence primarily consisted of depositions of the Dalai Lama and the Lamo Oracle. Once submitted to court, the statements of the Dalai Lama, the oracle, the steward, and the Tüsiyetü Khan would be selectively quoted and included in a series of widely disseminated public pronouncements that argued for the necessity of the dynasty's new statute on the Golden Urn. Sections three examines these statements and why it took two months for the Throne to finally issue an edict reporting the selection of the reincarnation of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu. Section four examines the translation of imperial instructions into Tibetan, and the careful response of the Eighth Dalai Lama to them. This section will explore the degree to which the emperor's message was conveyed directly into Tibetan-language proclamations, as well as the degree to which the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan elites deflected some of the court's harsher accusations. Section five will conclude the chapter with a discussion of Sungyun's supervision of the identification of the Pakbala Lama, the first major Tibetan kūtuktu to be recognized using the urn. Fresh from his service to the emperor in Mongolia, Sungyun had been transferred to Lhasa in 1794 to manage what the court viewed as the penultimate test of the new law.

This chapter also continues to build on an argument advanced in the previous chapter: That the articulation of the emperor's sovereignty over Tibet was intimately linked to his concern with controlling the arts of divination. As the emperor stated in his private letter to Heliyen quoted above, he believed that the practical exercise of Qing authority over all matters Tibetan required as a prerequisite a monopoly over the use of divination. Yet as noted in Chapter One, this idea had germinated over time. The documentary record reveals that more than any other factor, it was fears of the misuse of divination that prompted the emperor to assert control first over divination and

subsequently over Tibetan affairs more generally. It was in the process of discussing divination with his field officials that the Qianlong emperor made increasingly articulate and comprehensive claims to authority/sovereignty over Tibet.

In this light, it should come as no surprise that the *Imperially Sanctioned Twenty-Nine Articles*—the Tibetan-language omnibus proclamation of all the reform measures approved by the emperor and delivered to the Dalai Lama by Fukanggan on April 4, 1793 (QL 58/02/24)—begins with the statute instituting the Golden Urn ritual. Discussion of the urn had begun in Beijing nearly two months before Fukanggan had even been ordered to consider drafting reforms of the Tibetan administration. And further discussion of these twenty-eight measures is nearly non-existent in the months and years following Fukanggan’s departure from Lhasa. Meanwhile, discussion of the Golden Urn and divination more generally remained the dominant subject of communications between officials in Lhasa and the court in Beijing throughout the remaining days of the Qianlong emperor’s life and into the first several years of the Jiaqing reign. With the notable exception of Fukanggan’s memorials on the subject, the discussion of divination was conducted in Manchu and considered separately from other issues pertaining to the reform of Tibetan administration. Moreover, the numerous imperial rescripts on these documents attest to the fact that this issue also remained a priority concern of the emperor despite his advancing years and gradual withdrawal from the daily oversight of other issues. Thus, these records constitute a distinctive deliberative process that was accessible only to a select number of Manchu-speaking officials. As a result, previous scholarship on the aftermath of the Gurkha war that has not made use of Manchu sources has overlooked both the importance of divination in Qianlong’s thinking on sovereignty and

the significance of the emperor's belief that the effort to impose the Golden Urn ritual was incumbent on stamping out the oracles of Central Tibet.

“Legislating the Possible:” The Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu, Fukanggan, and the Negotiated Existence of the Oracles

From the very moment when the idea for the Golden Urn began to circulate among Qianlong's inner court advisors, the emperor intended for it to completely replace the custom of seeking prophecies/divinations (Ma. *lungdan*, Tib. *lung bstan*) from the oracles (Ma. *cuijung*, Tib. *chos skyong*) especially the Lamo oracle.²⁰⁹ Yet the emperor was initially forced to compromise and the public promulgation of the Golden Urn—the *Discourse on Lamas*—included the oracles in the recognition process. Two individuals in particular seem to have been instrumental in negotiating the initial configuration of the new statute: A Beijing-based Gelukpa monk—the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu, and General Fukanggan in Lhasa.

Recall that we have met the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu previously in the context of the Throne's initial solicitation of advice regarding the proposal to institute a lottery. As the highest-ranking Gelukpa monk in residence in Beijing in the summer of 1792, the emperor had sought him out to provide an explanation of the nature of the oracles of Central Tibet as well as an assessment of the feasibility of the new procedure. The Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu's advice was subsequently included in the first letter concerning

²⁰⁹ Letter to Agūi, MWLF 154:1351-1354 (1792-08-17, QL 57/06/30).

the new ritual dispatched to Fukanggan in Tibet.²¹⁰ As noted in Chapter One, the kūtuktu sanctioned the Golden Urn yet also advised the emperor to retain the oracles in the process. A later document, however, reveals more clearly the role of this monk in both legitimizing the ritual within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and also forcefully rejecting the emperor's wish to proscribe the use of the oracles.

Labeled “A draft letter from the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu to the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama translated into Manchu,” this document recounts how the monk traveled from Dolonor to the emperor’s summer retreat at Chengde and subsequently learned of the new “process for drawing lots.” The monk wrote to the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama that upon hearing the news he was “deeply persuaded and appreciative,” and confident that the new measure would “eliminate the corruption of the mediums.”²¹¹ He also added the following observation: “Having thus established this change, it is exactly in accord with the manner in which the hūbilgan of the Fifth Dalai Lama and previous Panchen Lama were identified... Truly the edict of Manjusri, the Great Holy Lord of the East, resplendent like the sun and moon, has reached the point of clearly perceiving the state of affairs of our western land and the feelings of the people.”²¹² The Fifth Dalai Lama had actually been identified using a *zentak* (“dough-ball”) divination, a process qualitatively different from the Golden Urn Lottery (and a difference that did not go

²¹⁰ MWLF 154:0491-0492.

²¹¹ MWLF 155:0314-315.

²¹² MWLF 155:0315.

unnoticed by subsequent Tibetan observers).²¹³ Yet this bold comparison would have major repercussions for the subsequent reception of the ritual among Tibetans. As we shall see in Chapter Three, later Tibetan commentators would make a similar comparison. Placing the Golden Urn ritual within the same category of practices that had located the Great Fifth Dalai Lama had a powerful effect on legitimizing the new ritual.

However, the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu did not offer unreserved support. He informed the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama that he had told the grand councilor (most likely Hešen²¹⁴) and assembled Qing officials that he disagreed with the recommendation to prohibit the use of the oracles. He wrote, “However, if the prophecies are not consulted concerning the place where the reincarnation is located and children’s names are submitted according to people’s desires to be selected from the urn, petty quarrels will arise and it will be impossible to convince the clergy and lay people [of the authenticity of the child].”²¹⁵ The monk then continued by telling his correspondents that he had advised that once “good and virtuous mediums” had been located, the four protector deities (Ma. Lamo, Neichung, G’awadung, and Samye) could be invoked to provide information on the location of the rebirth. As noted in Chapter One, the grand councilor

²¹³ Fifth Dalai Lama Losang Gyatso, *Rgyal dbang lnga pa'i rang rnam du kU la'i gos bzang* (Autobiography of the fifth Dalai Lama), (Kawring, India: Tobdan Tsiring, 1979-1983), 53 (Ka:28a). TIBRC # W23956.

²¹⁴ Hešen conveyed other contemporaneous documents containing the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu’s opinion on this matter to the emperor. For example, see MWLF 155:0490 (QL 57/07/25).

²¹⁵ MWLF 155:0316. “damu aika fe songkoi hūbilgan i tucire ergi be lungdan baime fonjirakū, geren i cihai hūbilgan inu seme joriha jusei gebu be foihori bumba de dosimbuñi tatabuci, balai temšendure demun banjinambime, geren suwayan kara ursei gūnin be inu dahabume muterakū.”

Hešen relayed to the emperor the kūtuktu’s proposal for continued use of the oracles but dropped mention of the monk’s underlying rationale for the disagreement.²¹⁶

This letter from the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu is but one of a large body of Manchu-language translations of letters that passed between Tibetan elites between 1791 and 1793.²¹⁷ These letters were collected and translated by the Grand Council in Beijing. The flattering tone and formal organization of the letter, in addition to the indication that this was a “draft letter,” suggests that either the monk was well aware of the possibility that the court would inspect the contents of his letter or that the letter was actually drafted under the supervision of the court. Regardless of the impetus behind its creation, the existence and content of this letter indicates the degree to which the Qing court officials were able to use monks based at imperially-sponsored institutions such as Yonghegong to convey imperial policy to local elites in Tibet and Mongolia. The term *degree* is crucial here because, as this letter demonstrates, Gelukpa elites could be counted on to support imperial initiatives, but not in an unqualified manner. The letter exposes not only the power of the emperor, but also the advisory authority of the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu.

²¹⁶ MWLF 154:0491-0492. So the question remains, would the emperor have learned of the kūtuktu’s specific reason for retaining the oracles? There is no direct evidence in written communications involving Hešen, the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu, or the emperor. But the existence of this “draft letter” as an attachment to a palace memorial means that at least in principle the document could have been read by the emperor and certainly circulated within inner court agencies such as the Grand Council. The exact reasoning was later also restated by Fukanggan. See Fukanggan’s memorial of QL 58/01/08 (YHGSL 15:10-12).

²¹⁷ Approximately thirty such letters are listed in a recent catalog of Tibet-related materials at the First Historical Archives. See, Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan, Zhongguo Zangxue zhongxin, eds., *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguang suocun Xizang he Zangshi dang’an mulu, Man, Zangwenbu* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1999), 480-481, 485-487. These letters, plus numerous other Manchu and Tibetan-language letters that do not appear in the above catalog, can be located at the beginning of microfiche roll #155 of the reproductions of the Manchu-language Grand Council file copies of palace memorials held by the First Historical Archives, Beijing. The existence of these letters suggests that Tibetan elites across the empire were utilizing the presence of resident Qing officials and their postal system to exchange information.

The Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu's sketch of the ritual was included in Qianlong's court letter to Fukanggan that first informed the general, then still in Nepal, of the idea for the lottery. As a result, this kūtuktu's draft configuration of the Golden Urn ritual would influence both Fukanggan's understanding of the statute and all subsequent public edicts concerning the Golden Urn until Qianlong categorically outlawed the use of the oracles in a major decree issued eight months later (QL 58/04/19, 1793-5-28).²¹⁸ The *Discourse on Lamas* proclamation of December 1792, for instance, accorded the oracles a major role. Ironically, this proclamation had only just begun to circulate widely in Mongolia when the Tüsiyetü Khan case broke and the emperor began to push more forcefully for the eradication of the oracles. In light of this, it is perhaps understandable that Qing field officials in Mongolia and Tibet, as well as local Mongols and Tibetans, would not have understood the institution of the Golden Urn as an attempt to supplant the oracles.

Of additional significance is the fact that the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu's blueprint for the lottery interpreted the emperor's edict as implying that it would be either the Dalai Lama or the Panchen Lama who drew the lot from the urn.²¹⁹ In his early formulations of the ritual, Qianlong had not explicitly addressed the issue of who would physically draw the lot. Major imperial pronouncements on the issue of the Golden Urn that were handed down in the first month after the idea was initially floated stated ambiguously that the lots

²¹⁸ MWLF 156:0043-0052. This edict was issued in Manchu and subsequently translated into Tibetan for distribution in Tibet. The emperor had, however, a month earlier demanded the end of the oracles in a Manchu-language court letter to Heliyen, MWJXD 23:236-239 (QL 58/03/17; 1793-04-27).

²¹⁹ MWLF 155:0315.

would be “selected jointly by the Dalai Lama and the resident ambans.”²²⁰ On this latter issue, Fukanggan’s own first blueprint of the ritual, submitted to the throne in December of 1792 just a week after concluding his first meetings with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan elites after having returned from Nepal, recommended that the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama personally draw the lots. In the event that there was a search for a Dalai Lama or Panchen Lama, the living member of the pair would identify the reincarnation of his colleague, “in imitation of the spirit of the master-disciple relationship.”²²¹ In all cases, the ambans resident in Tibet would supervise the lottery. General Fukanggan’s advice probably reflects the influence of local Tibetans if not the original input of the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu.

It seems, however, that Fukanggan felt obliged to modify the proposed statute on the Golden Urn in one significant way. Although he evidently concurred with the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu that a place for the oracles was necessary, he seems to have anticipated a potential problem: If the oracles were permitted to arrive at a set of unified instructions for where and how to search for candidates, what was to prevent them from unifying around the candidacy of a single child, thus preempting the need for a lottery? To solve this problem, Fukanggan proposed a control test in which a lot bearing the single

²²⁰ See edict dated QL 57/08/27 in KKFL, 622-626: “令達賴喇嘛等會同駐藏大臣公同念經，對眾拈定，具奏作為呼畢勒罕。” In the earliest extant formulation of the ritual, the emperor states that, “the ambans resident in Tibet together with the Dalai Lama et al will observe as sutras are recited and one [name] is selected from the urn” (MWLF 154:0981-0982). See also, MWLF 155:2862 (QL 57/08/29). This document reads: “The Dalai Lama together with the ambans residing in Tibet shall supervise the identification of the hūbilgan by drawing lots” (“dalai Lama, dzang de tehe ambasai sasa tuwame tatame gaifi hūbilgan toktobukini.”).

²²¹ YHGSL 14:382 (QL 57/10/23, 1792-12-6): “駐藏大臣親往監視。凡達賴喇嘛、班禪額爾德尼之呼畢勒罕，即仿互為師弟之義，令其互相拈定。” This document was also reproduced in the *Weizang tongzhi*. See Hening, *Weizang tongzhi* (Lhasa: Xizang yanjiu bianji bu, [reprint] 1982), 263-264.

candidate's name would be placed in the urn along with a blank lot. If the blank lot was drawn, the general wrote, the candidacy of the child would be thrown out and the search would have to start anew.²²² Although this amendment to the statute did not arrive in Beijing in time to be included in the emperor's formal proclamation of the ritual in the *Discourse on Lamas*, it was established as a precedent the next year after Fukanggan himself oversaw just such a test in March of 1793 (QL 58/02/11).²²³

It was in direct response to Fukanggan's initial blueprint for the lottery that the emperor first broached the idea of testing the oracles more closely. Noting that Fukanggan had advocated the consultation of the oracles as the first stage in the search process, Qianlong was still resigned to their inclusion in the process, stating, "At the present we can only do like this."²²⁴ The emperor was suspicious of the oracles, yet seems to have been open to their continued use, especially if it could be ascertained that they were effective and credible before the wider audience. Thus he ordered Fukanggan and the other Qing officials resident in Lhasa to, "examine the Lamo and other oracles. If what they [divine] is not found trustworthy before the people, it merely becomes a joke, and thus we will be unable to use them in the future and we will have to cut through this thicket." A separate court letter from the emperor to his field officials was more strongly worded:

The protectors all use various heterodox methods to mislead the people. When the deity descends to them, they use a knife to stab themselves, yet their bodies are unharmed. These arts of illusion make their method appear true. Among the teachings of the Buddha these [arts] are the most inferior. If [these arts] are fraudulent, then they are not even worth a laugh! How

²²² YHGSL 14:384a (QL 57/10/23).

²²³ YHGSL 15:30b-31a.

²²⁴ Imperial rescript QL 57/11/29 (1793-01-11) YHGSL 14:383b.

could anyone believe in them as before? Fukanggan and the rest should promptly put the methods of those four protectors to the test. Have them stab themselves! And if their methods are not efficacious, then immediately point out their absurd and unbelievable claims to the people to educate them. The monks and laity will then know of their presumption and shall not act in accordance with their foolishness. Thus in the future when an incarnation appears the use of oracles can be forbidden. [Instead,] the names of several candidates with similar dates of birth shall be [placed] in the golden urn, and the Dalai Lama will by drawing a lot come to a decision, and by means of this promulgate what is equitable and fair.²²⁵

Although in this command the emperor communicated more strongly his distaste for the oracles and expectation that they would be found false, it is important to distinguish this request to investigate the oracles from subsequent tests conducted by Heliyen. At this stage, the emperor was still only conditionally disdainful of the oracles—wary of the authority they might wield on the basis of certain abilities, base as they might be. It should also be noted that at this date that the emperor was not only willing to countenance some role for the oracles, but also still positioned the Dalai Lama front and center in the lottery as the man who would draw the lot.

A month later, Fukanggan, Sun Shiyi, Heliyen, Zhong-ling (忠齡), and Cheng-de (成德) submitted a joint memorial detailing the results of their investigations in Lhasa. The document deserves to be examined in detail because the results of the investigation forced the authors to walk a delicate line between affirming the ideas of the emperor but also conveying to the Throne the enduring influence of the oracles.

The officials began by confirming the emperor's impression that recent reincarnations had been poorly verified and were of dubious authenticity:

²²⁵ This court letter is quoted inside Fukanggan's memorial dated QL 57/12/29 (1793-02-09), YHGSL 15:7b-8a. Having been unable to locate the original court letter, I am assuming from contextualizing evidence that the court letter quoted by Fukanggan is the “separate edict” noted in Qianlong’s rescript to Fukanggan’s memorial of QL 57/10/23.

We find that during the early period following the founding of the teaching, when the Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama and other great kūtuktu reincarnated, they did not lose their fundamental natures. Yet with regards to whether or not later reincarnations truly possessed the root essence, this matter has been vague from the beginning. There has not necessarily been irrefutable evidence or tests and [we] have not heard that there were any who truly could recall matters from their past lives or recognize objects from their previous generations.²²⁶

Yet Fukanggan and his fellow officials then observed that despite a purported lack of confidence in the identifications, faith in these kūtuktus had been shored up because ultimately the emperor himself had sanctioned the selections:

As it is the intention of the Holy Lord to promote the Yellow Teachings, and because all the Mongol tribes and Tibetans customarily worship the Buddhist teachings, they are therefore guided according to their situation and we facilitate their customs and pacify these foreigners. This [is the principle behind how,] in the past, whenever the chokyöng (oracle, 吹忠) pointed out a person, after the details were reported, an edict would be passed down recognizing them as a hūbilgan and thus all the millions of Mongols and Tibetans would have faith in [the child] as a true [reincarnation] and wholeheartedly worship them.²²⁷

In other words, the officials were pointing out that even before introducing the Golden Urn, the actions of Qing rulers had been key in preserving the faith of Tibetan Buddhists in their reincarnations. And they were noting that the court had already been doing this despite reservations about the authenticity of the reincarnations—reservations that the authors imply were also held by Tibetans. The influence of the indigenous tradition on sustaining peace in Mongolia and Tibet led the dynasty to consider it politic to add its

²²⁶ YHGSL 15:8a, QL 57/12/29 (1793-02-09): “竊查達賴喇嘛、班禪額爾德尼及大呼圖克圖轉世，當其立教之初，前數輩或尚不迷本性，此後出世之呼畢勒罕是否實有根氣，其事原屬渺茫，未必確有征驗，亦未聞有真能記憶前生來歷、認取前輩物件者。”

²²⁷ YHGSL 15:8a: “仰維聖主振興黃教之意，亦因各部蒙古、番族（俗）崇信佛法，因勢利導，以便方俗而安外藩，是以向來每遇吹忠指出之人，一經奏明，奉旨作為呼畢勒罕後，遠近蒙古番眾數十萬人，悉皆信以為真，一心供奉。”

authority to the decisions of the Oracles. Fukanggan et. al. then turned to recounting their own personal observations of the activities of the oracles:

Since your servants have arrived in Tibet, we have personally witnessed how a deity descended to chökyong in order to exorcise demons and the streets became crowded with tens of thousands who pressed in to watch. Long lines formed of those who wished to present kadak and others who wished to be touched on the head while they prostrated themselves bareheaded. They proceeded in an orderly line and galloped out like crazy people! Their absurdity reaches such a degree that there are even those who, having been accidentally cut by the knife of an oracle in the midst of their mad dancing, promptly recite a mantra and then happily look to the future thinking that all those who receive such an injury will never suffer misfortune or illness! When your servants brought this excessive faith to the attention of important lamas and Tibetan headmen (大喇嘛番目), and carefully explained to them the ridiculous aspects of such oracles, they looked at each other in astonishment and dared not reply as they feared their excessive guilt. When we consider such sincere faith, there are ultimately no words that will change their minds.²²⁸

With regards to why the oracles held such widespread authority, Fukanggan provided the following reasons:

As for the methods of the chökyong, regardless of whether they dress up as deities, read sutras or pray, carelessly claim that the deity has possessed their body, dance with knives, shake their heads and spit out hot air, make prognostications about the future of the harvest or smallpox epidemics; no matter what kind of test they are subjected to, after the spirit has left them they abruptly wake up. And if you ask them about what they just said, they look dumbfounded and can remember nothing. Thus there is not a Tibetan who doesn't believe them. Rumors about what they do while under the influence, are not at all reliable. Even claims that they can stab themselves with knives are all myths and unreliable hearsay. In fact nothing of the sort happens. Speaking of their skill, it really is not worth a laugh (here quoting Qianlong). While it is not even a match for the somewhat skilled sorcery of the shamans of the interior (尚不及內地巫師稍有障眼邪法), it is able to fool the stupid.²²⁹

²²⁸ YHGSL 15:8b (QL 57/12/29, 1792-02-09).

²²⁹ YHGSL 15:8a-b.

The comparison with the shamans of the interior in this memorial introduced a theme that would become increasingly prominent in later trials of the oracles. Although this particular report was filed in Chinese, it is clear that by the Chinese term “*wushi 巫師*” the authors were referring to the abilities of shamans. Later Manchu-language memorials and bilingual imperial proclamations in Manchu and Tibetan employed the term “*saman*” or “*kutenpa*” (Ma. *gurdemba*, Tib. *sku rten pa*) in Manchu and Tibetan, respectively, to refer to the human medium who served as the vessel or intermediary for the deity to speak through.²³⁰ The Qing officials stationed in Lhasa in 1792 seem to have felt that there was a similarity between their shamans and Tibetan mediums and that informing Tibetans about the relative inferiority of their shamans—and testing them against the purported skills of the Manchu shamans—would be an effective way of persuading Tibetans to give up their indigenous arts and support the Qing emperor’s efforts to stamp out the oracles.

Qing colonial officials placed the oracles within their own familiar category of “shamans.” But if the oracles were shamans they were at best degenerate shamans whose abilities paled in comparison with those of the superior tradition of the Manchus or the “interior.” This aspect of official thinking about the oracles recalls Homi Bhahba’s theory of “colonial mimicry,” the idea that colonial discourses find ways to portray the subordinate Other as similar yet not quite the same, and that their claim to authority lies in the conviction that the Other is fundamentally incapable of rising to the status of being

²³⁰ See for instance the Manchu-language edict of QL 58/04/19 (1793-5-28) (MWLF 156:0043-0052) and its Tibetan-language translation as the “*Chu glung wang shu*” (水牛年文書) in Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, *Bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim gyu yi phreng ba* vol. 3 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1989), 335-340.

fully the same and thus equal.²³¹ The colonizer notices or establishes some sort of similarity, yet then continually “disavows” it.²³² The subject can “mimic” or “ape” the colonizer, but never fully become assimilated. While Bhabha was primarily thinking of English colonialism in India, the Qianlong court’s “shamanic imperialism,” was very much a variation on this theme. The similarity of the oracles to the “shamans of the interior” (Ma. *dorgi ba i saman*)²³³ meant that the court naturally had a certain expertise in the oracles; such expertise then translated into an obligation to test, rectify, and transform. Moreover, Bhabha notes that what seemed similar could also seem “menacing.”²³⁴ As we have seen in Chapter One, the threat oracles and unregulated divination posed to the stability of the Qing order and the credibility of the Gelukpa served as justification for the imposition of Qing sovereignty.

What seems unique in the Qing case is that Qing officials not only portrayed Tibetan shamans as charlatans, they took an ambiguous position on the underlying value and identity of the superior category, the “shamans of the interior.” By the end of the Qianlong reign, successive Qing rulers had established and codified an elaborate set of shamanic rituals and ritual sites dedicated to the state and banner elite, as well as individual clans, including the Aisin Gioro, the imperial clan. As Rawski notes, over the

²³¹ Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse” *October* 28 (Spring, 1984), 125-133.

²³² *Ibid*, 126.

²³³ MWLF 156:0049.

²³⁴ Bhabha, 132-133.

²³⁵ Nicola Di Cosmo, “Manchu Shamanic Ceremonies at the Qing Court,” in *State and Court Ritual in China*, ed. Joseph McDermott (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press: 1999), 352-398. See also, Rawski, (1998), 240.

course of this codification process, the Qing court had consciously “removed the ecstatic element from all the rituals except the palace evening services.”²³⁶ The court had eliminated rituals involving trance from the formal liturgies for court shamanic rituals.²³⁷ As noted in Chapter One, the Qing Code also proscribed most of these activities among the Han of China proper. According to Donald Sutton, during the early Qing shamanism and specifically spirit possession had come under increasing attack from Neo-Confucian literati in China proper. From the perspective first of literati and subsequently Qing officials, shamanic practices transgressed proper social boundaries and threatened the position of educated Confucian men at the top of the social and ritual hierarchy. Spirit mediums were often female, worked frequently at night, and were generally of low status yet capable of providing ritual services across social classes. Literati attempts to suppress shamanism were infused with the argument that spirit mediums were avaricious charlatans who preyed on the naïve and impressionable.²³⁸ As Qing officials in Tibet and at court honed in on the oracles, their reports included similar language. Fukanggan et al. were therefore comparing the activities of Tibetan oracles to activities of shamans in the “interior” that were either forbidden or at least looked upon with increasing suspicion. It is unclear if Fukanggan had the Manchu shamanic tradition in mind or the activities of Chinese “sorcerers.” But regardless, both had been the focus of a kind of shamanic

²³⁶ Rawski, (1998) 240.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 240.

²³⁸ Donald Sutton, “From Credulity to Scorn Confucians Confront the Spirit Mediums in Late Imperial China,” *Late Imperial China* 21.2 (December 2000): 1-39.

imperialism—regimentation, rectification, and often, eradication, since the early years of the dynasty.²³⁹

The Qianlong court’s assessment of the oracles as examples of the “low tradition” (Ch. 下乘)²⁴⁰ of Tibetan Buddhism would find an echo in the Orientalist scholarship of the late nineteenth century. Their studies of Tibetan religion attributed what they perceived as the degeneration of high, classical Buddhism to the influence of Tibet’s indigenous “shamanist” beliefs.²⁴¹ Since the 1960s, the association of the pre-Buddhist tradition, and Bon in particular with shamanism has been the subject of much contumely. In a recent critique of the application of the label “shamanism” to the religious traditions of Tibet, Zeff Bjerken has argued that the concept of “shamanism” as understood by western Orientalists and later social scientists had no direct equivalent in Tibetan thought.²⁴² Bjerken also makes the argument that although the application of the term “shamanism” to Tibetan religious culture was a novel, outside imposition by Western Tibetologists, their analysis (alternatively pejorative and glowing) has been strongly influenced by polemical arguments *within* the Tibetan tradition.²⁴³ For instance, Chandra Das may have identified Bon as “shamanism,” but his critique was largely based on a reading of Tukwan Chökyi Nyima, the famous Qianlong-period chronicler of Buddhist

²³⁹ A similar process also occurred in Mongolia. The prosecution of shamans in Mongolia, however, began before Qing incorporation and often with Gelukpa assistance. See Elverskog (2006), 118-119.

²⁴⁰ YHGSL 15:8. See further discussion later in this chapter.

²⁴¹ Donald S. Lopez Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 37.

²⁴² Zeff Bjerken, “Exorcising the Illusion of Bon ‘Shamans’: A critical Genealogy of Shamanism in Tibetan Religions” *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 6 (October 2004): 4-69.

²⁴³ Bjerken (2004): 7.

schools.²⁴⁴ The Manchu-language sources permit us to modify Bjerken's argument: Western Orientalists were not the first to apply the label "shaman" to Tibetan religious culture and do so pejoratively in a colonial context.

After dismissing the oracles as but a shadow of their peers elsewhere in the empire, Fukanggan and his associates turned to the actual test they had conducted of the oracles:

Then your servants, in accordance with your instructions, gathered the oracles together and ordered them to perform their conjuring arts in the Jokhang. They all stated that up until the present they had only practiced possession and transmission of the words of deities and that there were no other arts. [We] tested them, ordering them to become possessed. What we observed resembled what we had seen and heard previously. We examined them by posing one or two questions about what kind of woes Tibet (藏) might soon face. Each oracle, speaking for their deity, said nothing more than that there will be an outbreak of smallpox as a result of the incoming spring winds. Given that the Tibetans (番民) fear smallpox more than anything else, at first we did not take [the oracles] seriously. Yet just a little more than ten days after the prophecy, over two hundred Tibetans came down with the pox. This was thus a small proof of their abilities.

In conclusion, these sorts of absurd and preposterous matters are in principle impossible to believe in. Unfortunately, the inborn nature of both the Tibetan (唐古忒) clergy and laypeople is extraordinarily stupid. To the end of their days they will worship the Buddha and recite their sutras, thinking of nothing but what benefits the Buddha realm (福田). Although one can appeal to them to consider the higher way (上乘) and not follow those who speak empty gibberish, this can ultimately not be achieved, and, as if cast in iron, their habits will continue on. It is difficult to quickly break through their muddled perplexity.²⁴⁵

The forceful official boilerplate about the "preposterous" claims of the oracles thus begins to feel a bit hollow by the end of the letter. The test of the oracles seems to have

²⁴⁴ Bjerken (2004): 12-13.

²⁴⁵ YHGSL 15:8b-9a.

left Fukanggan and his fellow officials not fully persuaded that they were without abilities, and if anything may have had the opposite effect. Seen in this light, much of the letter seems like a carefully calibrated attempt to convey the importance of reconciling the emperor to a continued role for the oracles. Fukanggan's comment about the previous widespread credibility of imperially-approved and licensed kūtuktu seems intended to persuade the emperor that the pre-Gurkha War status quo had been working well enough to justify its continuation. Moreover, the general ultimately concurred with the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu that the oracles were essential to the process of locating candidate children:

Now our Enlightened Holy Lord promotes the Yellow Teachings and has issued a Golden Urn to be held at the Jokhang. All those incarnations identified by the chökyong, shall ultimately, as a rule, be selected using the urn lottery. Thus [we] will not only shore up the faith of the Tibetans (番民) but also be able to covertly eliminate the evils of the existing practice of collaborating to selfishly transmit [tülkuhood] among themselves (彼此授意私相傳襲之弊). This is a good law with a profound intent. Although reincarnations recognized by the chökyong are not in the slightest believable, if some [candidates] are not identified by the chökyong, not only will there be no basis for writing names on the lots and no way of putting the lots into the urn, but [we] also fear that the many disciples and followers of the reincarnation will individually presume to make identifications, abuses will flourish, and the results will be even more unreliable. There are, after all, only four chökyong and the [candidates] whom they identify are not numerous...

Now the exclusive use of the imperially-decreed Golden Urn lottery means that not only will [those candidates] indicated by the oracles be credible, but when lots are pulled from the urn, and the robes and bowl are inherited (i.e. the child is enthroned as the lama reincarnate), the clergy and laity will be naturally persuaded and in agreement, and the abuses of the past will be eliminated.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ YHGSL 15:0a-9b.

Before the emperor received the report quoted at length above, he had evidently dispatched several other missives to Fukanggan that the general felt obliged to address. In particular, the emperor had again requested the general's opinion on the possibility of banning the oracles and expressed hope that several searches for the reincarnations of kūtuktu from the Chamdo region of Kham could be resolved using the new Golden Urn law. Fukanggan's response, penned on February 18, 1793 (QL 58/01/08) just a week after the long report quoted above, built on several of his prior arguments. Most importantly the general continued his attempt to dispel imperial misunderstandings about the oracles by distinguishing between rumors and the actual observed practices. Fukanggan argued that the oracles had not claimed the ability to stab themselves or swallow knives—an assertion that the Throne had fixated on previously. He also explained that the mediums themselves were reincarnations who had been carefully vetted by traditional means before being recognized.²⁴⁷ Fukanggan's strategy seems to be to distract the emperor from the oracles by downplaying their strangeness or purported magical powers: "They are no match for the shamans of the interior. Do not exaggerate the mysteriousness of what they say, because in fact there is no such things."²⁴⁸ The emperor, however, was less than satisfied. Next to Fukanggan's closing statement that only the continued inclusion of the oracles would satisfy the local people, Qianlong penned in the margins with evident exasperation, "This too is little more than an expedient!"²⁴⁹

With regards to the Chamdo reincarnations, Fukanggan cautioned against subjecting them to the new law. He noted that in the history of these lineages there

²⁴⁷ YHGSL 15:11a-b.

²⁴⁸ YHGSL 15:11a-b.

²⁴⁹ YHGSL 15:11b.

existed no indigenous precedent for seeking out divinations from either the oracles or the Dalai Lama or other authorities in Ü and Tsang. Thus, he argued that forcing the names of the candidates to be dispatched to Lhasa to be subject to the urn lottery would, “I fear, be more than what the Tibetan mood can accept.”²⁵⁰ Fukanggan seems to have been more aware both of the diversity of traditions concerning locating reincarnations, but also the historical tensions between outlying Tibetan regions and the Dalai Lama’s administration in Lhasa. Still, Fukanggan noted that if disciples of the kūtuktu in question heard about the Golden Urn and wished to have their candidates confirmed using the lottery they would not be refused.²⁵¹

The urn arrived in Lhasa on January 2, 1793 (QL 57/11/20) and was immediately installed in the Jokhang temple under the supervision of the Dalai Lama.²⁵² Having promised on March 15, 1793, (QL58/02/04) to “test out the lottery” on some “insignificant reincarnations” at the earliest possible opportunity, on March 24, 1793 (QL 57/02/13), Fukanggan reported that no less than five different searches had been subjected to the Golden Urn Lottery in a single day.²⁵³ The event established a number of important precedents, the least of which was a concrete format, cast, and procedure for conducting the ritual. The lotteries were held in the Jokhang cathedral and preceded by a ceremony of sutra recitation led by the Jirung Kūtuktu (also known as the Tatsak Rinpoché, the regent and day-to-day chief administrator of the Ganden Podrang

²⁵⁰ YHGSL 15:11b-12a. One wonders if there is not a second subtext here: that local Tibetans in Chamdo not only might not accept Qing interference in this matter, but that they were resistant to oversight by Tibetan authorities in Lhasa as well.

²⁵¹ YHGSL 15:12a.

²⁵² *Huibian* 3:794.

²⁵³ YHGSL 15:9b; 15:30b-31b (#9).

government) before the image of Tsongkhaba. “On the twenty-first day of the second month, the Dalai Lama descended from the mountain to the Jokhang. Your servants went in person to supervise as the lots were written and placed in the urn. The lots were drawn jointly.”²⁵⁴ Although the last clause does not state explicitly who drew the lots, it is most likely that the Dalai Lama drew the lots. As noted above, Fukanggan had previously advised that the Dalai Lama should draw the lot.²⁵⁵ When in later editions of the Golden Urn ritual the ambans personally drew the lots, this was always explicitly stated in the follow-up report.²⁵⁶

A second precedent set by these lotteries was application of the Golden Urn statute to relatively insignificant reincarnation lineages (whom Fukanggan referred to as “not-great kūtuktu” 非大呼圖克圖). Furthermore, these were all lineages that had never previously had an obligation to report their reincarnations to the Lifanyuan. Only one of the five reincarnations had the status of “kūtuktu,” and even this lineage, according to Fukanggan, had historically been outside the purview of the Lifanyuan. The implication of this precedent was profound: It demonstrated that the Golden Urn could be used to extend imperial oversight over a category of local elites that had historically eluded the dynasty. Observing that the “mood of the audience was deeply moved and heartily enamored with this edict which their hearts are inclined to embrace,” Fukanggan wrote,

²⁵⁴ YHGSL 15:31a.

²⁵⁵ There is unfortunately no reference in Démo Kūtuktu’s biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama to this event.

²⁵⁶ See, for instance, the identification of othe Phagpa Lha (Ma. Pakbala kūktuktu) in 1796 (MWLF 162:2467-2474, JQ 01/08/10, 1796-9-10).

“from now on all reincarnations large and small, shall be identified by lottery according to the manner of this [trial].”²⁵⁷

The first test runs of the Golden Urn were pivotal for two further reasons. First, all five of the reincarnation lineages in question had traditionally sought out the counsel of the Dalai Lama or Panchen Lama in making the final identification, yet none of them had a history of seeking out divinations from the oracles.²⁵⁸ The use of the Golden Urn in these five cases thus conveyed the message that the court intended the Golden Urn to supersede not only the oracles but also the divination authority of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama. Second, the native places of the five reincarnations subjected to the Golden Urn were also not without consequence.

The first reincarnate lineage on Fukanggan’s list was the Sumpa Kūtuktu, who hailed from the jurisdiction of the Xining amban. Coincidentally, on the same day that Fukanggan submitted his memorial reporting the selections, the emperor dispatched a court letter to Tekšin, the Xining amban requesting the amban’s advice on whether it would be “more frugal” (Ma. *malhūšame*) to have the kūtuktu (plural) of that jurisdiction identified in Lhasa or Beijing.²⁵⁹ Of course, this decision was about more than just frugality. The statute on the Golden Urn had ethnic undertones with geopolitical implications. In the *Discourse on Lamas*, Qianlong had legislated that the urn at Yonghegong was intended for use by kūtuktus from Mongolia while the urn in Lhasa for kūtuktus of Tibetan regions. But he had not considered the status of kūtuktus from the jurisdiction of the Xining amban. This jurisdiction was home to a mixed population of

²⁵⁷ YHGSL 15:31a-b.

²⁵⁸ YHGSL 15:30a.

²⁵⁹ YHGSL 15:33-36.

Mongols and Tibetans that could be conceived of from the perspective of indigenous historical memories both as the heartland of the Khoshot khanate of Gurshi Khan and as the northeastern province of “Greater Tibet”—Amdo. General Fukanggan’s decision, therefore, to include the Sumpa Kūtuktu in the ritual set a precedent that not only preempted any decision that the Xining amban might come to, but also made a de facto claim about the inclusion of the Qinghai Mongols within the sphere of influence of the Dalai Lama’s government in Lhasa.²⁶⁰ The identification of the Sumpa kūtuktu’s reincarnation using the Golden Urn could thus be understood as simultaneously setting a precedent for both the emperor’s control over Tibet and Lhasa’s authority over Amdo.²⁶¹

The other four lineages identified on day one of the Golden Urn hailed from the Khorchin (科爾沁) of Inner Mongolia. In contrast to the case of the Sumpa Kūtuktu, the identification of the reincarnations of the lamas from Khorchin was a kind of “anti-precedent.” As subsequent generations of Mongolian reincarnations would be confirmed using the urn at Yonghegong, this moment was also symbolic of the gradual diminishment of the Dalai Lama’s authority to personally supervise his fellow Gelukpa lamas in Mongolia.

Less than two weeks after overseeing the trial-run of the Golden Urn statute, Fukanggan took his final leave of the Eighth Dalai Lama and departed Lhasa on the road to Sichuan. In his last report from Lhasa, Fukanggan informed the emperor that during his final meeting with the Dalai Lama and a large assembly of Tibetan officials both lay

²⁶⁰ There is perhaps a small irony here in that the reincarnation of the Sumpa Khenpo Yeshe Paljor (1704-1788), an influential local historian who contributed to the emergence of a unique identity for the Amdo region and was locally famous for his distaste of the Qing dynasty, would be the first rebirth recognized using the urn ritual!

²⁶¹ One can also imagine, then, that from the perspective of the Tibetan government in Lhasa, the establishment of the statute on the Golden Urn was not without its advantages.

and clergy, he had presented the complete set of new regulations for the reform of the Tibetan administration in a Tibetan translation (“唐古特字”) and explained them point by point. Most likely this reference is to a version of the *Imperially-Sanctioned Twenty-nine Articles of Reconstruction*, perhaps the copy that was stored in the Jokhang temple.²⁶² The general and his associate officials assessed their accomplishments as follows:

[Your servants] observe that the inborn nature of the Tibetans of Tibet have never in the slightest been regulated... Respectfully obeying the imperial instructions, [your servants] observed the state of the Tibetans, promulgated statutes, and gradually displaced their entrenched habits. Our reforms were instituted without aggravating or worrying [the Tibetans], and we legislated only what was possible to implement...Recently the Tibetans have absolutely changed their minds concerning their degenerate customs. There is now no major administrative issue about which the Dalai Lama will not inform your servant Heliyen, and officials from the kalön on down all acknowledge and respect the law.²⁶³

Their stated concern with legislating within a band of what they perceived would be tolerated by their Tibetan counterparts seems well born out by the record of communications concerning the early implementation of the Golden Urn statute. The Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu and Fukanggan took actions that deflected early efforts by Qianlong (and perhaps other officials in Beijing) to fully eliminate the oracles from the process of identifying reincarnations. The Tibetan language version of the ritual Fukanggan presented to the Dalai Lama and assembled Tibetan dignitaries included, therefore, notification that the oracles would continue to play an essential part in the

²⁶² See the discussion of different editions of the *Twenty-nine Articles* in Liao Zugui, Li Yongchang, Li Pengnian, “*Qinding zangnei shanhou zhangcheng ershijiutiao*” banben kaolie (Philological research on the “Twenty-nine articles of Reconstruction”) (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2006).

²⁶³ *Huibian*, 821-822 (QL 58/02/24, 1793-4-4). The last sentence: “進來番民疲玩積習頗絕改觀，達賴喇嘛遇有公事無不向臣和琳告知，而噶布倫以下人等亦皆各知畏法。”

search and recognition process.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, the Qing officials' complex descriptions of their investigations of the Tibetan oracles remind us that Qing official skepticism and hostility to Tibetan divination technologies should be understood as an expression not of a blanket disbelief in divination, but of a prejudice against indigenous technologies that existed in a seemingly unregulated and corrupt system.

Fukanggan also recorded the Dalai Lama as responding to the presentation of the new regulations as follows:

As for the regions of Ü and Tsang that are united under me, I shall not handle matters by myself. [Instead] I will trouble the Heaven heart of the great emperor and belabor the great ministers-who are his representatives, to provide advice. I and the other clergy and laity all share unsurpassable gratitude for the [emperor's] grace. Henceforth we will assiduously preserve the regulations, and manage every matter together with the resident ministers.²⁶⁵

Recall, however, from Chapter One that the Démo Kūtuktu, author of the *Biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama*, who witnessed these events mentioned no such power sharing arrangement or even the *Twenty-Nine Articles* in his account of Fukanggan's departure. But both accounts share an atmosphere of congeniality that perhaps attests to the abilities of Fukanggan and Tibetan elites to diffuse tensions that may have arisen from imperial imperatives to assert authority over the Tibetan government. Moreover, just days after Fukanggan's departure, the Dalai Lama's chronicler noted how the prelate had, "in accordance with custom, propitiated the Lamo chökyong, presenting him with many

²⁶⁴ The Tibetan-language *wang shu'i deb* (Ch. 《水牛年文書》), reproduced in Liao Zugui et. al. (2006), 15. Of the two versions of the *Twenty-nine Articles* that exist, the version stored at the Jokhang temple allows the oracles, but still accuses them of corruption. A later version of this text that had been held in the archives of the Ganden Podrang government, makes no mention of the possible corruption. See reproduction of this document in Liao Zugui et. al. (2006), 16.

²⁶⁵ *Huibian* 821.

offerings of the faith. The protector, with unsurpassed sincerity, again agreed to promote the success of all affairs.”²⁶⁶ The remaining Qing officials in Lhasa, most importantly Heliyen, the chief amban, would soon have a very different agenda.

Heliyen and the Prosecution of the Oracles

Fukanggan’s report concerning the investigation of the oracles arrived at court at the same time as the Tüsiyetü Khan scandal broke. The emperor was greatly disappointed with both the outcome of the investigation and the manner in which it had been conducted. Qianlong expressed his displeasure by adding caustic interlinear comments directly on Fukanggan’s memorial. Next to the general’s description of having asked the oracles to make general predictions about potential afflictions that might affect the Tibetan people, the emperor scribbled, “You shouldn’t have asked about this matter!”²⁶⁷ Asking open-ended questions was clearly not the way to entrap the oracles. As for the prediction concerning the outbreak of smallpox, the emperor observed that since such outbreaks occurred every year when the weather turned from winter to spring, “How can this possibly constitute an unusual prediction?”²⁶⁸ In a separate letter the emperor continued to dress down Fukanggan:

The way you have handled things is really not suitable. Your knowledge of these matters is still rather crude. With regards to the matter of the oracles, the Tibetans have governed themselves for a long time and therefore it is difficult to break through [their accumulated malpractices] in just one go... Having brought everyone together, how could you not

²⁶⁶ *Biography of Eighth Dalai Lama*, 210-kha-05.

²⁶⁷ YHGSL 15:9a.

²⁶⁸ YHGSL 15:84a.

test [the oracles] by requiring them to swallow swords or cut their own flesh? ... You should present difficult tests!²⁶⁹

In contrast to his initial instructions in January, 1793 (QL 57/11/29), it is clear that in March the emperor was interested in testing the oracles not out of curiosity about their potential utility, but in order to demonstrate to the Tibetans and Mongols that their abilities and claims were completely fraudulent.

Just one day after instructing Fukanggan, who the court believed might have already departed Tibet, to conduct further trials of the oracles, Qianlong sent further instructions to Heliyen, who continued to serve in Lhasa as chief amban, ordering him to stamp out the oracles and interrogate the Dalai Lama concerning the search for the reincarnation of the Erdeni Pandida kūtuktu. The departure of Fukanggan from Tibet thus coincided with a turn towards a much more direct confrontation of Tibetan authorities. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, it was the letter to Heliyen on March 16, 1793 (QL 58/02/05) and a subsequent letter posted three days later that marked the turning point in the Throne's willingness to tolerate the oracles and the opening of a concerted campaign to discredit both the oracles and the Dalai Lama.²⁷⁰ The importance of this policy shift was made evident by the fact that the emperor demanded the transmission of these instructions to Tibet at the extraordinary speed of six hundred *li* (approximately 200 miles) per day. These letters also marked the shift of communications concerning implementation of the Golden Urn statute and other matters concerning the investigation of the Dalai Lama back into being the sole provenance of the Manchu language.

²⁶⁹ YHGSL 15:70a. Qianlong's letter to Fukanggan, dated QL 58/02/04, is quoted in Fukanggan's memorial dated QL 58/03/13 (1793-4-23): “所辦殊屬未當，尚且識見偏鄙。吹忠降神一事，惟番俗相治日久，一時驟難革除。”

²⁷⁰ MWJXD 23:194-199.

The emperor's officials now understood that the Throne was demanding multiple tests in front of large audiences. On April 23, 1793, having already decamped Tibet for Sichuan, Fukanggan reported that the first tests of the Golden Urn (involving the reincarnations from Xining and Khorchin) had been designed in a manner to not only promote the use of the Urn, but also to expose the “wild talk” of the oracles.²⁷¹ The oracles were initially asked to identify who the winning candidates would be. Their fraudulence was demonstrated, first, when they all returned different answers, and second, when none of their answers corresponded with the results of the lottery. Fukanggan explained that this test had been conducted before an “audience of ten thousand.”²⁷² Fukanggan admitted, however, that the results were mixed: the moment the mediums entered the trance, “there were no people who did not bow or pray with utmost respect.”²⁷³ But the emperor seemed placated by the knowledge that Heliyen would be continuing the trials, noting, “There are yet other methods by which to deal with this matter. No need for worry.”²⁷⁴

With Fukanggan gone, the task of eliminating the oracles fell to Heliyen, who, as we have seen in Chapter One, arrived in Tibet with an agenda already quite different than the general. In the edict appointing him to the post in Lhasa, Qianlong implicitly noted that Heliyen was the first amban to serve in a capacity “equal” (平等) to the Dalai Lama

²⁷¹ YHGSL 15: 70a.

²⁷² YHGSL 15:70b.

²⁷³ YHGSL 15:70b.

²⁷⁴ YHGSL 15:70b.

and therefore had responsibility to “forcefully rectify the inveterate habits of Tibet.”²⁷⁵ Heliyen concurred with the emperor’s focus on the oracles, noting how the dynasty had largely overlooked the significance of the oracles in Tibetan political and religious affairs. He memorialized, “It is well-known that the Dalai Lama is a leading person of the Yellow Teachings. But the Lamo Chökyong also reincarnates and has done many corrupt deeds that are revealed when people are asked straight on. Yet people not only do not consider him a leading figure, but also ignore his crimes.”²⁷⁶

Heliyen submitted the results of his investigations to the court on April 25, 1793. In contrast to the memorials of which Fukanggan was the lead author, Heliyen’s memorials are less summary assessments of the events but rather detailed transcripts of the proceedings. Heliyen’s memorials and the “testaments” and “confessions” attached to them, recreated the exact dialog between the ambans, the Dalai Lama, and the oracles, as well as the spontaneous responses of onlookers, establishing an atmosphere of verisimilitude that Qianlong and his capital officials evidently expected. Qianlong had originally provided Heliyen with specific questions and scripts designed to entrap the Dalai Lama and the oracles.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ *Qingshi liezhuan* (《清史列傳》) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 2230-2234: “和琳平素敬佛，此次到藏，見達賴、班禪，自必照常瞻禮。其辦事原與達賴、班禪平等，應加義整飭，力矯從前積習。” See also the similar instructions in the edict of QL 58/04R/24 (1793-6-13), in *Qing Gaozong chun huangdi shilu* (“Veritable Records of the Qianlong reign”) fascicle 1403, p. 852a. This edict instructs Heliyen that, since he should now consider himself an equal of the Dalai Lama, he should prostrate only before the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama and not other Tibetan officials. Evidently, Heliyen, who had arrived in Tibet shortly before this edict was issued, interpreted “equal” as meaning he no longer needed to prostrate before the Dalai Lama. See further discussion in Chapter One.

²⁷⁶ Manchu-language memorial, QL 58/03/15, YHGSL 15:86a.

²⁷⁷ MWJXD 23:194-199.

Heliyen began his accounts by providing a new transcript of the first trial that had originally been conducted jointly with Fukanggan. This time Heliyen was careful to point out that before “a mass of monks and laypeople that had been gathered in the Jokhang temple,”²⁷⁸ they had in fact demanded that the four oracles stab themselves. When the oracles refused, the Qing officials rhetorically entrapped them: “If the deities really descend into your body, then naturally you should invisibly be receiving their support. Why then do you still fear the blade of the sword?”²⁷⁹ This point had the desired affect on both the oracles and the onlookers: “The oracles were thus obstructed and fell silent, their expression disordered. And the surrounding monks and laypeople were now only half believing.”²⁸⁰ Thus, Heliyen presented the prior test as having had a greater impact than Fukanggan originally had suggested.

Shortly after receiving instructions to conduct further tests and just a day after Fukanggan had departed, Heliyen again gathered all four oracles in the Jokhang cathedral and asked them to “perform their arts” (令其各將法術演試) before an audience that included the Dalai Lama, the Jirung Kūtuktu (Tatsak Rinpoche), the Démo Kūtuktu, and a crowd of other prominent lamas and other secular Tibetan leaders. He informed the mediums that:

The interior also has people similar to you who are able to serve as mediums and make predictions about the future trials and tribulations of the people. They are all able to swallow knives and cut off pieces of flesh and in doing so demonstrate their magical powers. Of course these are nothing more than small tricks of illusion. Yet even so officials forbid

²⁷⁸ Memorial, QL 58/03/15 (1793/04/25) (rescript on QL 58/04/19), YHGSL 15:83b.

²⁷⁹ YHGSL 15:83b-84a: “臣等詰以神果降體自必暗裡扶持。豈復畏懼刀劍。”

²⁸⁰ YHGSL 15:84a: “吹忠等義阻語塞，神色支離。而查看在旁之僧俗人等半信半疑。”

these activities. And these [oracles] are without a doubt deluding the people in a similar fashion. Their crimes must be heavily punished!²⁸¹

Having concluded his speech, Heliyen wrote that he promptly handed out knives to the oracles. Where Fukanggan had primarily been testing the oracles against prior claims about the abilities of Tibetan oracles, Heliyen was more explicitly testing them against a catalog of skills possessed by shamans from the interior of the empire and making a justification for the extension of imperial law. Given the way Heliyen framed his challenge by pointing out that even shamans in the interior, skilled as they might be, faced punishment, it should come as no surprise that the oracles “threw themselves to the ground in fear, pleading that “the knives and swords are merely tools for attracting people. We do not dare make a game of our lives!” Having “truly frightened them,” Heliyen continued to ensnare the oracles: “I have heard that previously, when speaking on behalf the deity that has descended [to you], you wildly slash with your knives at onlookers. Why are you able to stab others when you cannot stab yourselves?” The oracles fell into the amban’s trap: “We have heard that among previous generations of oracles there were those who could stab themselves, and perhaps some, when they were truly possessed were able to act like that. However, we are truly not able to do this.” Heliyen then sprung the rhetorical trap: “Then you not only possess no [magical] arts but cannot even accomplish spirit possession! How then can you make such rash predictions?”²⁸²

Heliyen reported to the emperor that by the end of this exchange, not only had the oracles provided a public admission that they “truly possessed no methods or arts and that everything relied on empty words,” but that the onlookers, “were laughing behind their

²⁸¹ YHGSL 15:84a-84b.

²⁸² YHGSL 15:84b.

hands.”²⁸³ With the indigenous technology thus thoroughly discredited, Heliyen reported that, “the fairness and credibility of the imperially-sanctioned Golden Urn” would be widely accepted. Heliyen placed the Dalai Lama on record as having been convinced by the trial. He quoted the Dalai Lama as stating, “I have always believed in the truth of the oracles, yet today I have finally learned that they are not trustworthy.”²⁸⁴ Heliyen requested that the Eighth Dalai Lama prepare a proclamation on this matter.²⁸⁵ The amban then optimistically concluded his memorial with the opinion that although Tibetans should be permitted to continue to seek out the oracles for divinations concerning other issues, the use of the oracles to identify reincarnations (*hūbilgan*) could be permanently forbidden without much opposition.

With regards to the Erdeni Bandida case, the emperor provided Heliyen with an even more detailed script to follow should the Dalai Lama prove less than forthcoming. The fact that one of the emperor’s first official utterances regarding this case took the form of a court letter to Heliyen (dated QL 58/02/05, 1793-03-16), demonstrates not only the emperor’s interest in getting to the bottom of how the son of the khan had been identified as one of the leading reincarnations of outer Mongolia, but also his expectation that the prosecution of the case and resolution of the search using the Golden Urn at Yonghegong would help persuade Tibetan Buddhists of the advantages of the new procedure and the underlying fairness of the new law.

²⁸³ YGHSL 15:84b.

²⁸⁴ YHGSL 15:84b.

²⁸⁵ YHGSL 15:84b.

Tibetan Buddhists in Tibet and Mongolia were not, however, the only audience. The documentation of both the trials of the oracles and subsequent interrogations of the steward, Nawangdasi, the Tüsiyetü Khan, the Dalai Lama, and the medium of the Lamo Chökyong oracle first circulated privately between Qing officials in Lhasa and at court. The production of these documents played an even more important role in persuading Qing officials and the Throne that their suspicions were justified and that their reforms were legitimate and would be broadly supported by both Tibetan and Mongol elites and their subjects. As we shall see in the following examination of the exchange of letters between Heliyen, the Grand Council, and the emperor, the court's constant concern with assessing the mood of the Tibetans and the sentiments of leading Tibetans such as the Dalai Lama and the Jirung Kūtuktu is evidence of how their own feelings about the legitimacy of their efforts hinged on the response of the Tibetans. Moreover, the intensive concern with understanding the oracles and the local sentiments was a reflection of how little the late Qianlong court still knew about Tibetan affairs in general and especially those of central Tibet. Elliot Sperling's short study of the visit to the Qianlong court in 1792 by a lay official of the Tibetan government, the kalön Doring Pandita, amplifies this point. In his autobiography, Doring Pandita observed that Qing officials in Beijing had never seen Tibetan aristocrats before and expressed great curiosity about his costume and jewelry.²⁸⁶ The presence of Tibetan laypeople at court and their status as subjects of the Qing was still a novelty in 1792 despite a relationship with Tibetan Buddhists that stretched back to the early years of the dynasty prior to its conquest of the Ming. In this light, Qianlong's early requests to Fukanggan and Heliyen to test the oracles can be

²⁸⁶ Elliot Sperling, "Awe and Submission: A Tibetan Aristocrat at the Court of Qianlong," *The International History Review* 20, no. 2 (June 1998): 329.

understood as expressions of not only hostility, but also a genuine need to acquire more credible information about their abilities, their influence on Tibetan affairs, and their potential to remain part of the recognition process.

The prominent place that the comparison with shamans played in Fukanggan and Heliyen's presentation of their tests of the Tibetan mediums is also more explicable when the need to persuade the home audience is taken into consideration. Tested against a catalog of skills drawn from the Manchu shamanic tradition, the Tibetan oracles could easily be placed at a low rung in the hierarchy of divination technologies known to the court. Yet, as we will see in the discussion to follow in section three, the analogy to the shamanic tradition of the Manchus papered over perhaps too easily fundamental differences between Tibetan and Manchu understandings of the work of spirit mediums: the "oracles as false shamans" trope was useful for delegitimizing the oracles before a home audience, but less intelligible from a Tibetan perspective.

In addition to contrasting Tibetan divination technologies unfavorably with Manchu ones, another key strategy employed by Qing officials to undermine Gelukpa hierarchs and the oracles was to insinuate that these monks were fundamentally motivated by avarice and that the maintenance of their institutions—either the corporate estates of their reincarnate lineages, their monasteries, or schools more generally—had led them to immoral or at the very least problematic entanglements with noble patrons and lay support communities. As we have seen already in the introduction, where the interrogation of Nawangdasi highlighted the manner in which the steward had seemingly compromised his principles in the interest of financial expediency, Qing interrogators lingered on the accounts of gift-exchange and alms-seeking in order to insinuate

corruption or bribery. That bureaucrats of the Hešen-dominated late Qianlong court, an administration already infamous for its opulent gift culture and dogged by scandal and accusations of venality and bribery, would raise similar accusations against the Geluk establishment in Tibet and Mongolia is hardly remarkable.²⁸⁷ Rather the hunt for corruption (*Ma. jemden*) within the Gelukpa school was yet another reflection of the degree to which the perceived crisis of official malfeasance had become the overriding concern of the Qing officials in the 1790s.²⁸⁸

The amban Heliyen's reconstruction of his interviews with the Dalai Lama and the Lamo Chökyong oracle, as well as the transcripts of the testimony of these figures appended to his memorial, focused on the trail of gifts (*Ma. belek*, Ch. 伯勒克) presented by the steward. Ultimately Heliyen seems to have decided that the lists of gifts received by the Lamo oracle and the Dalai Lama provided the clearest evidence of corruption, since neither the Dalai Lama nor the oracle could ever be brought to state directly that the steward had told them to sanction the child of the Tüsiyetü khan as the next Erdeni Bandida Kütuktu. Qianlong himself had demanded such an explicit statement when he first wrote about the case to Heliyen: "Only after the Dalai Lama himself has definitively said that it was the idea of the steward Nawangdasi will it be possible to punish the

²⁸⁷ For a study of one of the main corruption scandals that rocked the Qianlong court see Elif Akcetin's study of the embezzlement of the famine relief funds in northwest China in 1781: Elif Akcetin, "Corruption at the Frontier: The Gansu Fraud Scandal" PhD Dissertation, University of Washington, 2007.

²⁸⁸ For a summary of the discourses surrounding the corruption crisis of the Qianlong court, see: David Nivison, "Ho-shen and His Accusers: Ideology and Political Behavior in the 18th Century," in *Confucianism in Action*, ed. David S. Nivison et al (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959), 209-243. One might also wonder if the reason that Hešen and his brother Heliyen were so keen on pursuing corruption in Tibet was to deflect attention from their own activities.

steward.”²⁸⁹ In order to arrive at such a statement, Qianlong provided Heliyen with the following script for the cross-examination of the prelate:

Heliyen must meet in person with the Dalai Lama and ask him what is true. If the Dalai Lama spits out the truth, immediately and speedily memorialize what he hears. If the Dalai Lama does not report the truth, Heliyen should elucidate the Dalai Lama by inquiring, “This matter was definitely the idea of the steward Nawangdasi and since it has absolutely no connection to the Dalai Lama, certainly no harm can come to the Dalai Lama if he reports the truth. Besides, how can this be disguised with lies if the steward is currently being interrogated in the capital? After the steward has spoken, there will be even greater obstacles before the Dalai Lama!”

If the Dalai Lama is still not forthcoming with the truth, Heliyen should, according to my words, thoroughly interrogate the Dalai Lama saying, “Among the Buddhist sutras there is the teaching/way called, ‘jeodun barihū ubadis.’ When one recites with conviction this dharani, the air will certainly change, and by the power of the dharani a dream/trance will occur. Ordinary people will know nothing of the [significance] of the dream. [Those] who understand their own dreams when they enter a trance with the power of the dharani, are able to clearly know the matters of other people in their dreams. In this there are three levels of ‘hūmhatu air/breath attainment.’ (The superior level is that of those who are able to know things [in advance]). In my opinion, does the Dalai lama’s talent rises to this superior level? If his capabilities do not rise to this level, how could he know that the son of Cedendorji is the only reincarnation of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu?” After he hears this, the Dalai Lama with certainly reveal the truth.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ MWJXD 23:198 (QL 58/02/05, 1793-3-16).

²⁹⁰ MWJXD 23:196-197. This court letter is a draft. Underlining indicates Qianlong’s additions to the draft. The passage in parentheses indicates a phrase that was crossed out. The original text is as follows: “dalai lama aika yargiyan babe alarakū oci, Heliyen uthai Dalai Lama de ere baita urunakū šangjoTiba Nawangdasi i gūnin hono Dalai Lama de dalji akū. Dalai Lama yargiyan babe alaci umai hūwanggiyarakū. te aika holtome miyamišaci, gemun hecen de šangoTiba de fonjime bi. šangjoTiba gisurehe manggi, elemangga Dalai Lama de ambula goicuka babi seme neileme ulbibufi Dalai Lama de fonjikini. Dalai Lama aika kemuni yargiyan babe tuciburakū oci Heliyen mini hese uthai fuchi nomun de jeodun barihū ubadis sere doro bi urunakū ereX nomun tarni be hūlame urebumē gūnime, sukdun be forgošome, tarni hūsun de teni uthaiX tulgin tolgišambi. an i niyalma tolgin tolgišara de umai tolgin ojoro be sarkū. Tarni i hūsun de tolgišara de, beye tolgin tolgišara be same, tolgin i dorgide inu weri baita be iletu seme mutembi. erei dorgi hūmhatu sukdun jafara ilan jergi bi. X(baita be same muterengge uju jergi) mini gūnin de Dalai Lama i bengsen uju jergi de isinaheo bengsen ede isinahakū oci, ainahai cedendorji i jui be teile erdeni bandida kūtuktu i hūbilgan inu babe same mutembini seme dalai lama be mohobume fonjiha manggi gūnici Dalai Lama urunakū yargiyan babe tucibumbi.”

These instructions reveal that in addition to advising Heliyen to adopt the classic interrogation technique of threatening the subject with the incriminating testimony of an accomplice (in this case the steward Nawangdasi), the emperor was also prepared to reach for a highly technical argument based on a reading of a specific Tibetan Buddhist text. The emperor believed that such a move would force the Dalai Lama to admit that he possessed no ability to make the kind of difficult divination required to identify the rebirth of powerful Buddhist adept.

Heliyen's report to the emperor notes no such recourse to technical discussions of divination abilities. To the contrary, the amban smugly reported that he had called on the Dalai Lama in the Potala Palace and taken advantage of a "casual conversation to discuss the [Dalai Lama's] livelihood and the amount of gifts received from the various *aiman*."²⁹¹ He then made circuitous inquiries about the specifics of Erdeni Bandida case. The amban reported that on three different occasions the steward and the chamberlain presented gifts to the Dalai Lama and that the latter had freely admitted that he had instructed Nawangdasi to seek out divinations from the Lamo oracle. But in neither his primary, Manchu-language memorial recounting the interview nor the Chinese-language transcript of the interview attached to the memorial, did Heliyen record the Dalai Lama as admitting to having received any specific request to identify the son of the Tüsiyetü khan.²⁹² After detailing for the amban a long list of gifts he had received from Nawangdasi when he approved the Lamo oracle's identification of the Tüsiyetü Khan's son, the Dalai Lama stated, "We have always accepted all the gifts offered without regard

²⁹¹ YHGSL 15:89a. "*Aiman*" in this context most likely refers to outer/Khalkha Mongols.

²⁹² YHGSL 15:86a-90a (Heliyen's Manchu-language report of QL 58/03/15). The "Transcript of the Dalai Lama's Answers" (達賴喇嘛回覆單) can be found both in YHGSL 15: 270a-271a and MWLF 156:1384-1386.

to amount. When we receive things we make bestowals in return that reflect the value of the original gifts. The Tüsiyetü Khan never made any entreaties, nor did Nawangdasi ever beg for my help.”²⁹³ Despite this denial, Heliyen and the emperor seized on the record of gifts received (and elided the Dalai Lama attestation that he had bestowed gifts in return) as evidence that the Dalai Lama had been bribed.

The interrogation of the Lamo oracle presented further complications. First, the medium (Ma. *gurdemba*, Ch. 古爾丹巴, Tib. *sku rten pa*) refused outright to answer questions, claiming that, “When possessed by the deity, I cannot clearly remember anything that I say. I beg, therefore, that you ask my assistant (Ma. *nirba*, Ch. 業爾巴, Tib. *gnyer pa*) Döndrup Dorjé.”²⁹⁴ Next, Heliyen reported that the assistant also repeatedly refused to talk and only did so when he was “frightened by the prospect of being tortured.”²⁹⁵ Despite the initial intransigence, the account of the steward Nawangdasi’s visit to central Tibet in Döndrup Dorjé’s deposition corresponds closely with the presentation of events provided by the Dalai Lama and the original deposition of Nawangdasi taken in Beijing and forwarded to Heliyen in Lhasa. The similarities should

²⁹³ MWLF 156:1385-1386. “向來遞伯勒克的無論多少我們俱是收。受回時，酌給物件，酬發答其實。圖舍圖罕並未向我求情。納網達什亦實在並未求過我。” On the occasion of the confirmation of the selection by the Dalai Lama, the steward presented one thousand *liang* of silver, for which he accepted, on behalf of the estate of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu, eighteen *juan* of writings by Tsongkhaba, two bolts of fine cloth, a bowl of precious wood, twenty lacquered vases, ten bolts of monk robe-cloth, one hundred *liang* of saffron, eighty-four lots of Tibetan incense, three tubes of candles, ten sheets of woolen fabric (氆片), fifteen cases of women’s head ornaments (花細), ten further cases of a different type of headdress (布魯克巴花細), thirty-six bolts of woolen fabric (氆氇), a sack of sugar, and another package of Tibetan spices. The steward was separately given a number of items as well.

²⁹⁴ YHGSL 15:272a. This “confession” (供單) appears in both YHGSL 15:272a-273b and MWLF 156:1380-1383.

²⁹⁵ YHGSL 15:272a.

not be surprising given that it was in the amban's interest to provide the Throne with a clean case shorn of any conflicting details. Beyond adding some new information about where the divinations occurred, Heliyen's transcript of the assistant's interrogation devotes similar attention to cataloging the multiple gifts the steward distributed to the oracle and his assistant on the three different occasions when they sought divinations. In total, the assistant stated that the oracle had received four hundred *liang* of silver in return for his divinations in addition to other gifts.²⁹⁶ Yet, Heliyen informed the emperor in his summary report that despite confronting the medium and his assistant with what he felt was overwhelming evidence of bribery at multiple stages of the divination process, the assistant continued to insist that, “Nawangdasi never requested an identification saying that the reincarnation was definitely one of these two people. Thus it is true that he never sought to bribe.”²⁹⁷ Still, in contrast to the deposition of the Dalai Lama that was labeled “Answers” (回覆單), Heliyen submitted the transcript of this later interrogation to the Throne under the title “Confession of the Lamo Chökyong and his Assistant Döndrup Dorjé” (供單).

On April 25, 1793 (QL 58/03/15), Heliyen submitted his complete report on the investigation of the Tüsiyetü Khan case to the court. Heliyen's assessment confirmed Qianlong's belief that the steward had colluded with the Tüsiyetü Khan to bribe the Dalai Lama and the Lamo Oracle. Considering that Qianlong had initially pondered whether the idea of identifying the Tüsiyetü Khan's son had actually originated with the Dalai Lama himself as a scheme for eliciting greater donations from the Khalkha, Heliyen's

²⁹⁶ YHGSL 15:272b-273a.

²⁹⁷ YHGSL 15:87a. Ma. *nawangdasi umai urunakū ere juwe niyalmai dorgici emke hūbilgan jorire be baihakū bime. inu ulintume baihakūngge yargiyān seme hengkišeme jabumbi.*

insinuation that he had only been bribed was perhaps a more ideal outcome for the Dalai Lama.²⁹⁸ Yet even before the emperor received Heliyen's report, the court had moved to resolve the Tüsiyetü Khan case.

Just two days after Heliyen had dispatched his report from Lhasa, the emperor, clearly frustrated by what seemed like a delayed response from Heliyen (it had been 42 days since he had dispatched the first court letter to Lhasa), wrote again to Heliyen updating him on events at court.²⁹⁹ Qianlong informed him of several decisions. First, reports from Sungyun and Kūišu in Mongolia had pinpointed the origins of the plot in a chance meeting of the steward Nawangdasi and the Tüsiyetü Khan at Erdeni Jui monastery in outer Mongolia. Second, Mongols would henceforth be permanently forbidden from seeking divinations regarding reincarnations in Lhasa. And third, preparations were already underway to recognize the reincarnation of the Erdeni Bandida from among three new candidates using the Golden Urn at Yonghegong.³⁰⁰

The identification of the reincarnation of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu was finally confirmed using the Golden Urn at Yonghegong on May 10, 1793 (QL 58/04/01).³⁰¹ This event marked not only the first instance in which a Mongol kūtuktu was identified in Beijing, but also a departure from the recommendations of the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu and Fukanggan that leading lamas draw the lot from the vase. In this case, although the

²⁹⁸ MWJXD 23:196-197.

²⁹⁹ If average postal time between Lhasa and Beijing is considered, receiving a response from Lhasa to a letter posted from Beijing in forty days would be extremely fast. The average turn around time for a piece of correspondence to travel from Beijing to Lhasa and back seems to have required 63 to 75 days (or nine to ten weeks), even at a postal rate of 600 *li* per day.

³⁰⁰ Court letter to Heliyen, MWJXD 23:236-239 (QL 58/03/17, 1793-4-27).

³⁰¹ MWJXD 23:260-262.

Gumang and Dongkor kūtuktus had been commissioned to lead three days of recitations before the ritual was to take place, and were present for the selection, it was an imperial prince and officials of the Lifanyuan who played the penultimate role.³⁰² This seems to have set an important precedent because subsequently, in Lhasa as well as well as Yonghegong, it would be Qing officials who drew the lots instead of Tibetan lamas.

Yet the court hesitated before widely circulating a formal account of the Golden Urn lottery at Yonghegong. News of the event spread first only in Manchu and Mongol-language court-letters and edicts that were disseminated to inner court officials, officials of the Lifanyuan, Qing resident officials in Inner Asia, and select Tibetan and Mongol elites. It was not until July 1, 1793 (QL 58/05/25), when the court had fully assessed the mood of the Dalai Lama and the child had been enthroned, that the Throne issued a broadly distributed public announcement of the “successful” conclusion of the Erdeni Bandida case.³⁰³ The court was sensitive to the fact that because the recognition of the Erdeni Bandida was unprecedented, it would take continued careful management of the promulgation of this case to ensure that this particular event became an established legal precedent. The following section will explore the tenuous process of transforming *precedent* into repeated *practice*.

Managing the Identification of the Erdeni Bandida

³⁰² MWJXD 23:260-261, see also YHGSL 15:124.

³⁰³ Manchu-language issued to Qing colonial officers dealing with Mongol affairs, YHGSL 15:291-293. Information concerning the selection of the Erdeni Bandida Kütuktu first appeared in Chinese a day later, and at this point only in the form of a private court letter from the emperor to Sun Shiyi, the governor-general of Sichuan. See Heliyen’s Manchu-language memorial of QL 58/05/09 confirming support among Tibetan elites and commoners: YHGSL 15:281-283.

The identification of the Mongol child Ciwangjab as the reincarnation of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu was momentous for several reasons. First, the child hailed, as Qianlong had ordered, from a non-noble family. Second, the recognition of this child using the Golden Urn at Yonghegong marked the explicit rejection and replacement of another child whose authenticity had already been vouchsafed by the Dalai Lama himself. The emperor's decision also overruled the local jasak aristocracy of Khalkha Mongolia, most obviously the sanction of the league captain of the Sayin Noyin Khan League, not to mention the wishes of the neighboring Tüsiyetü Khan.³⁰⁴ Moreover, as interrogations of the steward Nawangdasi and the Tüsiyetü Khan revealed, the birth of the Khan's son had been attended by a variety of auspicious signs that had also bespoke the child's legitimate candidacy.³⁰⁵ That reincarnations of the kūtuktu should emerge in noble families was also not unusual: the first Erdeni Bandida was a son of the Sayin Noyin Khan and subsequent reincarnations had historically possessed both religious and secular authority, a fact that had been recognized by the Qing since at least 1737, when Qianlong confirmed his status as the *jasak* ruler of a “nomadic lama banner” in the Sayin Noyan Khan aimag.³⁰⁶ The appointment of child of “common rank” to a position that had historically been the fief of

³⁰⁴ MWLF 156:1404.

³⁰⁵ See Sungyun's memorial of QL 58/03/14 (YHGSL 15:71-74). These signs were also noted in the bilingual Manchu-Mongol edict of QL 58/03/15 (YHGSL 15:121) and the Manchu-language court letter to Heliyen, MWJXD 23:236-237 (QL 58/03/17).

³⁰⁶ *Qinding Daqing Huidian shili lifanyuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2007 [1899]), 47; Jin Hai, *Qingdai menggu zhi* (Huhehaote: Neimenggu renmin chubanshe, 2009), 394.

the local jasak nobility carried inherent risks.³⁰⁷ These reasons help explain why the court made careful preparations for the ritual and carefully managed the reception of the result.

Well before the final identification of the Erdeni Bandida's reincarnation was conducted on QL 58/04/01, the court began making public efforts to justify its intervention in this recognition process. On QL 58/03/15, a bilingual edict in Manchu and Mongol was issued to officials in both Lhasa and Mongolia intended for widespread promulgation. This edict offered an extensive justification (sixteen pages and seventeen pages for the Manchu and Mongol versions, respectively) for the use of the Golden Urn that built on arguments that had appeared in the *Discourse on Lamas* proclamation of the previous year, yet should be understood as presenting a significant new analysis of the crisis that the emperor believed was besetting the “Yellow Teachings.” At the crux of the problem was the fact that, “nobody is completely convinced” by the recent generation of reincarnations.³⁰⁸ This new edict’s first departure from *The Discourse* was that Qianlong publically expressed his belief that the oracles had been corrupted. Echoing the results of Fukanggan and Heliyen’s interrogations, the emperor began by arguing that, “In the past several years, whenever it was time to identify a hūbilgan, because the mediums have attained no special talent, they are incapable of possession by the gods and simply affirm whatever is requested of them by other people.”³⁰⁹ For evidence, the emperor then turned to the details from the investigation of the Tüsiyetü Khan and the steward of the Erdeni

³⁰⁷ As we shall see in Chapter Five, just two years later, in a similar case involving the search for the reincarnation of a kütuktu who was historically the ruler of a nomadic banner in Qinghai, Qianlong conceded the right of the lama to reincarnate among local nobles, including his own relatives, provided that the final confirmation occurred using the Golden Urn in Lhasa.

³⁰⁸ YHGSL 15:126: “*geren i gūnīn yooni daharakū*.”

³⁰⁹ YHGSL 15:126.

Bandida estate, most of which had just been received in court in the days before the edict was issued. As Heliyen's final interrogations had yet to be received, this account was primarily based on memorials from Sungyun in Mongolia. The emperor then announced comprehensive punishments for the Tüsiyetü Khan and Nawangdasi.³¹⁰

The final third of the edict offered an extensive moralistic critique of the Geluk School based on the emperor's claim to having cultivated an authoritative expertise in Buddhism unmatched by his contemporaries—the Dalai Lama included. In a passage that recalled his earlier advice to Heliyen on how to interrogate the Dalai Lama, the emperor for the first time publically introduced his argument that the Dalai Lama lacked the ability to perform divinations and interpret visions because he had not yet mastered the teachings concerning the dharani of the “*jeodun jai sukdu barihū ubadis*” tantra.³¹¹ Moreover, he continued to cast aspersions on the whole notion of directed rebirth when he noted caustically that neither Sakyamuni nor Tsongkhaba had reincarnated.³¹² Yet this critique was also expressed in terms characteristic of an emperor who held an abiding concern with the preservation of traits he felt were crucial markers of Manchu—as well as Mongol and Tibetan—distinction. Behind the corruption of the oracles and the “rot of the old, pure, and simple manners of the Mongols and Tibetans,”³¹³ Qianlong ultimately described a Gelukpa establishment that had become debased as it grew accustomed to ever more lavish donations from the faithful. Among these gifts (Ma. *belek*), the emperor even included standard offerings of support for the Sangha such as offerings of food,

³¹⁰ YHGSL 15:116-117.

³¹¹ YHGSL 15:118.

³¹² YHGSL 15:120.

³¹³ YHGSL 15:124: “*monggo fandze se fe golo nomhon banin gūwaliyakangge*.”

butter, and tea. Thus, in closing the emperor offered the Golden Urn as a means of halting the stream of corrupting gifts and an opportunity to return to a more frugal (Ma. *malhūšara*) existence.³¹⁴

Just two days later, Qianlong dispatched a court letter to Heliyen. In his letter, the emperor reiterated the new prohibitions introduced in his edict, but was also clearly concerned about whether his extensive justifications had been persuasive. The emperor wrote, “Since there will definitely be no seeking out the Lamo Oracle when searching for rebirths [of reincarnate lamas] from the Mongol lands, there will also be no necessity for travel to Tibet. [Therefore] I write to Heliyen, ordering him to investigate and exhaustively memorialize on whether, due to their loss of authority and decrease in alms, the Dalai Lama and Jirung Kūtuktu are truly obedient or are not very pleased.”³¹⁵ The emperor also provided Heliyen with a new blueprint for the conduct of the ritual, one that he expected the amban to follow in the future. Qianlong proposed that in the same manner as Kūišu, the vice-minister of the Lifan Yuan who had personally traveled to Mongolia to collected the names of candidate children, the two Lhasa ambans could also take over the task of personally locating candidates. The emperor then directed the ambans to supervise as, “the Dalai Lama together with the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu and

³¹⁴ YHGSL 15:112.

³¹⁵ MWJXD 23:238-239: “*damu uttu šuwe lamu cuijung be baiburakū bime. monggo bade bisire hūbilgan be jorire jalin. geli inu dzang de generakū oho. dalai lama. lamu cuijung ni toose akū. fuluhun komso be dahame. dalai lama. jai jirung kūtuktu se jiduji yargiyan i gūnin dahara. embici yebelerakū muru bisere akū babe Heliyen sede jasifi. gūnin werešeme fere heceme kimcifi. yargiyan be jafasi donjibure wesibukini (inu ume urunakū gese be dahara be memereme) sehebe gingguleme dahafi.*” Parentheses indicate passages added by the emperor to the draft court letter.

other throne-holding great kūtuktus well-versed in the prayers jointly observe and make an identification by drawing lots.”³¹⁶

This latter instruction is remarkable for its break from what appears to be a studied reticence on the part of the Throne to spell out explicitly *who* would draw the lot. Less than a week after informing Heliyen that the responsibility for drawing the lot should fall to Gelukpa prelates, the emperor issued final instructions for the conduct of the Yonghegong ritual. Here again the Throne’s public instructions returned to their customary ambiguity: “After their names have been written on lots and placed in the vase that has been installed at Yonghegong, the Gomang Kūtuktu and Dongkor Kūtuktu, both seal-holding great jasak lamas, will be especially commissioned to gather together the lamas and from the Twenty-seventh through the Twenty-ninth earnestly and sincerely recite sutras/tantras for three days. On the first [of the fourth month] the Eighth Prince, Liobooju, and Delek will be delegated to jointly observe as one name is drawn to be confirmed as the rebirth of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu.”³¹⁷ Although it is perhaps possible to read into the grammar of these sentences a relative emphasis on the influence

³¹⁶ MWJXD 23:238: “*aniya se, gebu be sibiya de arafi aisin bumba de dosimbu fi dalai lama jai g’aldan juktehen i g’aldan siretu (jai nomun de sain g’aldan siretu kūtuktu gūwa) beser gen de tebuhe amba kūtuktu lama sa emgi tuwame tatame tokto buni. inu urunakū lamu cuijung be baibure be akū kai.*” Underlined sections indicate sections crossed out by the emperor.

³¹⁷ Manchu-language edict (QL 58/03/24; 1793-5-4), YHGSL 15:158-157: “*esei gebu be sibiya de arafi hūwaliyasun huwaliyaka gurung de doboho bumba de dosimbu fi doron jafaha jasak da lama g’umeng kūtuktu dongk’or kūtuktu sede afabu fi geren lamasa be gaifī orin nadan ci orin uyun de isibume hing seme unenggi gūnīn i ilan inenggi nomun hūlafī ice de jakuci age liobooju delek be tucibu fi sasa tuwame emke tatafi erdeni bandida kūtuktu hūbilgan tokto biki sehe.*” The other significant public pronouncement issued in advance of the ritual was similarly vague on who would actually draw the lot: “Having reported the names to the Court of Colonial Affairs and written the names on lots and placed them in the urn, the seal-holding jasak lama kūtuktus will read sutras/tantras before the Buddha after which the officials of the Court of Colonial Affairs with jointly oversee the confirmation by drawing a lot.” QL 58/03/15, YHGSL 15:124: “*monggo jurgan de getukeleme boolafī gebu be sibiya de arafi bumba de dosimbu fi doron jafaha jasak da lama kūtuktu sa fucihi i juleri nomun hūlafī monggo jurgan i ambasai sasa tuwame tatame tokto biki.*”

of the imperial prince³¹⁸ and the two officials³¹⁹ (the first of whom, Liobooju 留保住, a Mongol, was the president of the Lifanyuan 理藩院大臣) on the lottery, the main impression left by this account is that monks and officials were acting in concert.

The lack of specificity should not be taken as a sign that the court was unaware of the significance of this issue. To the contrary, maintaining the ambiguity of this crucial moment in the ritual had several important implications. First, even if one presumes that the court wished to have Qing officials draw the lot as would ultimately be the case, the lack of clear directive on the issue left field officials with the leeway to negotiate a configuration of the ritual that would be acceptable to the Tibetan or Mongol audience. The lack of a strong directive on this issue leaves the impression that, at least in the spring of 1793, that the throne would be satisfied if the fundamental requirements of the statute were met. Second, the lack of specificity on this issue, even well after the selection of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu had been determined, indicates that the court purposely left room for both sides to flexibly interpret the official account, especially in the immediate aftermath of the event when the court was still unsure of whether the selection would be welcomed in Tibet and Mongolia.

This interpretation is borne out by an examination of how the court managed information in the aftermath of the selection of the Erdeni Bandida reincarnation. In a private letter to Heliyen composed on the day of the ritual, the emperor's description of the event left out all mention of the Gomang and Dongkor kūtuktus, signaling that only

³¹⁸ The “Eighth Prince” most likely refers to Yongxuan 永璇, 1746-1832 (Prince Yishen of the First Rank 億慎親王).

³¹⁹ Liobooju (留保住), an eight-banner Mongol, was president of the Lifan Yuan (理藩院大臣). Delek (德勒克?) cannot be positively identified, but was also most likely an official at the Lifan Yuan.

the imperial prince and the officials of the Lifan Yuan had been the main actors.³²⁰ Yet in the first mass dissemination of news of the ritual in Inner and Outer Mongolia on July 2, 1793, the language was consistent with the promulgations that had preceded the lottery. Court officials and Geluk monks were both present yet when the winning lot was drawn neither was granted clear agency.³²¹

That the court was choosing its words with great circumspection is further demonstrated by the fact that nearly two months passed between the identification of Ciwangjab on May 10, 1793, and the dissemination of the news on July 2. The emperor was reluctant to issue a full account of the selection to the broader public until his field officials had fully assessed the impact this news would have on indigenous elites in Mongolia and Tibet. On the day the ritual had been held, Qianlong wrote privately to Heliyen that he believed the event had been “good and propitious”—the “selection was exceedingly fair and the weather...was clear and free of wind.”³²² He ordered the amban to describe and explain the ritual to the Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama, Jirung Kūtuktu and other major lamas. Yet he was wary of their reaction:

³²⁰ MWJXD 23:260-261 (QL 58/04/01): “Having searched out and obtained the names of five boys, the Eighth Prince, Liobooju, and Delek were delegated to write their names on lots and place them in the vase that had been donated to Yonghegong. After reading prayers for three days, on the first day of the fourth month they watched together as a lot was drawn and the name of Ciwangjab, the son of the Khalkha layman was selected.” (“*sunja juse baime baihafi. uthai jakuci age. liobooju. delek be tucibufi esei gebu be sibiya de arafi. hūwaliyasun hūwaliyan gurung de doboho bumba de dosimbufti ilan inenggi nomun hūlabufi. duin biyai ice de uhei tuwame sibya tatabuci. kalkai kara šabi eitegel i jui ciwangjab i gebu be tatame tucibuhebi.*”)

³²¹ Edict QL 58/05/25, YHGSL 15:292: “Having received [Kūišu's memorial reporting the names of the five candidates], I immediately commissioned the Eighth Prince to supervise together with Liobooju and Delek, the reading of sutras by lamas, after which, from among the lots that had been placed in the golden urn, the lot of the fifth candidate named Ciwangjab was drawn without prejudice and confirmed [as the reincarnation]...” (“*bi uthai jakuci age be tucibufi liobooju. delek i sasa tuwame lamasa be nomun hūlabufi aisin bumba de dosimbuha sibiya i dorgici gūnin akū de uthai sungjaci de faidaha, ciwangjab i gebu sibiya be tatame tucibuhe bime.*”)

³²² MWJXD 23:260-261.

With regards to the matter of this rebirth, we did not use the man selected by the Dalai Lama and instead made a determination by drawing lots. It is difficult to predict if we can do this without offending him. Heliyen must therefore with great care observe the mood and manner of the Dalai Lama and all the lamas and kūtuktus and with haste and secrecy report what he hears.³²³

The court had also asked Kūišu to make another trip to the seat of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu and assess not only the character of the child whose name had emerged from the Golden Urn but also the attitudes of the leadership of the monastery and the local nobility. Kūišu's memorial, which arrived in court on June 15, 1793 (QL 58/05/08), and subsequent follow up audience with the emperor two weeks later (1793-7-2; QL 58/05/15), surpassed imperial expectations, leaving the emperor ebullient. Upon returning to the monastery Kūišu learned that, of the five children who had originally been brought to the monastery as candidates, the fifth child, Ciwangjab—the boy ultimately chosen in the Golden Urn—had performed a number of acts that had left the monastic community persuaded that this was the genuine reincarnation. First, when parents had returned to the monastery to collect their children after the initial round of tests, Ciwangjab, unlike the other children, refused to return home with his mother and father. Adamant that he wished to remain in the monastery, his parents eventually acceded to his demand and left him in the care of an uncle. Over the next several weeks the small child won the affection of the community for his diligence and helpfulness around the monastery. Upon learning that the child had been identified as the reincarnation, further auspicious acts were witnessed. Kūišu and later, Qianlong, would seize on one detail in particular: while preparing for his enthronement, the child had refused to don the robes that the now disgraced steward had prepared for the occasion and would not take his seat until he had

³²³ MWJXD 23:261.

been offered an alternate costume. Kūišu confessed that when first presented with these “kinds of miraculous matters” (Ma. *hacingga ferguwecuke ba*) he “hesitated in disbelief” (Ma. *tathūnjame akdahakū*). Therefore, he “secretly dispatched” investigators to “Chinese merchants” (Ma. *hūdašara nikasa*) residing in the vicinity of the monastery. After the merchants immediately confirmed that child’s brief history of residence in the monastery had indeed been “miraculous,” Kūišu posted his memorial and then rushed in person to the court.³²⁴

Kūišu’s testimony resulted in the immediate and widespread dissemination of news of the identification of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu using the Golden Urn. This occurred despite the fact that Qianlong had yet to hear from Heliyen in Tibet (although the amban had already penned his response on June 16, 1793 (QL 58/05/09). The discovery of a child who exhibited signs of being a genuine reincarnation resulted not only in an outpouring of confidence in the legitimacy of the Golden Urn but also in the addition of an entirely new explanation for the efficacy of the ritual to the public discourse. The emperor summarized his understanding of the ritual as follows:

After receiving Kūišu’s memorial reporting that he had identified five boys, I immediately commissioned the Eighth Prince to supervise together with Liobooju and Delek the reading of sutras by lamas, after which, the lot of the fifth candidate named Ciwangjab was drawn without prejudice from among the lots that had been placed in the golden urn. The revelation of such a miraculous situation wherein Ciwangjab was already residing in that monastery, [makes] the principles of the Buddha especially clear and manifest. It must be said that what occurred as a result of having invoked the Protector Amitāyus Buddha and received his invisible blessing, is truly miraculous. My efforts to rectify the declining teaching of the Yellow Law/Religion were undertaken for the benefit of the Buddha’s law. The Buddha has found this proper as is evidenced by occurrences such as this that are genuinely miraculous. Henceforth, as the various corruptions are

³²⁴ YHGSL 15:277b-27a, 292-293. It is interesting that the Qing field officials considered local “Chinese” (merchants nonetheless!) to be an objective authority on this matter.

eliminated, may the true traditions of the Buddha's law come to be restored!³²⁵

Here we learn for the first time that it was not human agency that orchestrated the successful outcome of the lottery, but rather supernatural agency. In this case, the emperor is referring specifically to Amitāyus (Ma. *ayusi fucihi*, Tib. *a yu She* or *tshe dpag med*) a manifestation of the Amitābha Buddha, who is associated in Tantric practice with the propitiation of long-life. It is perhaps not coincidental that the Yonghegong complex housed multiple images of Amitāyus, several of which were located in the Tantric Hall just to the east of the spot where Qianlong's tetraglot *Discourse on Lamas* stele stood.³²⁶

The attribution of the successful selection to Amitāyus may also explain the seeming disinclination of the emperor to state explicitly who drew the lot. The ambiguity of the official pronouncements and the passive grammatical construction of the respective sentence enable the reader to envision a supernatural actor causing the lot to emerge (Ma. *tucibuhe*). Such a linguistic strategy complements indigenous Tibetan Buddhist understandings of divination, particularly the practice of dough-ball investigation with which the Golden Urn was occasionally compared. Just as the fall of a ball from a rotating plate needed no direct human agency and could be explained as a divine

³²⁵ YHGSL 15:191-192: "jaka kūišu sei baci. ere sunja jui be sonjome tucibuſi wesimbuhe amala. bi uthai jakūci age be tucibuſi lioboju. delek i sasa tuwame lamasa be nomun hūlabuſi aisin bumba de dosimbuha sibiya i dorgici gūnin akū de uthai sungjaci de faidaha, ciwangjab i gebui sibiya be tatame tucibuhe bime. ciwangjab tubei juktehen de bifī. geli enteke ferguvecuke arbun serebuhengge. cohōme fucihi i doro ten i gebun iletu. ayusi fucihi sakigūsun adistit bifī dorgideri aisiha ci banjihangge. ere yala ferguvecuke seci ombi. mini uttu suwayan šajin i eyehe tacin be tuwacihiyame icthiyabuhange. enteheme fucihi šajin de tusa okini sere jalin. fucihi uruſefi uttu obuhangge. yargiyan i ferguvecuke. ereci eiten jemden yooni nakafī. fucihi šajin i targiyan ulan be dahūbuci ombikai."

³²⁶ Ferdinand Lessing, *Yung-ho-kung: An Iconography of the Lamaist Cathedral in Peking with Notes on Lamaist Mythology and Cult* (Stockholm: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1942), 64-65.

intervention, so too could the emergence of a lot from an urn—if the sentence was constructed with subtlety.

Into Tibetan

The arrival in Tibet in late 1792 of the Golden Urn and its installation in the Jokhang is perhaps the main reason why the temple became a focal point for formal encounters between Tibetan and Qing officials in 1793.³²⁷ By the end of the year, the Jokhang chapel also possessed a register of Tibetan-language translations of Qing official proclamations that had been issued over the course of the year. This register, known simply as the “Record of Royal Pronouncements from the Water-Ox Year” (Tib. *chu glung wang zhu tshur phul gyi deb*), has been extensively quoted in Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs’s “The Turquoise Garland Annals of Tibetan History” (Tib. *bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim g.yu yi phreng ba*) and is therefore available to serve as a rough guide to understanding what a handful of elite lay and ecclesiastical officials might have known about Qing policy as it evolved from 1792 through 1793.³²⁸ This register contained a full copy of the Fukanggan’s “Twenty-Nine Articles” as well as a Tibetan-language translation of an edict dated to May 28, 1793 (QL 58/04/19)—the same day that

³²⁷ The documentary record suggests for the remainder of the dynasty, this was a role that the cathedral shared with the “Chapel of Victory over the Three Realms” (Tib. *gzim chung sa gsum rnam rgyal*, “Zimchung sasum namgyel”), a chamber in the older “Red Palace” section of the Potala. On the occasion of the enthronement of the Eighth Dalai Lama in 1762, Qianlong bestowed an image of himself that subsequently hung in this chamber. Moreover, the room also housed a complete set of the Kangyur translated into Manchu. See Gyurme Dorje *Footprint Tibet Handbook* (fourth edition), (Bath, UK: Footprint, 2009), 113-114.

³²⁸ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, *chu glung wang zhu tshur phul gyi deb* (Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe skrun khang, 1989), 334-340.

Heliyen's final report summarizing his investigation of the Lamo Chökyong and the Dalai Lama arrived in the emperor's hands (or perhaps more precisely, received the emperor's rescript).³²⁹

Known in Tibetan simply as the “Water-Ox Year Edict” (Tib. *chu glung wang zhu*), the document begins with a brief history of its long journey from Manchu to Tibetan and from Beijing to Lhasa. As noted above, the emperor handed down the edict to the Grand Council on May 28, 1793. The proclamation then appears to have languished for four months until on September 24 (QL 58/08/20) the Lifan Yuan produced a Chinese translation of the Manchu original. It was then forwarded to Tibet via the office of the Sichuan governor-general and arrived in Lhasa on October 19 (QL 58/09/15), whereupon a Tibetan-language translation was finally produced.³³⁰

This edict is significant for two reasons. First, this decree marked the second major articulation of the Golden Urn law since the *Discourse on Lamas*. Having just received Heliyen's report on his final test of the oracles and the transcripts of the interrogations of the Dalai Lama and the Lamo Chökyong, as well as Sungyun and Kūišu's earlier reports on Nawangdasi and the Tüsiyetü khan, the emperor felt he now had sufficient evidence from both Mongolia and Tibet to mount a renewed effort to forbid Mongol nobility from seeking reincarnations among their kin and introduce a *new* prohibition against the use of the oracles in the recognition process. Second, considering that there is no evidence that the text of the *Discourse on Lamas* edict circulated in Tibet in 1792-3, the “Water-Ox Year Edict” is therefore the earliest formal, written, Tibetan-

³²⁹ Grand Council file copy of the original Manchu-language edict MWLF 156:0044-0052 (QL 58/04/19, 1793-5-28). For the Grand Council file copy of Heliyen's base memorial, see MWLF 156:1395 (QL 58/03/15, 1793-4-25).

³³⁰ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 334.

language statement of the underlying rationale for the law on the Golden Urn known to have circulated in Tibet.³³¹ Contemporaries evidently recognized the import of this edict as well. It was included in the Tibetan compilation of key official documents from 1793 held at the Jokhang and was reproduced by the Lhasa amban Hening in his “Comprehensive Gazetteer of Ü-Tsang” (《衛藏通志》).³³² Moreover, the Eighth Dalai Lama issued a decree in response to the imperial edict that was also included in the registry of official pronouncements held at the Jokhang.³³³

Of course, long before the “Water-Ox Year Edict” arrived in Lhasa, Heliyen, like Fukanggan before him, had been ordered to confidentially explain the Golden Urn and the related prohibitions to the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan elites. The edict followed on the heels of several court letters from the emperor to Heliyen (QL 58/03/17 and QL 58/04/01). Yet given the oral nature of those conversations, the “Water-Ox Year Edict” is the earliest and only record that reveals the exact wording by which the court attempted to communicate its policy and therefore provides a basis for beginning to think about how Tibetans might have understood the new policy.

It is also important to note that production of this formal, public, and textual justification for the Golden Urn narrowed and limited the ways in which field officials such as Heliyen and indigenous interlocutors/translators could talk about the law. Committing the emperor’s message to paper committed the messengers to a single message, thus eliminating the ability of the court’s field officials to rephrase or otherwise

³³¹ For a Manchu-Mongol bilingual version of this edict: YHGSL 15:212-230.

³³² *Chu glung wang zhu tshur phul gyi deb* (“Record of Royal Pronouncements from the Water-Ox Year”), 85-91; Hening, *Weizang tongzhi*, 267-269.

³³³ *Chu glung wang zhu tshur phul gyi deb*, 108-110.

reconfigure the message in a form that might better accommodate indigenous sensibilities. And Qianlong was not unaware of these dangers. As illustrated in the proceeding section, the deliberate pace at which the Throne revealed information about the selection of the Erdeni Bandida's reincarnation (and it should be noted that the "Water-Ox Year Edict," although issued nineteen days after the identification of the reincarnation included no mention this event), its preference for personal, private communications, and even his reluctance to spell out all the details of the Golden Urn ritual, are all evidence of the degree to which the Qianlong emperor appreciated the utility of ambiguity.

Although Qing officials familiar with the deliberative process at court or the Manchu-Mongol edict of QL 58/03/15 would have found little new in the emperor's edict of QL 58/04/19, from the perspective of Tibetan officials the message of the edict must have been galling, and especially so for the Eighth Dalai Lama. The edict began with a succinct announcement that the steward Nawangdasi's attempt to have the Tüsiyetü Khan's son identified as a kūtuktu was "wrongdoing" (Tib. *nyes pa*, Ma. *weile*, Ch. 罪), and that the Dalai Lama's sanction of the Lamo Chökyong's decision constituted complicity in the crime.³³⁴ In the subsequent exposition of the Tüsiyetü Khan scandal, the edict construed the Dalai Lama's statements into admissions of, if not quite guilt, certainly gross ignorance. Since the edict quoted directly from the depositions of the Dalai Lama and the Lamo Oracle, the edict accomplished the unprecedented act of compromising the authority and integrity of the Dalai Lama on record in Tibetan. Although the edict allowed the Dalai Lama to protest that he had "always found the Lamo Chökyong to be credible," the subsequent presentation of evidence contradicted his

³³⁴ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 335.

account.³³⁵ Translated back into Tibetan, the testimony of the assistant to the Lamo Chökyong asserted that the medium was bribed with goods and that the questions put to the oracle were contrived in such a manner that he could not but point to the son of the Tüsiyetü Khan.³³⁶ If the Dalai Lama actually read this text (which I suspect he did), he would, therefore, have been reading his own words after they had passed through a minimum of four stages of translation (Tibetan>Chinese, Chinese>Manchu, Manchu>Chinese, Chinese>Tibetan).³³⁷ One can only speculate about how familiar they sounded. Yet at least between the original Manchu-language edict and the final Tibetan-language translation the content of proclamation underwent very little change.

Qianlong's message in the edict can be summarized as follows: First the emperor abrogated to himself the role of both patron *and* priest. He made this claim on the basis of the Dalai Lama's relative youth and ignorance, expressed in the following terms, "Since this Dalai Lama is still young, he is still in the early stages of study, and it is impossible that he has acquired higher forms of perception. Thus when asked to identify a kūtuktu, he is only able to call upon the prophecies of the Lamo Chökyong."³³⁸ In contrast, the emperor claimed a long personal history of Buddhist study as well as a tradition of patronage by his "royal state" (Tib. *rgyal khab*, Ma. *daicing gurun*, Ch. 本朝). "Since ascending the throne fifty-eight years have passed. I have sought out the learning of

³³⁵ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 335.

³³⁶ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 335-336.

³³⁷ Although these confessions were submitted in Chinese, one wonders if there were Manchu-language originals, or if the interrogations were conducted in Manchu and Tibetan, because there are a lot of Manchu words transliterated into Chinese. Most significantly, the term for "gift," (ma. *belek*).

³³⁸ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 338.

Mongolia and Tibet and, although I have studied for only fifty plus years, my dynasty has always protected the teachings of the Buddha.”³³⁹ Such knowledge also provided him with the following perspective: “Nowadays, the behavior of the clergy has not only fallen into wickedness, but the craving of the Mongols and Tibetans for material things bears no resemblance to before. They no longer possess the single-minded devotion to the religious laws of the Buddha.”³⁴⁰

Faced therefore with a crisis in the Geluk church, the emperor argued that it was his obligation to subject Mongols and Tibetans to his law. Moreover, he felt that his recent success against the Gurkhas had proven the benefits of such control. Qianlong stated, “Recently there arose great discussion because of the conflict over property involving the Shamarpa [Kūtuktu]. Due to the vast strength of my dynasty (Tib. *rgyal khag*, Ma. *gurun boo*, Ch. 國家), peace was established. Similarly, the distant land of Tibet and the all the Mongol jasaks must necessarily be placed under the Court of Mongol Affairs (i.e. the Lifan Yuan, Tib. *mong gol sbyor khang*, Ma. *tulergi golo be*

³³⁹ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 336: “*nged khri du khyon nas lo lna bcu nga bryad song bar mong gol dang bod kyi slob gnyer sogs kyang lo lnga bcu lhag tsam skyong bar sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa de bzhin nged kyi rgyal khab nas bsrungs thog/*” The Manchu original contains a longer, if not stronger statement. MWLF 156:0046: “I have studied the Buddhist sutras in the mongol and Tibetan script since the eighth year of my reign, which now amounts to over fifty years. In my spare time from handling affairs, I have acquired a general understanding of the Buddha's way through intense focus, explanation and discussion. Our Great Qing state's continuous protection of the Yellow Teachings stems from our observation that the Mongols in particular are by nature sincere believers in the Buddha and thus we appropriately honor their teachings.” (“*mini beye abkai wehiyehe i jakūci aniya ci monggo tanggūt hergen i fucihi nomun be tacifi. te susai funcere aniya otolo. baita icihiyara šolo de gūnin girkūfi giyangame leoleme. fucihi i doro be murušeme ulhihebi. musei daicing gurun suwayan šajin be karmadaragge. cohome geren monggoso banitai hing seme fucihi de akdame ofi. tuttu ceni tacin de acabume wesihulere be tuwabuha.*”)

³⁴⁰ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 336-337.

dasara jurgan), which will render fair justice if conflicts again arise.”³⁴¹ However, it must be noted that the translator of this passage made a significant adjustment between this text and the Manchu and Chinese-language versions. Where the original edict states that, “all the Mongol jasaks should be placed under the governance of the Lifan Yuan,” the Tibetan text has added “Tibet and the Mongol jasaks.” thus clarifying that now Tibet would also fall under the jurisdiction of an institution that, from its Tibetan-language name at least, would seem to have only supervised Mongol affairs. This specificity is important because at several points in the text, the emperor’s attention seems focused on Mongols and not Tibetans. For instance, the injunction against seeking reincarnations among aristocrats explicitly pertains to Mongol nobility.³⁴² The Tibetan aristocracy is not mentioned, potentially raising questions about whether this restriction would apply in practice in Tibetan regions.³⁴³

Having asserted the sovereignty of the dynastic house (Tib. *rgyal khag*, Ma. *gurun boo*) over Tibet, the edict culminated with an exhibition of how the emperor’s representative had exposed the oracles as charlatans:

³⁴¹ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 337: “*dper na zhwa dmar bas chas dngos la rtsod gzhi byung ba'i stabs gleng che byung rung/ nged rgyal khag gi stobs shugs che ba'i stabs zhod 'jags su song ba/ de mtshungs phyogs mtha'i bod dang/ mong gol dza sag bcas nas kyang ma mong gol sbyor khang du 'bul dgos la su thad nas rtsod gzhi'i rigs byung tshe drang bzhag gi dpyad mtshams dgos rgyur*” The Manchu version speaks only of subjecting “Mongol jasaks” to the Lifanyuan. MWLF 156:0048: “*te gurun booi horon erdemu goro selgiyebu. geren monggo jasak sa. gemu tulergi golo be dasara jurgan de kadalabume. yaya boigon hethe be temšere jergi baita be gemu tondoi lashalame icihiyambi.*”

³⁴² Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 337. The Tibetan reads: “Similarly, the self-serving practice of [finding] rebirths among the descendants or brothers of royals is henceforth prohibited. With regards to this law, the Mongol *khans*, *beile*, *beise*, and *gong*, already possess their own inheritable positions. Therefore it is not appropriate that they carry off the wealth of the reincarnated lamas as well.”

³⁴³ As I will discuss in Chapter Three, the lack of clarity on who was an aristocrat and whether this statute applied to Central Tibet and Amdo, did in fact turn out to be a source of confusion and contention.

As for the Chökyong's mediums, they are the equivalent of the spirit possession that occurs in China. In China, people who are possessed by gods and ghosts build faith among the people by means of magical displays involving stabbing with knives, swallowing swords, and hatchets. Recently, when the resident amban in Tibet, Heliyen, gave the mediums knives to see what they would do, they all went into a state of panic. Seeing that they could not match the skills of those possessed by gods and ghosts in China, they obviously have no ability to recognize tülku.³⁴⁴

Thus the Throne restaged the contest between the shamans of the interior and the oracles of Tibet in written form for widespread distribution. On the basis of this test, the emperor rested his case for why, “It will never again be acceptable to make identifications using the Chökyong.” As the Manchu language original makes clear, the emperor envisioned the elimination of the oracles from this process as a “victory by means of legislating” (Ma. *eteme fafulaha*).³⁴⁵ Yet he also hoped that such tests would eventually accomplish what lawmaking alone could not—thorough change and transformation (Ma. *halambi* or *webumbi*, respectively) of Tibetan and Mongol customs.³⁴⁶ While the edict firmly decreed that oracles could no longer be consulted in the process of locating reincarnations, it recognized that its ability to enforce its will through the law was limited. He was confident, however, on the basis of Heliyen’s report that when presented with the failures of the oracles, they would arrive on their own at the

³⁴⁴ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 338-339: “chos skyong gi sku rten pa de bzhin yang rgya'i yul gyi lha 'dre zhugs pa lta bu yin 'dug/ rgya yul gyi lha 'dre zhugs mi nas gri rgyag pa dang/ gri lces lcag pa/ sta gri sogs kyi cho 'phrul bstan nas mi mang yid du 'ong ba byed cing/ da lam sku rten pa de bzhin la bod sdod blon chen ho lin nas gri sprad lto jus ji 'dug bltas par tshang ma 'jigs rngams byed pa yod 'dug pa/ des na rgya yul gyi lha 'dre zhugs mir yang ma do ba'i sprul sku ngos 'dzin byas pa de dag mngon gsal ltar yin n'ang/ bod mi rnams kyis cha 'jog byas nas lo mang song bar sdon byas la brtsad gcod med pa dang/ phran bu'i brtag pa bden pa'i stabs lha lung bstan btsan 'dzul ('gog) gyi 'phal gang bkod pa gtong ma dgos pa”

³⁴⁵ MWLF 156:0046. This phrase is used in several edicts to convey the sense that the Qing suppression of the oracles was achieved not through brute force, but through law.

³⁴⁶ MWLF 156:0050. Qianlong used these verbs frequently to describe the overall effect he wished to have on Tibetan Buddhism.

intended conclusion: that the mediums were frauds. Thus the emperor, noting that it was “provisionally impossible to change” (Ma. “*taka halame muterakūngge*”) widespread belief in the oracles, offered the following concession in the Tibetan-language edict:

However, the Tibetans (*bod mi*) universally find [the oracles] credible and for many years have never tested them. Because when asked about trifling matters they may make accurate [predictions], it is unnecessary to issue a command instantly outlawing their prophecies. Naturally, it is not necessary to prohibit Tibetans (*bod mi*) from making inquiries of the chökyong [with regards to minor, personal matters]... As for the chökyong they will gradually weaken and over time will definitely disappear of their own accord.³⁴⁷

The Qing strategy for the elimination of the oracles hinged on two assumptions: First, that Tibetans would recognize the shamans of the interior and the chökyong as comparable; and second, that Tibetans would also accept the method—public tests of the oracles by Qing officials—as an acceptable way of disproving the oracles. Both of these assumptions also reflect hierarchical systems of knowledge anchored in the intellectual authority of the emperor. The first operated from an implied hierarchy of divination technologies in which shamans/師巫 are superior to the mediums. The second assumption reflected the imposition of a particular method for generating and interpreting empirical information. The vision of a future Tibet free of oracles was a peculiar and paradoxical expression of Qianlong-era Qing imperialism. Yet although the shamans of the interior were superior, Qing officials contemptuously portrayed their abilities and maintained a regime of surveillance lest they get out of hand.

³⁴⁷ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 339: “*rang bzhin bod mi nas lung bstan zhus pa sogs la bkag 'doms byed ma dgos/ chos skyong gi skor yang rim bzhin nyams thag tu 'gro nges la de skabs rang shugs kyi bkag 'doms byed bde yong ba gzhir bcas/*”

The depositions of both the Dalai Lama and the medium of the Lamo Chökyong oracle (and the edicts into which these depositions were incorporated) contain evidence that indicates that, although Tibetans may have seen the shamans and mediums as both speaking on behalf of deities and spirits, they had different expectations for the use of the oracles and different standards for evaluating the accuracy of their prophecies or actions more generally. Moreover a question can be raised about whether the Qing officials were talking about Manchu shamans or Chinese sorcerers. In Manchu, Heliyen and Qianlong spoke of “shamans of the interior” (Ma. *dorgi ba i saman*).³⁴⁸ Their descriptions of the abilities of these shamans would seem to place them firmly within the shamanic traditions with which bannermen like Heliyen would be most familiar: the traditions the Manchus inherited and adapted from Inner Asia. Still, the ambiguous meaning of “the interior” raises the question of whether they were in fact speaking of the traditions of China proper as well.³⁴⁹ The final translation into Tibetan identifies the “people who are possessed by gods and ghosts” as clearly being of China (Tib. *rgya yul*).³⁵⁰ From the perspective of the Tibetan translation then, regardless of whether Tibetans appreciated a separate Manchu divination tradition in other contexts, in this case the Manchu tradition was indistinguishable from the “traditions of China” much in the same way that Tibetan texts seldom distinguished “China” from the Great Qing.

As mentioned in section two above, the Dalai Lama and the Lamo Chökyong medium engaged in several strategies to deflect Qing interrogations. They also asserted a

³⁴⁸ MWLF 156:0049.

³⁴⁹ The Chinese version of this text translated this expression as “內地師巫,” *Weizang tongzhi*, 269.

³⁵⁰ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 338.

vigorous defense of the oracles. First, both the medium and his assistant insisted upon the complex and often indeterminate nature of seeking prophecies from the oracle. The following exchange between Heliyen and the medium of the Lamo Chökyong is illustrative of these differing expectations:

[Heliyen] asked: If you are truly able make requests of the gods, why did you not spontaneously and immediately point out the name of the rebirth when Nawangdasi had asked you to become possessed by the deity? Why was it that even after several attempts you still had not made an identification? You obstinately prevaricate saying that you had to wait for Nawangdasi to provide a letter stating the ages and year of birth of Cedengdorji and his wife along with that of their son. Then, only after they delivered silver and satins did you identify the son of Cedengdorji! How can you recognize the son of the Tüsiyetü Khan if you originally said that the [reincarnation] would emerge in an average household?! It is obvious that the son of the khan received special consideration. Nawangdasi bribed you. You most definitely have no innate ability with spirit possession! Moreover, it is obvious that on a daily basis you fake possession in order to trick the stupid Tibetans out of their money and goods! Today the truth has finally been exposed. Do you still dare make a false confession?

The oracle prostrated and responded: I have been an oracle for generations. It is commonplace for people to come to Tibet to seek reincarnations. Some ask “in what place?” Others ask, “which of these one or two, or even of these three or five, names is the one?” Frequently there are identifications that are not correct and they are asked to renew the search. The first two times he approached us, Nawangdasi did not tell us the number of candidates or their names, he only asked where the incarnation had taken rebirth. Therefore, the prophecy told him to search in his home region. Without having returned to his home, he persistently asked us to see if it was either of the names that he delivered to us on the basis of previous answers. [I] could not refuse to make an identification for him. Therefore [I] again checked and [the protector] indicated that it was Cedendorji's son. The stamp of the chökyong placed above his name is authentic. This and similar types of matters have always been handled in this manner. Moreover, as for the relationship between myself and the Tüsiyetü Khan, there were no contact/dealings between us. Nawangdasi never insisted that [the Protector] choose between these two people. He only wanted to know if the [reincarnation] was one of those two people.³⁵¹

³⁵¹ MWLF 156:1382-1383: “問拉穆吹忠初次那網達什托你降神時你如果真能請神自然即將呼畢勒罕得名姓指出。何故數次總未指定？一味言語支吾必待那網達什遞字內寫出車登多

In his response, one can observe that the medium provided Heliyen with an outline of a divination technology that delivered results not by means of singular or sudden revelations, but rather through an accumulative process. According to the medium, an accurate decision required multiple stages of inquiry, both by the protector deity and the supplicant. Moreover, there was no expectation that the process was infallible, especially if the deity was not provided with accurate or complete information.

Other contemporaneous Tibetan-language commentaries about oracles make the same point. In his description of the search for the reincarnation of the Second Jamyang Zhepa in 1797 (the history of which will be the focus of Chapter Three), Drakgönpa recorded how the protector deities themselves, speaking through the mediums, expressed uncertainty about which candidate was the genuine article. In this case, the search party sought multiple prophecies from multiple deities, who all offered different assessments of the candidates. The author presented this not as a sign of the inaccuracy of the oracles, but rather the complexity of the task. Moreover, in this specific case, the deities not only hedged their predictions but also recommended the utility of subjecting the candidates to

爾濟等夫婦年歲屬相及伊子等屬相並遞了銀子緞疋後你纔將車登多爾濟之子指定。況你先說出自中等人家後又指定圖舍圖罕之子。可見是圖舍圖罕授意與你。納旺達什有賄托與你。你毫無降神本事！並可知你平日托言降神欺詭愚番圖詐錢財！是實今事已全露。你還不據實供麼？吹忠叩頭供稱：小的世當吹忠，凡有來藏求指呼畢勒罕者或係問出在何方或係執一二人三五人名字來求降神指認者，往往亦有指為不真。令其再尋者。前兩次那網達什並未將人數名姓說出。只問他們呼畢勒罕出在何處。故囑單內指與他地方尋找。他又未回去找尋，再三求看是以仍照前次回復迨他遞字呈出名姓不能不與他指定。故再行看了，即指為車登多爾濟之子。並於名字上用過吹忠圖記是實。此等事件歷來俱如此辦理。況圖舍圖罕與小的素常，並無來往。那網達什亦未求小的必在此二人內指定，不過求看此二人內是與不是。令蒙大人如此嚴訊。還敢不實供什麼求詳情。”

further tests such as a *zentak* (a dough-ball investigation).³⁵² Thus from an indigenous perspective, oracles delivered the best results when used responsibly in combination with other divination technologies and tests.

The Dalai Lama and the medium of the Lamo Chökyong both also attempted to defend the indigenous tradition by making more modest claims about the abilities of the oracles. In a sense their responses under interrogation seem strategically designed to lower imperial expectations. In this regard, the Lamo Oracle is reported as stating, “All Tibetans come to inquire about the harvest and whether or not there will be smallpox. However we respond in accordance with the statutes of the classics. Some of these [predictions] occasionally hit the mark. The Tibetans then disseminate [these predictions] as evidence of our powers.”³⁵³ Yet in the same breath that he minimized the abilities of the oracles, the medium also situated the technology firmly within a written legal tradition. In the transcript of his deposition, the Dalai Lama made a similar move, pointing out that the use of oracles in the Tüsiyetü Khan case was “in accordance with the ancient statutes.”³⁵⁴ Moreover, in these statements, both the Dalai Lama and the Lamo Chökyong medium also pinned the blame for misconceptions about the abilities of the oracles firmly on the common people, thus distinguishing the textual *civilization* of the Gelukpas from the rumor mongering of the illiterate hoi polloi. Given the degree to which Qing officials overtly spoke of indigenous practices of divination as a “low

³⁵² Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Deb ther rgya mtsho* (*Oceanic Book*) (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1987 [1865]), 432.

³⁵³ YHGSL 15:84b: “凡番民向問年歲豐缺及本年有無痘症。不過依着經典照例答之或有時湊巧偶中番民等即傳以為奇。”

³⁵⁴ MWLF 156:1386. The full quote is as follows: “我向來總據吹忠所說為憑，彼時尚未奉有欽頒金本巴瓶來藏，因此就照向來舊例，憑吹忠龍單上的話，給他批了。”

tradition” (Ch. 下乘), and Tibet more generally as a land without law, it is difficult not to view the Dalai Lama and the oracle’s statements as intentional moves to reassert the high status of their tradition according to what they perceived were the standards of the Qing emperor and his representatives.³⁵⁵

The Eighth Dalai Lama’s personal decree issued in response to the Qianlong emperor’s “Water-Ox Year Edict” offers a further glimpse of the manner in which Tibetan elites might have understood the Golden Urn in the initial aftermath of its establishment. The decree conveys the Dalai Lama’s strong support for the new measure, yet also describes a configuration of the ritual that departed in crucial respects from the emperor’s instructions. Thus, much like the letter of the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu to the Dalai Lama described in the first section of this chapter, the existence of the Dalai Lama’s decree hints at the range of strategies the court employed to express its will in a Tibetan voice. In the case of this decree it is impossible not to suspect that the Qing officials resident in Lhasa had a hand in either drafting the document, vetting its contents, or at the very least encouraging its production. Yet the final product is perhaps a testament to the limits of Qing influence and the dangers the imperial message faced when exposed to the translation process.

The Dalai Lama began the edict by thanking the emperor—the “Great Sovereign Emperor Manjusri, the Cakravartin/Heaven-sent,” for his support of both the “doctrine of the those who wear yellow” (Tib. *zhwa ser ‘chang b’ai ring lugs*) and Tibet more

³⁵⁵ In his report on the oracles of QL 57/12/29 (1793-2-9), Fukanggan quoted Qianlong as referring to the oracles as the “lowest tradition of Buddhism.” “吹忠多以邪術惑人，降神時舞刀自扎，而於身體無害。此等幻術，即使其法果真，在佛教中已最為下乘...” (YHGSL 15:7-8.)

generally (Tib. *bod 'bangs spyi byings*).³⁵⁶ Echoing the structure of the emperor's edict, the Dalai Lama then turned to the emperor's claim to have studied the Gelukpa teachings yet then significantly embellished it: "The Manjusri emperor especially cherishes the monks who follow the doctrine of Tsongkhaba, zealously studies, and has personally and assiduously strived to achieve the goal of taking the vows of a renunciate."³⁵⁷ From this passage it is unclear if the Dalai Lama believed that the emperor had already become a monk, or was working towards such a goal by observing the vows. The Démo Kūtuktu's biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama describes the prelate as leading a ceremony of offerings to an image of Qianlong as a "Vajra-holding monk." Démo reports that on the occasion of the ritual, because "there were those who were not enthusiastic," the Dalai Lama offered a passionate defense of the Manjursi emperor.³⁵⁸ Thus, although it would seem that such veneration was not universally supported, it was promoted by the Eighth Dalai Lama (or his assistants, such as the Démo Kūtuktu) as justification for implementation of imperially-sanctioned measures such as the Golden Urn.

The Dalai Lama then seconded the emperor's observation that the recent crop of reincarnations had not elicited the deep faith of the past. He wrote:

Nowadays, because the majority of reincarnated lamas do not study the dharma, when it comes time to identify a rebirth they are unable to make a clear/convincing decision. Therefore they do not receive unanimous faith and respect, even from the sangha. Similarly, when requests are made to the Protectors (*chos skyong*), whatever is revealed in the prophecies becomes a pretext for making an identification. In reality, in accordance with their greed they merely recognize the children of those who possess

³⁵⁶ In Tibetan, Qianlong's celebratory title is: "gnam gyi lha 'jam dbyangs gong ma bdag po chen po." Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 341.

³⁵⁷ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 341.

³⁵⁸ Démo Kūtuktu, *'Jam dpal rgya mtsho'i rnam thar* (Lhasa: Drépung Monastery, 1811; TIBRC W2CZ7847), 269a:2-269b:3.

material wealth, giving rise to debates among the people over whether or not they are really [rebirths].³⁵⁹

Although the Dalai Lama shares the emperor's sense that there is a crisis of faith in the reincarnations and his diagnosis that the oracles have been corrupted, his analysis in this passage is different in key respects. First, unlike Qianlong, he did not point to specific lineages as corrupt. The tone of this statement is thus greatly softened by the lack of direct accusations against leading monks. Second, the Dalai Lama did not single out particular clans or Mongol aristocrats for attempting to influence the selection process. There is no mention of the Tüsiyetü Khan's attempt to have his son recognized as the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu. In searching for the roots of the crisis, the Dalai Lama's analysis led him not outwards, to the Mongol aristocracy, but rather inwards to the purported laxity of the contemporary training regime for monks.

The most striking departures from Qianlong's edict are contained in the final the final section of the decree, where the Dalai Lama laid out a blueprint of the Golden Urn ritual. First, where the emperor had limited the law to major kūtuktus, the Dalai Lama broadened the scope of the ritual to apply to "all reincarnations of lamas born in the land of Tibet."³⁶⁰ Second, the Dalai Lama described the Qing ambans as drawing the lots.³⁶¹ And finally, despite the emperor's forceful prohibition of the use of the oracles, the Dalai

³⁵⁹ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 342. A similar statement from the Dalai Lama was reported in Heliyen's memorial of QL 58/03/15: "However, the customs of the Tanggut are passed on from generation to generation, and it is impossible to inform every household. Now having witnessed several trials, it is apparent that the [oracles] possess not even the slightest magical ability. The sanction of the Golden Urn by the emperor to be placed before the image of Tsongkhaba and used for drawing lots is both just and righteous. There are neither clergy nor laypeople who are not persuaded."

³⁶⁰ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 342.

³⁶¹ Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 343.

Lama still reserved a role for the oracles in the recognition process. Much as the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu and Fukanggan had advised a year earlier, the Dalai Lama positioned the oracles as playing a role in the nomination of candidates for the final Golden Urn lottery.³⁶² Given the fact that the Dalai Lama's articulation of the Golden Urn ritual ignored the key injunction of the emperor's public edict as well as private instructions ostensibly passed to him via the auspices of the ambans, it is not difficult to understand the degree to which the successful implementation of the new law remained a consistent concern of the Qianlong emperor through the remainder of his reign and into the first couple years of his son's reign. In his decree on the Golden Urn, the Dalai Lama in certain respects accorded the Qing an even greater role than the court had anticipated. Yet the continued role for the oracles reveals the indelible stamp of the Dalai Lama's administration on the ritual.

The Golden Urn as “Law” and “Omen”

The court had received mix messages about the reliability of the Dalai Lama over the spring and summer of 1793. In response to the emperor's request that the Jirung Kūtuktu (Tatsak Rinpoche) be recalled to Beijing to serve again as head of the Geluk mission there, Fukanggan cautioned that it was not wise to return sole responsibility for the administration of the Ganden Podrang government to the Dalai Lama:

The Dalai Lama appears to have truly understood the perfection of the emperor's loving grace and be genuinely overjoyed and sincerely appreciative. Since your servants Fukanggan and Heliyen arrived in Tibet last year, we have observed that although the Dalai Lama is a good judge

³⁶² Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, 342.

of people, and exceedingly zealous in his study of the sutras, he does not understand [worldly] affairs... [Although] he has heard the Lord's edicts with their various instructions, only after your servants have elucidated the main principles numerous times will the Dalai Lama come to grasp what he previously [didn't understand], genuinely appreciate the emperor's perfect and loving grace, and comprehend the many ways of handling affairs.³⁶³

In summary, Fukanggan argued that the Dalai Lama was loyal, but not a reliable vehicle for the execution of imperial policy because he was difficult to communicate with. He needed constant tutoring from officials both Qing and Tibetan in the realm of secular administration. According to Heliyen, the difficulty the Dalai Lama had in comprehending Qing policy was shared by Tibetans more generally. In the aftermath of the public tests of the oracles, Heliyen cautioned the emperor that the “muddleheaded Tibetans” (Ma. *hūlhi tanggūt se*) seemed unable to comprehend the “true way” (Ma. *jingkini doro*): “Having been thoroughly deceived, they firmly believe...thus false actions become ever more true.”³⁶⁴

Several months later, Heliyen arrived at a more positive assessment. Having been asked by the emperor to secretly assess the mood of the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan elites in the aftermath of the selection of the next Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu, he reported that among the “kūtuktu and important lamas” he had gathered for a meeting at the Potala Palace, “there were none who were not pleased.”³⁶⁵ Heliyen reported that the lack of dissent extended to the Dalai Lama who he quoted as offering his approval of the (re-) identification of the Erdeni Bandida and promising to spread word of the new statute

³⁶³ YHGSL 15:138-139. Bilingual Manchu-Chinese Grand Secretariat copy of a memorial from Fukanggan and Heliyen dated QL 58/03/22 (1793-5-2). The memorial was rescripted four days earlier on QL 58/03/18.

³⁶⁴ YHGSL 15:87b (QL 58/03/15).

³⁶⁵ YHGSL 15:282a, Manchu language memorial, (QL 58/05/09, 1793-6-16).

through the entirety of “my Tibet” (Ma. *meni dzang*). According to Heliyen, the emperor’s fears that the Dalai Lama would react with hostility to the rejection of his original candidate and the potential loss of donations from Mongolia were groundless. Heliyen also put the Dalai Lama on record as referring to the new method as “fair and measured” (Ma. *tondo kemun*), a phrasing key to the court’s self-perception of its legitimacy.³⁶⁶ The Dalai Lama made these statements despite the fact that Heliyen claimed to have told the Tibetan elites that the configuration of the ritual he planned on recording as law prohibited the use of the oracles.³⁶⁷

Upon receiving Heliyen’s report, Qianlong seized on the reports that indigenous Tibetans had found Qing law “fair” and had, in the aftermath of the public tests and promulgation of the Erdeni Bandida case, begun to reject the “old laws” (Ma. *fe kooli*).³⁶⁸ Heliyen’s report implied that there had been a crucial shift in the way that both Tibetan elites and commoners thought about reincarnation. In a court letter to Heliyen composed on the day he received the amban’s memorial, the emperor wrote:

Since Heliyen has explained things to the Dalai Lama et al, not only is the Dalai Lama overjoyed and thankful, but the regular people as well discussed among one another in a great hubbub that, “It is also possible for a reincarnation to emerge among us small folk!” Observing this it is revealed how, because all the reincarnations had only emerged among the

³⁶⁶ YHGSL 15:282a-b.

³⁶⁷ YHGSL 15:281a. With regards to the question of who would draw the lot, the statute drafted by Heliyen remained ambiguous, stating that the lots would be drawn as the Dalai Lama et al together with the ambans supervised. “*uthai aha i ongolo weimbuhe songkoi duin cuijung be šuwe baitalaburakū ci tulgiyen. hese be dahame. hūturi ulhisu bisire juse be udu baifi. banjiha aniya. biya. gebu be sibiya de arafi. amba joo de doboho bumba de dosimbufi. dalai lamasai sasa tuwame sibiya tatami toktobure babe dangsede ejefi endeheme kooli obuki.*”

³⁶⁸ YHGSL 15:282b.

households of nobles and never among those of the common people, the common people were completely unconvinced.³⁶⁹

Having been persuaded that not only had the selection of the Erdeni Bandida not been opposed, but had also been embraced by the common people, the emperor approved Heliyen's request that the new statute "be entered into the records to become a permanent law."³⁷⁰

Yet despite these optimistic reports from the field concerning the response of the Tibetans and the Mongols to the introduction of the new law and the identification of the Erdeni Bandida Kūtuktu, the emperor appears to have been deeply concerned about the future implementation of the law. Over the summer and late fall as Qianlong's mood swung from confident (that the oracles would "vanish of their own accord") to pessimistic, he continued to badger the resident officials in Lhasa for any news, increasingly suspicious that the rebirth and identification of reincarnate lamas was being hidden from him. Upon receipt of a report from Heliyen that in fact there were no "suppressed reports," of rebirths, the emperor remained unpersuaded that the "foolish Tibetans" had accepted the new law. He ordered Heliyen to warn the Dalai Lama and the oracles that they would be shown no leniency if caught violating the law.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ MWJXD 23:291, Manchu-language court letter (QL 58/06/08, 1793-7-15): "*te ere babe Heliyen i baci Dalai Lamasa de ulhibuhede, dalai lama se urgunjeme hukšere teile akū an i jergi urse gemu ereci meni buya ursei boode inu hūbilgan tucici ombi seme dur seme urgunjendume leolecehe be tuwaci ere uthai onggolo yaya hūbilgan gemu monggo wang gung (sei) taijisai booci tucime an i jergi niyalmai boode fuhali ubu akū de, geren gemu asuru gūnin daharakū sere muru tuyembuhabi.*"

³⁷⁰ MWJXD 23:292: "*heliyen dangse de ejefi enteheme kooli obuki seme wesimbuhengge umesi inu. uttu dahame icihiyakini.*" The fact that the emperor was only at this time ordering Heliyen to add the new law "to the books" in Tibet is yet a further indication of just how uncertain the process of making law in Tibet was from the perspective of the court.

³⁷¹ MWJXD 23:316, Manchu-language court letter to Heliyen (QL 58/08/14).

Anxious that new cases be found to test the law, especially since there had yet to be a rebirth of a kūtuktu from the territory supervised by the government of the Dalai Lama, during the winter of 1793-1794, the Lhasa ambans dispatched messengers across Tibet and to “all three [sects]—the Yellow, Red, and Black” to gather news of any ongoing or future searches regardless of the status of the lineage. In particular, the Qing was particularly vigilant for the emergence of hūbilgan in several districts of Kham—Chamdo, Riboché, and Drakyab—that fell within the territory accorded to the administration of the Ganden Podrang. On February 25, 1794 (QL 59/01/26), Heliyen reported that he had received news that searches might commence for three different reincarnation lineages in those regions.³⁷² This news prompted the Throne to insist a month later that these rebirths be confirmed using the Golden Urn, a decision that marked a reversal of Fukanggan’s advice from a year earlier that searches in the Chamdo region continue to be conducted according to local customs.³⁷³ This reversal can be attributed to the Throne’s stated desire to establish a *Tibetan* precedent for the use of the Golden Urn, and perhaps also to the strategic location of this region at the intersection of trade and communication routes between Sichuan and central Tibet. The Lhasa ambans would have to wait another five months, however, before they finally received word via a Qing logistics official stationed in Chamdo that a kūtuktu had actually died—the Pakbala Kūtuktu (Tib. Phagpa Lha, ‘Phags pa lha, Ma. pakbala kūtuktu).³⁷⁴

³⁷² Hening, *Weizang tongzhi*, 269.

³⁷³ For the emperor’s court letter to Heliyen see, MWJXD 24:48-51 (QL 59/03/04, 1793-4-3). For Fukanggan’s original report on this matter, see YHGSL 15:10.

³⁷⁴ Heliyen et al., MWLF 158:3415-3416 (QL 59/08/18, 1794-9-11).

In order to subject the search to final confirmation using the Golden Urn, the emperor and his field officials realized they faced an extremely delicate task. As Fukanggan had previously pointed out, the estate of the Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu had never accepted outside interference in the search process.³⁷⁵ For this reason Heliyen traveled in person to Chamdo and initiated negotiations with the estate of the Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu and other local elites well before the search for the kūtuktu's reincarnation had even begun. Heliyen and the assistant amban Hening were both aware of stakes: they wrote to the emperor that selection of the Phagpa Lha would be the ultimate test of "over two years of continuous efforts to promote the use of the Golden Urn among Tibetans."³⁷⁶

In fact, deliberations about how to handle the Phagpa Lha case had begun in private among Qing officials even before they had received news of the monk's death. Although the need to establish a Tibetan precedent for the use of the Golden Urn clearly outweighed Fukanggan's concern for local sensibilities, the emperor still granted broad discretion to his officials to implement the new law flexibly. Qianlong's instructions in this regard marked a rejection of several strict interpretations of the Golden Urn statute that Heliyen had floated in the winter of 1793-94. For instance, on February 25, arguing that even if the urn was used there was nothing to stop the stewards of the kūtuktus' corporate estates from choosing candidates from among their relatives or disciples, Heliyen advised that the entire search process be turned over to local "Han officials."³⁷⁷ Heliyen furthermore proposed a blanket rule that all search parties be limited to searching

³⁷⁵ YHGSL 15:10.

³⁷⁶ Heliyen and Hening memorial, MWLF 159:1292-1295 (QL 59/11/10, 1794-12-3).

³⁷⁷ Hening, *Weizang tongzhi*, 269-270.

within one to two hundred *li* of the place where the lama in question had passed away and restricted from searching within the same clan (Ma. *mukun*) as the man who had just died.

The emperor approved of these latter two measures, yet in the same breath offered an exemption in the case of the Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu and the other leading kūtuktu of Riwoché, Drakyab, and Markham (Tib. *Smar khams*, Ma. *Sak'a*, Ch. 江卡). In court letters to Heliyen, Qianlong observed that these kūtuktus deserved special attention because they were not just influential monks, but also secular administrators. Out of apparent deference to the historical autonomy of these communities, especially vis-à-vis the administration of the Dalai Lama, the emperor advised Heliyen to allow these communities to locate their own candidates. He wrote:

Although the Cagan Nomunhan is a monk, he governs people and has the responsibility of a *jasak* who handles the routine affairs of the pastures. I observe that the kūtuktu of the places of Chamdo, Rewoché, Zhaya, and Markham similarly administer common people. And moreover, the Dalai Lama has never administered any of their affairs. Therefore, it will be beneficial if identifications of rebirths are made in accordance with the wishes of their subordinates. Do not obstinately enforce the new laws. Handle matters by observing their old customs and taking into consideration what the people will find persuasive.³⁷⁸

That the search for the reincarnation of the Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu would have special significance for the Qing is especially evident if one considers briefly the biography of the Seventh Phagpa Lha, Jigme Tenpai Gonpo (Tib. ‘Phags pa lha 07 ‘jigs med bstan pa’i mgon po, 1755-1794). The Seventh Phagpa Lha was born into a noble family of Litang and recognized as a rebirth of an august and powerful lineage that traced its roots to the fifteenth century and the generation that founded and promoted the spread of the Geluk teachings after the death of Tsongkhaba. During his lifetime, the Seventh

³⁷⁸ Court letter, MWJXD 24:59-62 (QL 59/03/10).

Phagpa Lha had been responsible for the construction of a massive palace in Chamdo, had witnessed the enthronement of the Eighth Dalai Lama, and had even founded a temple in Lhasa in honor of the Qianlong emperor's eightieth birthday.³⁷⁹ The Qing had reciprocated by confirming on him the title "nomunhan" which carried with it recognition of the monk's secular authority.³⁸⁰ Thus, given the Phagpa Lha lineage's ties to the dynasty, as well as noble families located in Lithang, well beyond the 200-li boundary proposed by Heliyen, the emperor had good reasons to consider an exemption from key provisions of the Golden Urn law.

The emperor, however, was firm on the importance of subjecting the final candidates to the Golden Urn and preventing any recourse to the prophecies of the oracles of central Tibet. In this respect, the emperor's instructions concerning the Phagpa Lha searched signaled to the realm that the fundamental purpose of the new statute had become the elimination of the oracles. The eradication of reincarnations among the Inner Asian nobility was now relegated to only secondary significance. Yet this shift in priorities resulted in a thorny problem: If the Phagpa Lha lineage's historical ties to aristocratic households was now acceptable and the estate of the lama possessed no tradition of consulting the oracles of central Tibet, what then was the rationale for

³⁷⁹ Treasury of Lives, "The Seventh Pakpa Lha, Jigme Tenpai Gonpo," (<http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Jigme-Tenpai-Gonpo/3783>), accessed 2013-3-14.

³⁸⁰ The Qing court may, however, have been confirming a title that the Dalai Lama had already granted to the Phagpa Lha. Previous generations of the Phagpa Lha had also held this title. Ibid.

insisting that the final identification be made in Lhasa using the urn? What improvement did the new method offer over the existing traditions?³⁸¹

Perhaps fortuitously for the Qing emperor, into this conundrum stepped the newly appointed Lhasa amban, Sungyun. Although modern Chinese scholarship on Sungyun's tenure in Lhasa tends to view his appointment as the outcome of factional battles between the Hešen and his detractors (among whom Sungyun purportedly considered himself), the arrival of an official who was contemporaneously recognized as an expert in frontier regions and who had just successfully managed the investigation of the Tüsiyetü Khan case at such a critical juncture hardly seems like the unintentional result of banishment from court.³⁸² Sungyun's appointment was made a month before the court learned of the death of the Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu, but probably reflected the emperor's desire to have someone competent in Tibet to implement the new statute.³⁸³ Before Sungyun departed from Beijing, the emperor issued the following instructions:

The Pakbala is the major reincarnation of Kham, thus his rebirth is very important. If it is possible to determine his rebirth using the newly established method for handling the rebirths of the Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama and other major kūtuktu by means of drawing lots from the Golden Urn, [we] shall definitely take advantage of this and let it become a model for the identification of other major rebirths... This would be splendid.

In the event that this is impossible, instead, in accordance with what they find persuasive, select several [candidates] from among the boys who are reported to have emerged among his subjects and have their names be

³⁸¹ As we shall see in Chapter Three, the emperor's shifting agenda with regards to the Golden Urn statute also left his officials confused about who the court would permit to become a candidate for selection in the urn.

³⁸² For the argument that Sungyun was ejected from Beijing on account of his hostility to Hešen and so that the chief grand councilor could make space for the return of his younger brother from Tibet, see Zhang Yuxin, "Weizang Tongzhi de zhuozhe shi Hening," 102.

³⁸³ Sungyun was appointed Lhasa amban on QL 59/07/19 (1794-8-14). Phagpa Lha had passed away on QL 59/07/11.

placed into the urn. It will also be acceptable if [the rebirth] is identified in this manner. But it will surely be unacceptable if they are able to select one as they wish according to the previous ways.

Because Sungyun will be passing through Chamdo, he should definitely probe deeply the [local] opinions and after arriving in Tibet, discuss together with Heliyen how to handle this matter. Overall, since it will be unacceptable for them to identify [a rebirth] in accordance with their previous customs as they wish from among the [children] of their own clan, you must handle the selection in a fashion that takes into consideration what will be both advantageous and what will probably cause them to be convinced.³⁸⁴

Subtle almost to the point of being inscrutable, this directive required careful parsing. On the one hand the emperor repeatedly expressed his desire to control the entire search process. Ideally the candidates could be vetted to ensure that they hailed from particular locations and common households unrelated to the established aristocracy. On the other hand was the larger strategic picture: candidates, regardless of origin, had to be persuasive, which at least from the Throne's perspective, required at a minimum the use of the Golden Urn. Thus the passage above demonstrates the degree to which a genuine concern for the believability of reincarnations (and fear of a crisis of faith) drove the deliberative process behind the creation and implementation of the Golden Urn law.

Sungyun's task was to balance the emperor's desire to see all aspects of the Golden Urn law implemented with the need to ensure that the outcome was considered legitimate and would not upset the political status quo in Chamdo. Qianlong's appointee appreciated this subtlety. The following day Sungyun advised the emperor to lower his expectations that the identification could be resolved quickly. He noted that if they immediately held a lottery, the Tibetans would complain that the candidate children were too young as it was the custom to wait until the children were at least able to speak. Yet if

³⁸⁴ MWLF 159:0525-0526 (QL 59/10/04, 1794-10-27).

they waited three or four years, there might be “no point in conducting a lottery.” Thus, he proposed that names be gathered in a little over a year.³⁸⁵ He also indirectly warned the emperor that the relationship between the Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu and the central Tibetan government was more complicated than the emperor had previously stated. Sungyun wrote that, although the Phagpa Lha administered his own vast territory, he had also historically been a “close assistant to the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama.”³⁸⁶ As a result the court would have to take into consideration the sentiments of Tibetans outside of Chamdo. Still, despite these complications, Sungyun concluded his memorial with the opinion that, “without resorting to coercion, I will handle things properly and arrange things such that everyone will definitely be convinced.”³⁸⁷

A little more than a month later, Sungyun reported that he had arrived in Chamdo and reached an agreement to subject the search to the Golden Urn. Sungyun met with steward of the Phagpa Lha estate and the Zhiwa Lha Kūtuktu, who the amban described as, “seventy-seven years old but still lucid.”³⁸⁸ The Fourth Zhiwa Lha (Ma. Siwala Kūtuktu, Tib. Zhi ba lha 'phags pa dge legs rgyal mtshan, 1720-1799), had received the title “kūtuktu” from the Qianlong court in 1754 and overseen the search for the seventh Phagpa Lha shortly thereafter. This monk’s support was therefore essential, and Sungyun secured it. In fact, Sungyun presented the Zhiwa Lha Kūtuktu as being highly supportive of the new measure and advocating on its behalf among the other disciples of the Phagpa

³⁸⁵ MWLF 159:0528.

³⁸⁶ MWLF 159:0527.

³⁸⁷ MWLF 159:0529: “heni ergelerakū bime. gelī urunakū geren i gūnin be dahabure be bodome saikan toktobume icihiyaki.”

³⁸⁸ Sungyun memorial, MWLF 159:1209 (QL 59/11/13, 1794-12-5).

Lha. Perhaps even more significantly, Sungyun quoted the Zhiwa Lha as presenting his own novel justification for the ritual. The monk was quoted as stating that, “The Great Holy Lord on High is the Manjusri Buddha. If a determination can be made by drawing lots after sutras have been recited, I will consider it appropriate. One can say that this is the true hūbilgan that has just been indicated by Tsongkhaba.”³⁸⁹ The attribution of agency in the ritual to Tsongkhaba was original in this document and a theme that Sungyun and Tibetan elites would return to in subsequent communications. Moreover, Sungyun reported that the Zhiwa Lha Kūtuktu had been “thoroughly convinced” (Ma. *umesi gūnin dahame*) that it would be “unprincipled” (Ma. *doro akū*) if the reincarnation was recognized within the same clan as that of the Seventh Phagpa Lha.³⁹⁰ In return for what Sungyun admitted was unprecedented outside interference, delegates from Chamdo were invited to travel to Lhasa the following year to observe the actual lottery.³⁹¹

Although Sungyun had informed the emperor that he had arranged to return to Chamdo in the summer of the following year to gather the names of candidates, by August of 1795, he still had reported no further progress on the identification of the Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu. Much as he had a year earlier with Heliyen, Qianlong began to

³⁸⁹ MWLF 159:1209. The full quote: “*siwala kūtuktu. jai geren šabisa de ulhibuhede. uhei hukšeme alarangge. dergi amba enduringge ejen. uthai manjusiri fucihi. uttu nomun hūlabume sibya tatame toktobuci. mende derengge bime. ere teni dzungk’aba i joriha yargiyan hūbilgan seci ombi seme geren gemu urgunjeme hukšeme gūnin dahambi.*”

³⁹⁰ MWLF 159:1210.

³⁹¹ MWLF 159:1211. Sungyun wrote, “Your servant observes that having thus dealt with things, not only is the Siwala Kūtuktu persuaded, but, when the disciples, who had previously by themselves conducted the search for rebirths of the Pakbala Kūtuktu, were told that this time the determination would be made according to the emperor’s edict and that this was entirely appropriate, responded thanked [the emperor] joyously with utter sincerity and true earnestness.” (“*aha turwaci. uttu icihiyara babe. siwala kūtuktu se gūnin dahara teile akū. nenehe jalan i pakbala kūtuktu i hūbilgan be baire de manggai ini šabisa beye baime fujurulaha. ere mudan enduringe ejen i hesei uttu fujurulame toktoburengge. cende umesi derengge oho seme. yargiyan i hing sere unenggi gūnin i hukšeme urgunjenduhe.*”)

again voice suspicions that searches were being undertaken in secrecy. He wrote to Sungyun asking if, “At this time, although everyone has come to realize the spuriousness of the Lamo Chökyong, have there been any cases of identification of hūbilgan according to the divinations of the Lamo Chökyong by lowly, muddleheaded people who still trust in the oracles?”³⁹²

In his letter to Sungyun, the emperor had also identified the Golden Urn lottery for (perhaps) the first time explicitly as a “law” (Ma. *kooli*: “aisin bumba tampin de sibiya tatami toktobure kooli”).³⁹³ Sungyun’s detailed response to the emperor’s concerns revealed the extent to which the gradual establishment of the Golden Urn as law had entailed the construction of an enforcement apparatus within both the ambans’ office in Lhasa and the administration of the Ganden Podrang. This supportive scaffolding had apparently been erected in the two years since Heliyen had first requested that the measure be “committed to the records.”³⁹⁴ Sungyun reported:

Since the establishment of the Golden Urn, there has not been a single case of the Tibetan people recognizing a reincarnation on the basis of secretly observing divinations. The reason for this is that after establishing the Golden Urn, Heliyen et al have respectfully obeyed the imperial decree and together with the Jirung Kūtuktu have collected the names and numbers of the major and minor kūtuktu and šaburung and reported them to the Board as well as placed them away for safekeeping in our office of seals. Moreover whenever it is time to recognize the reincarnation of a kūtuktu or šaburung, having received the name of the small child that has emerged from each respective monastery’s investigations, we can make accurate reports.³⁹⁵

³⁹² Sungyun memorial, MWLF 160:2028 (QL 60/06/29, 1795-8-13).

³⁹³ MWLF 160:2027.

³⁹⁴ See court letter to Heliyen, MWJXD 23: 290-296 (QL 58/06/08, 1793-7-15).

³⁹⁵ MWLF 160:2028-2029. In this memorial, (Ma.) *šaburung* is the Manchu transliteration of the Tibetan term “zhabdrung” meaning “honored one” (Tib. *zhabs drung*). Sungyun appears to be

It is evident from Sungyun's report that the reification of the Golden Urn as *law* also involved the cooperation of Tibetans. The regent of the Eighth Dalai Lama, the Jirung Kūtuktu (Tatsak Rinpoche), and the ambans had jointly established an inventory of reincarnate lamas, laying the groundwork for what Sungyun envisioned as the comprehensive management of tülku. Further classified as "major kūtuktus" and "minor kūtuktus and šaburung," the different ranks of reincarnations would receive different bureaucratic treatments, with the former being handled via the palace memorial system and the latter being supervised via routine communications with the Lifen Yuan.³⁹⁶

Sungyun also offered a striking assessment of the success of the new law:

Previously the Tibetans (*tanggūt sa*) had trusted the chökyong and observed their divinations. And nothing could be done about the way they squandered wealth on the chökyong. Since the urn was established in accordance with the edict, once [the names of candidates] are reported, the selection of lots is immediately carried out. Their wealth is now spent much more frugally and they rejoice together, all having been convinced that the Great Holy Lord Manjusri's identification [method] is very proper.

I observe that the Tibetans are no longer deceived by the chökyong. Originally they found the chökyong credible, even in the matter of identifying *hūbilgan*, despite there being nothing reliable about it, and their arbitrary words were taken as omens (*temgetu*). Now, the Tibetans believe the determination of *hūbilgan* made according to the imperial decree by selecting lots from a golden urn after reciting prayers before the Buddha Tsongkhaba to be an unusual omen and are persuaded. Therefore the divinations [of the oracles] are not secretly observed by anyone anymore.³⁹⁷

using this term to refer to those tülku/reincarnate lamas who had not been honored with the title "kūtuktu" by the Qing court. The "board" here refers to the Lifen Yuan.

³⁹⁶ MWLF 160:2029.

³⁹⁷ MWLF 160:2030-2031.

Sungyun's interpretation of the Golden Urn lottery as an "omen" (*Ma. temgetu*), casts light on the amban's strategy for implementing the law. According to Sungyun, the believability of the event hinged on transforming it into a spectacle more impressive than that of the oracles. The key to the success of the law was its reinterpretation by Tibetans as an "omen," and Sungyun was nothing if not a consummate stage-manager of the Golden Urn ritual. As a result he adapted and modified the configuration of the lottery such that the agency of unseen forces (deities, Buddhas, emperors, etc.) could be imagined and appreciated. Moreover, this attention to the staging of the Golden Urn lottery carried over both to his advance planning—the cultivation of the search party members in the lead up to the drawing, and to his later representations of the event in subsequent celebrations and reports to Beijing. Thus it was Sungyun more than any other Qing official who served in Lhasa during the 1790s who appears to have influenced the organization and interpretation of lottery during the nineteenth century.

It was not until another year had passed that the reincarnation of the seventh Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu was identified in the form of a one-year-old child from "commoner Tibetan" household in the Litang region (JQ 01/08/10, 1796-9-10). Sungyun's subsequent report to the throne detailed a ritual that departed significantly from previous blueprints. His arrangement of the ritual offered an innovative interpretation of the Golden Urn statute. First he shifted the venue from the Jokhang cathedral to the Potala palace. As Sungyun described the event, the Dalai Lama, Jirung Kūtuktu, Démo Kūtuktu, several other monks with the rank of abbot, and two chamberlains of the Phagpa Lha estate brought the Golden Urn, along with various possessions of the previous Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu, to the Potala and arranged them before a painted image (*Ma. enduringge*

nirugan Tib. *thangka*) of the Qianlong emperor. This marks the second innovation: in contrast to early blueprints that positioned the urn and the prayer service in the presence of either the Jowo Sakyamuni or Tsongkhaba, Sungyun brought the ritual into the presence of the emperor. After these monks had led seven days of prayers the final lottery was conducted. Here too we find a difference: where the Erdeni Bandida lottery at Yonghegong had lasted only three days, the preparatory prayer service for the Phagpa Lha was stretched over a week. Finally, Sungyun offered the first unambiguous account of how the lottery was conducted. He personally made up the lots and placed them in the urn. Then, following another round of prayers, “both ambans genuflected before the urn and images and in a manner such that the audience could observe, the assistant amban respectfully drew the [name] of the Tibetan child from Litang.”³⁹⁸ This joint involvement of both ambans in the physical work of conducting the lottery subsequently became the model for all future Golden Urn lotteries.

The structure of Sungyun’s written announcement of the lottery results was also influential. As he would subsequently do in later memorials that announced the results of other Golden Urn lotteries, Sungyun concluded this report with personal reflections on the meaning of the ritual and its reception among the Tibetan witnesses. In this case he first presented evidence of how the Tibetans had appreciated the ceremony, noting that they had immediately prostrated before the image of Qianlong and exclaimed, “The Great Holy Lord on High is truly the Manjusri Buddha!” He then followed this observation by stating that the “hūbilgan had definitely been indicated by Tsongkhaba,” an opinion he then conveyed in letters to the Zhiwa Lha Kūtuktu and other disciples of the Phagpa Lha

³⁹⁸ Jointly submitted memorial from Sungyun and Hening, MWLF 162:2471-2472 (JQ 01/08/10).

in Chamdo.³⁹⁹ As a result of this careful framing, the presentation of the ritual itself served as a kind of public exchange of agency: The Qing officials attributed the accuracy of the lottery to Tsongkhaba, and the Tibetans credited Qianlong. Finally, Sungyun reflected on his own personal satisfaction with the ritual. He was very pleased: the first test of the Golden Urn in the case of a major Tibetan reincarnation had been successful. There was no evidence that Tibetan nobility had corrupted the process. And the oracles were absent from his account.

Conclusion:

The first mention of the Golden Urn in the *Biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama* is in the context of the search for the reincarnation of the Phagpa Lha Kūtktu. The author, the Démo Kūtktu, who Sungyun recorded as having witnessed the event, arrived at a similar observation about the synthesis of forces that had come together to make this a successful identification. The idea for the method had originated in the “perfect wisdom of the emperor,” who had perceived that “corruptions stemming from human beings desire for status and power” had led to “ever greater disputes and quarrels.” But the correct result ultimately relied on the intercession of Tsongkhaba who had to be carefully propitiated before and during the lottery. The Démo Kūtktu’s account noted that the emperor’s original edict had also listed two specific texts dedicated to Tsongkhaba that should be recited before conducting the lottery.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ MWLF 162:2473-2474.

⁴⁰⁰ Démo Kūtktu, *Biography of Eighth Dalai Lama*, 250:kha-251:ka. These prayers were: 1) *dga ldan lha brgya ma* (“Hundred deities of Tushita,” a guru yoga of Tsongkhaba. Ch. 《兜率上師瑜

Démo's account differed from Sungyun's in a handful of ways, adding some details, but dropping others. The text reported the specific location of the ritual, the Chapel of Victory over the Three Realms (Tib. *gzim chung sa gsum rnam rgyal*) in the Potala Palace. While the mention of this site might have implied the presence of the Qianlong emperor to individuals familiar with the room's association with the propitiation of Qing rulers, the *Biography* did not reference the painting of Qianlong as playing a role in the ritual as Sungyun had. Nor did the text mention the direct involvement of the ambans in selecting the lot. To the contrary, after names had been written on "golden cards" and the prayers to Tsongkhaba had been completed, they "entrusted the veracity [of the ritual] to the dharma protectors (deities) of the previous incarnations of the lama." The subsequent description diverged even further:

Having mixed the lots, because the one that was pulled out was the Lithang [candidate], a child who had already been greatly favored by all the people—from aristocrats to commoners—of Chamdo and had also been identified by the testimony of the Protectors, he was [celebrated] as a true Jewel and [people] swore that the emperor's measures to avoid conflicts [over the identification of reincarnations] were in fact good. Among those witnesses [from Chamdo], the faith that comes from conviction (Tib. *yid ches pa'i dad pa*) increased very greatly.⁴⁰¹

In a sense, Démo's description is a testament to the success with which the Qianlong emperor and his field officials in Inner Asia had integrated a Ming bureaucratic practice into the process of locating reincarnate lamas. Moreover, the metaphysical understanding of the ritual had evidently undergone a transformation. Qianlong's ritual had worked as Sungyun (and the Zhiwa Lha Kūtuktu, perhaps) intended: The urn had become a venue for the unseen powers of Tsongkhaba and the deities to act and the

伽母》), and 2) *dmigs brtse ma*: Miktsema prayer aiming at loving kindness, a prayer to Tsongkhapa. Ch. 《緣悲頌》.

⁴⁰¹ Démo Kūtuktu, *Biography*, 251:ka-kha.

winning lot had become an omen/*temgetu/mtshan ltas* of their wishes. But far from displacing the oracles, from an indigenous perspective the urn had become a complimentary technology. The oracles were back. And despite Sungyun's bluster, they had probably never left. The Démo Kūtuktu was willing to concur with the Throne that "mistakes" (Tib. *'dzol 'ga' zhig*) had been made in the identification of reincarnate tulkus.⁴⁰² Yet at no point had Démo cited the oracles as the source of the corruption and lack of accord over the authenticity of tulkus.

Evidence from Tibetan sources casts doubt on Sungyun's claim to have completely eliminated the oracles. Prior scholarship has argued that the Tibetans never shared the Qing ruler's sense of crisis or doubt in the incarnations and that Qianlong's interest in reforming the system was either a pretext for asserting political supremacy over the Geluk School or was simply an expression of his ignorance of Tibetan understandings of reincarnation (or perhaps both).⁴⁰³ However, accounts such as that of the Démo Kūtuktu do suggest that some Tibetan elites from the Geluk School did in fact concur with the Throne fear that faith in the authenticity of the tulkus had been compromised. Moreover, the reports of both the Démo Kūtuktu and Sungyun focused attention on whether the identification process achieved a very specific type of faith. In this chapter we have seen the emperor, and subsequently Sungyun, speak explicitly of achieving obedience to the law on the Golden Urn not through force but as a result of "having become convinced" (Ma. *gūnin dahabumbi*). Similarly, the Démo Kūtuktu wrote

⁴⁰² Démo Kūtuktu, *Biography*, 250:kha.

⁴⁰³ Matthew Kapstein, *The Tibetans* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2006), 159: "...As an imperial intrusion penetrating the heart of Tibetan religious life, it was by far the most resented, so that every effort was made to circumvent its use." Paul Nietupski, *Labrang Monastery: A Tibetan Buddhist Community on the Inner Asian Borderlands, 1709-1958* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 134.

that the use of the Golden Urn in the case of the identification of the Phagpa Lha had instilled in observers a particularly strong form of faith: “faith from conviction” or “faith from trust” (*yid ches pa’i dad pa*). The usage of these phrases in the documents above suggests that in both Manchu and Tibetan they express a form of faith based on the kind of conviction or trust that one acquires from personal observation.⁴⁰⁴

It is striking that in the Manchu language the concepts of persuasion and obedience are intimately linked by the same root verb (*gūnin dahabumbi* and *dahambi*, respectively). In light of the court’s attempts to implement the statute on the Golden Urn, the link hardly seems coincidental. The gradual establishment of the Golden Urn as law and the concomitant reification of certain elements from the management of the Erdeni Bandida or Phagpa Lha cases into precedents, were attended by a constant concern not merely with whether the court’s directives were obeyed, but if they were obeyed out of personal conviction. As a result, we have seen how the dynasty directed its field officials in Mongolia and Tibet to orchestrate public tests of the oracles and criminal proceedings against the Tüsiyetü Khan and the steward of the Erdeni Bandida estate. These proceedings were staged not merely to expose the corruption of the Geluk School but also to demonstrate the superiority of Qing laws and administration. As Qianlong himself frequently stated, Qing success was a “victory of law-making.” The court’s strategy for the eradication of the oracles, therefore, hinged on the belief that when exposed to the Qing system, Tibetans would choose it over their own on account of its fairness and frugality. This explains the emperor’s pleasure in receiving the news that common folk had purportedly reacted with astonishment at the news that kūtutku could emerge within their families. This extended as well to the notion that the Qing was rule-based and

⁴⁰⁴ See fuller discussion of this topic in Chapter Three.

systematized and therefore more just. Unlike the “way of the Buddha,” Qianlong’s “way of the emperor” promised not only equality before the law but justice in the here and now, without having to wait for karmic retribution.

The degree to which the argument for the replacement of the oracles and the imposition of Qing sovereignty (Ma. *toose*) in Tibet was legitimized in terms of extending legal justice to Tibetans should not only give us pause to reconsider the importance of law and legal discourse in the expansion of Qing colonialism, but also draws our attention to the ways in which Qing expansion paralleled other contemporaneous empire building. As Elizabeth Kolsky argues with regards to colonial India, the belief that the British could deliver impartial justice and stronger legal protections to Indians than the indigenous legal traditions was the most important device for legitimating colonial rule, both in the home country and abroad.⁴⁰⁵ Qing official discourse in 1790s Tibet was little different.

Yet how far, ultimately, was the late Qianlong court willing to go to delegitimize the indigenous legal system? What kind of role did it envision for Qing administrators in local jurisprudence? As a concluding vignette, a case handled by Sungyun at the same time as he was dealing with the Phagpa Lha search paints an extreme picture. On August 13, 1795, Sungyun reported that he had been approached by a group of Tibetans who filed a lawsuit against the Néchung (Ma. *Naicung*) oracle. They claimed that the oracle had, on the authority of a decree (Ma. *g'ašuk*, Tib. *bka' shog*) from the Dalai Lama, occupied their land and claimed their produce for three full years. Sungyun investigated

⁴⁰⁵ Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India: White Violence and the Rule of Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 13, 15.

the case and, finding the medium guilty, had him caned thirty times. Sungyun summarized the case as follows:

In Tibet there are only four major chökyong, the Lamo, Néchung, Samye, and Gwadung. In accordance with their faith, the Tibetans in a muddled manner inquire after the fortunes of their petty matters. Their divinations not being at all clear, their credibility is accordingly also minimal. Among the four protectors, the Néchung protector has willfully taken possession of the people's fields. Because of this, our servants have frightfully punished and imprisoned him. The Néchung chökyong is the object of faith and worship by the Dalai Lama and all the monks of Drépung monastery. The Dalai Lama only knows how to read sutras. He understands nothing of the ways of things. Thus when we explain to him what we have done, he just approves and thanks us and states that he will not again issue decrees. The Tibetan people fearlessly point out how [the Dalai Lama] has wronged them and raise their grievances against the Oracles. Indeed these are clear signs that they no longer have faith in the protectors.⁴⁰⁶

In this case the amban, in an unprecedeted fashion, not only involved himself in a local property dispute, but also reversed the decision of the Dalai Lama. Given the timing of the case in the midst of the campaign against the oracles, it was clearly an opportune moment to further discredit the oracles. Yet the additional pressure the amban reports to have placed on the Dalai Lama to recuse himself from making further judgments on property issues, and the insinuation that he was complicit in the crime, suggests that agents of the court were now growing more comfortable in presenting to the broader public what previously had only been an internal discourse challenging the legitimacy of the Dalai Lama's increasingly restricted role in local administration.

In the following chapter we will explore in greater detail the implementation of the Golden Urn Law from the perspective of Tibetan-language sources. Just three months after the successful identification of the Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu, the dynasty received word that the monks of Labrang Monastery in Amdo had already commenced their search for

⁴⁰⁶ MWLF 160:2033 (QL 60/06/29, 1795-8-13).

the reincarnation of the second Jamyang Zhepa. This case was to prove much more complicated than the Phagpa Lha case, and the tensions it generated both between the Qing state and Tibetan Buddhists, and among Tibetan Buddhists, reveals how, although there was a great range in ideas about divination and how to search for reincarnations, all sides strategically engaged each other in the shared pursuit of “convincing” identifications.

Chapter Three: The Power of Dreams

Introduction: The Recognition of the Third Jamyang Zhepa

In September of 1797, Sungyun reported to the Throne that he and the assistant Lhasa amban Hening had conducted the Golden Urn lottery to confirm the identity of the reincarnation of the Second Jamyang Zhepa (1728-1791). This was the first time the ritual had been conducted since the selection of the Phagpa Lha lama a year earlier and followed the same format: Tibetan dignitaries including the Eighth Dalai Lama, the regent Tatsak Rinpoche, and representatives of the Jamyang Zhepa's estate were drawn together before the image of Qianlong in the Potala Palace, and, as the "scriptures of Tsongkhaba were recited,"⁴⁰⁷ Sungyun inscribed the names of three candidate children on lots. Hening drew the winning lot—that of candidate number two, a three-year-old Tibetan child named Kelzang Bum (Ma. *G'aldzangbum*, Tib. *Skal bzang 'bum*), the son of Rinchen Gyamtso (Ma. *Rincinjamseo*, Tib. *Rin chen rgya mtsho*), a Tibetan from Xunhua subprefecture.⁴⁰⁸ Just as he had in his memorial concerning Phagpa Lha, Sungyun concluded by noting the various ways in which the outcome had received the support of the witnesses. In particular, he recorded that the Belmang Pandita (Ma. *kaimong surulku*, Tib. *dpal mang paN+Di ta dkon mchog rgyal mtshan*, 1764-1853), the chief representative from Labrang Monastery had prostrated himself before the image of Qianlong and exclaimed, "The Great Holy Emperor on High is truly the Manjusri Buddha! The determination that has been made by drawing a lot while reciting the sutras

⁴⁰⁷ MWLF 164:0392-0393. "dzungk'aba i nomun hūlabume..."

⁴⁰⁸ Xunhua subprefecture (Ch. 循化廳).

appears to me to be completely proper. This can be considered to be nothing but Tsongkhaba's indication of the genuine reincarnation. I myself am truly and joyously convinced.”⁴⁰⁹ The chosen child was duly enthroned at Labrang as the Third Jamyang Zhepa, Lozang Tupten Jikmé Gyatso (Tib. Blo bzang thub bstan ‘jigs med rgya mtsho, 1792-1855).

Sungyun's Manchu-language palace memorial reporting this matter circulated not only within the court in Beijing, but also amongst the disciples of the Jamyang Zhepa. When the biographer of the Third Jamyang Zhepa commenced his work in 1859, he accorded the Golden Urn lottery a prominent place in the account of the identification process and included Sungyun's memorial, translated in its entirety from Manchu into Tibetan.⁴¹⁰ The Tibetan-language biography presented the official Qing account of the lottery immediately after its own description of the event based on Tibetan sources, giving the reader the opportunity to view the event from two different perspectives. In the account based on witness testimony, however, the prostrating monk was identified not as Belmang Pandita, but rather the chamberlain of the Jamyang Zhepa's estate, who had been second-in-command of the delegation to Lhasa. The biographer wrote that immediately upon seeing the result of the lottery:

⁴⁰⁹ MWLF 164:0393.

⁴¹⁰ The Tibetan translation of Sungyun's Manchu-language memorial puts Belmang Pandita's speech as follows: “The entourage of the Jamyang Zhepa with great respect knelt and said, ‘We request to prostrate with folded hands before the treasured image of the Great Emperor. The Cakravartin Great Sovereign Emperor is truly the same as the Manjusiri Bodhisattva (*gnam gyi lha Gong ma bdag po chen po nyid rje btsun 'jam pa'i dbyangs*). It is difficult to imagine but this judgment on the identification of the tülku by means of shuffling the wooden lots after having completed the rituals has occurred according to the decision by means of prophecy having gone directly to the lord Tsongkhapa.’” See Ngag dbang thub bstan rgya mtsho, *Kun mkhyen 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku phreng gsum pa'i rnam thar*, (Pe chin [Beijing]: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1991 [1859-1889]) 54-55. This work is hereafter abbreviated as JYZP03.

The [chamberlain] from Labrang then zealously said in Mongol without pause, “The two previous incarnations of the Jamyang Zhepa Kutuktu, according to the word of the [Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama], accomplished the ‘stability of life’ in both Amdo and Ü. Likewise, the Great Sovereign Emperor also awarded seals and proffered unmatched support. Until now, due to the compassion of the Great Manjusri Emperor, the masters and disciples the monastery and colleges of the Jamyang Kūtuktu have existed in happiness and comfort. Now, because of the Great Sovereign Emperor’s grace, in front of the image which bears no difference from the real person himself, [and] under the principle direction of the Dalai Lama, and before a gathering of the emperor’s wise kūtuktus and the two ambans who appeared like the sun and moon; in accordance with the system (*lugs srol*) of the great emperor, the unmistakable high incarnation was identified. Because [the emperor] has bestowed the Great Wish-fulfilling Jewel on Labrang Trashi Khyil and the entirety of Amdo, [I] prostrate before [His] Grace!⁴¹¹

Although the *Biography of the Third Jamyang Zhepa* presents two differing accounts of the same speech, both convey the legitimacy of the Qing ritual and the authenticity of the selection. In this biography, as well as three other published Tibetan-language accounts of the search for the third Jamyang Zhepa that were available to the Labrang community in the late nineteenth century, the urn was portrayed as a complimentary component of a complex search process. Moreover, according to these accounts, the Golden Urn confirmed the authenticity of a child whom the Labrang community had already identified as the leading candidate.

Not without justification, contemporary scholarship on Labrang Monastery and the lineage of the Jamyang Zhepas has pointed to the “fact” that the lottery ultimately identified the candidate favored by the Tibetans as evidence that the Qing court exercised little more than ceremonial authority. On the basis of the description of the search in *Biography of the Third Jamyang Zhepa*, Paul Nietupski has written that, “The Tibetans

⁴¹¹ JYZP03, 50-51.

carried out their own selection procedure but at least went through the motions of the Qing policy. At once Tibetan tradition and authority were preserved and the Qing voice was heard.”⁴¹² The unstated implication of this assessment is that the leaders of the Jamyang Zhepa’s estate had the power and authority to guarantee that the results of the lottery could be fixed in their favor. Thus the use of the urn was but one of several gestures made by Tibetans from Labrang during the nineteenth century as a “diplomatic courtesy” to uphold the fiction of Qing authority.⁴¹³ However, in light of new information emerging from the Manchu-language archives of the communications between Beijing, Lhasa, and Amdo, this assessment requires revision.

In the days following the identification of Kelzang bum as the third Jamyang Zhepa, Sungyun had submitted not one, but two reports to the court—the formal memorial (*Ma. bukdari*, Ch. 奏摺, Tib. *gre'u tsi*) that appears to have been composed from the outset with a mind towards both official and non-official circulation and a second, secret note intended only for the inner court.⁴¹⁴ In this second letter Sungyun informed the emperor that he had successfully ensured the correct outcome of the lottery. Seven months earlier, Qianlong had decided that among the three candidates whose names had been brought to the attention of the Qing court, the child listed first was unacceptable.⁴¹⁵ Therefore, he ordered Sungyun to arrange the lottery in such a fashion as

⁴¹² Paul Nietupski, *Labrang Monastery: A Tibetan Buddhist Community on the Inner Asian Borderlands, 1709-1958* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 135.

⁴¹³ Nietupski, *Labrang*, 137.

⁴¹⁴ This second note was most likely dispatched to Beijing as an attachment to the longer memorial. Both documents are dated JQ 02/08/03 (1797-9-22). For the base memorial, see MWLF 164:0391-0395; for the attachment, MWLF 0388-0389.

⁴¹⁵ MWLF 163:1352-1355 (JQ 02/01/08, 1792-02-04).

to ensure that the name of the first child was not drawn. Sungyun's mission was doubly complicated, however, because according to contemporary Manchu-language reports from the Xining amban, it was *this* child, Wangchen bum (Ma. *wangcinbum*, Tib. *Dbang chen 'bum*), *not* Kelzang Bum, whom the Labrang community had identified as the most promising candidate.⁴¹⁶ Sungyun and Hening would have to not only fix the lottery but also manage what, from the perspective of the delegation from Labrang, would now be an unexpected outcome.

In his secret communiqué, penned just two days after the lottery had been conducted, Sungyun was confident that he had pulled the matter off: "Nothing has been divulged. We have ensured that their first-ranked child, the son of the Tibetan *baihu* Dula, was not selected. Having seen to it that the name of the second-ranked child, the son of a Tibetan with no official status, was drawn; we explained the benefits the of this [selection] to the Belmang tülku and the other of the disciples [of the Jamyang Zhepa] who were all completely thankful and convinced."⁴¹⁷ And his confidence appears to not have been misplaced. Starting in 1798 with the completion of the *Biography of the Second Jamyang Zhepa*⁴¹⁸ and culminating with the production of the *Biography of the Third Jamyang Zhepa*⁴¹⁹ in the late nineteenth century, members of the Labrang

⁴¹⁶ MWLF 163:0645-0646 (JQ 01/11/21, 1796-12-19).

⁴¹⁷ MWLF 164:0388: "*heni sereburakū de umai ceni ujude faidaha fandze tanggū da dula i jui be tatame tucibuhakū. emgeri jaide faidaha sula fandze i jui be tatame tucibuñi sain i ulhibuhe de harangga šabi kaimong surulku se yooni hukšeme gūnin dahaha.*"

⁴¹⁸ Gung thang bstan pa'i sgron me, *Kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku 'phreng gnyis pa rje 'jigs med dbang po'i rnam thar* (Lan kru'u [Lanzhou]: kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1991 [1798]).

⁴¹⁹ Mkhan po ngag dbang thub bstan rgya mtsho, *Kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhet pa sku 'phreng gsum pa'i rnam thar* (Pe chin [Beijing]: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, [1859-1889]). Hereafter JYZP03.

community composed a series of written accounts of the search for the reincarnation of the second Jamyang Zhepa that legitimized the candidacy of Kelzang bum. These books were themselves transcriptions of the oral testimony of witnesses such as Belmang Pandita. Belmang's student, Drakgönpa Könchok Tenpa Rapgyé (hereafter, "Drakgönpa," Tib. *brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas*, 1800/1-1869), incorporated his teacher's reminiscences about his trip to Lhasa into both his history of the Amdo region, *The Oceanic Book* (first printed in 1849, expanded edition 1865), and his biography of Belmang Pandita (1864).⁴²⁰

Although the composition and printing of these books spanned nine decades, they constitute a coherent single narrative of the events of 1796 through 1797 that helped consolidate a historical memory within the Labrang community and the wider Amdo region that to the present day has remembered the rebirth of the second Jamyang Zhepa to be relatively uncontroversial. This is in stark contrast to the divisive search for the reincarnation of the first Jamyang Zhepa in the 1720s. That search resulted in two candidates, a division of the original Labrang community into irreconcilable camps, and a simmering feud that continued to generate bloodshed well into the early twentieth century. The historical record contains no trace of a comparable conflict in the aftermath of the identification of the third Jamyang Zhepa in 1797.⁴²¹

However, as this chapter will demonstrate, these works do contain evidence that at the time of the search, disciples of the second Jamyang Zhepa, members of the greater

⁴²⁰ Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Yongs rdzogs bstan pa'i mnga' bdag rje btsun bla ma rdo rje 'chang 'kon mchog rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'o zhal snga nas kyi rnam par thar 'dod 'jug ngogs zhes bya ba bzhugs so* (Pe chin [Beijing]: mi rigs dpe sgrun khang, 2001). Hereafter abbreviated as Drakönpa, BMNT.

⁴²¹ See Chapter Six and Nietupski, *Labrang*, 126-127.

Labrang community, and Tibetan Buddhists elsewhere experienced profound misgivings concerning the involvement of the Qing and the outcome of the search. Since the signs of these underlying tensions were camouflaged by the hagiographic conventions of these works, they become salient only when one reexamines the Tibetan-language record against the secret Manchu-language letters and the revelation that the Qing had manipulated the outcome of the Golden Urn lottery. This chapter will argue that, although certain Qing officials such as Sungyun made great efforts to cultivate indigenous authorities and make the lottery and its outcome palatable to Tibetan Buddhists, the key work of managing the reception of Kelzang bum as the reincarnation of the second Jamyang Zhepa fell to Tibetan-Buddhist elites in both Lhasa and Amdo. The case of the third Jamyang Zhepa—the “truth” of which never appears to have leaked beyond Sungyun, Hening, and the Qianlong emperor and his inner court advisors, demonstrates that the Qing could rig the urn. But the success of their intrigue hinged on the actions of a wide range of Gelukpa hierarchs, witnesses, and later chroniclers. These Tibetan Buddhists *harmonized* two seemingly incompatible systems for locating reincarnations and *naturalized* the result of a highly contentious and unexpected identification. Moreover, this was an ongoing process that was taken up by several successive generations of authors at Labrang, stretching from the return of the original search party from Lhasa in 1798 until the printing of the third Jamyang Zhepa’s biography in the 1880s. This chapter is therefore a story of indigenous agency in a colonial context, but one that flips the standard narrative of Sino-Tibetan relations during the Qing: No longer a story of how Tibetans slyly and astutely got their way in the face of

a weakening imperial authority, it becomes a testament to the lengths Tibetans might go in service of the Great Sovereign Emperor.

In Chapter Two we have seen how over the course of several years the court attempted to manage the transformation of a bureaucratic lottery into an omen—a moment of divine intervention when the invisible became precipitate. During the period of Heliyen’s tenure in Lhasa, the Golden Urn was presented alternately as a moment when Amitāyus Buddha or perhaps a manifestation of the emperor himself (present in the form of a painting hung in the Potala) could be summoned to intervene. Sungyun added to these interpretations by promoting the notion that Tibetans could envision Tsongkhaba as the guiding force.⁴²² The wealth of Tibetan-language sources from Labrang Monastery permit us in this chapter to explore the various ways in which Tibetan-Buddhists themselves interpreted and participated in the Qing ritual/law making effort.

These materials lead towards new questions about the nature of “service” to the Qing state and Qing authority in Tibetan-Buddhist contexts. Several of the Gelukpa hierarchs portrayed in these texts as playing key roles in the search for the third Jamyang Zhepa also possessed strong ties to the Qing court. In particular, Tükwan Lozang Chökyi Nyima (Tib. *Thu'u bkwan blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma*, 1737-1802), Gungtang Könchok Tenpé Drönmé (Tib. *Gung thang dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me*, 1762-1823), and

⁴²² Interestingly, aside from a grammatical change in tense, Sungyun reported the Zhiwa Lha Kütuktu and Belmang Pandita as making exactly the same statement about Tsongkhaba’s influence on the lottery Zhiwa Lha’s statement: “*dergi amba enduringge ejen. uthai manjusiri fucihi. uttu nomun hūlabume sibiya tatame toktobuci. mende derengge bime. ere teni dzungk'aba i joriha yargyan hūbilgan seci ombi seme geren gemu urgunjeme hukšeme gūnin dahambi.*” MWLF 159:1209 (QL 59/11/13, 1794-12-5). Belmang Pandita et al.’s purported statement: “*dergi amba enduringge ejen. yala manjusiri fucihi. uttu nomun hūlambume sibiyā tatame toktobuha de . fuhali mende derengge bime. ere teni dzungk'aba i joriha yargyan hūbilgan seci ombi. mei beyese yargyan i urgunjeme gūnin dahambi seme alibuha.*” From MWLF 163:0393 (JQ 02/08/03).

Tatsak Tenpé Gönpo (Tib. *Rta tshag bstan pa'i mgon po*, 1760-1810) had not only received the title of “kūtuktu” but had also been elevated to the status of “kūtuktus resident in the capital” (Ch. 駐京之呼圖克圖).⁴²³

Contemporary scholarship has identified the cultivation of certain lineages of reincarnate lamas by successive Qing rulers as a key component of the empire’s strategy for managing relations with Tibetan Buddhists in Inner Asia. The Qing tradition of inviting Tibetan Buddhist monks to reside at court began well before they had conquered the Ming and accelerated during the Kangxi reign as the empire turned from the pacification of China proper to the growing strategic threat posed by the Junghars.⁴²⁴ Yet these efforts were highly fraught. For instance, starting in the mid-1650s the Shunzhi and Kangxi emperors successively maintained the Ilayuysan Kūtuktu in Beijing to serve as the leading representative of the Geluk school and intermediary between the court and the Dalai Lama. However, when this lama was dispatched to Lhasa in 1689 with instructions to aid the court in working out a peace accord with Galdan’s Junghar khanate, he ultimately joined the Junghar cause.⁴²⁵ During the Qianlong reign efforts were made to establish a more permanent legal framework for hosting Geluk hierarchs and assigning

⁴²³ See the section on “lamas” in the Jiaqing edition (1817) of the *Daqing Huidian* (“Collected Statutes of The Great Qing”), reprinted in Zhao Yuntian (annotator), *Qianglong chao neifu chaoben Lifan Yuan Zeli* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2006), 368.

⁴²⁴ Wang Xiangyun, “The Qing Court’s Tibet Connections: Lcang skyā Rol pa'i rdo rje and the Qianlong Emperor,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 60.1 (2000): 125- 63, 127.

⁴²⁵ The Kangxi court subsequently liquidated the monk’s estate in Beijing and began casting about for another monk to take up the leadership of the Geluk teachings in Beijing, ultimately settling on the second Changkyā incarnation. A decade later Kangxi managed to convince the next Junghar khan, Tsewang Rabdan to extradite the Ilayuysan Kūtuktu, who was then executed at the Yellow Temple (*Huangsi*) in front of a large audience of Inner Asian nobility. See, Chen Xiaomin, “Qingdai zhujing lama zhidu de xingcheng yu yange,” *Manzu yanjiu* 4 (2007): 111-121, 115-116.

responsibilities. Internally circulated draft *Statutes of the Lifan Yuan* (c. 1756) record that following the establishment of the Yonghegong temple (1744) and the Office of Lama Seals and Service (Ch. 嘛嘛印務處, 1745) within the Lifan Yuan, the court legislated the presence of three kūtuktu in the capital—the Changkya, Galdan Siretu, and Jirung (Tatsak) lineages.⁴²⁶ Thirty-three years later, after the death of Changkya Rolpai Dorjé, Qianlong undertook another major reevaluation of the situation and ultimately expanded the formal list of “kūtuktus resident in the capital” (駐京之呼圖克圖) to include twelve kūtuktu divided into left and right wings.⁴²⁷ Chen Xiaomin has suggested that the practice of inviting prominent lamas to Beijing, granting them titles, stipends, and residences, and delegating to them a range of formal administrative and religious responsibilities constituted by the late Qianlong period a full-fledged “system.”⁴²⁸ Yet considering that this institution was only formally articulated in 1786 (at the beginning of Qianlong’s final decade of rule) and that many of the kūtuktus living at the time of their enlistment in the statute would never visit Beijing, it is perhaps appropriate to think of the “kūtuktu resident in the capital” not as a fixed system but rather as a historical resource or ideological tradition that could be used strategically by both rulers and lamas. Thus in the nineteenth century, the legacy of the *zhujing kūtuktu* remained to be shaped and debated by contemporaries.

⁴²⁶ See section on “Tibetan monk preceptors in the capital (京師番僧)” in *Qianlong chao neifu chaoben Lifan Yuan Zeli*, 125; and Chen, 117.

⁴²⁷ See section of the Jiaqing-period *Lifan yuan zeli*, on “lamas resident in the capital (駐京喇嘛)” in *Qianglong chao neifu chaoben Lifanyuan zeli*, 368.

⁴²⁸ Chen Xiaomin, “Qingdai zhujing lama zhidu de xingcheng yu yangge” (Manzu yanjiu 4 (2007), 111-121).

The complexity of these institutions, and their continuous adaptation during both the Qianlong reign and subsequent reigns, suggests that what it meant to be a “resident kūtuktu in Beijing” was open to a range of interpretations. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Qianlong proclaimed a revised and expanded system of *zhujing kūtuktu* in the year that Changkya Rolpai Dorjé (1717-1786), the longest serving and most influential “state preceptor,” passed away. Understood by both contemporaries and modern historians to be the paradigmatic *zhujing kūtuktu*, Rolpai Dorjé’s career has been exhaustively studied by both for information on the nature of this role. However, preoccupied with the question of whether Changkya was an agent of Qianlong’s empire building or an advocate of local/Tibetan/Gelukpa concerns, modern scholarship has left unanswered the question of how contemporaneous understandings of his career, expressed in widely-read biographies such as those of his disciple Tukwan Lozang Chökyi Nyima (1737-1802) and Chuzang Rinpoche (Tib. *Ngag dbang thub bstan dbang phyug*, 1725-1796), influenced the subsequent development of Qing-Gelukpa relations and the role(s)/careers of later monks who traveled to court and undertook various tasks at the dynasty’s request.⁴²⁹ Furthermore, Yonghegong and Changkya-focused studies of Qianlong’s relationship with Tibetan-Buddhist hierarchs have rarely addressed the question of what these monks actually did in their home communities and how their affiliation with the court was perceived therein. Rolpai Dorjé’s court-centered career, which stretched from childhood

⁴²⁹ See Marina Illich, “Imperial Stooge or Emmissary to the Dge lugs Throne? Rethinking the Biographies of the Chankya Rolpé Dorjé,” in *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition; Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, Königswinter, ed. Bryan J. Cuevas and Kurtis R. Schaeffer (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 17-32. Studies by Berger and Wang present a more nuanced interpretation of the activities of Rolpai Dorjé but still largely catalog his activities according to the for/against dichotomy. See Wang Xiangyun, “The Qing Court’s Tibet Connections: Lcang skyā Rol pa’i rdo rje and the Qianlong Emperor” (*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 60/1 (2000), 125- 163); and Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness* (University of Hawai’i Press, 2003).

to death, was an outlier from the experience of most *zhujing kūtuktu* who spent the majority of their time away from court.

One of the few scholars to address these questions is Paul Nietupski, whose study of Labrang Monastery has cataloged the relationships of numerous local reincarnate lineages with the Qing state. Tibetan-language sources from Labrang identified monks who taught in neighboring Chinese communities or ministered at court “Chinese lamas” (Tib. *rgya nag pa bla ma*).⁴³⁰ Nietupski depicts these monks primarily as “emissaries” who periodically traveled to Beijing to take up translation or teaching tasks on behalf of the Qianlong court, but whose fundamental orientation was toward the interests of their home institutions and perhaps the Geluk School more generally: They “worked on behalf of Labrang Monastery.”⁴³¹ Nietupski’s case in point is Lozang Tenpé Nyima (1689-1762), the reincarnation of the forty-fourth Ganden Tripa (Lubum Ngawang Lodrö Gyatso, 1635-1688). He was invited to Beijing during the last year of the Yongzheng reign and under Qianlong was instrumental in the translation of the Tengyur into Mongol and the conversion of the Yonghegong princely residence into a monastery.⁴³² Known at court as the “Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu” (Ma. *G’aldan siretu kūtuktu*, Ch. 噶爾丹錫勒圖胡圖克圖), he was one of the first three estates to be permanently established in Beijing by

⁴³⁰ Nietupski, Paul Kocot, “The ‘Reverend Chinese’ (*Gyanakpa tsang*) at Labrang Monastery,” in *Buddhism Between Tibet and China*, ed. Matthew T. Kapstein (Boston MA: Wisdom Publications, 2009), 181-213; and Nietupski, *Labrang Monastery*, 123-125, 128-129.

⁴³¹ Nietupski *Labrang Monastery*, 128; (2009), 189.

⁴³² Nietupski, *Labrang Monastery*, 128-129; see also the *Oceanic Book*, 278-281.

the Qianlong emperor early in his reign.⁴³³ His exceptionally high status and long residency in Beijing suggests though, that this lama, much like Rolpai Dorjé, was much more than just an emissary from Amdo, he was also a servant of the emperor.

Rather than approaching our interpretation of Labrang's Beijing-affiliated lamas as a case of sorting out whether they were acting on behalf of the Qing emperor or Labrang, it might be helpful to interpret their project to legitimize the influence of Qing laws and officials as a product of what Johan Elverskog has referred to as the “Qing cosmopolitan culture” of Inner Asia.⁴³⁴ Elverskog defines this cosmopolitanism as, “the ability of the various peoples within the Manchu state to see, think and act beyond the local, be they Mongol, Tibetan, Manchu, or Chinese.”⁴³⁵ Elverskog elaborates this picture of Qing cosmopolitanism primarily by describing several examples of Qing literature composed in Inner Asia that not only combined literary traditions from China, Mongolia and/or Tibet, but also synthesized these components into a novel yet coherent product.

Similarly, during the search for the third Jamyang Zhepa, a host of Gelukpa hierarchs from both Amdo and central Tibet fabricated an original *Qing* ritual out of Tibetan and Chinese components. In the aftermath, Tibetan-language chroniclers would over the span of eighty years engage in an ongoing revisionist project to produce a

⁴³³ This “Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu” is not to be confused with the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu mentioned in Chapters One and Two. See the Qianlong-period statutes on “Tibetan monk preceptors in the capital (京師番僧)” in *Qianglong chao neifu chaoben Lifanyuan zeli*, 125.

⁴³⁴ Johan Elverskog, “Wutai Shan, Qing Cosmopolitanism, and the Mongols,” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 6 (December 2011): 255. Matthew Kapstein has also noted the contributions of scholars from Amdo to an “Inner Asian cosmopolitanism” that arose during the 18th century. See Matthew T. Kapstein, “Just Where on Jambudvīpa Are We?” in *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 336-364.

⁴³⁵ Elverskog, 255.

narrative of these events that posited a legitimate place for the Qing emperor and imperial law in the search process. It should come as little surprise that court-affiliated reincarnate-hierarchs such as the Tükwan Rinpoche, whom Elverskog points to as an exemplar of Qing cosmopolitanism, should prove instrumental in the legitimization of the Golden Urn. The Tükwan Rinpoche was intervening neither on the side of the “Tibetans” nor would he have conceptualized himself as an “ally” of the dynasty—for it is unlikely that he saw himself as an “enemy” of Tibetan Buddhists. To employ such terms implies an anachronistic dichotomy dividing Tibetans/Gelukpas from the Qing. The resistance that had to be overcome in the case of the urn should not be understood as “Tibetan.” It is also based on modern, twentieth-century assumptions concerning the coherence and stability of “Tibetan” as a category of meaning during the Qing period. This is not to say that there was not a strong sense of local identity vis-à-vis China and perhaps even other regions of Tibet. Nor is it to say that cultural identity was not a factor in what was very real resistance to the notion of using the urn. Building on Elverskog, I would add that Qing cosmopolitanism did not necessarily hide the traces of its creation. Much as Tükwan frankly identified the elements of other non-Geluk religious traditions that had shaped his own teachings,⁴³⁶ in the case of the identification of the third Jamyang Zhepa, commentators did not hide the disparate origins of different elements of the search process and Golden Urn ritual.

The search for the Jamyang Zhepa fell at a unique moment. It was proceeded by a burst of legal reforms of Tibetan administration that intensified Qing imperial involvement in central Tibet and, as we’ve seen in Chapters One and Two, divination

⁴³⁶ Roger Jackson, “Triumphalism and Ecumenism in Thu'u bkwan's *Crystal Mirror*,” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 2 (August 2006): 15-16.

technologies. Yet it was followed shortly afterwards by the death of the Qianlong emperor and the first imperial succession in sixty-four years—the end of an epoch that had begun well before any of the major characters in the search had been born. The Tibetan-language narratives produced by this encounter between Tibetan-Buddhist elites and the Qing colonial bureaucracy thus had the potential to not only define the Qianlong legacy but also shape local understandings of the Geluk-Qing and local-center relationships more broadly. The proper management of the search for the Jamyang Zhepa was thus essential to the survival of the institutional innovations of the Qianlong reign and setting the right tone for the uncertain times that lay ahead. In the following section we will begin our examination of this event from the perspective of the Manchu-language sources.

The Manchu-Language Record

In the early winter of 1796-1797, the Xining amban Tsebak (Ch. 策拔克, Mongol, Bordered Yellow Banner, d. 1812) reported to the Throne that he had personally examined three children whom preliminary tests had indicated might be the reincarnation of the Second Jamyang Zhepa. During the winter months it was not unusual for the amban to head out to the pastures south of the Yellow River beyond the subprefectures of Guide and Xunhua to check the border posts (Ma. *karun*) that marked the Gansu-Qinghai frontier. Early winter, when the earth firmed up and the rivers froze over, and the animals were still fat and healthy, was the perfect time for the nomads from beyond the frontier (Ma. *aiman i fandze*) to launch raids on the Mongol banners of Qinghai or other

communities in Guide and Xunhua. And the frequency of these raids had been increasing of late.⁴³⁷ The amban claimed that since he was in the area, it was “convenient” (Ma. *ildun de*) to drop by the households of the candidate children to make a personal inspection. On the basis of his subsequent reports, one suspects that he may have been motivated by more than curiosity, but regardless, what he perhaps hoped would be perceived as earnestness in pursuing his official duties landed him in hot water instead.

Tsebak’s memorial began by quoting the steward (Ma. *šangjoiba*) of the Jamyang Kūtuktu’s estate, Lobdzangdarji. The steward reported that since the death of his master in the sixtieth year of the Qianlong reign, he had traveled frequently in the places of the “Mongols and Tibetans” (Ma. *monggo fandze i ba*) near the monastery and after much investigation identified three children: 1) Wangcinbum, the son of Dülagyel (Ma. *dula*, Tib. *bdud la rgyal*), a headman from Rangen (Ma. *ranggan*, Tib. *rwa ngan*) in Guide subprefecture; 2) Kelzang, the son of Rinchin Gyamtso, a “Tibetan subject of the Rongwo Nomunhan of Xunhua subprefecture” (Ma. *rungbu Nomunhan i šabinar i fandze*) of Xunhua; and 3) Bomandorji, the son of Nyima (Ma. *nima*, Tib. *nyi ma*), a “nomadic Tibetan from Nangra in Guide” (Ma. *gui de i haringga nangra aiman i fandze*). After reporting that he thought the first two candidates displayed the most potential, the steward requested, “Please send these names to Tibet and subject them to

⁴³⁷ Tsebak, memorial MWLF 163:0638 (JQ 01/11/21, 1796-12-19). There is also a rare and uncataloged map of the five Mongol banners situated to the south of the Yellow River attached to this memorial (labeled 郡王納漢達爾濟等五旗遊牧地輿圖), MWLF 163:0649-0653. Scattered Tibetan (Ch. 番, Ma. *aiman i fandze*) raiding began to come to the attention of the court in 1782, but intensified during the 1790s. Tsebak was cashiered in 1797 for mishandling the raiding. See Wenfu, *Qinghai shiyi jielüe* (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1993 [1809-1841?]), 10, 15-25. While serving as chief Lhasa amban seven years later, Tsebak became embroiled in a bribery scandal. See Li Ruohong, “Dui cebake shouhui an de zai tantao,” *Zhongguo Zangxue* (1998.3): 47-51.

the lottery in the Golden Urn!”⁴³⁸ The depiction of the steward’s request to use the urn as voluntary here is significant. The Labrang leadership is presented as not merely obeying the law but rather actively seeking out the intercession of the Qing. During the nineteenth century, this became a constant leitmotif of all memorials from Xining to Beijing that introduced the names of search candidates.⁴³⁹

Tsebak also filed a secret note that accompanied the memorial. This memo raised a thorny problem: he worried that the son of Dülagyel might be disqualified on account of his father’s status as headman (Ma. *tanggūda*, Ch. 百戶, lit. “hundred-household head”). According to Tsebak, the law stated that, “When rebirths arise, they cannot be recognized among the sons of Mongol *han*, *wang*, *beile*, *beise*, *gung*, *jasak*, or *taijis*. Recognize them only from among the sons of *taiji* with no official post or subjects of common status.” Tsebak wondered if this statute applied to Dülagyel’s son, even though the father was “a nomad [Tibetan]” (Ma. *aiman i fandze*)⁴⁴⁰ and, although an “indigenous official of the sixth rank” (Ma. *ningguci jergi aiman i hafan*), did not obviously hold one of the aristocratic ranks the Qing doled out to Mongols. Yet the problem was even more complicated:

⁴³⁸ MWLF 163:0643: “ere ilan jui i se gebu be wargi dzang de yabufi. aisin bumba de dosimbufi. sibya tatame tokobureo.”

⁴³⁹ I found similar “requests” to use the urn in several other cases that I investigated from the nineteenth century. For example, in 1836, the coordinators of the search for the reincarnation of the fifth Cagan Nomunhan wrote to the Qinghai amban to request the use of the urn (MWLF 206:2122-2125, DG 16/12/14). In 1890, representatives of the estate of the Tatsak Rinpoche (Ma. Jirung Kūtuktu) also requested the use of the urn ritual (National Palace Museum, Taipei, *Qingdai gongzhongdang zouzhe ji junjichudang zhejian*, doc. #171082, GX 16/07/20, 1890-9-3).

⁴⁴⁰ MWLF 164:0392. In this document Dülagyel is not specifically identified as a “*fandze*” (Tibetan) unlike the other two fathers. In subsequent documents, however, he is labeled “*fandze*.”

Although it is not permitted to enter his child [as a candidate], however the birth of this child was auspicious and impressive. The steward Lobdzangdarji and every one else collectively acclaims this marvelous child as the reincarnation of the kūtuktu. This year Dula, in obedience to your servant Tsebak's orders, delivered and promulgated [official] letters/instructions (Ma. bithe) among the raw nomadic Tibetans. In the course of recovering goods that had been stolen by bandits, he zealously made a great effort. Since Dula is after all merely a sixth rank indigenous official, he should not be compared to the Mongol khans, princes, dukes, and so forth. In violation of the statutes, your servant has rashly not withdrawn the name of his child... I politely request an edict indicating whether it is appropriate to enter the son of Dula into the determination of the Jamyang Kūtuktu by drawing lots.⁴⁴¹

Tsebak's hope that his "rash" petition would find a sympathetic ear was not unprecedent in recent experience. Just a year earlier the emperor had granted a special dispensation to the community of the Cagan Nomunhan, a prominent reincarnation lineage that administered a "Mongol" banner in the pastures south of the Yellow River. In that case, the edict had cited the political power of the lineage and its recent assistance in rounding up bandits (much like Dūlagyel purportedly had) in permitting the disciples of the monk to identify candidates as they saw fit without reference to the restrictions listed above.⁴⁴² Unfortunately for Tsebak, he had misjudged the underlying goals of the law.

According to the emperor, the problem lay not with the family background of Dūlagyel but with the fact that the steward had already begun to promote the child as the authentic reincarnation. He dispatched the following orders to Sungyun in Lhasa:

Tsebak has memorialized concerning the matter of identifying the rebirth of the Jamyang Kūtuktu. The name of the child of Dule, the *tanggüda* of Rangan has been placed at the head of the list. Moreover, he reports that

⁴⁴¹ MWLF 163:0646.

⁴⁴² Bilingual edict in Mongol and Tibetan, issued from the office of the Xining amban, QL 60/04/15 (1795-06-01), held at Qinghai Provincial Museum, photograph in collection of author.

the steward Lobsangdarji has spoken with awe about how this child is probably the rebirth of their kūtuktu because the child's birth was auspicious and magnificent. I observe that the subordinate steward's earnest opinion reflects only his selfish intentions. [He] obviously desires that the son of the *tanggüda* will be selected. Yet honestly, if things are done in this manner, for a long time afterwards it will be impossible to eliminate widespread skepticism. Therefore, I have passed down a secret order to Sungyun et al. At the time [of the ritual], regardless of which childrens' names Tsebak sends to Tibet, discretely and without revealing anything, handle the selection in such a way that the name of the candidate who has been listed first—the son of the Tibetan *tanggüda* Dula, definitely does not emerge. Regardless of the artifice and cunning you employ, ensure that you disclose nothing to anyone.⁴⁴³

In this letter to Sungyun, Qianlong clearly explained his priorities: the identification of persuasive reincarnations, free from what he perceived was the debilitating stain of self-interest and corruption of the Gelukpa establishment. In contrast, the status of Dülagyel was of perhaps only secondary concern and not even mentioned. Since Dülagyel's son's name was already circulating, it would be tactless to directly prohibit his candidacy. It would be up to Sungyun to identify a "convincing" rebirth by fixing the lottery.

The emperor's adamancy in this case suggests two additional rather speculative observations. First, given the emperor's fixation on the role of the steward, it is hard not to wonder if the scandal involving the steward of the Erdeni Bandida estate was not also weighing on the emperor's mind. And second, one wonders if the Throne was aware of the violence that had followed the contested identification of the second Jamyang Zhepa in the 1720s. Although never mentioned in any official archival source, memories of the 1720s conflict might have provided sufficient justification for the Qing emperor to insist on the new law and incentive for Labrang-affiliated elites to engage strategically with the

⁴⁴³ Quoted in Sungyun's Manchu-language memorial of MWLF 163:1352-1353 (JQ 02/01/08, 1797-2-4). Original instructions to Sungyun probably date to JQ 01/12/05, the day that Tsebak's original report was received at court.

new recognition method. Regardless, the emperor's apparent willingness to bend the law to accept Labrang's favored candidate was a solid testament of his sincerity in this matter.

Sungyun and Heliyen responded to the imperial instructions as follows:

The Holy Lord's continuous protection of the Yellow Strictures is authoritatively handled with completely lofty intentions. It will not do for the suspect and evil customs of the steward to flourish. At this time I still have not received the names of the three children from Tsebak. After the steward Lobdzangdarji has arrived, your servants will promptly in accordance with the existing [laws] take the Dalai Lama et al. before the image of the Holy One [i.e. the emperor] to read sutras/prayers. There in the presence of the steward and Dalai Lama we will inscribe the names of the three children on the lots. Yet your servants will covertly remember [which is which]. Your servant Sungyun will himself place the lots in order into the Golden Urn. When the recitation of prayers concludes, your servant Hening will choose from among the second and third candidates only. It will remain a secret that only the son of the Tibetan *tanggūda* Dula will not be allowed to emerge. Therefore there will be no grounds for the old doubts to reemerge. Since the identification will have taken place according to the edict, the Dalai Lama will still be convinced and will not be persuaded by anything the steward Lobdzangdarji says. Additionally, here in Tibet there is the nephew of the former Jamyang Kūtuktu and also a chamberlain lama (*jonir*) named Šarab Coinjur. Könchok Sengge [the nephew of Jamyang Zhepa 02] has been in Tibet for fourteen years and his knowledge of the virtuous teaching of the sutras is great and he has attained the status of lharampa. The disciples of the Jamyang Kūtuktu all respect this Könchok Sengge. After the steward Lobdzangdarji has arrived, we will gather Könchok Sengge and the chamberlain Šarab Coinjur and let them both also observe selection of lots. After the reincarnation has been identified, these two [monks] will be sent back [to Amdo] to inform all the disciples. The new reincarnation will be entrusted to Könchok Sengge who will oversee his education in the sutras. This will also be beneficial. Your servants have secretly conferred and personally written this memorial. We urgently dispatch this to inform Your Highness.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴⁴ Sungyun and Heliyen memorial, MWLF 163:1353-1355 (JQ 02/01/08, 1797-2-4):
“enduringge ejen suwayan šajin be karmatara jalin tooselame yamara (?) teni gūnin fuhali
akūnahabi. haringga šangjoTiba i uttu hiracara ehe tacin be yargiyān i yendebuci ojorakū. ne
tsebak i baci ilan jusei gebu be kemuni bejire unde. sirame bejifi. šangjoTiba lobdzangdarji
dahame jihe manggi. ahasi uthai dalai lama sebe nenehe songkoi budala de enduringge nirugan i
juleri nomun hūlabume haringga šangjoTiba i dere tokome. dalai lama sade tuwabume. ilan

Sungyun and Hening's strategy for manipulating the ritual reveals a keen attention to the use of witnesses and a more than passing knowledge of the biographies the monastic population of Lhasa. The ambans appear to have undertaken at least a basic survey of Labrang's connections in central Tibet. Although the identity of the chamberlain has yet to be confirmed, Könchok Senggé (Ma. gongcuk sengge, Tib. Dkon mchog seng ge, 1768-1833) was indeed the nephew of the second Jamyang Zhepa and had recently received the highest scholarly credentials (Ma. *jaramba*, Tib. *lha rams pa*) from Gomang College at Drepung Monastery.⁴⁴⁵ The ambans planned to affix the authority of this monk to the selection process by including him in the ritual and make him a stakeholder in the continuing legitimacy of the candidate by honoring him with the appointment of tutor to the next Jamyang Zhepa. The role of the Dalai Lama, in contrast, appears to have been considered rather insignificant. The emperor was pleased with this plan. In the margins of the memorial he jotted, "Good! Do not divulge this to anyone!"⁴⁴⁶

*jusei gebu be sibya de arafi. ahasi dorgideri ejeme. ilan sibya be. aha sungyun beye bumba
tampin de faidame tebu fi dobome. nomun hūlame šanggaha teisu. aha hening damu jaici
ilacingge be emke tatami tucibu fi. sereburakū de umai fandze i tanggūda Dula i jui be tatami
tuciburakū be dahame. we ya fe ya gemu kenehunjere ba akū. yala hesei tacibuha adali. dalai
lama hono gūnin dahara bade. ere šangjoTiba lobdzangdarji ai hendume gūnin daharakū. jai
dzang de beleni jamyang kūtuktu i jalahi jui bimbime. kemuni šarab coinjur sere emu jonir lama
bi. gongcuk sengge dzang de juwan dūin aniya nomun erdemu tacihangge sain ofi. aramba colo
bihe. jamyang kūtuktu i šabisa yooni ere gongchuk sengge be kundulembi. šangjoTiba
lobdzangdarji atanggi isinjha erinde. hono jamyang kūtuktu i jalahi jui lama gongchuk sengge.
jonir šarab coinjur sede sasa tuwabume sibya tatafi. hūbilgan be toktobuha manggi erebe amasi
unggifi. geren šabisa de ulhibume. ice hūbilgan be uthai gongchuk sengge de nikebu fi eršeme
nomun tacibume ohode. ele tusangga gese. ahasi narhūšame hebšefi. beye bukdari arafi.
hahilame donjibume wesimbuhe."*

⁴⁴⁵ Sonam Dorje, "Konchok Sengge," Treasury of Lives, accessed March 22, 2013, <http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Konchok-Sengge/3769>.

⁴⁴⁶ MWLF 163:1355.

Via the Grand Council, the emperor issued a court letter to Tsebak and Lobdzangdarji, the steward, with a very different message. Here, he permitted all three original names to be sent to Tibet. He admonished the steward, however, writing that, “When identifying any hūbilgan, [we] prayerfully seek a decision from the Buddha. This matter cannot be determined through the surmises of any human.”⁴⁴⁷ The emperor then encouraged Tsebak to send the steward to Tibet in accordance with his original plans: “Furthermore, having elucidated the steward, definitely have him sent to Tibet. If he observes things with his own eyes, perhaps regardless of which candidate is selected, his suspicions will disappear.”⁴⁴⁸ The Xining amban does not appear to have been informed about the plans to doctor the results of the Golden Urn. While it might be easy at this point to portray the emperor’s actions as purely cynical manipulation, one should not dismiss out of hand Qianlong’ insistence that the Buddha alone could identify reincarnations. The fact that the emperor insisted on secrecy in this matter should not be confused with an admission of wrongdoing. The emperor saw himself as removing a false candidate from the competition, not manipulating the ritual. As emperor and adept, his involvement was legitimate—it did not constitute biased human interference like the actions of the steward. Rather than narrowing the field, the emperor could have seen himself as opening it up, reminding his officials that in the implementation of the new statute, they should not take their cues from Gelukpa hierarchs and produce outcomes in accordance with local expectations. One suspects, however, that the steward was pressured to bow out. Although the emperor claimed that he did not mind if the steward

⁴⁴⁷ Court letter quoted in Manchu-language memorial from Tsebak, MWLF 163:1701 (JQ 02/02/28, 1797-3-26).

⁴⁴⁸ MWLF 163:1701.

proceeded to Lhasa, the steward removed himself from the search. Labeling himself a “foolish Mongol slave” and “dizzy with fear,” Lobdzangdarji now claimed that his advanced years made it unwise to travel to “distant lands.”⁴⁴⁹ The monk now requested permission for a new party, consisting of nineteen monks and led by Belmang and Sherab Gyamtso, to set off for Tibet in the spring.

As noted in the introduction, the Lhasa ambans followed through on their plans and selected from among only the second and third candidates. As intended, Könchok Senggé was in attendance and, together with the Dalai Lama and the regent, Tatsak Rinpoché, leant their authority to the proceedings. Sungyun reported that Könchok Senggé had agreed to return to Labrang and take up the job as chief tutor to the young reincarnation and that the Dalai Lama had bestowed not only a formal name on the young child, but also a new title on Könchok Senggé.⁴⁵⁰ Three months later, upon receipt of the emperor’s acknowledgement of the identification of the third Jamyang Zhepa, Sungyun reported that he had translated the edict (essentially a reprint of his original memorial reporting the selection) into Tibetan and that Belmang and the other disciples of the Jamyang Zhepa remained persuaded and would return to Labrang the following year to enthrone the child.⁴⁵¹ Reflecting on the successful outcomes of both the Phagpa Lha and Jamyang Zhepa cases, Sungyun speculated that in the future it would “be easy” to deal

⁴⁴⁹ MWLF 163:1701-1702.

⁴⁵⁰ MWLF 164:0394.

⁴⁵¹ Sungyun et. al, Manchu-language memorial, MWLF 164:1708-1710 (JQ 02/11/20, 1798-1-6). Belmang is quoted as stating that he had recited prayers of Amitāyus Buddha (Ma. *ayusi nomun*) to promote the emperor’s long-life and that he would return to “Xining” in the following year (1798) “after the snow melted” (MWLF 164:1709).

with other reincarnations and that “their past customs could be thoroughly eliminated.”⁴⁵² He wrote confidently, “If your servants carefully handle each case of drawing the lots of hūbilgan, [no one] will dare consult the oracles. If prior to drawing lots we explain to them that this is proper and beneficial and make them understand the foolish blunders of the oracles, they will believe that obeying the imperial decree and drawing lots to make a determination is proper.”⁴⁵³ Although Sungyun claimed to have established “a model” for future searches that excluded the oracles, the Tibetan-language sources reveal that the amban’s claims were false, if not intentionally misleading. Sungyun and Hening may have had their secrets, but so did the Tibetans.

The Tibetan-Language Record

By the late 1880s, literate Tibetans and Mongols could have located an account of the search for the third Jamyang Zhepa in at least four published sources. These were the biography of the second Jamyang Zhepa by Gungtang Rinpoche, the biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa by Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso (Tib. *mkhan po ngag dbang thub bstan ryga mtsho*, 1836-1889), and the biography of Belmang Pandita and the *Oceanic Book*, both by Drakgonpa. The second Gungtang Rinpoche, Könchuk Tenpé Drönmé Pelzangpo (1762-1823), composed the earliest of these works, the biography of

⁴⁵² MWLF 164:1710.

⁴⁵³ MWLF 164:1710.

the second Jamyang Zhepa, in 1798 at the request of Tukwan Chökyi Nyima.⁴⁵⁴ Both of these monks were instrumental in the search process. Gungtang Rinpoche had been the Throne Holder (chief abbot) of Labrang Monastery during the period of the search and also at Gonlung Monastery, the home residence of Tukwan, beginning in 1797.⁴⁵⁵ Thus one suspects that Gungtang's chapter on the search for and enthronement of the third Jamyang Zhepa may also reflect the views of Tukwan Rinpoche. Although but a brief synopsis of these events—only five pages in the modern edition, Gungtang's description laid down a basic narrative of key events during the search that would be reproduced and elaborated on in subsequent accounts.⁴⁵⁶

Continuing chronologically, the next two works to appear were composed by Drakgonpa between 1849 and 1865. As a comprehensive history and geography of the Amdo region (Part One and Two) and a history of Labrang and its abbots (Part Three), the *Oceanic Book* probably achieved the widest contemporary readership of any of the texts that included an account of the search for the third Jamyang Zhepa.⁴⁵⁷ The account of the search appears in Part Three of the *Oceanic Book*, as part of the short biography of the Third Jamyang Zhepa, the twenty-seventh Throne-holder of Labrang. According to the colophon, Drakgonpa commenced his history of the Amdo region in his youth at the

⁴⁵⁴ Gung thang bstan pa'i sgron me, *Kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku 'phreng gnyis pa rje 'jigs med dbang po'i rnam thar* (Lan kru'u [Lanzhou]: kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1991 [1798]), colophon, 490.

⁴⁵⁵ Samten Chhosphel, "The Third Gungtang, Konchok Tenpai Dronme," Treasury of Lives, accessed March 27, 2013, <http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Konchok-Tenpai-Dronme/4730>.

⁴⁵⁶ Gung thang bstan pa'i sgron me, *Kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku 'phreng gnyis pa rje 'jigs med dbang po'i rnam thar*, 482-486.

⁴⁵⁷ This assertion requires further substantiation. While this text has become enormously influential in post-1978 studies of the history of northwest China and Tibet, there have been few studies on the circulation of this text and similar historical works in Tibet prior to 1911.

urging of his teacher, Belmang Pandita. Although early drafts of the history of the “northern lineages” (i.e. the monasteries to the north and west of Labrang, the section labeled “Part one” in modern editions) appeared first in 1833, and again in 1849, it was not until 1865 that historical guide to Labrang, its abbots, and affiliated schools (“Part Two”) appeared in print.⁴⁵⁸ Slightly before this date, in 1864, Drakgönpa completed his biography of his teacher, Belmang Pandita. This biography included an entire chapter devoted to Belmang’s 1797 trip to central Tibet.

On the basis of the title, “A Description of [Belmang’s] journey to Lhasa, the place of the dharma, where the All-seeing Victorious Pair presided harmoniously over the identification of the Supreme Incarnation according to the prophecy of the Superior Deities and the experience of the festival of the breadth of the dharma,” one might be forgiven for assuming that the Qing had little role to play in the search for the third Jamyang Zhepa. However, just four pages into the modern reprint of this chapter, Drakgönpa argued that the search for the reincarnation necessarily required the joint involvement of both central Tibet and “China,” i.e., the Qing court. He wrote that from the very beginning of the search, “The first sign indicated that this matter must be decided by means of the relationship between Ü (*Dbus*) and China (*Rgya nag*).”⁴⁵⁹ This sign, as we shall discuss below, was the fact that indigenous authorities in central Tibet and the emperor had directed the estate of the Jamyang Zhepa to seek a final decision using what people at Labrang would eventually perceive as the same ritual.

⁴⁵⁸ *Oceanic Book*, colophon, 782-783.

⁴⁵⁹ Drakönpa, BMNT, 155. Drakönpa’s description of the Golden Urn as a “sign” or “omen” (Tib. *mtshan ltas*) echoes that of Sungyun, who explained the importance of understanding the lottery as an “omen” (Ma. *temgetu*) in his memorial to Qianlong, MWLF 160:2030 (QL 60/06/29, 1795-08-13).

Yet Drakgönpa is also clear that, especially in the early stages of the search, Belmang Pandita felt significant reservations about the imperial directive—reservations based on a sense that the imperial command and the monastery’s initial plans for the search were discordant. It is this frank admission of doubt that gives Drakgönpa’s retelling of the search a compelling and engaging narrative arc that sets it apart from other accounts. Belmang’s journey to Tibet is therefore not simply a journey to Lhasa to witness a preordained outcome concerning the identity of the third Jamyang Zhepa, but rather the climactic moment of a life-changing personal pilgrimage to Lhasa that simultaneously consolidated his faith and spread his own reputation as a competent administrator and learned Buddhist. This was the only trip to central Tibet that Belmang undertook during his life. Moreover, the confirmation of the identity of the third Jamyang Zhepa by means of both the Golden Urn and other tests affirmed for him the legitimacy of an order in which the Qing state and the Geluk School were integrally linked. As the disciple and life-long associate of Belmang Pandita, Drakgönpa was able to retell this story in considerable detail, recording both the inner thoughts as well as outward speech of his teacher, thus granting this account a degree of verisimilitude not found elsewhere. Whether intentional or not, Drakgönpa’s construction of a narrative journey from disbelief to deeply held personal conviction, makes for a highly effective argument for the legitimacy of the child who was ultimately identified as the third Jamyang Zhepa as well as the Golden Urn. And as a reincarnation who himself was confirmed by the third Jamyang Zhepa in 1804, Drakgönpa had ample personal reasons for promoting the authenticity of the Jamyang Zhepa.

Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso began drafting his biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa four years after his death in 1855, but the final work does not seem to have appeared in print until 1889, the year the author died.⁴⁶⁰ This work was probably strongly influenced by Belmang's account as transcribed by Drakgönpa since several long and important passages in this biography are either quotations or paraphrases of Drakgönpa's biography of Belmang Pandita. Although this text lacks the emotional arc of Drakgönpa's biography of Belmang, it does nonetheless indirectly signal in several places that the candidacy of the first child, the son of Dülagyel of Rangan, had been popular before the expedition set off for Lhasa and that the instructions to conduct a lottery had raised concerns both at Labrang and in neighboring communities.

These four texts were themselves key components of an ongoing process of legitimization. Yet to the degree that they relate a common story, the events they describe reveal several ways in which Gelukpa elites with varying degrees of affiliation with Labrang intervened to resolve concerns with the accuracy of the search. These conflicts emerged not all at once, but gradually over the course of the search. The following section will simultaneously narrate the history of the search for the Third Jamyang Zhepa and examine the different tactics employed to solve the problems posed by the Golden Urn and the actions of Qing field officials stationed in Xining and Lhasa.

The Power of Dreams

⁴⁶⁰ Nietupski, 2011, n. 132 (pp. 162-163), states that the author of this biography began his work in 1859. The colophon is unclear on the date of printing, but suggests that it occurred in or before 1889, the year the author passed away. See JYZP03, 382-383.

The emperor's insistence on the implementation of the statute on the Golden Urn seems willfully ill-conceived when considered in light of the plans already circulating at Labrang for the identification of the reincarnation of the second Jamyang Zhepa. Unlike the case of the Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu wherein Heliyen and Sungyun had already laid the groundwork for the use of the urn well before search had commenced, there is no record of similar advance work by Qing officials at Labrang in the aftermath of the death of the second Jamyang Zhepa in 1792. Instead, prior to the visit of Tsebak, the Xining amban in the early winter of 1796, the Labrang community had already begun to lay plans for a recognition procedure modeled after the procedure that had identified the Great Fifth Dalai Lama. Not only did this model seemingly preclude any use of the Golden Urn, but it carried with it the sanction of an historical tradition independent of and prior to any Qing imperial claims of authority over Tibetan Buddhists or the tradition of reincarnation.

According to the biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa, shortly after the passing of the second Jamyang Zhepa, a well-educated monk from Dongkor Monastery (Tib. Stong skor) traveled to “Tibet” (Tib. bod) to present an offering commemorating the Jamyang Zhepa.⁴⁶¹ This monk then proceeded to request a divination from the Longdöl Rinpoche (klong rdol bla ma ngag dbang blo bzang, 1719-1794) on how to locate the reincarnation.⁴⁶² According to his biographers, by the 1790s the Longdöl Rinpoche was one of the most august and influential teachers in central Tibet, having trained a large

⁴⁶¹ This monk is identified in both the biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa and the biography of Belmang Pandita as a “*dka’ bcu*.” This probably indicates that the monk had studied at Trashilhünpo in Tsang, where the *dka’ bcu* degree was the second-highest credential within the local system of geshé degrees. JYZP03, 37; Drakgönpa, BMNT, 155.

⁴⁶² JYZP03, 37.

number of students including most of the Ganden Tripa who served during the second half of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶³ Although hailing originally from Kham (from an early age he was a friend of the Zhiwa Lha Kūtuktu), he seems to have possessed no shortage of connections to Amdo and Labrang monastery specifically. Among his students was the nephew of the second Jamyang Zhepa, Könchok Senggé, whom we have already met.⁴⁶⁴ The Longdöl lama advised the monk from Dongkor Monastery that the reincarnation of the Jamyang Zhepa should be identified by conducting a dough-ball investigation before the image of Manjuvajra at Reting Monastery (Tib. *Rwa sgreng jo wo 'jam pa'i rdo rje*) as had been done when the reincarnation of the fourth Dalai Lama was determined in the early 1620s.⁴⁶⁵ Longdöl Rinpoche also specified that the divination should be conducted only after the disciples of the Jamyang Zhepa had completed a sadhana ritual from the Kadampa tradition.⁴⁶⁶ Finally, the biography of the Third Jamyang Zhepa reports that Longdöl warned that no other method would deliver an accurate result: “Neither a lama nor a dharma protector [i.e. an oracle] is capable of making this decision. Only after one has completed the Kadam sadhana of the ‘sixteen spheres’ before the Manjuvajra of

⁴⁶³ Samten Chhosphel, “Longdol Lama Ngawang Lobzang,” Treasury of Lives, accessed March 22, 2013, <http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Longdol-Lama-Ngawang-Lobzang/3877>.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ The lama is quoted as referring to the doughball investigation as “zan bsgril:” “*de rwa sgreng jo wo 'jam pa'i rdo rje'i mdun nas zan bsgril gyis thag bcad pa red/*” JYZP03, 37.

⁴⁶⁶ That the Longdöl lama would recommend a sadhana ritual based in the Kadampa tradition is perhaps not surprising given the monastery’s historical affiliation with the Kadampa school. The original text reads, “*rwa sgreng jo bo 'jam pa'i rdo rje'i mdun lta bu zhig nas bka' gdams thig le bcu drug gi sgrub mchod byas te zan bsgyur na 'khrul med babs yong gsungs pa...*” The Longdöl Rinpoche also elaborated a list of specific texts/prayers that the disciples of the Jamyang Zhepa should recite both at Labrang, and in central Tibet. In summary, he presented a detailed set of instructions for a full ritual cycle that was attentive to issues such as location, participants, texts and temporal sequence. The correct outcome of the ritual hinged on the precise execution of all of these elements. See JYZP03, 37.

Reting, will the correct [result] drop when one conducts the dough-ball divination.”⁴⁶⁷

Both Gungtang Rinpoche and Drakgonpa record similar advice from Longdöl in their accounts of the search.⁴⁶⁸ The biographer of the third Jamyang Zhepa however, adds a further detail, noting that when the delegation from Dongkor Monastery returned to Amdo and reported the Longdöl lama’s advice, the Dongkor Kūtuktu⁴⁶⁹ dreamt that he had seen the Jamyang Zhepa return to Labrang, thus providing further confirmation that the Longdöl Rinpoche’s divination was correct.⁴⁷⁰

Thus when the Labrang community received the imperial edict ordering them to use the Golden Urn in the spring of 1797, they not only already had alternate plans in place, but had been warned by a highly respected Gelukpa hierarch that any deviation from the elaborate ritual procedure jeopardized the accuracy of the result. Moreover, the Longdöl Lama’s placement of the Jamyang Zhepa lineage within a ritual tradition that evoked the “great wisdom, great auspiciousness, vast power, and immense generosity of

⁴⁶⁷ “‘jam dbyangs bzhad pa’i sprul sku yang bla ma dang chos skyong gist hag chod mi yong/ rwa sgreng jo bo ‘jam pa’i rdo rje’i mdun lta bu zhig nas bka’ gdams thig le bcu drug gi sgrub mchod byas te zan bsgyur na ‘khrul med babs yong gsungs pa” JYZP03, 37. The second sentence of this quote also appears in the Biography of the Belmang Pandita. See Drakgonpa, BMNT, 155.

⁴⁶⁸ See Drakgonpa, BMNT, 155. The Gungtang Rinpoche recorded the Longdöl Rinpoche as stating: “It is necessary to make the decision by conducting a dough-ball investigation (brtag sgril) before the Jowo Rinpoche. If the [recognition] is conducted in the same manner as that which [found] the previous Great Fifth [Dalai Lama], then there will be no possibility of deception/fraud.” “sprul sku’i don thams cad la lung zhus sogs byas te sku rim sgrub pa gal che/ ‘on kyang dngos gzhi jo bo che lta bu zhig gi mdun nas brtag sgril gyis thag gcod dgos pa yong/ sngar kun gzigs lnga pa yong de ltar byas pa yin pas bslu ba zhig mi yong gsungs shing/” See Gung thang bstan pa’i sgron me, Kun mkhyen ‘jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku ‘phreng gnyis pa rje ‘jigs med dbang po’i rnam thar, 482.

⁴⁶⁹ The Dongkor Kūtuktu was also considered, since 1789, a “kūtuktu resident in the capital” (駐京呼圖克圖).

⁴⁷⁰ JYZP03, 38.

the Great Fifth [Dalai Lama]”⁴⁷¹ meant that departure from this program would also sever an association (both in metaphoric and effective terms) between the Jamyang Zhepas and the fifth Dalai Lama.

The historical sources record that the imperial instructions were met with a mixture of concern and derision. Gungtang wrote that shortly after Labrang received the edict, they raised their concerns with the Tukwan Rinpoche, who had traveled to the monastery to examine the three candidates. “They insistently queried of the honorable Tukwang Rinpoche, ‘If the dough ball examination is performed using these three names, as a matter of course one will fall. It is very important that the root principle is not mistaken. Is it possible to hope that there is another method and that if the [ritual] is postponed the [true incarnation] will emerge?’”⁴⁷² Drakgonpa provided further details, noting how monks at Labrang made light of the controversy by pointing out the underlying similarity between the two sets of instructions: “At that time, the lamas of Labrang Trashi Khyil sarcastically joked, ‘The dough-ball divination is definitely required!’”⁴⁷³ Belmang, however, upon learning of the emperor’s edict worried aloud, “In that case, other than follow [the emperor’s] command, is there any other choice? But will it be possible to truly get the unmistaken reincarnation?”⁴⁷⁴

It was the Tukwan Rinpoche who appears to have played the key role in allaying these concerns. According to the biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa, after the names

⁴⁷¹ JYZP03, 37.

⁴⁷² Gung thang bstan pa’i sgron me, *Kun mkhyen ‘jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku ‘phreng gnyis pa rje ‘jigs med dbang po’i rnam thar*, 483.

⁴⁷³ “zen bsgyur” Drakgonpa, BMNT, 155.

⁴⁷⁴ Drakgonpa, BMNT, 156.

of the potential candidates had been collected, Tukwan was invited to Labrang to consult with Gungtang and Hortsang, the two most senior of the four “Golden Throne-holders” of the monastery at that time. At the conclusion of this meeting, Tukwan announced, “Henceforth, the two Golden Throne holders and myself, having conducted the recognition tests, affirm that among the four there is indeed the true incarnation. Thus it is necessary to hold a dough ball examination (*zan brtag*) in the chapel that holds the remains of the two previous incarnations.”⁴⁷⁵ While it would seem from this statement that Tukwan was advocating yet another method of identifying the reincarnation, he modified his advice on the basis of a dream that occurred to him that evening. The biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa describes the dream as follows:

That night in his dream, [Tukwan] found himself sitting together with the Great Sovereign Emperor at Rehol. A man appeared who claimed to be from the estate (Tib. *lha sde*) of the Jamyang Zhepa. In his sash, he had tucked four arrows. He then took three arrows into his hand. He shot the first, which missed the target. The second arrow, however, struck the target and afterwards he did not shoot again. [Later] when [Tukwan] stated that [this dream] was a sign that the unmistakable [reincarnation] was among the first two, all the monks were as ecstatic as magpies when they hear thunder.⁴⁷⁶

In contrast to the previous dream of the Dongkor Kūtuktu that sanctioned the Longdöl Rinpoche’s method, Tukwan appears to have introduced his own competing dream, one that clearly legitimized the participation of the Qing emperor and approved of the method dictated by the new statute on the Golden Urn. The dream also performed two additional tasks. It winnowed the four candidates that had been located by the search party down to three and sent a clear signal that most likely it would be the second candidate who would

⁴⁷⁵ JYZP03, 40.

⁴⁷⁶ JYZP03, 40.

prove to be the genuine reincarnation. Although this dream is a fixture of all four of the published accounts, the different authors deployed the dream at slightly different moments in the chronology of events.

The author of the biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa, Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso, wrote that Tukwan announced his dream at Labrang well before the community had received word that they would be required to use the Golden Urn. As noted above, after conducting their first round of visits to households of promising children in the spring and summer of 1796, the leaders of the search party brought four names back to Labrang and requested Tukwan's advice. Following this meeting and the promulgation of the dream, Tukwan then traveled to Xining and informed the amban of the status of the search.⁴⁷⁷ It was only at this point that the amban personally traveled to the pastures between Xining and Labrang to visit the candidates. The biographer writes, "At that time, because it became clear for the son of Dülagyel of Rangan, it quickly became common opinion that this was the true and unmistaken incarnation."⁴⁷⁸ Here we have evidence for the accuracy of the amban's report that Dülagyel's son was widely viewed as the most promising candidate. However, this biography records that when the amban submitted his memorial to the emperor, he wrote that the second candidate, not Dülagyel's son, was probably the actual reincarnation.⁴⁷⁹ Since the Manchu documents reveal that this was not the case, it seems likely that either the author or his sources

⁴⁷⁷ JYZP03, 40.

⁴⁷⁸ JYZP03, 41: "'di skabs rwa ngan bdud la rgyal gyi bu kha gsal ba byung bar brten/ mi mang nas de sprul sku 'khrul med yin nges kyi gtam 'ur rlung ltar mched pa byung/'"

⁴⁷⁹ See JYZP03, 41: "The amban reported three names from among the four candidates (*dog gnas*) to the golden ear (the emperor) for testing. However, among these [he] extolled the supreme incarnation (i.e. the child who was ultimately identified as the rebirth, candidate two) as being the most promising."

revised this detail in the aftermath of the search.⁴⁸⁰ According to Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso, it was only after the amban's visit that Labrang learned definitively that the Golden Urn would have to be consulted.⁴⁸¹ The structure of this narrative would suggest, therefore, that the imperial command was but the fulfillment of Tukwan's prophetic dream.

Of Drakgönpa's two works, the *Oceanic Book* does not mention the Longdöl Lama's instructions at all and, in a fashion similar to the biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa, presents Tukwan's visit to Labrang and his dream as occurring before the community learned of the imperial decree.⁴⁸² However, Drakgönpa added a small yet telling detail. He writes that although prior to his dream, Tukwan had instructed the disciples to conduct a *zengyur* (Tib. *zan bsgyur*) at Labrang, after the dream, he stated that, "although representatives will be sent to Ü, the outcome will still be the same as in my dream."⁴⁸³ In other words, Tukwan appears to be predicting that the site of the divination will be shifted to Lhasa. Thus this account not only minimizes the existence of competing instructions, but also presents Tukwan's dream more directly as sanctioning the Golden Urn.

Drakgönpa's other account of the search, the one contained in his biography of Belmang Pandita, as well as the Gungtang Rinpoche's recollection of the events, both position the emperor's edict ordering the use of the urn as arriving shortly after the

⁴⁸⁰ MWLF 163:0642-0644.

⁴⁸¹ JYZP03, 41-42.

⁴⁸² Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 431-432.

⁴⁸³ *Oceanic Book*, 431.

instructions from the Longdöl Lama. Tukwan's dream is introduced later.⁴⁸⁴ Thus, in Gungtang's narrative, Tukwan's dream is more easily interpreted as reconciling two potentially conflicting sets of instructions. In fact, Gungtang records that Tukwan's dream was the direct result of the request for a divination made by those at Labrang who were troubled by the two sets of instructions.⁴⁸⁵ Furthermore, Gungtang implies that it was only after Tukwan had approved the ritual that the emperor made the final decision to send the candidates names to Tibet for final selection.⁴⁸⁶

The temporal proximity of Gungtang's account, published in 1798, might support the argument that the utility of Tukwan's dream was such that later authors pushed it up in the chronology of events, granting him a prophetic authority. Given the accuracy of Tukwan's dream and its approval of Qing involvement, it is impossible not to take this argument a step further and speculate that the dream was a useful fabrication or embellishment of something that Tukwan had said. Regardless, given that Gungtang's account was printed in 1798, at the latest the final version of the dream would have to have been produced shortly after news of the lottery trickled back to Amdo in late 1797 or early 1798. The consistent focus on Tukwan's dream in traditions written and oral surrounding the search for the third Jamyang Zhepa from 1798 through the 1880s, demonstrates that dream was understood as a key instrument for legitimating the candidacy of the second child.

⁴⁸⁴ In the case of the biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa, Tukwan's dream does not appear in the text until the very end of the account of the search process. See BMNT, 165.

⁴⁸⁵ Gung thang bstan pa'i sgron me, *Kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku 'phreng gnyis pa rje 'jigs med dbang po'i rnam thar*, 482-483.

⁴⁸⁶ Gung thang bstan pa'i sgron me, *Kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku 'phreng gnyis pa rje 'jigs med dbang po'i rnam thar*, 483: “de nas gong du gre'u tse bzung ba'i lan du thag gcod rgyur dbus su 'gro dgos kyi bka' phebs te/”

Yet Gungtang also wrote that there were those who perceived a basic similarity between Longdöl and Qianlong's instructions: both had ordered an "investigation by rolling" (Tib. *brtag sgril*, "takdril").⁴⁸⁷ Drakgönpa also promoted this equivalency in his biography of Belmang Pandita. It was this seemingly coincidental agreement between two separately issued decrees, one from central Tibet and one from the Qing ruler, that was for Belmang a "sign" or "omen" (Tib. *mtshan ltas*) of the "connection" between Tibet and China.⁴⁸⁸ According to Gungtang, the fact that the emperor had also ordered a *takdril* "increased [people's] trust and confidence in what the [Longdöl] lama had said."⁴⁸⁹

Gungtang and Drakgönpa's claim of similarity between the Golden Urn and the dough ball divination hinged on the semantic incorporation of the urn into the dough-ball divination tradition. Drakgönpa, much like the other three authors of these works, rarely used the term "golden urn" (Tib. *gser gyi bum*). Instead, the imperially-sanctioned procedure is almost always referred to as either *zentak* (Tib. *zan brtag*, "dough ball investigation"), *zengyur* (Tib. *zan bsgyur*, "dough-ball transformation"), or *takdril* (Tib. *brtag sgril*, "an investigation by rolling [things up]"), thus firmly placing it within an indigenous category of divination technologies. Even where the words "golden urn" are used, they are usually found within a phrase that presents the urn as a type of *brtag sgril* as in the following example from Gungtang's account: "Shortly thereafter, a golden edict arrived from the Manjusri emperor stating, 'With regards to the tülku, the identification

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 482.

⁴⁸⁸ Drakgönpa, BMNT, 155.

⁴⁸⁹ Gung thang bstan pa'i sgron me, *Kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku 'phreng gnyis pa rje 'jigs med dbang po'i rnam thar*, 482.

must be made by conducting a *takdril* within the golden urn.”⁴⁹⁰ When describing the final ritual, Gungtang again avoided direct reference to the golden urn, recording instead that a “name-card transformation” (Tib. *mtshan byang bsgyur ba*), thus conveying the notion the cards had been “transformed” in the ritual in the same fashion as a dough-ball might be in the traditional ritual (Tib. *zan bsgyur*).⁴⁹¹ If the Tukwan Rinpoche’s dream can be understood as a strategy for legitimating the urn, the semantic assimilation of the urn into an indigenous category was part of a related set of tactics that minimized the appearance of incongruity between the two traditions.

Such efforts to harmonize the two ritual prescriptions can be found in several places in these texts. For instance, Gungtang’s account neglects to mention any of the specific details of the Longdöl Lama’s instructions (such as location or accompanying offerings and prayers) other than it should occur “before *something like* the Jowo Rinpoche” (emphasis mine). Thus when he writes in the following sentence that the emperor has also ordered that ritual be held before a “Jowo,” it appears that the monk and the emperor were talking about the same “Jowo” image.⁴⁹²

That Gungtang would downplay the differences between the instructions of Longdöl Rinpoche and the emperor in his text is perhaps not surprising given that both

⁴⁹⁰ Gung thang bstan pa’i sgron me, *Kun mkhyen ‘jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku ‘phreng gnyis pa rje ‘jigs med dbang po’i rnam thar*, 482: “ma ‘gyangs par ‘jam dbyang gong ma chen po nas/ sprul sku ‘i skor jo bo ‘i mdun du gser gyi bum pa’i nang nas brtag sgril gyis thag gcod dgos zhes gser gyi bka’ babs pas sngar gyi ibla ma’i gsung la yid ches rnyed/” Even the concerned petitioners quoted by Gungtang also refer to emperor’s method simply as “*brtag sgril*,” 483.

⁴⁹¹ Gung thang bstan pa’i sgron me, *Kun mkhyen ‘jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku ‘phreng gnyis pa rje ‘jigs med dbang po’i rnam thar*, 483. Transformation from a mere ball of dough or wooden lot into a magical portent.

⁴⁹² Gung thang bstan pa’i sgron me, *Kun mkhyen ‘jam dbyangs bzhad pa sku ‘phreng gnyis pa rje ‘jigs med dbang po’i rnam thar*, 482.

Drakgönpa and Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso quote Gungtang as arguing that the venue of the ritual was of little significance. It appears that even as the search party prepared to depart Labrang for central Tibet there were still reservations about the imperial instructions. Just days before their departure, Belmang and the other leader of the search party, the chamberlain of Labrang, Shérap Gyatso (*blab rang mron gnyer shes rab rya mtsho*)⁴⁹³ met with Gungtang Rinpoche who pointedly instructed them to obey the imperial instructions. According to the biography of the Third Jamyang Zhepa, the Gungtang Rinpoche stated:

Although it is not appropriate to perform the *zengyur* before the Manjuvajra at Reting Monastery, having completed the basic conditions by offering of the sixteen spheres there and reverently praying, is it really still necessary to roll up the dough balls at that place? While on the road, you should inquire in detail about this with the Tukwan Rinpoche.⁴⁹⁴

Belmang's biography also records this same statement, although modified slightly to suggest that Gungtang felt strongly that the ceremony of the "sixteen spheres" and the prayers were important prerequisites that should be completed even if they did not ultimately perform the *zengyur* at Reting monastery.⁴⁹⁵ Gungtang's advice was

⁴⁹³ Drakgönpa and Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso both report that after the steward backed out of leading the expedition, new leadership was selected (ironically!) by using a dough ball divination. See JYZP03, 42; BMNT, 157. With regards to the sudden withdrawl of the steward, Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso reports that the steward excused himself on account of old age and poor health. Nothing is mentioned about possible pressure on the steward to remove himself from the search. Drakgönpa does not discuss the steward.

⁴⁹⁴ JYZP03, 42-43: “*khri rin po che nas rwa sgreng jo bo 'jam pa'i rdo rje'i mdun du zan bsgyur rgyu stabs mi 'grigs kyang/ der thig le bcu drug gi sgrub mchod dang/ dad gus gsol 'debs sogs rgyu tshogs tshang bar bsgrubs na zan ril der bsgril ma bsgril la ltos pa ci yod/ lam bar nas thu'u bkwan rin po cher gsung bkod zhib mo zhus gsungs/*”

⁴⁹⁵ BMNT, 158-159: “*thu'u bkwan rin po cher mjal dus gung thang rin po che'i gsung bkod ci yod gsungs/ rwa sgrengs jo bo'i mdun du zan bsgyur rgyu stabs mi 'grig kyang thig le bcu drug gi sgrub mchod gnad smin gal che/ dad gus dang gsol 'debs sogs rang ngos nas tshang dgos pa'i rgyu tshogs bsgrub na zan ril mdun du sgril ma sgril la ltos pa ci yod gsung tshul zhus pas/*”

significant. First of all, he was unequivocal in his support for the imperial command. Second, he authorized the Belmang Pandita to reconcile the conflicting methods by incorporating elements from the original plan into Qianlong's new ritual procedure. Regardless of whether the divination was held at Reting monastery or the Jokhang, the result would be accurate provided that they sincerely completed the preliminary rituals as spelled out by Longdöl.

When Belmang and several assistants visited Tukwan near Kumbum monastery several weeks later, the latter affirmed Gungtang's advice:

The Tukwan Rinpoche clearly explained, "According to the words of Gungtang and the Qianlong emperor's prior edict, 'High status monks from [places like] Kumbum must be recognized through a trial of the *zendril* before the Jowo [statue] in Lhasa, whereas lower status tülku shall be tested before sandalwood Jowo.'⁴⁹⁶ However, nowadays because many people regard the *zendril* as no different from simply tossing lots there have arisen various controversies as to whether this actually makes accurate [identifications]. [For example] previously, the elder prince of Choné said sarcastically, 'If one performed a *zendril* to determine who was the [incarnation] of Tsongkhaba—either myself or Khyagé pönlop,⁴⁹⁷ of course one of us would be selected!' Although some people understand things in this manner, due to our faith in the Jewel (i.e. the Dharma) we each have no qualms about the *zengyur*. It is a fundamental principle of the Dalai Lama that the most important matters of that honorable Government are decided before the Lhamo sungjönma.⁴⁹⁸ Moreover [this

⁴⁹⁶ The "sandalwood Jowo" (Tib. *tshandan jo bo*) is a reference to the massive sandalwood (Ch. 旃檀) statue of Sakyamuni housed in Yonghegong temple in Beijing. It is striking that Tukwan has evidently interpreted the substatute relegating the selection of Mongol kütuktu to Yonghegong and Tibetan Kütuktu to Lhasa not as an ethnic or geographical distinction but rather a status distinction between "low" and "high" tülku.

⁴⁹⁷ Tib. "khya dge dpon slob": a monastic official named "Khyagé."

⁴⁹⁸ "Lhamo Sungjönma" (Tib. *lha mo gsung 'byon ma*) is a painting before which important divinations are frequently conducted. Apparently this image is still possessed by the government of the fourteenth Dalai Lama in exile and still used in divinations.

course of action] accords with my own previous dream. It resembles what will befall us.”⁴⁹⁹

The quotation above is from Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso’s biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa. Drakgönpa’s biography of Belmang Pandita also records this exchange but also adds, however, that Tukwan also provided Belmang with several prayers/texts dedicated to Tara (Tib. *sgrol ma*) written by Changkya Rolpai Dorjé that he could recite en route for good luck.⁵⁰⁰ Such actions further legitimized the journey and embellished this increasingly hybrid recognition process with a liturgical framework. Overall, Tukwan’s statement accomplished several important tasks. First, he again reminded Belmang (and, of course, the readership of these narratives) of the overlapping endorsement of the imperial command by himself and Gungtang Rinpoche, as well as supernatural authorities in the form of his dream. Second, he compared the imperially-sanctioned divination ritual to the set of divination practices historically conducted before the Lhamo Sunjönma by the central Tibetan government. The point Tukwan appears to be making here is that these things are fundamentally similar and therefore of little concern. Finally, Tukwan argues that the broader category of divination technologies labeled *zengyur* or *zendril* are legitimate Buddhist practices. Both Gungtang and Tukwan

⁴⁹⁹ JYZP03, 43-44: “gung thang tshang gi gsung bkod dang/ sngar gong ma chen lung nas sku 'bum yan chad kyi bla sprul rnames lha sa'i jo bo dang/ de man chad kyi bla sprul rnames tsandan jo bo'i mdun nas zan bsgril gyi thag gcod dgos par bka' phebs yod kyang/ deng dus mi mang gis ngag la zan bsgril brgyan 'phangs pa lta bu yin pas nges pa yod med kyi gleng brjod sna tshogs byung/ sngon co ne dpon rgan gyis/ khya dge dpon slob la nged rnam gnyis kyi nang nas rje rin po che gang yin zan bsgril na gcig la babs yong rgyu red ang zhus tshul sogs rgyu mtshan 'ga' zhig gseng bkrol nas zhus par/ rang res dkon mchog la blo gtad kyis zan bsgyur pa yin pas dogs pa ma dgos/ rgyal dbang gong ma'i du yan du gzhung gi sku don la rgya 'gengs che ba'i rigs lha mo gsung 'byon ma'i mdun nas brtag bsgril gtsos bor 'dzin pa yin/ sngar nged rang la byung ba'i rmi lam de dang 'grilgs dgos la/ de'i thog tu babs 'gro ba 'dra zhes gsung bkod lhus theng pa gnang/ ”

⁵⁰⁰ BMNT, 159.

maintain that those who have faith in the dharma and conduct the ritual with sincerity need not fear the results.

This leads us to an interim conclusion: we should not assume, as modern scholarship does, that Tibetans from the outset viewed the establishment of the Golden Urn as foreign “interference.”⁵⁰¹ From the perspective of Gungtang, Tukwan, and ultimately, Belmang and later disciples of the third Jamyang Zhepa at Labrang monastery such as Drakgönpa and Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso, it was the apparent incongruity of the two ritual configurations that posed a problem, not the “Chinese” origins of the Golden Urn. Belmang and his biographer did not shy away from characterizing Qianlong’s instructions as symbolic of “China.” Yet the foreignness or (perhaps more appropriately) strangeness of the ritual could be elided or obscured by discussing it in terms from a familiar indigenous tradition. Moreover, as the critique of the Choné prince reveals, it was the overall category of divinations known as *zengyur* that were suspect, not the Golden Urn in particular. Tukwan’s commentary suggests that he was aware of a strand of thinking circulating in Amdo that considered dough ball divinations in general to be nothing more than “lotteries” that could be easily twisted and warped by human self-interest. The problem the Qing court faced in implementing the Golden Urn policy was therefore a problem indigenous elites in Inner Asia also faced whenever they engaged in divination: they had to overcome the possibility that divinations could be mistaken for lotteries.

⁵⁰¹ See comments in Derek F. Maher, “The Eight Dalai Lama Jampel Gyatso” and “The Ninth to the Twelfth Dalai Lamas” in *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, ed. Martin Brauen (Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2005), 117-127 and 129-135, especially 127, 130; Kapstein (2006), 159-160; and Nietupski (2011), 135-136. Blanket assessments such as, “Tibetans disliked the interference intensely” (Maher, 127), ignore the diversity of views among “Tibetans” and the geographic diversity of these views.

The Trials of Lhasa

The search party undertook a methodical journey across the Amdo region before departing for central Tibet. After spending several weeks at Kumbum Monastery, they proceeded to Dongkor Monastery where they resided for another two months before setting off for Nakchu on June 23, 1797 (JQ 02/05/29). Belmang's biographer reports that during their residency at these two monasteries the party conducted numerous ceremonies to ensure the success of their venture and met with scholars from across the region. While at Dongkor Belmang had time to read "most of the Kangyur and Tangyur."⁵⁰² Even once they had again taken to the road, Belmang recalled that their progress was, "like that of an elephant plodding."⁵⁰³

The pace sped up dramatically shortly after the party crossed over the mountains into the territory of Nakchu (JQ 02/07/13, 1797-9-3), the first major outpost within the jurisdiction of the Ganden Phodrang government. Before arriving at the town of Nakchu, they were met by two "Tibetan lay officials"⁵⁰⁴ who delivered confidential letters from the senior Lhasa amban, Sungyun. Sungyun informed Belmang that although he had planned to travel to Tsang on an inspection tour, he had delayed his departure and urged the delegation from Labrang to hasten to Lhasa before September 20, 1797 (JQ

⁵⁰² BMNT, 159. Belmang Pandita also apparently engaged in extensive discussions of "religion and politics" (*chos srid*).

⁵⁰³ BMMT, 160.

⁵⁰⁴ BMNT, 160. "Two Tibetan lay officials (Tib. "*bod pa drung 'khor gnyis*"): This term *bod pa* is rarely seen in nineteenth-century documents, although in the twentieth century it would become the standard ethnonym for "Tibetan." Here, it is functioning not as a general ethnonym but as an adjective identifying people representing the central Tibetan government.

02/08/01).⁵⁰⁵ As it turned out, this was the date the amban had set to conduct the Golden Urn lottery, a date that the amban had decided was “auspicious according to the Chinese calendar.”⁵⁰⁶ The sudden speed demanded of the delegation seems to have taken them by surprise. Although neither Drakgönpa nor Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso record any overt complaints regarding the sudden speed demanded of the delegation, the narratives do reveal that it created hardships for Belmang and his co-leader, the chamberlain. These later narratives also imply that Sungyun’s timing forced them to circumscribe some of the activities they had anticipated completing before the divination using the Golden Urn.

Belmang and the chamberlain were provided with fresh mounts by Tibetan officials and proceeded ahead of the rest of the delegation, arriving in Lhasa on September 12 (JQ 02/07/22), just six days after departing Nakchu. Since the arduous journey had sickened the chamberlain, Belmang “had to shoulder the responsibilities alone.”⁵⁰⁷ He immediately met with Sungyun. Drakgönpa and Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso leave the impression that the amban was kind and accommodating. On learning that the chamberlain had become ill, he offered to postpone their meeting. Belmang did not delay, however, and when he “met with the amban it elicited feelings of pleasure like the encounter between a mother and son.”⁵⁰⁸ Sungyun advised Belmang that they should promptly handle the matter. At this point, Belmang appears to have attempted to slow

⁵⁰⁵ BMNT, 160; JYZP03, 44.

⁵⁰⁶ “*brgyad pa'i tshes gcig nyin rgya tshis ltar na legs pa*” JYZP03, 46; BMNT, 162.

⁵⁰⁷ BMNT, 162.

⁵⁰⁸ BMNT, 162; JYZP03, 45. Both of these sources record that similar feelings arose between Belmang and the junior amban, Hening, when they met a day later.

down the process, raising concerns that the date could not be set until he had met with the Dalai Lama and the regent, Tatsak Rinpoche.⁵⁰⁹

Sungyun agreed to this request, but it is difficult not to suspect that ambans seemingly sincere desire to “handle the matter expeditiously”⁵¹⁰ harbored ulterior motives. For instance, the less time that the delegates spent in Lhasa, the fewer opportunities there would be for them to settle on a final candidate by other means or raise objections to the procedure. The separation of Belmang and the chamberlain from the rest of the party also meant that there would be fewer witnesses to deal with when the ritual was conducted. Within two days of their arrival, Drakgonpa reports that the ambans had fixed the date and ordered the Golden Urn moved to the Potala to begin a week of preparatory services under the watch of the Dalai Lama. At his second meeting with Sungyun, although Belmang does not appear to have a problem with selecting a date based on a “Chinese calendar,” he raised concerns about the timing more directly. “He informed the amban that he had grave concerns about the upcoming identification of the tulku because they had not even had the slightest opportunity to request the advice of the Panchen Lama.”⁵¹¹ Sungyun agreed to settle this issue by sending a letter to the Panchen Lama on behalf of Belmang. There are hints in several of the sources that the lack of consultation and involvement by the Panchen Lama was considered problematic, both at the time and by later authors.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁹ BMNT, 162; JYZP03, 45.

⁵¹⁰ BMNT, 162; JYZP03, 45.

⁵¹¹ BMNT, 163.

⁵¹² The biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa notes in some detail that: “The Panchen Lama, who had exchanged very important vows with the previous Jamyang Zhepa and thus had a unique

While in Nakchu, Belmang had also received a separate letter from the Tatsak Rinpoche in addition to those from the ambans. The contents of this letter, and the conversations that subsequently transpired between Belmang and the regent, reveal that both these monks had other concerns that they did not share with the ambans. These concerns led to a series of activities that the ambans may not have known about. Drakgonpa, the primary source for this information, claims that the subject of these conversations was confidential and that the activities undertaken as a result were conducted in secret.

In his letter to Belmang, the regent asked, “How many candidates are there for the reincarnation? Among these candidates, who is the most promising? What did you report to the Xining amban and the emperor? How do you plan to report to the amban here? [...] The Jamyang Zhepa is more important to [me] than the Buddhas of the Three Epochs. Therefore, on account of his grace, I will diligently offer all assistance here to him.”⁵¹³ Drakgonpa offers no comment on whether and how Belmang responded to this inquiry. If the tone of these questions seems to imply that the regent had already received news about the search and possibly a conflict between the estate of the Jamyang Zhepa and the Qing, course of the conversation that transpired when Belmang first met the regent confirms this hunch:

relationship with him, however, was not in the slightest informed about these proceedings and, thus vexed, sent a letter to the amban. The Panchen responded to a request for assistance and a letter describing the situation of the mission from Labrang. He responded with one letter stating, ‘Because the Jamyang Zhepa is the unrivaled mainstay of both the faith and its followers, he thought there should be no mistake in this important matter. Having investigated, various ceremonies shall be completed here [at Jashilumpho / bkra shis lhun po] by the Great Assembly and the Tantric College. And on the day of the decision, I will go in person to each of the Mgon Khang (chapels of Maitreya) to place crowns [on the images] and earnestly place your cause before the Protectors.’” JYZP03, 47. A similar passage is also found in the *Oceanic Book*, 432.

⁵¹³ BMNT, 161.

When the Tatsak Rinpoche held a private audience with Belmang Pandita, he asked, “Among the three candidates, which is the most promising or preferred?”

[Belmang] replied, “There is no difference.”

“Then why is the one from Rangan⁵¹⁴ more famous?”

[Belmang] jokingly replied, “It is just like the saying, ‘The Amdowas send signals and the Khampas feign ignorance.’”⁵¹⁵

[Tatsak Rinpoche] laughed at this.

Belmang then recounted [for the regent] the advice that had been successively given by Longdöl Lama, Tukwan Rinpoche, and Gungtang Jamyang. [Belmang Pandita] then made the following detailed request:

“At Trashi Khyil [Monastery],⁵¹⁶ when we departed, it was widely known that the *zengyur* would be conducted before the Lhasa Jowo. But now it seems as though the ritual will take place in the Potala. Although [we realize] it makes no difference, because [they are people] of a remote place, it is possible that their expectations will not be satisfied. If things thus transpire, if someone like you were to conduct the ritual before the [Lhasa] Jowo rinpoche, the people would be satisfied. But who would dare ask such a thing?”

At this the [regent] replied, “I can do the ritual myself in front of the Jowo, but it must be kept as secret as possible.” He then continued, “I plan on going before the Jo[wo] on the twenty-sixth and will conduct the *zengyur*. Furthermore I will bring pieces from the *zentak* that was conducted before the Manjuvajra Jowo [of Reting monastery] and offer them before the naturally occurring Lokeshvara [image] in the Potala.”⁵¹⁷

The regent had already independently received information concerning the relative standings of the three candidates. However, Belmang was unwilling to divulge

⁵¹⁴ The candidate originally favored by the steward and the Xining amban, the son of Dülagyel.

⁵¹⁵ BMNT, 163: “*a mdo'i brda zhogs dang khams pa'i ldob kyi dpe yin 'dra/*”

⁵¹⁶ I.e. Labrang Monastery.

⁵¹⁷ BMNT, 163. Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso also records parts of this conversation, JYZP03, 47-48.

any further information or state his own preferences. Drakgönpa offers no explanation for his teacher's silence. Belmang might have been reluctant to state a preference or discuss the situation at Labrang because he did not want to present any grounds that might bias Tatsak Rinpoché if and when the regent conducted additional *zengyur*. For Belmang, the overriding concern was that the format of the divination ritual had been changed yet again. They had not expected Sungyun to shift the venue to the Potala. The Tibetan-language accounts concur that the emperor's original edict positioned the ceremony in the Jokhang.⁵¹⁸ And on the basis of what Qing officials in Gansu and Qinghai claimed to have discussed with local people, it is not surprising that the Labrang community would have had this expectation. The Xining amban's original Manchu-language reports from the time of his visit to Labrang state that the ritual was to be held in the Jokhang cathedral (Ma. *amba joo de*).⁵¹⁹ It appears, however, that from the time when he first learned of the search for the Jamyang Zhepa and the need to fix it, Sungyun had intended to hold the ceremony in the Potala, "before the painting of the Holy One"—i.e. Qianlong.⁵²⁰ This was where he had also conducted the ritual on behalf of the Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu.

Sungyun had probably not intended to make the upcoming ceremony less credible to the delegation from Labrang. But from the latter's perspective, the shift in location had far-reaching implications because different sites were home to different combinations of tutelary deities, protectors, and Buddhas. Different sites therefore required different ritual preparation and the associated deities might look on the affair with unequal degrees of

⁵¹⁸ Gungtang, biography of second Jamyang Zhepa, 482; Drakgönpa, BMNT, 155; JYZP03, 43. The *Oceanic Book* merely records the emperor as stating that the ritual would have to occur in Ü-Tsang (431).

⁵¹⁹ MWLF 163:0643-0644 (1796-2-19; JQ 01/11/21).

⁵²⁰ MWLF 163:1354 (1797-02-04; JQ 02/01/08): "*enduringge nirugan i juleri*."

benevolence. The change in location thus called into question the carefully laid plans that Belmang, Tukwan, and Gungtang assembled before the delegation departed Amdo for central Tibet. The sudden change of location and the accelerated schedule provoked a flurry of secret activity by Belmang and other Gelukpa hierarchs in Lhasa in the days leading up to the Golden Urn ceremony.

Some of these activities had already been planned well before Belmang Pandita arrived in Lhasa. Most importantly, the delegation sought the assistance and prophecies (Tib. *lung bstan*, “lungten”) of the oracles (Tib. *chos ‘byung*, “chökyong”) and the Eighth Dalai Lama. The biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa and the *Oceanic Book* describe in detail the results of these inquiries. Given the seemingly comprehensive solicitation of the oracles around Lhasa and the importance of the Jamyang Zhepa within the Geluk establishment, it is unlikely that these activities were unknown to the ambans. Drakgönpa summarized the advice of the oracles as follows:

Prophecies were sought from several chökyong/protectors. The Néchung stated that, “For the time being, it appears that the first [child] is authentic. At the time of the *zentak*, [I] will indicate the authentic one by means of an invisible action.” The Tenma⁵²¹ prophesied, “The second one, Kelzang, the son of Rinchen Gyatso, is the true emanation body. During the *zentak* he will be [identified] through an invisible action.” The Gadong stated, “The first one has a beautiful appearance. However, you must still do prayer services for each one in accordance with the proper order of the recognition process.”⁵²²

⁵²¹ “Tenma” (Tib. *bstan ma*). This female protector is identified as Drakgyelma (Tib. *drag rgyal ma*) in the biography of the Third Jamyang Zhepa, 45-46.

⁵²² Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 432. With regards to the oracles, the biography of the Belmang Pandita briefly states, “Then [Belmang] sought oracles from the Dga’ gdong, Gnas chung, and Drag rgyal ma, and carried out all the ceremonies (zhabs brtan) as they instructed” (162). The biography of the third Jamyang Zhepa adds that, “When they sought out the prophecies of the chökyong, they were told that nowadays it was good to make the identification according to the [advice] of the Gadong [oracle]. Secretly make a recognition and the best one will appear” (45).

All three oracles qualified their predictions with tentative language, and the very diversity of their predictions necessitated further tests. It is ironic that although the emperor was insistent that the oracles be stamped out, in this case, their prophecies were interpreted as providing further impetus for the need to conduct the *zentak* in the Golden Urn. Contrary to what Qianlong expected and in line with the original expectations of the Galdan Siretu Kūtuktu and other advisors to the throne in years prior, the oracles could indeed facilitate the use of the urn.

It was not until after the oracles had been consulted that Belmang finally had the opportunity to meet with the Eighth Dalai Lama. Belmang's biographer states that his teacher was "filled with happiness and inspiration" at the sight of the prelate, then quickly turns to other matters. In contrast to the detailed presentation of Belmang's more personal interactions with the ambans, the regent, and even other lamas in central Tibet, the impression is that the Dalai Lama's influence on the proceedings was important, but not transformative. The Tibetan-language sources portray the Dalai Lama as being directed by the ambans to conduct various rites as opposed to taking any initiatives of his own accord. In Drakgönpa's other work, the *Oceanic Book*, and in Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso's biography, in response to a request for advice, the Dalai Lama is reported as stating simply:

His honor the Jamyang Zhepa is an exceptional pillar of the teaching, therefore the [identification] of the incarnation is of great importance. Needing to provide ritual supports, the prophecies of several protectors have been sought. Regardless of this you should provide the sangha of the Three Seats with a major food service and request that they read the Kangyur and the names [of the Jamyang Zhepa]. Moreover, I will

personally and constantly keep in my heart the Precious Jewel and pray.”⁵²³

From the perspective of the commentators from Labrang, the final significant event that occurred before the urn ritual was the completion of the so-called “Sixteen Spheres” sandhana that had been ordered by the Longdöl Rinpoche. According to Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso, this ritual was organized by the regent and conducted by monks at Reting Monastery.⁵²⁴ Gungtang also emphasized this event and noted that Könchok Senggé, the nephew of the second Jamyang Zhepa, played a leading role.⁵²⁵

In the *Oceanic Book*, Drakgönpa described the ceremony involving the Golden Urn on September 20 (JQ 02/08/01) as follows:

Holding the same wish, everyone came on the first day of the Auspicious Month to the palace [at the top of the Potala].⁵²⁶ The Supreme Victorious One arrived, treading on lotus, as did the pillars of the teaching of the Snowy Lands. Together with the two ambans who protect Tibet⁵²⁷ and in front of the likeness of the emperor,⁵²⁸ a determination was made by turning the Golden Urn. At that time, the Supreme Victorious One extemporaneously chanted true words so that there would emerge from the urn the authentic name card. When the great lamas together with the chief

⁵²³ JYZP03, 46. In the *Oceanic Book*, the Dalai Lama makes a similar statement: “In response to a request for protection from the Lord of the Victorious ones, the sovereign [Dalai Lama] (*gong sa rgyal ba'i dbang po*) issued the following edict (*bka' lan*), ‘The Jamyang Zhepa is not like other friends of the teaching (*bstan pa'i rtsa lag*), thus it is essential to not mistake [his] reincarnation. Moreover it is necessary to perform rites of worship. Not only should offerings of worship to the Dharma protectors not be few, but the spiritual community of the Three Seats should be given many donations to support the proclamation of the Kanjur, and thus request spiritual protection. I will also frequently keep these things in my mind and appeal to the Three Jewels’ (432).

⁵²⁴ JYZP03, 47.

⁵²⁵ Gungtang, 483.

⁵²⁶ Tib. “*rtse'i gzims chung A wa*.”

⁵²⁷ Tib. “*bod skyong Ambhan gnyis*.”

⁵²⁸ Tib. “*gung ma'i 'dra thang gi mdun nas*”: a painting of the emperor.

cantor of Namgyel Monastery⁵²⁹ and its monks, together with the whole congregation were chanting prayers, the amban witnessed⁵³⁰ that the name card of [the Jamyang Shepa] leapt up. Finally, the “*bstan ‘bar ma*,” “*chos ryal ma*” and “*bdag gzhan ma*” were chanted rhythmically in unison, thus their pure intentions were conveyed.⁵³¹

Overall, this depiction legitimates the Qing ritual by attributing the agency of the correct selection to the Dalai Lama, protectors, and overall sincerity of the congregation. The ambans were merely the instruments or “witnesses” of the unseen forces invoked by the Dalai Lama and the other participants. In Gungtang’s account, the Qing elements are even further minimized. For instance, instead of holding the ritual before a thangka of Qianlong, he writes that it was conducted before the Jowo Lokeshvara image (Tib. “*jo bo lo ki shwa ra*”).⁵³² In the two biographies, Drakgönpa and Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso offered accounts of the ritual that are broadly similar to that in the *Oceanic Book*. Although they both provide a more extensive list of participants and witnesses, they placed slightly more focus on the actions of the ambans. The ambans are reported to have performed the full kowtow (“nine-knocks”) twice, once before placing the lots in the urn, and once before drawing the lot.⁵³³ Again, human agency of the Qing officials was downplayed: Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso quotes Hening as turning to the audience

⁵²⁹ Tib. “*rtse i rnam rgyal grwa tshang*”: the private college/monastery of the Potala palace complex.

⁵³⁰ Tib. “*gzigs*.”

⁵³¹ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 432.

⁵³² Gungtang, 483.

⁵³³ BMNT, 164; JYZP03, 49.

and exclaiming, “the name card of the Supreme incarnation [the Jamyang Zhepa] leapt upwards of its own accord!”⁵³⁴

According to the third Jamyang Zhepa’s biographer, the drawing of the winning lot was followed by a sudden and seemingly spontaneous outburst from Belmang’s partner, the chamberlain, who had apparently roused himself from illness to attend the ceremony. The statement provided a summary judgment on the proceedings and asserted in no uncertain terms the significance of the emperor’s grace. As we have seen in the introduction to this chapter, the ambans were struck by it as well and reported it to the emperor. The biographer of the third Jamyang Zhepa commented on it as well, “There arose amazement among all with regards to the splendor of the un-coerced speech and actions [of the chamberlain] whose health had not been good on account of not acclimating well to the unfamiliar environment on account of his age.”⁵³⁵

All three authors report that shortly after the ceremony using the Golden Urn, the regent, Tatsak Rinpoche informed the Labrang delegation of the results of his own, secretly conducted tests. According to Drakgonpa, Tatsak told Belmang that:

Since [I] had heard that the one from Rangan was better known, I myself made up two dough balls [concerning the question] of whether he was or was not the reincarnation and rolled them before the [Jokhang] Jowo. The “no” fell. [I then] took dough balls [representing] all three candidates and rolled them together. The name of the second candidate fell for the second time. Then before the Lokishvara [I] again rolled the names of all three candidates at once it was the second candidate that again descended of its own accord. It is a fine thing that today’s [winning] name card from the Golden Urn is in accord with my previous results.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁴ JYZP03, 49.

⁵³⁵ JYZP03, 50: “*ma non par bzo lta dang smra brjod*”: “unforced actions and speech.” One wonders if it was perceived as odd because it was forced.

⁵³⁶ BMNT, 164-165. Same statement can also be found in JYZP03, 50-51.

According to Drakgönpa, this news had a profound effect on Belmang. “When this was spoken, there arose feelings of great confidence and trust in the deities and lamas.”⁵³⁷ Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso’s account contains the same statement from the regent, but then adds another significant detail. He reports that representatives of “the lineage” of the Jamyang Zhepa also conducted their own “covert investigation using dough balls” (Tib. *mngon chung gi zan brtag mdzad pa*) at before the Manjuvajra (Tib. *jo bo 'jam pa'i rdo rje*) at Reting Monastery while en route home from Lhasa. As this trial also resulted in the identification of the second candidate, “it generated a faith of conviction in the deities and lamas that resulted in even greater confidence in the refuge [i.e. the candidate identified as the reincarnation].”⁵³⁸ According to Gungtang Rinpoche, the result of the successive tests was that, “Thus among the superior and inferior, deep conviction and faith in the incontrovertible truth of the supreme incarnation was established.”⁵³⁹

These three appraisals share a common concern with the creation of a specific type of faith, “*yid ches*.” As the third of the “four types of faith” in Tibetan Buddhist thought, *yid ches* connotes a higher order of faith or trust that has been attained through a logical process of reasoning (“valid cognition,” *tsad mas drang pa*).⁵⁴⁰ In these three

⁵³⁷ BMNT, 165: “...gsungs bas lha dang bla ma la yid ches kyi thugs nges chen po ‘khrungs/”

⁵³⁸ JYZP03, 51: “rgyud zur zhal snga nas mar lam rwa sgreng du ched gnyer gyis phebs te jo bo 'jam pa'i rdo rje'i mdun du mngon chung gi zan brtag mdzad pa yang ang gnyis par babs pa bcas lha dang bla ma la yid ches kyi dad pas nges pa lhag par rnyed pa'i gnas su rgyur/”

⁵³⁹ Gungtang, 484: “mchog dman kun gyis dkon mchog mi bslu ba'i bden pa ni /di lta bu'o sngam du gting nas yid ches kyi nges pa ‘drongs/”

⁵⁴⁰ See definitions of the “four faiths” (Tib. *dad pa gzhi*) and “faith of conviction” (Tib. *yid ches kyi dad pa*) in *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1993), 1242-1243,

texts, the achievement of this particular type of faith seems to have hinged on a process that was explicitly empirical. Multiple tests and personal observation moved Belmang and the other participants beyond “blind faith” to a confidence in the outcome of the Golden Urn based on evidence. As we have seen in Chapter Two, the establishment of this sort of evidence-based faith was also a goal expressed by the Qing court in Manchu-language documents. By stating that the process generated this type of faith, the participants and later commentators were intentionally making an even stronger claim in the legitimacy of the search.

Although Gungtang, Drakgönpa, and Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso all mention the other dough-ball divinations, these *zengyur* tests were of subordinate significance to the Golden Urn. The regent claimed that his tests were conducted before the Golden Urn ceremony, but our three authors placed their discussion of the results of the tests *after* the Golden Urn in their narratives. Moreover, these tests were presented less detail than the ceremony involving the Golden Urn. In contrast, the Golden Urn ceremony is the central event, the culmination of the search process in these accounts. This common narrative structure suggests that far from being a symbolic, “diplomatic courtesy” that followed the “real” tests, the Golden Urn mattered and the dough-ball investigations were props—although not insignificant ones. These additional tests provided the empirical evidence for the reliability of the Golden Urn, the deities that had been invoked, and the monks who had participated in the ceremony. And for Belmang personally, it appears that the Golden Urn ceremony, and its confirmation by other means, was a transformative moment in the evolution of his personal faith.

2573. Also, “*yid ches kyi dad pa*,” The THL Tibetan Dictionaries, accessed April 6, 2013, <http://www.thlib.org/reference/dictionaries/tibetan-dictionary/translate.php>.

Conclusion: The Circulation of Information in Qing Tibet

What is there to prevent us from imagining that Tatsak Rinpoché fabricated the results of his “secret” dough-ball divinations to conform to the results of the Golden Urn? Is it not possible that the regent secured his information about the early popularity of the candidate from Rangan from the ambans whom he may very well have been assisting in this endeavor? Furthermore, to what extent were Gungtang Rinpoché, Drakgönpa, and Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso self-conscious revisionists when it came to the history of the search for the reincarnation of the second Jamyang Zhepa? What prevented their readership from having doubts about the accuracy and impartiality of these written narratives?

This chapter has uncovered several strategies employed from the late 1790s through perhaps as late as the 1880s by Tibetan-language authors to bury a controversial selection process beyond the reach of historical memory: Tukwan Rinpoché promulgated a dream that sanctioned Qing supervision of the search process and identified the second candidate as the true reincarnation; Tukwan, Gungtang, Tatsak and other Geluk hierarchs sanctioned a new configuration of the search process that combined elements from both indigenous and “Chinese” traditions of divination; the strangeness and incongruity of the imperial instructions was obscured by the semantic incorporation of the Golden Urn into the category of dough-ball divinations; and finally the careful construction of the biographies themselves, about which several concluding points can be made.

All of these accounts begin their efforts to legitimate the candidacy of the second candidate by noting the auspicious nature of his birth and the host of signs that manifested his potential tülkuhood to his relatives and, eventually the search party. The other candidates are mentioned, but not with the same respect or aura of inevitability that surrounded the candidacy of the second child as it progressed towards confirmation in the urn. For instance, Drakgönpa writes in the *Oceanic Book* that the child was “absolutely and clearly identified” when he was first interviewed by the Golden Throne Holder of Labrang, Hortsang Rinpoche.⁵⁴¹ In his biography of Belmang, Drakgönpa reports that his teacher’s fears that the search would fail evaporated when he realized that the second candidate turned out to be the nephew of a monk whom he had previously met by chance on the road. Moreover, he recalled that the monk had told him at the time that, “In the future our relationship will go deeper and deeper.”⁵⁴² These two passages underline the degree to which the successful reception of candidate two hinged on Belmang Pandita’s credibility within the Labrang community and the subsequent dissemination of his personal confidence in the candidacy of the second candidate and the uncompromised nature of the selection process.

The Manchu-language sources reveal, however, that at the time of the search, the opinions of leading figures at Labrang were significantly different than what is portrayed in the Tibetan-language biographies, even that of Gungtang, who composed his account within the year following the identification. From the steward of the Jamyang Zhepa’s estate to the Xining amban, there was much support for candidate one both at Labrang and in the wider Amdo region. Thus the authors of these later accounts were not merely

⁵⁴¹ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 431.

⁵⁴² Drakgönpa, BMNT, 156.

writing hagiographies of the third Jamyang Zhepa but *making the case for his legitimacy* against competing memories. Studies of Qing-period Tibetan biographies have underappreciated the political implications of the genre. But what is perhaps most striking about these histories/biographies is the degree to which signs of the conflict remained visible within them. Evidence for the persuasiveness of the first candidate and the difficulty of conducting appropriate divinations is not hard to find in these books. If Gungtang, Drakgönpa, and Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso were “revisionist” historians why did they not fully erase the traces of controversy from their works? At best they were incomplete “revisionists” and the label itself is probably of little analytical utility beyond reminding us that these biographies need to be read critically. These were books with an agenda that went beyond merely celebrating the Buddhist adept in question.

The elisions and inclusions in both the Manchu-language archives and Tibetan-language sources raise further questions about the circulation of information. The inclusion of complete Manchu-language palace memorials in published Tibetan-language texts suggests that Tibetan elites had access to official Manchu-language communications and understood how the imperial communications system functioned. Moreover, it appears that by the early nineteenth century at the latest, the palace memorial, originally a secret, inner court document, had already entered the public realm (a realm albeit limited to literate Tibetan and Mongol elites). It seems that Qing officials wrote their memorials with the expectation that they would be read by Tibetans. However, as the case of the third Jamyang Zhepa also demonstrates, the medium could still be used in secrecy.

But did Qing officials read Tibetan? As we see in the case of the biography of the Belmang Pandita and the third Jamyang Zhepa, if they had they would have found a list of proscribed and suspect activities. The Tibetan authors from Amdo do not appear to have been much concerned about Qing officials reading their writings, probably because such a possibility seemed remote. The Court of Colonial Affairs periodically trained classes of bannermen in the “Tangut” (i.e. Tibetan) language in Beijing and would even dispatch them to Lhasa for further practice, yet there is little indication that bannermen, let alone Manchu bannermen, ever immersed themselves in the literary world of Tibetan biographies, geographies, and histories (despite the fact that many of these works were actually composed, at least partially, during sojourns in Beijing).⁵⁴³ But it is worth remarking that the Tibetan case was exceptional. Elsewhere in the empire the Qianlong-period court did exercise varying degrees of censorship—most famously during the “literary inquisition” that accompanied the creation of the emperor’s compilation of a comprehensive catalog of Chinese-language literature (the *Sikuquanshu*), but also, as Walther Heissig has pointed out, in Mongolia as well.⁵⁴⁴ Why the Qing state never

⁵⁴³ During the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns several groups of bannermen were sent to Lhasa for periods of five years for Tibetan-language studies. These students are expressly identified not as monks but rather as laymen engaged in training to become secretaries and translators in the Qing colonial apparatus. It is uncertain whether these activities continued beyond 1850. Relevant documents are listed in Zhongguo di yi lishi dang'an guan, Zhongguo Zangxue zhongxin, eds., *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan suocun Xizang he Zangshi dang'an mulu*, *Man Zangwen bufen* (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe, 1999). It should also be noted that the evidence suggests that Qing bannermen learned, or at least commenced their studies in Beijing, with the Amdo dialect of Tibetan. Manchu transliterations of Tibetan words generally follow the Amdo pronunciation (the words for “steward:” Tib. *phyag mdzod*, Ma. šangjotba; and “medium:” Tib. *sku rten pa*, Ma. *gurdemba*).

⁵⁴⁴ For information on the intertwined cataloging and censorship activities in China, see Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries* (Cambridge MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1987). For censorship in Mongolia see, Walther Heissig, *Beiträge zur Übersetzungsgeschichte des Mongolischen Buddhistischen Kanons* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 43-53.

developed an interest or infrastructure for censoring texts from Tibet is therefore a question that deserves further investigation.

Moreover, despite the best efforts of officials such as Sungyun and Tsebak, the court was able to amass only very incomplete information on local conditions and the backgrounds about the candidates. If their primary goal was to prevent successive rebirths within the same families, they failed. The child ultimately identified as the third Jamyang Zhepa was the scion of a local notable family and the nephew of the Shar Nomunhan, the leading tülku of Labrang's chief rival in the Amdo region, Rongwo Monastery.⁵⁴⁵ If the Qing had hoped the introduction of the Golden Urn statute would prevent the consolidation of religious and political authority among Tibetan gentry, their efforts had come up short in this case. Qianlong's rationale for rejecting the candidacy of the first child reminds us, however, that his overarching priority in instituting the statute was the elimination of the appearance of self-interest in the identification process. The Throne feared for the future of the faith and the institution of reincarnation if people had the impression that the steward could cherry pick his own candidates. In this respect, the emperor may have succeeded.

In conclusion, the case of the third Jamyang Zhepa represents an impressive accomplishment for the Qianlong emperor: a Chinese bureaucratic practice, a lottery, had been transformed into a Tibetan Buddhist divination technology. But the court could not take full credit for the success of the Golden Urn. The work of repackaging the ritual for consumption by Tibetan Buddhists was undertaken primarily by indigenous elites. The result was a hybrid, “cosmopolitan,” divination technology invented in the context of

⁵⁴⁵ JYZP03, 19; BMNT, 156.

Qing colonialism. Khenpo Ngawang Tupten Gyatso, for instance presented the ritual as something that had closely “followed the legal system of the emperor” (Tib. *gongma chen po khrims kyi lugs sol*). The successful result, however, could be interpreted, alternately, as the result of the agency of the protectors, the “deities and lamas,” “Tsongkhaba,” as well as the emperor himself. The agent was perhaps ambiguous, but the result was anything but random. Yet the Tibetan-language sources also document that the new divination technology did not succeed in displacing the oracles. Sungyun’s claim that the oracles had been eradicated was therefore either grossly ignorant of the situation in Lhasa or a purposely misleading.

A final testament to the success of Qing ritual-making came in the form of a letter from the steward of the Jamyang Zhepa’s estate in 1859. In his letter, the steward requested permission to submit the names of three children to the court so that from among them the reincarnation of the third Jamyang Zhepa could be identified using the Golden Urn ritual. All three children, he wrote, had correctly identified the belongings of the deceased Jamyang Zhepa and exhibited signs of being exceptional. The aid of the court was therefore requested.⁵⁴⁶ A year-and-a-half later, the Lhasa amban Manking reported that the first candidate on the list, a Tibetan boy from Yushu, had been recognized.⁵⁴⁷ This child would soon be brought to Labrang and installed as the fourth Jamyang Zhepa Kalzang Tubten Wangchuk (Tib. *skal bzang thub bstan dbang phyug*, 1856-1916), of whom more shall be heard from in the following chapters.

⁵⁴⁶ Manchu-language memorial from Fuji, MWLF 3-207-4442-047 (XF 09/10/28).

⁵⁴⁷ MWLF 3-2-4458-071 (XF 11/08/13). On the same day, Manking also identified the reincarnation of the Chuzang Kütuktu from Amdo: MWLF 3-207-4458-70.

Part Two: Local Encounters and Entanglements in Amdo

Chapter Four: The Historians of Labrang

Introduction

In 1785 or 1786, Tukwan Lozang Chökyi Nyima paid a visit to his elderly master, Changkya Rolpé Dorjé, who was residing at Wutai Shan. As Tukwan recalled in his biography of Rolpé Dorjé, although his master was approaching his seventieth year, he was active and in good health. Thus, the younger reincarnate lama profoundly misinterpreted Changkya as he began to speculate about his immanent death. Tukwan described the incident as follows:

Moreover, one day [Changkya Rolpé Dorjé] asked me, “Will you return to your homeland next year?” When I said I probably would not leave this place, he commented, “Oh, probably something of importance will befall my family.” [At the time] because he always spoke of the royal household as his “family,” I interpreted him as referring to a political matter. At that time I had heard speak of a difficult revolt in Hotan, thus I asked him, “I’ve heard that the matter in Hotan is becoming more grave, is that what you mean?” He replied, “It is not like that. Probably it is something major that will befall this very courtyard.” Yet still out of foolishness and ignorance I thought that by “courtyard” he was speaking of the royal court. So I said, “Surely in this courtyard is there not someone capable of handling this matter?” With a laugh [Changkya] responded, “Who knows? Some diviners have predicted this.” Later, upon reflection I realized that he had clearly entrusted me with the information that he would soon depart for another realm. However, in my great stupidity I was unable to perceive this at the time.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁸ Th'u bkwan 02 Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, *Ljang skyā rol pa'i rdo rje'i rnam thar* (Lan kru'u: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989 [1798]), 613: “der ma zad nyin gcig kho bo la/ khyed rang lo rjes ma'i nang rang yul du phyir 'gro rgyu e yin phebs pa la/ lo rjes ma 'dir mi thon pa 'dra 'dir mi thon pa 'dra zhus par/ 'o na de rag tu nged tshang la do gal zhig yong ba 'dra gsungs/ kho bo'i bsam par ryal bo tshang la nged tshang zhes snga mo nas gsung gi yod pas chab srid kyi

What is of interest here is not the bond of friendship between two lamas who both hailed from the same monastic community in Amdo,⁵⁴⁹ but the depth of identification with the Qing court conveyed in Tukwan's narrative. From Tukwan's perspective, it was quite natural for Gelukpa lamas resident in Beijing to view the imperial household as their own and the political stability of the empire, even in its most distant reaches, as a personal concern. From Tukwan's perspective, Qing imperial expansion, whether on the Sichuan frontier in Jinchuan or the new Muslim territories in the far west, was a project indistinguishable from the spread of the Geluk teachings. New Qing subjects were also new converts to the Geluk faith, a fact Tukwan believed Qianlong, the "Manjusri emperor," also explicitly recognized. In his account of the Jinchuan campaigns, Tukwan reported that the emperor had deferentially and publically acknowledged that victory had ultimately hinged on the support offered by Gelukpa lamas both at court and in the field.⁵⁵⁰

For Tukwan then, the sentiments expressed in the contemporaneous Mongolian expression, "our Great Qing," would probably not have seemed unfamiliar, especially since he had spent many years of his life traveling and teaching in both Inner and Outer

*don skor zhig yin thag chod kyis/ de dus ho thon 'ga' zhig ngo log skad kyang thos pa bcas ho
thon phyogs kyi gtam de rtsa ba che ru song ba 'dra gsan pa yin nam zhus par/ de 'dra ma yin ra
skor 'di ka'i nang du brel ba che tsam yong ba 'dra zhes phebs/ da dung 'ang blun po gti mug pa
kho bo'i sems la/ ra skor zhes pa rgyal po'i mkhar la gsungs pa yin 'dug bsam/ ra skor 'di nang du
phral du brel ba slong thub mkhan zhig med dam zhus par/ bzhad mo zhig gnang nas sus shes mo
phywa mkhan 'ga' zhig gis de skad lab 'dug gsungs/ phyis su bsams na mi ring bar zhing khams
gzhan du gshegs pa'i dgongs gtad gsal bar gsungs pa yin 'dug kyang/ blun rmongs shin tu tha
chad pa kho boas ni don min gyi phyogs zhig tu dpyad nas ji bzhin ma shes pa 'dug go/*

⁵⁴⁹ Changkyä Rolpé Dorjé and Tukwan Lozang Chökyi Nyima both shared the same "seat" monastery, Gönlung Monastery (Ch. 佑寧寺) a day's travel east of Xining. Their common roots are on display in this exchange in their use of certain colloquialisms unique to the Amdo dialect. For example, "*lo rjes ma*" for "next year."

⁵⁵⁰ Th'u bkwan 02, 552-553.

Mongolia.⁵⁵¹ As Elverskog has argued, the identification of Mongol elites with the Qing as a “unified Buddhist Qing state” in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries came to legitimize Mongol submission to the Qing court.⁵⁵² Loyalty to the Qing ruling house came to be construed by indigenous Mongol historians as entwined with their Buddhist faith and the inevitable outcome of Mongol history. Thus disloyalty to the Qing was simultaneously a betrayal of one’s Buddhist faith and Mongol heritage.⁵⁵³ If such a historiographical complex had become a centerpiece of early nineteenth-century Mongol intellectual culture, did it have any parallel in Tibetan regions? How far did Tukwan’s sentiments echo within his home region of Amdo or in Central Tibet?

Moreover, according to Elverskong, Qing promotion of the Geluk school over all other sects had led to a thoroughly “Tibetanized” Buddhist culture in the region, dominated by Gelukpa hierarchs of Tibetan extraction and Tibetan-language texts. As a result, Qing Buddhism became synonymous with Gelukpa Buddhism and the adoption of Buddhist teachings by Mongol elites led not to an indigenous “Mongol” adaptation of Buddhism, but rather an ever more widely entrenched Tibet-based Gelukpa orthodoxy.⁵⁵⁴ If indeed the conversion of the Mongols to the Gelukpa teachings also entailed their “Tibetanization,” how might this have appeared in the writings of Gelukpa observers? Just how orthodox and Gelukpa were the Mongols and the Qing state from the

⁵⁵¹ Samten Chhosphel, “The Third Tukwan, Lobzang Chokyi Nyima,” *Treasury of Lives*, accessed June 08, 2013, <http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Lobzang-Chokyi-Nyima/3008>.

⁵⁵² Johan Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism, and the State in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006), 3.

⁵⁵³ Elverskog (2006), 120, 125.

⁵⁵⁴ Elverskog (2006), 123-4.

perspective of contemporaneous Tibetan-language texts? How did Tibetan elites understand the Qing state and memorialize the Qianlong emperor during the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns?

In order to answer these questions, this chapter will examine the historical writings of Belmang Pandita Könchok Gyaltsen (1764-1853), whom the previous chapter introduced in the context of the recognition of the Third Jamyang Zhepa. After returning to Amdo in 1798, Belmang resumed his post as abbot of the Lower Tantric College (Tib. *rgyud smad grwa tshang*, est. 1716), the second-oldest institute of monastic training at Labrang.⁵⁵⁵ Five years later he was enthroned as the Twenty-fourth Throne-holder, or overall abbot, of Labrang monastery, a post he held from 1804-1809.⁵⁵⁶ In the aftermath of his trip to Lhasa, Belmang also began delivering the “lessons” that would eventually be compiled into his *History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia*,⁵⁵⁷ which was completed

⁵⁵⁵ Drakgönpa, *The Oceanic Book*, 407-408. For the Lower Tantric College see: Nietupski (2011), 20.

⁵⁵⁶ Drakgönpa, *The Oceanic Book*, 408.

⁵⁵⁷ The full title of this work can be translated as “A Ladder for Guiding the Youth: Lessons Summarizing the History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia” (in Tibetan: *Rgya bod hor sog gyi lo rgyus nyung brjod pa byis pa ‘jug pa’i ‘bab stegs.*). According to the *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, ‘bab stegs means a step-stool or platform, most often used in the context of dismounting from a horse (Zhang Yisun, *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1993), 1965.). I have translated it loosely as “ladder.” Its use in this title seems intended to convey the idea that the text is meant to assist the reader in understanding the difficult lessons of past history. The translation of the title presents several complications. First, the term “rgya” could be an abbreviation either of “China” (*rgya nag*) or “India” (*rgya dkar*). Previous English and Chinese translations of the title have translated “rgya” as “China” and “Han (漢),” respectively. See for instance, Nietupski, 2011, and the Chinese translation of the *Oceanic Book*: Zhiguamba Gongquehudanbaraoji, *An duo zheng jiao shi*, trans. Wu Jun et. al. (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 1989), 9. Vostrikov briefly describes the work, but does not translate the title (153-4). Martin (1997) loosely translates the title as “China, Tibet, Mongolia and Shambhala” (148-149). My impression, however, is that Belmang intended “rgya” to be interpreted as “India.” First, as we can see from the quotation from the introduction above, Belmang stated that he had been asked to write a history of “India, Tibet, China, and Mongolia. Second, the overall structure of the book matches this interpretation: the book tracks the rise of the faith first in India, then Tibet, and

between 1819 and 1821.⁵⁵⁸ This underappreciated work is significant not only because it sheds light on the historical thought of a scholar who would educate several generations of Labrang-affiliated historians during his lifetime, but also because it presents a vision of the Qing and the proper ordering of politics and religion that strongly contrasted with that of Tukwan Rinpoche and the Qing colonial officials with which he had contact. In Belmang's text, there are no "Manjusri emperors" and no "our Great Qing." If Changkya Rolpé Dorjé was at "home" in the Qing court, Belmang suggests that he would have preferred life under the rule of Tsewang Rabdan and Galdan Tsering, the last khans of the Junghar state.⁵⁵⁹ The Manchu rulers of China appear only tenuously Buddhist in contrast with the zeal of the Junghars or Gushri Khan and his descendants. According to Belmang, the residents of Amdo inhabited a world in which numerous potential dynasts vied for

finally China and Mongolia. There are numerous examples of titles of earlier literature in which the abbreviation "rgya" or "rgya bod" is clearly a reference to "India and Tibet." See for instance, Co ne grags pa bshad sgrub (1675-1748), *Rgyal rabs dang 'brel ba'i rgya bod kyi chos 'byung dgos 'dod kun 'byung* (A history of the spread of the faith in India and Tibet), described in Vostrikov (151). And also Sumpa Khenpo's 1748 religious history: *'phags yul rgya nag chen po bod dang sog yul du dam pa'i chos 'byung tshul dpag bsam ljon bzang* ("The auspicious forest of wish-fulfilling trees: A history of the royal Lineages and rise of the Dharma in the countries of India, China, Tibet and Mongolia"). One further difficulty with the title lies in the translation of "hor sog." Belmang (and also Drakgönpa) often use these words as a copula that refers "Mongolia" in a general sense. However, *hor* and *sog* are often used separately to refer to different phenomenon that are usually translated as "Mongol" in English. In some respects, the shifting uses of *hor* and *sog*, sometimes synonyms, sometimes separate categories, recalls the confusion in much earlier European scholarship between "Tatary" and "Mongolia." See separate note for further discussion of the use of these terms by Belmang Pandita and Drakgönpa.

⁵⁵⁸ The work lacks a clear statement of completion and/or printing. Since Belmang lists the Jiaqing reign (1796-1820) but not the enthronement of the Daoguang emperor, and because the last event mentioned in the text is the ascension of the second Tsemonling reincarnation (Tshe smon gling 02 ngag dbang 'jam dpal tshul khrims rgya mtsho, 1792-1860/62/64?) to the position of regent in 1819 and subsequent search for the tenth Dalai Lama, it appears that a date of 1819 through 1821 is appropriate. The xylograph consulted for this text comes from Belmang's *Collected Works*, which were printed no later than 1864. Page numbers are those given in the modern reprint of his *Collected Works*. See: *The Collected Works of Dbal-maṇ dkon-mchog-rgyal-mtshan*. Reproduced by Gyaltan Gelek Namgyal [New Delhi, Laxmi Printers, 1974], vol. 4 (nga), 480-665.

⁵⁵⁹ Belmang, *History*, 627.

control of China, Mongolia, and Tibet, and offered varying degrees of allegiance, reliability, and service to the Gelukpa cause. His Amdo homeland was the “vital juncture” of this world: the strategic gateway to all these ambitions, both temporal and spiritual.⁵⁶⁰

Belmang’s history was an groundbreaking piece of literature: the text was a genre-defying manual for would-be rulers and a strident argument for the legitimacy of Buddhist government and law—a system that, as recounted in chapters One and Two, had become the subject of increasingly vehement and public Qing official disapprobation and “rectification” during the late Qianlong reign. By defending the continued importance of Buddhism as the underpinning of just and effective governance, Belmang’s repost provided a legitimizing rationale for the increasing political power of the monastic polities of Amdo in the early nineteenth century.

Belmang’s Historical Context

Belmang Pandita presided over an unprecedented outpouring of historical and geographic writing at Labrang during the early nineteenth century. Belmang wrote or oversaw the production of much of this literature himself, most notably the “Labrang Gazetteer,” a history of Labrang Monastery, its affiliated colleges, and abbots.⁵⁶¹ Belmang completed the Labrang Gazetteer in 1800, just two years after he had returned from Lhasa. Among the better-known historical works composed during this period is

⁵⁶⁰ Belmang, *History*, 625.

⁵⁶¹ Dbal mang dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, *Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil gyi gdan rabs lha'i rnga chen* (Lan kru'u: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1987).

Tsenpo Nomunhan's *Detailed Description of the World* ('dzam gling rgyas bshad), a geography of Tibet and the wider world based on knowledge gleaned from Western sources during the author's periods of residency in Beijing and composed in the 1820s.⁵⁶² This work was completed and printed shortly after Tsenpo Nomunhan had spent time at Labrang.⁵⁶³

Less well known is the work of Mongol scholars affiliated with the manor of the Mongol prince and patron of the monastery. According to Shingza Kelzang (Tib. *shing bza' skal bzang*, 1926-1998),⁵⁶⁴ a reincarnate monk whose seat monastery is located within the present-day borders of the Henan Mongol Autonomous County (河南蒙古自治县), the second generation Henan qinwang Tendzin Wangchuk (Tib. *bstan 'dzin dbang phyug*, 丹增旺舒克, r. 1735-1749) invited tutors from central Tibet to his manor at Labrang in order to train Mongol youths in the Tibetan language to serve as secretaries in his administration. Their progeny continued to serve as secretaries to successive qinwang

⁵⁶² Lobsang Yongdan, "Tibet Charts the World: The Bstan Po No Mon Han's *Detailed Description of the World*, an early Major Scientific Work in Tibet," in *Mapping the Modern in Tibet; Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, Königswinter, ed. Gray Tuttle (Andiast, Switzerland: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH, 2011), 82. Sections of this text were translated by Turrell Wylie: "The Geography of Tibet Accordign to the 'Dzam gling rgyas bshad: Text and English Translation," *Serie Orientale Roma* 25 (Roma: Instituto Italioano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1962).

⁵⁶³ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 105, 441.

⁵⁶⁴ Shingza Kelzang (Shing bza'skal bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan) was recognized as the reincarnation of the Shingza lineage as a child. During the course of his traditional monastic training he established a particular expertise in Tibetan medicine. After 1949, he served as vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress (CPPCC) as well as vice-county chief in Henan. Following Deng Xiaoping's reforms, he was appointed vice-chairman of the Huangnan prefecture CPPCC and served on the standing committee of the provincial CPPCC. This information was drawn from the brief biography printed on the inside cover of Zhongyou Anqing jiabu, *Xianzu yanjiao* (Xining: Qinghai minzu chubanshe, 2008).

and junwang well into the republican period.⁵⁶⁵ These secretaries were also responsible for the production of at least two annotated genealogies, the first of which was “A Rosary of Pearls: Tales of the Ancestors” (Tib. *mes po'i gtam rgyud mu tig 'phreng pa*) by Waka Tsering (Tib. *wa ka tshe ring*) of the first generation of secretaries. Wangchen Kyab (Dbang chen skyabs), a secretary to the sixth-generation junwang Trashi Wanggyel (Tib. *bkra shis dbang rgyal* 達錫旺扎勒, r. 1833-1850) completed a second, updated history of the Henan princes in 1848 titled, “Book of Lessons From the Ancestors” (Tib. *deb ther mes po zhal lung* or *deb ther 'breng po*).⁵⁶⁶ While Wangchen Kyab does not mention

⁵⁶⁵ In 1770, following the death of the third generation *qinwang* (Tib. *ching wang*, Ch. 親王) without heirs, the Qing recognized a cousin as the new chief of the Oirat Khoshot banners south of the Yellow River, yet downgraded his official rank to *junwang* (Tib. *jun wang*, Ch. 郡王). Post-Qing republican governments later restored the ninth and tenth generation rulers to the rank of *qinwang*.

⁵⁶⁶ This rare book has only recently become available but must be approached with caution. According to Zhao Shunlu, as the Cultural Revolution swept across Qinghai and into the Henan Mongol Autonomous County, Shingza Kelzang copied the contents of the original manuscript out on cigarette and tea wrappings and hid them in the roof of his house. In 1967, the original text and all the other materials held by the descendants of the Henan princes were publically burned. In 1973, Shingza Kelzang recopied the text out into a small, western-style school notebook. This notebook is currently held in the Henan Mongol Autonomous County Archive. Photocopies of this notebook have subsequently circulated in private. I acquired a poor-quality photocopy of this text in the spring of 2012. Although the work has yet to be formally published in Tibetan, a Chinese-language translation of the work with an introduction by Zhao Shunlu and numerous appendices concerning the history of the Khoshot Mongols of southern Qinghai has been published in Xining. See: Zhongyou Anqing jiabu, *Xianzu yanjiao* (Xining: Qinghai minzu chubanshe, 2008).

Shingza Kelzang wrote a brief introduction to the reconstituted Tibetan-language manuscript in which he asserts that other than some minor editing and corrections, he has not altered the text. Much of the language in the manuscript, however, reflects vocabulary introduced either during the early 20th century or during the era of revolutionary socialism after 1949. The text uses terminology that did not exist in 1848 such the “minzu/mi rigs” vocabulary introduced by GMD and PRC “minority nationality” policies. One suspects that Shingza Kelzang adjusted the text in order to align the contents more closely with accepted historiographical discourse of the Maoist period. Although the phrasing and tone of the work seems to have been altered, the book still offers a wealth of historical detail that is not found elsewhere. In some sections, the book accurately quotes material from Drakgönpa and Belmang’s histories, suggesting that it would be a mistake to discard the text outright. Even were the text to prove a modern invention, the contents are still valuable because they represent a selection of historical events that had lingered within the historical memory of the Henan Mongol community more generally and

being the student of Belmang, it is difficult to imagine that they did not know each other, especially since the Mongol secretary's book contains numerous references to Belmang's *History* as well as the scholarship of his students.⁵⁶⁷

Other than a short unpublished introduction to the life and times of Belmang Pandita by Paul Nietupski, it has been the works of his students that have been the focus of modern scholarly attention.⁵⁶⁸ Among his best-known students were Sherab Gyatso (*shes rab rgya mtsho*, 1803-1875), Ngawang Tupten Gyatso (1836-1884), and Drakgönpa Könchok Gyeltsen (1801-1865). The first of these men, Sherab Gyatso served on and off as Belmang's personal secretary and is responsible for having transcribed several of Belmang's compositions from oral teachings. He later served as the secretary to the Third Jamyang Zhepa and left a body of writing that amounted to seven volumes when it was eventually block-printed in Lhasa in 1945.⁵⁶⁹ Ngawang Tupten Gyatso, whom we have

deemed significant enough by Shingza Kelzang to require retelling. Moreover, although the text seems to have an anachronistic interest in "class struggle" and commoner discontent, it is certainly possible to find equally dismissive and bitter analyses of the Mongol ruling elite in other Tibetan and Qing official sources from the 19th century that are couched in language that seems preternaturally Marxist (See Chapter Six for further discussion of this issue). The difficulties presented by the current state of this text suggest that it would serve as an excellent case study for understanding how Tibetans and Mongols in Qinghai reconstituted their libraries and recollected their history in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. The text already has served as the basis for several articles on the history of the Henan Mongol Autonomous County that appeared in the county-level *Wenshi ziliao* series. Shingza Kelzang wrote or edited several of these articles. See: *Rma lho rdzong gi rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad yig*, vols. 1-3 (1996, 1999, 2003), (Srid gros rma lho sog rigs rang skyong rdzong rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad yig u yon lhan khang gis bsgrigs, 1996, 1999, 2003).

⁵⁶⁷ For citations of Belmang's *History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia* and Drakgönpa's *Oceanic Book* see the last chapter of Wangchen Kyab, *Deb ther mes po'i zhal lung*, 352-364.

⁵⁶⁸ Paul Nietupski, "The World According to Belmang Pandita, Belmang Könchok Gyaltsan Palzangpo (1764-1853)," (unpublished manuscript, 2012).

⁵⁶⁹ For information on Sherab Gyatso's work as Belmang's secretary and scribe, see the annotated table of contents to *The Collected Works of Dbal-maṇ dkon-mchog-rgyal-mtshan*, reproduced by Gyaltan Gelek Namgyal (New Delhi, Laxmi Printers, 1974), vols. 1-11, *passim*. And also:

already met in Chapter Three, composed eighty works during his lifetime including the biography of the Third Jamyang Zhepa. He also served as the 51st abbot of Labrang beginning in 1863. Drakgönpa Könchok Gyeltsen, the 49th abbot of Labrang and author of the *Oceanic Book*, a survey of the history of Gelukpa monasteries in the Amdo region, has been the subject of a handful of recent studies.⁵⁷⁰ The attention paid to the *Oceanic Book* is well deserved given the fact that from the time of its publication in the 1865 to the present, it has been the most widely read and cited historical work among literate Tibetans in the Amdo region.⁵⁷¹ In a recent article that situates the *Oceanic Book* within the broader history of Tibetan literature and indigenous geographic sensibilities, Gray Tuttle has observed that at the time of its completion, in terms of both its size and its subject matter, Drakgönpa's *Oceanic Book* was an unprecedented work within the

Tsering Namgyal, "Sherab Gyatso," Treasury of Lives, accessed June 09, 2013, <http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Drungchen-Sherab-Gyatso/2495>.

⁵⁷⁰ For recent scholarship on this work see: Gray Tuttle, "Challenging Central Tibet's Dominance of History: The *Oceanic Book*, a 19th Century Politico-Religious Geographic History," in *Mapping the Modern in Tibet: Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, Königswinter, ed. Gray Tuttle (Andiast, Switzerland: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH, 2011), 135-172. And Anne Chayet, "A Propos de Notations Geographiques Dans L'Amdo Chos 'Byung." In *Tibet, Past and Present v. 1* edited by Henk Blezer, (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 247-262. The *Oceanic Book*, with its enormous bibliography of historical sources for the study of the history of Amdo and Tibet more generally, has served as the backbone of several guides to Tibetan historical literature produced in the west. See: A.I. (Andrei Ivanovich) Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature*, trans. Harish Chandra Gupta (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1994); and Dan Martin, *Tibetan Histories* (London: Serindia Publications, 1997).

⁵⁷¹ Since the work was block-printed following its completion in 1865, the work was probably readily available for collection both by monastic libraries and individual monks throughout Amdo and in the major monastic centers of central Tibet. Knowledge of the book within the lay population of Amdo during the late Qing is much harder to gage. The republication of the *Oceanic Book* by the Gansu People's Publishing house in 1982 and again in 1987 in an inexpensive paperback version under the shortened title *History of the Faith In Domé* (*Mdo smad chos 'byung*) expanded the readership of the work exponentially, especially among laypeople. There is perhaps a danger of distorting the historical importance of this work on the basis of its current popularity. Evidence for the circulation and reception of the work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is sparse and all claims regarding the "importance" of the work should be regarded with caution.

Tibetan literary tradition. In attempting to identify the motivations behind the production of the text, Tuttle arrives at several admittedly speculative conclusions that bear on this chapter's discussion of Belmang's earlier *History*.

At the beginning of the *Oceanic Book*, Drakgönpa provided his readers with an extensive bibliography that lists approximately 483 separate texts consulted over the course of his research.⁵⁷² Included in this list are numerous “histories of the faith” or “religious histories” (Tib. *chos ‘byung*, literally, “rise of the dharma”), a genre of works that had proliferated during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and typically took as the scope of inquiry categories such as “Mongolia,” “China,” “India,” or “Tibet.”⁵⁷³ Tuttle proposes that under the influence of this tradition, Drakgönpa may have written the *Oceanic Book* as a “companion volume” to these “religio-national” histories, thus asserting the equivalence of Amdo with other more familiar countries/regions. Noting, furthermore, that Drakgönpa chose not to title his work a “history of the faith” but rather as a *deb ther* (“book”), Tuttle suggests that Drakgönpa’s work was a “political document” reflecting the assertion of a regional identity, one which viewed the Amdo region as a unified political entity demarcated from central Tibet and the administration of the Ganden Podrang by its unique geography and culture.⁵⁷⁴ Tuttle makes this assessment largely on the basis of the conventions and contents of previous works in the *deb ther*

⁵⁷² Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 3-15.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., especially 5-6.

⁵⁷⁴ Tuttle (2011), 168-169.

genre—a class of historical literature that in the past had been written in order to assert a political claim to govern a particular territory.⁵⁷⁵

Tuttle's interpretation hinges primarily on Drakgönpa's list of works cited and his apparent choice of genre. Consideration of the relationship between Drakgönpa and his mentor in the craft of historical writing, Belmang Pandita, suggests ways to modify and strengthen Tuttle's interpretation. Drakgönpa himself recounts in the colophon that the initial idea for a new history of the Amdo region came from no one other than Belmang Pandita himself. According to Drakgönpa, Belmang had told him, "Other than the brief description in the honorable Drupé Wangchuk Kelden Gyatso's history of the faith⁵⁷⁶ and the jottings in Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Paljor's history of the faith,⁵⁷⁷ there has been absolutely nothing written about the history of this land of Domé (*yul mdo smad kyi ljongs*). Since people knowledgeable of the situation of Amdo are rare, you must write

⁵⁷⁵ Tuttle (2011), 166.

⁵⁷⁶ A reference to Grub pa'i dbang phyug Skal ldan rgya mtsho's 1652, *Mdo smad a mdo'i phyogs su bstan pa dar tshul gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdud* (A Short History of the Way the Teachings Spread in Amdo Domé). This text is often abbreviated to "The History of Amdo" (*A mdo lo rgyus*). It is available in the recently-republished collected works of Kelden Gyatso (1607-1677): *Yab rje bla ma Skal ldan rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 1 (Xining: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999).

⁵⁷⁷ In his bibliography, Drakgönpa lists three works by Sumpa Khenpo (sum pa mkhan po ye shes dpal 'jor): the "*Chos 'byung dpag bsam ljon pa*" (also known by the title *dpag bsam ljon bzang*, "The Auspicious Forest of Wish-fulfilling Trees"), a history of Buddhism in India, Tibet, and Mongolia c. 1748; the "*dzam gling spyi bshad ngo mtshar gtam snyan*" ("A General Description of the World"), c. 1777; and the *mtsho sngon lo rgyus tshangs glu gsar snyan* ("The Annals of Kokonor"), c. 1786. It is unclear which of these works Drakgönpa is referring to as his "history of the faith," but most likely it is the first one. It is possible that Drakgönpa is referring generally to all three of these works. For a recent reappraisal of the second book in this list, see Matthew T. Kapstein, "Just Where on Jambudvīpa Are We?" in *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 336-364. Kapstein translates the title of this work as the "*General Description of Jambudvīpa*." For an introduction and partial translation of the third work, see Ho-chin Yang, *The Annals of Kokonor* (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Center for the Language Sciences, 1969).

something like this.”⁵⁷⁸ Having commissioned the work, Belmang was a demanding taskmaster. Several years later in 1833, at the age of thirty-two, Drakgönpa presented a draft of his work to his teacher. Belmang, however, rejected the work, stating that it was incomplete. Sixteen years later in 1849, having traveled extensively in northern Amdo in order to collect information directly from local scholars, Drakgönpa read the newly completed sections on northern Amdo to Belmang. His teacher advised him, however, to undertake yet further revisions. It was not until 1865 and a decade after Belmang had passed away that Drakgönpa produced the final version of the text.⁵⁷⁹

At the conclusion of his life’s work, Drakgönpa thus credits his late teacher with encouraging him to expand the book beyond a simple narrative history of the region and its Mongol rulers and their relationship to Labrang monastery into an encyclopedic survey of Gelukpa monastic institutions with detailed biographical treatments of their reincarnate lineages. From the initial exchange between Belmang and Drakgönpa, it is clear that their starting point were the “religious histories” (*chos ‘byung*) of the first generations of Gelukpa historians in Amdo, yet they were dissatisfied with content of those texts. Moreover, the *Oceanic Book* was not the first history of Amdo to be labeled a “deb ther.” That status instead falls to his teacher’s *History*.

While Belmang’s *History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia*, does not include the word “deb ther” in the title, when printed as part of his eleven-volume collected works, the printers identified the *History* as a “deb ther” in the margin of each folio.⁵⁸⁰ The text

⁵⁷⁸ *Oceanic Book*, 783.

⁵⁷⁹ *Oceanic Book*, 783.

⁵⁸⁰ The collected works were block printed at Amchok Galdan Chökhör Ling (A mchog dga’ ldan chos ‘khor gling), the same printery that also produced Drakgönpa’s *Oceanic Book* in its final

has been colloquially referred to in Amdo and in later secondary literature as “Belmang’s deb ther” (*Dbal mang tshang gi deb ther*).⁵⁸¹ It seems that contemporaries also identified Belmang’s book as a “deb ther.” For instance, the Mongol secretary Wangchen Kyab cites Belmang’s history as a “deb ther” in his own 1848 genealogy/history of the Henan Khoshot princes, and, significantly, entitled his own work a “deb ther.”⁵⁸² The unprecedented appearance of three historical works at Labrang monastery within thirty years all labeled *deb ther* and centered on the original scholarship of Belmang Pandita suggests that the choice of this label signaled the intention to do more than merely update previous *chos ‘byung* literature. Moreover, the fact that Belmang instructed Drakgönpa to attempt a new history of the region shortly after he himself had written extensively on Amdo and Labrang in his *History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia*, is an indication that he had a particular agenda in mind and intended for Drakgönpa to produce an original work that would go even further beyond the conventional concerns and generic boundaries of the existing *chos ‘byung*-style historical works on Amdo.

In his bibliography of Tibetan historical works, Dan Martin also identifies *dep ther* as a separate genre from *chos ‘byung*. Unlike Tuttle, however, for Martin this genre is distinguished not by the existence of a political agenda, but rather by a particular

form in 1869. This monastery was the seat of Belmang Pandita. The date of printing Belmang Pandita’s Collected Works was probably no earlier than 1864, the year in which Drakgönpa completed his biography of Belmang, which is included in volume 10 (*tha*). See *The Collected Works of Dbal-maṇ dkon-mchog-rgyal-mtshan*, reproduced by Gyaltan Gelek Namgyal (New Delhi, Laxmi Printers, 1974). For the final date of 1869 for the *Oceanic Book*, see Piotr Klafkowski, “Introduction” to Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas Brag dgon Žabs druṇ, *Yul mdo smad kyi ljoṇis su Thub bstan rin po che ji ltar dar ba’i tshul gsal bar brjod pa deb ther rgya mtsho*, reproduced by Lokesh Chandra (New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1975-1977), 1-4.

⁵⁸¹ Oral interviews, Labrang, 2012. See also, Vostrikov, 153-154.

⁵⁸² Bkra shis dbang rgyal, *Deb ther mes po zhal lung*, 352-352.

method of composition. Translating *dep ther* as “annals,” Martin defines them as, “a historical compilation based in some part on archival types of documentation.”⁵⁸³ This observation accurately describes the three *dep ther* analyzed in this chapter. Belmang’s *History*, Wangchen Kyab’s *Book of Lessons from the Ancestors*, and Drakgönpa’s *Oceanic Book* all display careful attention to the use and critical evaluation of sources, often of a documentary nature, as well as first-hand research through travel, interviews, and examinations of monastic libraries and archives. While it is unclear if Belmang and his students saw themselves as writing in a “genre” separate from the proceeding *chos bung* literature, it does appear that for these Labrang authors, the *deb ther* label expressed an affiliation with a certain type of scholarship and signaled an interest in both the history of the Dharma (Tib. *chos*) and political affairs (Tib. *srid*).

Belmang Pandita was a pivotal figure in the intellectual history of the Amdo region in several respects. First, he served as a link between the great historically minded scholars of the Qianlong reign with the historians active during the mid to late nineteenth-century. Belmang was familiar with the major pieces of historical scholarship that had been produced during the Qianlong reign either in Amdo or by Amdo-based writers, as well as major literary figures in Central Tibet. Many of these scholars, most importantly Tukwan Rinpoché, the Second Jamyang Zhepa, the Third Gungtang Rinpoché, Démo Kūtuktu, Tatsak Rinpoché, he had either met in person, corresponded with, or studied with during the course of his education and early career at Labrang.⁵⁸⁴ As indicated by

⁵⁸³ Martin (1997), 13-14.

⁵⁸⁴ As discussed in Chapter Three, Belmang met with most of the individuals listed here during the course of the search for the Third Jamyang Zhepa. Further details concerning Belmang’s associations with prominent scholars can be found in Drakgönpa’s *Oceanic Book*, 404-411; and in his biography of Belmang Pandita.

Drakgönpa, Belmang had read the works of Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor, the Günlóng monastery based writer whose histories of Amdo, Tibet, India, Mongolia, and world geography were widely distributed throughout the Tibetan-Buddhist cultural area.⁵⁸⁵ Second, Belmang was pivotal in the sense that during his lifetime the center of historical scholarship in Amdo shifted from the monastic centers of northern Amdo such as Gönlung and Kumbum monasteries southward to Labrang—a transition that may be partially accounted for by Belmang’s active mentorship and cultivation of younger historians.

The accumulation of scholars at Labrang monastery was also a reflection of its growing wealth and political authority in the Amdo region, a context that is also essential to our consideration of Belmang and his students’ historiographical production. The *Oceanic Book* describes a political landscape where the highest level of political authority had passed from the descendants of Gushri Khan to “China” and the reincarnate hierarchs of the region’s monasteries, especially Labrang, had become governors of large segments of local Tibetan and Mongol society in their own right, superseding the influence of the Mongol nobility that had, in many cases, originally helped establish the monasteries and endowed the estates (*bla brang*) of reincarnate monks with property and tax-paying subjects.⁵⁸⁶ In Drakgönpa’s words, the abbots of Labrang and numerous other monasteries throughout Amdo, had unified “both spiritual and temporal authority” (*chos srid gnyis*) in their personages where previously these twinned authorities had been

⁵⁸⁵ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 783. For the influence of Sumpa Khenpo, see Kapstein (2011), Martin, 129-130, and Vostrikov, 151.

⁵⁸⁶ Drakgönpa identifies the inclusion of Kokonor within “China” as beginning with the submission of the Khoshot princes of Kokonor to the Kangxi emperor “China” in 1697. See, Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 41.

divided between monks and Buddhist lay rulers.⁵⁸⁷ This expression, and its parallel phrase “to govern with the two traditions” (*lugs gnyis*), appear throughout the *Oceanic Book* to describe not only their duties as ritual experts and teachers, but also their obligations as administrators and jurists to affiliated lay communities. Tuttle points out that this aspect of Drakgönpa’s presentation recalls earlier texts within the *dep ther* genre. Those texts tracked, for instance, acquisition of temporal authority by the Sakya rulers in central Tibet when Yuan influence wavered after Qubilai as well as the Pakmodru Kagyu hierarchs in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁵⁸⁸

In Drakgönpa’s history of Amdo, the shifting fortunes of the Mongols are best encapsulated in the biographies of two contemporary figures, the fifth generation chief of the Mongol banners south of the Yellow River, Trashi Jungné (bkra shis 'byung gnas 達什忠鼐, 1771-1840), who reigned from 1808-1835, and Könchok Senggé (Dkon mchog seng+ge, 1768-1833), who succeeded Belmang Pandita as abbot of Labrang in 1809. Könchok’s Senggé’s tenure at Labrang’s helm corresponded with the centennial of the monastery’s founding. And Drakgönpa’s depiction of the abbot and the qinwang leaves the impression that a nearly complete inversion of power relations had occurred during that century.

In 1709 when Trashi Jungné’s ancestor, Cagan Danjin (1670-1735), invited the first Jamyang Zhepa to Amdo and presented the original endowment of revenue-generating estates and novice monks to serve as the foundation of the new monastery, he

⁵⁸⁷ The identification of both political and religious authority with monks and monasteries occurs throughout the book. For some specific examples see for instance: the discussion of the Lamo/Cagan Nomunhan incarnations at Lamo Dechen Monastery, especially, 272 (and Chapter Six for further discussion); discussion of the role of abbot at Günlong monastery, especially during the era of Tukwan Lozang Chökyi Nyima, 66.

⁵⁸⁸ Tuttle (2011), 167-169.

was the ruler of the Right Wing of the Khoshots, a polity that dominated southern Amdo from the border with Gansu province in the east to the Yellow River in the north and west. This polity was itself the smaller half of the Khoshot Khanate that was, during Cagan Danjin's lifetime, overseen first by Trashi Batur (Bkra shi bA thur, the youngest son of Gushri Khan) and then, briefly, by Lobzang Danjin. Trashi Batur and Lobzang Danjin's power base was the Left Wing, those principalities surrounding Kokonor/Qinghai Lake.⁵⁸⁹ According to Drakgönpa, Trashi Batur's decision to respond to the Kangxi emperor's summons to audience in Beijing in 1697-8 marked the end of their independence. Kangxi awarded Trashi Batur and Cagan Danjin with the titles of *qinwang* and *junwang*, respectively. Drakgönpa described the submission in striking terms: "Having bestowed these titles and having made great gifts, China and Mongolia were continuously (permanently) joined as one China."⁵⁹⁰

For Cagan Danjin, submission to the Qing appears to have only encouraged his local ambitions. His elevation to *qinwang* by the Yongzheng emperor in 1723 reflected further Qing approval of his incorporation of additional territories, even though they came at the expense of Lobzang Danjin and other Oirat nobility in Qinghai. As Katō Naoto has argued, Lobzang Danjin's subsequent revolt was as much a revenge attack on

⁵⁸⁹ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 42.

⁵⁹⁰ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 41: "gzhan rnames la jun wang sogs 'os 'tsham dang gnang sbyin rgya cher mdzad pas rgya sog la rgya gcig pa'i 'brel ba lu gu rgyud du sbrel'" When I initially encountered this passage I was so struck with its message of permanent unity between "China" and "Mongolia" that I wondered if this sentence had actually been inserted by modern, pro-PRC editors. An Indian reproduction of the original text contains the exact same sentence. See: Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *The Ocean Annals of Amdo*, reprinted by Lokesh Chandra (New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1975), 99:1-2.

Cagan Danjin as it was a rebellion against Qing authority in the region.⁵⁹¹ Following Nian Gengyao's instructions, in the aftermath of the rebellion the Mongols south of the Yellow River were reorganized into five separate banners. But as the author of the *Deb ther mes po'i zhal lung* notes, as a loyal Qing partisan, once confirmed as the jasak *qinwang* of the vanguard banner of the southern Khoshots (Ch. 和碩特前首旗, or more colloquially in Qing documents, 河南親王旗), Cagan Danjin remained in charge of a large part of the territories to which he had aspired to before the rebellion.⁵⁹² Despite Nian Gengyao's injunction that Tibetans be separated from the Mongol banners, it appears that Cagan Danjin retained a great deal of influence over Tibetans.⁵⁹³ At Labrang, for instance, his representative retained a position in the monastic council and his fortified manor on the eastern side of the monastery remained a major administrative center.⁵⁹⁴ Furthermore, when the Labrang community fractured over the search for the incarnation of the first Jamyang Zhepa in 1728, it was the Mongol prince (or perhaps more exactly, his wife, who strongly supported one side) who had the final word in this dispute, ultimately installing their own candidate in 1738 after a decade of bitter feuding between the followers of Labrang's abbot, the first Sétsang lama (*Ngag dbang bkra shis*,

⁵⁹¹ Katō Naoto, “Lobsang Danjin’s Rebellion of 1723: With a Focus on the Eve of the Rebellion,” *Acta Asiatica* 64 (1993): 57-80.

⁵⁹² Wangchen Kyab, *Deb ther mes po'i zhal lung*, 262-263. Wangchen Kyab reports that Yongzheng asked Cagan Danjin what territories he wished to rule. Cagan Danjin responded by claiming the land between the Rma (Yellow), Tse, and ‘Bal rivers. These three rivers roughly approximate the northern, southern and western reaches of his territory, but leave his eastern borders vague. Are we to assume that he meant the Gansu provincial borders?

⁵⁹³ Wangchen Kyab records that he did lose “18 communities” of Tibetans located in what now Ngawa prefecture of northeast Sichuan, *deb ther mes po'i zhal lung*, 263.

⁵⁹⁴ Zhao Shunlu. “Anduo diqu dayuan manfa de hongzhuanze,” in Xianzu yanjiao [Lessons of the ancestors], auth. Zhongyou Angqing jiabu, ed. Xiangzha Gabuzang Queji Jianzan, trans. Duojie Renqing (Xining: Qinghai minzu chubanshe, 2008), 294.

1678-1738), and the steward of the Jamyang Zepa's estate, the Detri lama (*Blo bzang don grub*, 1673-1746). Contemporaries and later commentators have seen the *qinwang*'s household's successful intervention in this matter as confirming their status as the primary patron of the Jamyang Zhepas and supreme authority at Labrang for another generation.⁵⁹⁵

Drakgönpa's description of the Henan princes (Tib. *wang*) paints a literary map of a territory and populations much diminished from the glory days under Cagan Danjin (whom he refers to alternately as *Dar rgyal bo shog thu* or *Jo nang rgyal po*). While he credits Cagan Danjin with dominating a wide swath of territory stretching from the southwestern frontier of Gansu province down to Sichuan (from “*reb gong stod mad*” across to “*the bo*” (in present-day southern Gansu, Ch. 迭部縣), in addition to the core pastures south of the Yellow River, Drakgönpa records the fifth generation descendant Trashi Jungné as holding only a portion of the original core pastures.⁵⁹⁶ Although Wangchen Kyab quotes Drakgönpa's description of Trashi Jungné in order to demonstrate just how much the prince's domain had shrunk, Drakgönpa himself tries to put a better spin on things, noting that the territory was still rich and continued to provide large quantities of donations to Labrang.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁵ Zhao Shunlu, 295.

⁵⁹⁶ Drakgönpa discusses the history of the Henan princes in the context of his description of the monasteries established within the banner of the Henan *qinwang/junwang*, specifically the monastery affiliated with the governing encampment (Tib. *urge*) of the banner. This monastery was named *Urge grwa tshang gsang sngags smin rgyas gling*. See Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 247-257, especially, 249-250 (description of Cagan Danjin's domain), 255 (description of Trashi Jungné's domain). Drakgönpa cites Belmang's *Rgya bod hor sog gyi lo rgyus* at several points in his description of the shifting domains of the Henan princes (248, 250). Wangchen Kyab, in turn, cites this section of the *Oceanic Book* for his own discussion of Trashi Jungné.

⁵⁹⁷ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 255; Wangchen Kyab, 362.

In contrast, Drakgönpa's depiction of Labrang under Könchok Senggé presents his abbotship as the moment when the monastery first emerged as a major power in its own right. First, the circumstances of Könchok Senggé's return to the monastery were an unmistakable sign that the descendants of Gushri Khan had been displaced as prime arbiter of Labrang's affairs. As discussed in Chapter Three, unlike in the case of the search for the second Jamyang Zhepa, the recognition of the third Jamyang Zhepa had been conducted on the terms of the Qianlong emperor. According to Drakgönpa, just days after his return to the monastery, a great ceremony was held in which the imperial edict confirming the identification of the third Jamyang Zhepa and Könchok Senggé's new noble status as "Erdemu Mergen Khenpo" (Tib. *Ertem thu mengan mkhan po*) and tutor to the young monk.⁵⁹⁸ Thus, Könchok Senggé's presence at Labrang bore witness to the legitimacy both of the new Jamyang Zhepa and the Qing emperor as the main patron of the monastery.

Könchok Senggé returned home in the company of Belmang Pandita.⁵⁹⁹ Drakgönpa notes that the two monks had grown close while handling the search for the next Jamyang Zhepa, and Drakgönpa's presents them as shouldering the bulk monastery's administrative duties until well after the third Jamyang Zhepa formally assumed the abbotship of the monastery in 1817. In addition to overseeing the education of the young Jamyang Zhepa, Könchok Senggé was appointed steward (*phyag 'mdzod*) of his estate in 1798 and subsequently to the post of abbot in 1809 on the eve of his charge's

⁵⁹⁸ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 416.

⁵⁹⁹ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 415.

departure to pursue further education in central Tibet.⁶⁰⁰ According to Drakgönpa, the monk's relationship with the Qing officials in the region also continued to deepen. Shortly after returning to Labrang, Könchok Senggé was invited to Xining by the amban resident there to receive further instructions from the emperor and also a letter from Sungyun, the Lhasa amban with whom he had evidently been on good terms during his residency there. Drakgönpa writes: "Henceforth, the Chinese officials (*rgya dpon tsho*) held him in great esteem, and they did whatever he requested of them. Because his actions were upright and honest in the law/because he upheld the law with fairness and honesty, the ambans called him a 'Buddha.' When the Lhasa amban Sungyun was appointed to the post of Lanzhou Governor-general, [Könchok Senggé] dispatched messengers to greet him, for which he received further praise and bestowals."⁶⁰¹

Drakgönpa devotes considerable attention to Könchok Senggé's relationship with the Qing field officials stationed in Gansu province. Compared with the accounts of previous abbots, especially those who were not recognized reincarnations, the quality and scale of the relationship appears unprecedented. This aspect of the biography suggests that from Drakgönpa's perspective the true measure of the influence and importance of Labrang's monastic officials was to be found not in the esteem shown to them by their traditional Mongol patrons, but rather in the degree of deference paid to them by Qing officials and the status they acquired within the Qing imperial hierarchy. For this reason,

⁶⁰⁰ There are some interesting details here: Drakgönpa notes that the previous steward, Lozang (Blo bzang) passed away in 1798. This Lozang must be the same "Lobzang Dargyé" who ran afoul of the Qing court a year earlier (see Chapter Three). Könchok Senggé's appointment to steward was made using a dough-ball divination (*zan bsgyur*). See *Oceanic Book*, 415.

⁶⁰¹ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 416: "*de nas bzung rgya dpon tshos bkur gzos che zhing sku don gang zhus ltar yong ba zhig byung/ khrims lugs drang bor spyod pas am b+han sangs rgyas su grags pa lha sa'i bsung am b+han lan ju'i tsun dur phebs pa gsan pas 'tshams zhus pa mngags/ dgyes pa'i phebs sgo dang bdag rkyen kyang gnang/*"

instead of describing the Qing court's involvement in the selection and early education of the third Jamyang Zhepa, as meddlesome, Drakgönpa presents it as welcome and timely recognition of the importance of the monastery and the Jamyang Zhepas.⁶⁰² The intimate relations between Könchok Senggé and Qing officials such as Sungyun were a testament to the monastery's "arrival" as the court's essential partner in the governance of Amdo. The fact that "Chinese officials" (*rgya dpon*) would honor Könchok Senggé—who was not a "kūtuktu" and identified himself humbly as only the place-holder for the next Jamyang Zhepa—was for Drakgönpa only further evidence of Labrang's importance:

High-ranking lamas and officials from all across Domé and especially China and Tibet came regularly to pay their respects. The visitors were granted gifts and showed concern according to their rank and with reference to the rules established during the lifetimes of the first and second Jamyang Zhepas. He carried out his duties as steward without partiality. As the servant of the Supreme Reincarnation and Jewel, he traveled to all of the Supreme Reincarnation's monasteries in the north, and from Nangra down to Tsha kho, and from Golok to Choné—and took up the burden of handling all the business of the two traditions [i.e. religious and worldly affairs]. It was said that his inner yogic force was such that wherever he went he overawed both gods and men.⁶⁰³

The above statement is additionally significant because the borders Drakgönpa draws around the field of the abbot's religious and political activity perfectly shadow the

⁶⁰² *Oceanic Book*, 450-451. Similarly, Drakgönpa expresses no reservations about the use of the urn in identification of the fourth Jamyang Zhepa in 1861. This search unfolded under the supervision of Detri Lama starting in 1859. According to Drakgönpa, once several candidates had been identified, Detri traveled to Xining to report the matter to the Xining amban, who then forwarded the names on to Lhasa. The use of the urn is presented as being "in keeping with the traditional procedure." Unsurprisingly, this account notes that the winning candidate had been the one originally favored by Labrang. As seen in Chapter Three, this may not have been the case.

⁶⁰³ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 416: "grwa tshang bzhis mtshon sku mdun du rgyug 'bul mkhan rnams la bdag rkyen/ rgya dbus kyi gtsos mdo smad lho byang gi bla chen dpon chen 'brel zab can rnams la 'char can gyi 'tshams zhuss/ tshur sku zhabs su bcar mkhan drag zhan gyi rim pas shangs len zur gsos gnang sbyin sogz skyabs mgon gong ma'i dus ltar phyag mdzod zur gyi bar le shor med pa mdzad/ mchog sprul rin po che byang rgyud kyi dgon chen rnams dang/ snang ra nas tsha kho tshun dang/ mgo log nas co ne'i bar gar phebs kyi zhabs phyi mdzad de lugs gnyis kyi mdzad sgo gang ci'i 'gan khur bzhes/ de dus rje 'dis phebs gdong mnan pas nang gi rnal 'byor gyi stobs kyis lha mi thams cad zil gyis gnon pa zhig yod zer/”

territory he had identified previously as the domain of the first Henan *qinwang*, Cagan Danjin.⁶⁰⁴ The boundaries also completely encompass the shrinking domain of the Henan junwang Trashi Jungné.⁶⁰⁵ Moreover, among the activities undertaken by Könchok Senggé and Belmang within this region, many were devoted to shoring up the authority and territorial integrity of the weakened Mongol banners. In his biographies of Belmang Pandita and Könchok Senggé, Drakgönpa presents numerous cases in which the abbots were called in by either Mongol banners or Tibetan communities to deal with both small scale criminal cases and intra communal conflicts sparked by feuds over territorial boundaries, raiding, and the increasing migration of herders from Tibetan districts into pastures abandoned by the Mongols.⁶⁰⁶ In a striking role-reversal, Drakgönpa describes a political landscape in which monastic officials like Belmang Pandita guaranteed the security of the Mongol donor communities.

Drakgönpa does not present Belmang or Könchok Senggé as the sole political authority within the territory that he has staked out for their activities of the “two traditions.” That zone is inhabited by a variety of rulers and types of administration ranging from banner jasaks to Tibetan headmen, as well as monks from other monasteries and sects. Even within Labrang, Drakgönpa describes a system where power could easily be diffused between abbots and stewards (and ex-abbots and ex-stewards), across the various colleges that made up the monastery, and among the various reincarnate lamas

⁶⁰⁴ For the scope of Cagan Danjin’s territorial claims, see *Oceanic Book*, 250.

⁶⁰⁵ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 255.

⁶⁰⁶ For Könchok Senggé’s work as jurist and administrator, see Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 420-427.

and their retinues.⁶⁰⁷ But the book leaves the impression that it was only the Gelukpa hierarchs who had the authority to adjudicate between the various communities and rulers of southern Amdo and that Belmang Pandita and Könchok Senggé in particular exercised this authority in a way that contrasted with the situation a hundred years earlier when the first Henan qinwang founded the monastery.

The tumult in the Mongol banners is captured perhaps more poignantly in the works of Belmang Pandita and Wangchen Kyab both of whom wrote from a perspective both temporally and personally closer to events. Belmang had been asked to compose his history by an aristocratic descendant of Gushri Khan from the neighboring Mongol banners, although it is unclear precisely who. It is likely that banner nobilities' struggles to hold their patrimonies together had prompted the request. As discussed in the following chapter, the long-standing problems in the banners reached a crisis point in 1821 when the majority of the Mongol banners south of the Yellow River and to the south and East of Kokonor imploded, sending the Mongol banner nobility and thousands of households of destitute Mongols fleeing into Gansu province. Although the specific events of 1821 through 1823 appeared to have unfolded shortly after he finished his book, the struggles of the Mongol princes and the Qing state to respond to the devastating effects of raiding by Golok and other bands of marauders active in the Amdo region is a major topic of the book. As noted in Chapter Three, as early as the 1790s, these raids had

⁶⁰⁷ Drakgönpa writes that when Könchok Senggé finally retired and the abbotship was resumed by the Third Jamyang Zhepa that, “all religious and temporal (*chos srid*) matters were without reservation placed in the hands of the uncorrupted omniscient one.” The fact that Drakgönpa felt the need to clarify matters by adding this sentence reveals how complicated the political scene was. It was not always clear who was in charge and of what they were in charge.

already begun to cause consternation in the Qing court. This violence continued to grow in scale and frequency during the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

In Wangchen Kyab's *Book of Lessons From the Ancestors*, the Mongol secretary devotes the last three chapters to examining the attempts of the third through fifth generation princes to reverse the demographic decline of their banners and resist encroachments by neighboring Tibetans. Wangchen Kyab attributes the flight of Mongol subjects from the banners to the harsh ruling style of the jasaks. In the 1750s, in an attempt to stem the tide and break the cycle of raids and counter-raids, the regent of the third generation *qinwang* reinstated a "traditional" Mongol law code with harsher punishments (referred to as "*hos li*" in Tibetan).⁶⁰⁸ This attempted re-regimentation of the banners backfired however, generating resentment not only within the banner populations but also tensions with Labrang, where the Second Jamyang Zhepa protested the harsh sentencing of criminals, especially capital punishment. According to Wangchen Kyab, in the early Jiaqing reign (probably after 1809), Trashi Jungné abandoned these efforts, reconsolidated the rump of his banner, annulled the *hos li*, and even stopped collecting tax beyond what was due to the amban in Xining. "This prince himself was not strict when it came to criminal codes and the *hos li* were no longer observed. As for the responsibility for adjudicating disputes, they were left to the determination of the deities."⁶⁰⁹ In other words, the traditional Mongol laws were abandoned and the handling of criminal cases and civil suits was handed over to the monastic establishment. Although

⁶⁰⁸ Wangchen kyab, *Deb ther mes po'i zhal lung*, 335. "A Mongol legal code known as the *hos li* (*sog po'i hos li zhes pa'i khriims yig*)."

⁶⁰⁹ Wangchen Kyab, 356: "wang 'di ba'i rang la sgrig khriims yang btsan po min la sngar gi hos lis go mi chod bar byas yod/ zhu bzhes bden rdzun la lha sgo 'jog pa gtso bor bzung bas mnga' 'bangs gi bkur sti thob/"

neither Belmang nor Drakgönpa explicitly mention this watershed moment, if such a transfer of judicial authority occurred (and as we have seen, Drakgönpa implies that had), it occurred during the abbotships of Belmang Pandita and Könchok Senggé.

If, in its final form in 1865, the *Oceanic Book* documents the assumption of sweeping political and religious authority by Labrang and other Gelukpa monasteries from the faintly glowing embers of Mongol princely rule, Belmang's c. 1819-1821 *History* should be read as the first attempt to grapple with the shifting political landscape of Amdo. Belmang served at Labrang at the moment when the historical patrons of the Gelukpa were wavering. Moreover, while in Lhasa he had witnessed the Qianlong emperor stake his own unprecedented claim on the lineage of the Jamyang Zhepas and express a firm desire to replace "the way of the Buddha" with the "way of the emperor." In response, Belmang argued that just rule had only one foundation: the Law as understood by Gelukpa. Gelukpa jurisprudence was the only possible path to political stability in the banners. And Belmang hints that if the Mongol princes proved unable to organize their domains in accordance with this dictum, Labrang stood ready to assume control.

Drakgönpa's biography of Belmang Pandita depicts the monk as a man deeply interested in politics, especially as they related to his home region of Amdo. Prior to leading the Labrang delegation to Tibet in 1797, Belmang had had governing responsibilities both personally as an estate-owner in Amchok and while serving as the abbot of the Esoteric College at Labrang.⁶¹⁰ In his account of Belmang's mission to Tibet,

⁶¹⁰ *Oceanic Book*, 407. Drakgönpa states that Belmang "governed for four years by means of the two traditions" (*lugs gnyis kyis lo bzhir bskyangs*/).

Drakgönpa emphasized that while Belmang was traversing Amdo, he discussed both religious *and* political affairs with the monks he met along the way. For instance, while at Dongkor Monastery (a day's travel west of Xining), he met with Arik Geshé, an influential scholar and the founder of Ragya Monastery on the bank of the Yellow River in southwestern Amdo. Drakgönpa writes that, “[Belmang] and this monk had previously known each other well. They primarily discussed sutras and tantras from the Stages of the Path (*Lam rim*), histories, and religious and political affairs (*chos srid*). They talked so much it was like a waterfall pouring off the mountain.”⁶¹¹ Of his journey through Amdo and in central Tibet, Belmang kept copious notes, eventually filling an entire case.⁶¹² Drakgönpa also reports that Tatsak Rinpoche, the regent, advised him to remain in Lhasa and pursue a career in the upper echelons of the Geluk school. Another monk insinuated that within two years he would rise to the position of Ganden Tripa. The Demo Kūtuktu, who would later succeed Tatsak Rinpoche as regent (1811-1819), even offered him a position as chief preceptor at Tengyé Ling Monastery (*Bstan rgyas gling*) in Lhasa. Belmang declined these positions, arguing diplomatically that, “Having already renounced [the world], what use is there in striving for offices?”⁶¹³ It seems however, that Belmang was more willing to take up service in his homeland since he accepted the

⁶¹¹ Drakgönpa, BMNT, 159.

⁶¹² Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 408.

⁶¹³ The full statement as quoted by Drakgönpa reads: “*sku zhabs blos btang nas go sa tsam don du gnyer nas ci byed snyam pa yin ches zhal nas thos te tshe blos btang zer ba 'di 'dra la bya'o/*” *Oceanic Book*, 408.

appointment to abbot of Labrang Monastery six years later and would go on to serve in similar positions of authority, often concurrently, at other monasteries in Amdo.⁶¹⁴

In his *History*, Belmang does not hide his interest in government and the responsibilities of rulers, although he does allow that such matters are not the proper focus of monks. Belmang opens his book with the following statement:

By means of the compassion of the most perfect Buddha, it is unbecoming for those who become monks to think upon the stories of kings and talk of war. However, several of those ‘Protectors of the Realm’ born to the lineage of the Dharma King and Benefactor Gushri [Khan] requested that I write a royal genealogy. Furthermore, several [people] possessing the discernment and wisdom of the two traditions of the Dharma and statecraft had repeatedly mentioned that it would be good if there existed a clear and succinct history of India, Tibet, China, and Mongolia. Combining these two types of work into one, on the basis of the discourse of the noble ones, I promptly began composing this history for the sake of instilling devotion in the ten [Buddhist] virtues among the people of this degenerate age.⁶¹⁵

Belmang’s final product thus combined two distinctive genres—royal genealogies and religious histories. It was also addressed to two different audiences: the Mongol lay Buddhist aristocracy and those monks who had responsibilities as temporal rulers. One suspects that Belmang may very well have been addressing this work to the third Jamyang Zhepa whose assumption of religious and political duties following his

⁶¹⁴ For instance, Belmang also served as abbot of his seat monastery in Amchok, as well as Tsang Monastery. Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 408-411; *Biography of Belmang Pandita*. Also, Nietupski (2012), 4.

⁶¹⁵ Belmang, *History*, 481:4-482:4: “yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas thugs rje can gyis/ rab du byung ba rnams kyis rgyal po'i gtam gyi sbyor ba dang/ dmag gi gtam gyi sbyor ba sog s bya mi rung bar gsung pa yang yid kyi yul du gyur mod/ 'od kyang ku shri bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i gdung rgyud du 'khrungs pa'i sa skyong 'ga' zhig nas rgyal rabs shig 'bri bar bkas bskul ba dang/ chos srid kyi lugs gnyis mkhyen pa'i rnam dpyod can du mas kyang 'phags bod rgya sog rnams kyi lo rgyus nyung gsal re yod na legs tshul yang yang mol ba dang/ rnam pa gcig tu na ya rabs kyi gtam gleng ba tsam gyis kyang snyigs dus kyi skye bo 'ga' zhig dge bcu'i lam la dad pa skyes bar bya ba'i phyir du sngon gyi lo rygus 'ga' zhig cung zad 'god par bya'o//”

enthronement as abbot at Labrang in 1817 corresponds closely with the completion of Belmang's history.⁶¹⁶ Such speculation is perhaps supported by the fact that Drakgönpa portrays the third Jamyang Zhepa as showing a considerable interest in politics. For instance, he records that when Tsenpo Nomunhan accompanied the third Jamyang Zhepa home from Lhasa in 1812, they had "extensive discussions of the two traditions."⁶¹⁷ Moreover, during the 1820s, when Tsenpo Nomuhan was in the midst of composing his famous geography of the world, the Jamyang Zhepa invited him to Labrang monastery.⁶¹⁸

Belmang's opening statement reveals that the purpose of the book was overtly pedagogic: to provide those destined for positions of temporal authority with historical lessons demonstrating that the success and failure of kings, khans, emperors, and reincarnate lamas ultimately hinged on their mastery of Buddhism. This underlying agenda is particularly visible in both the full title of the book, "A Ladder for Guiding the Youth: Lessons Summarizing the History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia," and in Belmang's concluding comments where he states plainly the connection between just rule and Buddhist insight: "Regardless of whether the kings' deeds are good or bad, the subjects will follow their example. Therefore, if rulers and ministers of the temporal world are familiar with the treatise of the two traditions in order to rule according to the

⁶¹⁶ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 439. On p. 405, however, Drakgönpa writes that the third Jamyang Zhepa began to assume responsibilities for "all spiritual and temporal matters" in 1812, shortly after returning from Lhasa.

⁶¹⁷ Dragönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 439: "btsan po no min han dang lhan rgyas chibs bsgyur mdzad par lugs gnyis kyi gsung gleng 'phel zhing'" The third Jamyang Zhepa also traveled to Gönlung Monastery to visit Tsenpo Nomunhan soon after he had settled back in at Labrang.

⁶¹⁸ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 441.

system of karmic causality, their powers of the mind and heart will increase, and, not being overwhelmed by negative things, they will moreover become victorious.”⁶¹⁹

Belmang’s book, with its textbook-like quality and focus on civics, was neither a traditional “religious history,” nor should it be understood as a “secular” since in Belmang’s view good governance was inextricably linked to Buddhist knowledge. The book is perhaps best described as a kind of “princes’ manual” or “mirror for princes.” Although the book does not contain any references to works within Tibetan literary history that shared a similar agenda, this type of literature appears to have become more popular over the course of the nineteenth century. For instance, Wangchen Kyab’s *Book of Lessons from the Ancestors* seems to have been strongly influenced by Belmang’s history. It too uses historical events to present moralistic lessons on good governance to contemporary rulers. The best-known work of this nature is the guidebook that Ju Mipham Gyamtso (1846-1912) prepared for the young ruler of Degé in Kham entitled, “An Ornament for Worldly Kings, A Treatise on the Way of the King.”⁶²⁰ The author of this book, a Nyingma monk from Kham, was unlikely, however, to have known or read Belmang’s history.

A number of prominent works from central Tibet influenced Belmang Pandita. He provides several citations from both Butön’s (*Bu ston Rin chen grub*, 1290-1364) history of Buddhism in India and Tibet (the *Chos ‘byung*) of 1322, one of the first self-

⁶¹⁹ Belmang, *History*, 663:3-5: “ryal po rnams kyi spyod pa bzang ngan gang byed kyang/ chab ‘bangs rnams de'i rjes su 'brang pas na/ 'jig rten skyong ba'i rgyal blon rnams kyis kyang las 'bras kyi srol bskyangs pa'i ched du lugs gnyis bstan bcos la goms par byas na/ blo dang snying stobs 'phel zhing/ rkyen gyi zil gyis mi non par mi mthun phyogs las rnam par tyal bar 'gyur ro//”

⁶²⁰ 'Ju mi pham rgya mtsho, *Rgyal po lugs kyi bstan bcos sa gzhi skyong ba'i rgyan* in *Gsum 'bum/ Ju mi pham rgya mtsho'i* vol 1. (ka) (Paro, Bhutan: Lama Godrup & Sherab Drimey, 1984-1993), 1-158.

titled “*chos ‘byung*” in Tibetan literature, as well as the Fifth Dalai Lama’s 1643 history of Tibet’s rulers (*Bod kyi deb ther dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs*).⁶²¹ The text is, however, firmly rooted in the historical traditions of Amdo. Although Belmang admitted to his readers that as he was limited to Tibetan-language sources on account of his poor Mongol language skills,⁶²² he was able to draw upon the archives, genealogies, and other historical works that had been prepared by successive generations of the secretaries to the Khoshot *qinwang* resident at Labrang Monastery. In particular, much of Belmang’s information on the genealogy of Gushri Khan is sourced from Waka Tsering’s “A Rosary of Pearls: Tales of the Ancestors” (*Mes po'i gtam rgyud mu tig 'phreng pa*).⁶²³ In terms of its overall structure, the *History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia* closely parallels Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Paljor’s religious history, “The auspicious forest of wish-fulfilling trees.”⁶²⁴ Both texts begin with the history of Buddhism in India, and continue with its

⁶²¹ For example, Belmang cites Butön’s history for information on the collapse of the Tibetan empire (Belmang, 506:1), the origins of the Pakmodru (514:6), and finally in order to correct certain prevailing misconceptions about the connections between Chinggis Khan’s ancestors and the ancient kings of Tibet: Belmang, 527:5-6. Belmang cites the Fifth Dalai Lama’s *deb ther* on several points in his chapter on the history of Tibet (Belmang, 502, 506, 507, 515).

⁶²² Belmang, *History*, 533:1-2. The fact that he felt obliged to apologize for this deficiency, however, does indicate that there was still some expectation that those who wished to commentate on history and politics (such as himself) should have some Mongol-language abilities. His own home district of Amchok had a tradition of close relations with the Mongol banner nobility. See, Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 250, 252-3.

⁶²³ Belmang cites this work under an alternate title, *Ku shri bstan 'dzin chos rgyal gyi gdung rgyud rgyal rabs mu tig 'phreng ba*. Belmang, *History*, 532. Unfortunately, this work was lost when the manor of the Henan *junwang* at Labrang was burned to the ground in 1883. Shingza Kelzang, in his introduction to his resurrected version of Wangchen Kyab’s *Deb ther mes po'i zhal lung*, writes that much of Belmang’s information on the history of the descendants of Gushri Khan was based on Waka Tsering’s history (see first unmarked page of notebook manuscript).

⁶²⁴ Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Paljor (sum pa mkhan po ye shes dpal 'byor), *Chos 'byung dpag bsam ljon bzang* (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1992) (TIBRC W7667).

spread in Tibet, China, and finally, Mongolia.⁶²⁵ Belmang, however, devotes proportionally more attention to Gushri Khan and the history of his descendants in Amdo. This latter section, which in Belmang's work occupies approximately three-quarters of the book, draws at least partially on Sumpa Khenpo's chronicle of Gushri Khan and his descendants in the *Annals of Kokonor*.⁶²⁶ Sumpa Khenpo's *Annals of Kokonor* (1786) had been written at the urging of the Beise Tsokyé Dorjé (Tib. Bi se Mtsho skyes rdo rje), a fourth rank prince from the Khoshot banners located around Kokonor Lake.⁶²⁷ As a result, this book has largely been read as a glowing homage to Gushri Khan's descendants.⁶²⁸ Belmang's history, written thirty years later, presents a more critical evaluation of Gushri Khan's successors in Amdo. This was a reflection of the changed political circumstances and the existence of a new audience for works on politics—monks. Where Sumpa Khenpo had addressed his work solely to his Mongol patron, whom he identified using the pre-Qing title “boshoqtu” and praised as “holder of both

⁶²⁵ See also outlines of this work in Vostrikov, 151-152, and especially, Sh. Bira. *Mongolian Historical Literature of the XVII-XIX Centuries Written in Tibetan*, ed. by Ts. Damdinsüren, trans. by Stanley N. Frye (Bloomington IN: The Mongolia Society, 1970), 19-25.

⁶²⁶ Belmang Pandita does not mention Sumpa Khenpo or his works by name. However, Belmang's sections on Gushri Khan's grandson's Lobzang Danjin (Blo bzang bstan 'dzin), attempt to eject the Qing from Amdo, as well as subsequent sections on the Junghar rulers Tsewang Rabdan and Galdan Tsering contain passages that closely resemble those in Sumpa Khenpo's *Annals of Kokonor*. For Lobzang Danjin's rebellion, compare Belmang, 630-631 and Sumpa Khenpo, *Annals of Kokonor* (PRC reprint) 25-26. For the sections on the Junghars, see Belmang, 627 and Sumpa Khenpo, 43-45.

⁶²⁷ Sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor, *Mtsho sngon lo rgyus tshangs glu gsar snyan zhes bya ba bzhugs so* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe sgrun khang, 1982 [1786]), 55.

⁶²⁸ Ho-chin Yang, *The Annals of Kokonor* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University, 1969), 9.

religion and politics,”⁶²⁹ Belmang addressed a broader audience: rulers of men and monasteries such as the third Jamyang Zhepa in addition to the banner nobility.

The following sections of this chapter will examine the argument underlying Belmang’s *History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia*. In this text, Belmang argues that, 1) the laws that structure human society must be based in Buddhism; 2) that historically, conversion to Buddhism necessarily entails not just a spiritual transformation, but also a thorough transformation of the temporal laws by which one lived; and finally, 3) that the history of the recent era demonstrated that only the Gelukpa interpretation of law was correct. The final section of this chapter will discuss Belmang’s assessment of the Qing polity in light of his vision of the proper ordering of human society.

⁶²⁹ Sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor, *Mtsho sngon lo rgyus tshangs glu gsar snyan zhes bya ba bzhugs so*, 55.

Introduction (481)

Part I

Chapter One: “The rise of the teachings and its benefactors in India and the origins of the world system” (483)

Chapter Two: “A History of Other Countries”

- Section 1: “The kings of Shambhala and the later Buddha teachers” (493:3)
- Section 2: History of Tibet from early kings to 1757 (499:2)
- Section 3: History of China from ancient times until Jiaqing emperor (approx.1820) (520:6)

Part II

Chapter One: “An account of the descendants of Gushri Khan and how they supported the teachings throughout the country.”

- Further history of the Mongols until Gushri Khan (527)
- Gushri Khan and conquest of Tibet (532)
- History of the principalities of Gushri’s descendants in Amdo through the Qianlong reign (538)
- Detailed narrative of Tibetan history and relations with outside powers from Chinggis Khan through the defeat of the Junghars (583)
- History of Tibet and Amdo, especially relations with Qing court, 1750-1819 (653)
- Final essay on the legal history of Tibet and necessity of Buddhist governance (661)
- Colophon (665)

Figure 3: Contents of *The History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia*

Law and Order

As befits a book for rulers, Belmang's *History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia* is a history of the spread and evolution or elaboration of "law" (*khrims*). To the extent that just law is based in Buddhism (*chos*), it is possible on first glance to mistake the work as a standard "rise of the Dharma" (*chos 'byung*) history. But a closer examination the work reveals that rather than narrating the genealogies of various schools or teachings or the expansion of monasteries à la mode of previous *chos 'byung*, Belmang's book possesses a singular focus on the history of Buddhist-based legal systems and is a rigorously structured chronological narrative of those who have attempted to govern from within those systems.

For Belmang Pandita, the history of India is synonymous with the creation of the "world system" ('*jig rten gyi khams*) and the origins of human society. In summary: The basic necessities of human existence gave rise to families and agriculture, but also greed and social stratification. Wealth led to theft, the gravity of which ultimately resulted in the appointment of governors (*dpon po*) from among those of sound mind and body.⁶³⁰ Further funds were raised (the first taxes) and "the temporal kings arose, the first of whom received universal acclaim and hailed from the mind-stream of king Sakyamuni of the unrivaled teachings."⁶³¹ This king proscribed stealing and lying. "And from this there gradually arose the making of laws."⁶³² Thus Belmang reminds his readers that from the

⁶³⁰ Belmang, *History*, 484-486.

⁶³¹ Belmang, *History*, 486:2: "'jig rten 'di chags nas rgyal po'i thog mar byung ba mang bkur rgyal po 'di ni ston pa mnyam med shAky'a'i rgyal po dang thugs rgyud gcig par gsungs so/'"

⁶³² Belmang, *History*, 486:3: "de la khrims byed pa sogs rim gyis byung zhing"

outset, proper law-making has always been intrinsically Buddhist and that the act of temporal governance is not inimical to the Buddhist path. In just three more folio pages Belmang provides for his reader a genealogy of the princely lineage of Sakyamuni, introduces his first followers, and concludes with mention of Aśoka, the first Dharmaraja (*chos rgyal mya ngan med*).⁶³³

After apologizing for leaving out any further account of kings of India or the development of the teachings in India, Belmang turns swiftly to the “history of other countries.”⁶³⁴ The second stop on his whirlwind tour of world history is Shambhala, or, more specifically, “northern Shambhala” (*byang shambha la*), which in his treatment is a vehicle for praising Tibet. The three folios that make up this chapter begin with a description of Shambhala based on the Kalachakra tantra.⁶³⁵ It is in this chapter that the author introduces the idea of the parallel development of both *chos* (“dharma”) and *rgyal po* (“kings”). He wraps up his description noting that the country has been ruled for 700 years by a lineage of “great lamas,” the most recent manifestations of which are the, “Panchen lama the forceful wheel turner” and “his superior ministers, the Changkyia Rolpay Dorjé and the all-knowing Jamyang Zhepa.”⁶³⁶

⁶³³ Belmang, *History*, 492:6.

⁶³⁴ Belmang, *History*, 493:1-2.

⁶³⁵ Belmang, *History*, 493:3-496.

⁶³⁶ Belmang, *History*, 498: 3-4. It is curious that Belmang makes no mention of the Dalai Lamas in this context, nor does he discuss them in the subsequent chapter on the history of Tibet. Mention of the Dalai Lamas occurs quite late in the text and at first only as supporting characters to Gushri Khan. The history of Tibet begins on page 499, Gushri is first mentioned on 509, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama on 518 and the first Dalai Lama on 520.

Where Belmang's chapter on Shambhala begins with a fleeting reference to tracing the "manner of the rise of both the dharma and kings,"⁶³⁷ the subsequent chapter on the history of Tibet allows him to elaborate on the bifurcation of law (*khrims*) into two separate categories: "religious law" (*chos khrims*) and "royal law" (*rgyal khrims*).⁶³⁸ According to Belmang Pandita, the "religious king Songtsen Gampo" (or Dharmaraja, *chos rgyal strong btsan skam po*) was personally responsible for the introduction of both. Belmang first describes the establishment of the "superior *chos*" (*dam pa'i chos kyi srol btod*) following the arrival of his new Nepalese and Chinese wives in Lhasa.⁶³⁹ Specifically this entailed establishing the Jokhang to house the images brought to the capital by his two queens, "taming" the frontiers and various regions of the kingdom through the construction of chapels, dispatching missions to India to seek out Buddhist texts, and supporting the subsequent translation work into the new Tibetan script.⁶⁴⁰ He then describes the inauguration of the "royal law" (*rgyal khrims*) by means of three essential acts: palace construction, conquest, and finally the establishment of the "sixteen laws of pure human *chos*" (*mi chos gtsang ma bju drug gi khrims*).⁶⁴¹ Belmang

⁶³⁷ Belmang, *History*, 493:2: "byang shambha lar chos dang rgyal po byung tshul/"

⁶³⁸ For first use of the binary *chos khrims* and *rgyal khrims* in the summary of Tibetan history with which he opens the chapter on Tibetan history (499:3). It appears again on 506:4. Both cases the binary appears in the context of explaining the decline of these laws in the aftermath of Lang Darma's suppression of Buddhism.

⁶³⁹ Belmang, *History*, 503:3.

⁶⁴⁰ Belmang, *History*, 502:6-503:3.

⁶⁴¹ Belmang, *History*, 503:3-4.

enumerates these “laws” (*khrims*) and notes that they represent an expansion on the Buddha’s “law of the ten virtues” (i.e. the ten Buddhist virtues, *dge bcu'i khrims*).⁶⁴²

Belmang’s attribution of the first transmission of Buddhism to Tibet to Songsten Gampo was highly conventional for its day. He rejects other accounts containing stories of the arrival of Buddhist sutras from the sky to the palace of earlier kings as “absurd.”⁶⁴³ He cites no less an authority in these matters than the Great Fifth Dalai Lama’s own history of Tibet, the *Deb ther dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs*.⁶⁴⁴ Moreover, the idea that Songtsen Gampo’s sixteen “laws” (*khrims*) were merely an elaboration or adaptation of the Ten Buddhist Virtues had been mainstream since at least the twelfth century.⁶⁴⁵ What is important for our subsequent discussion of Belmang’s *History* is to point out that it is Belmang’s description of the origins of *chos khrims* and *rgyal khrims* under Songtsen Gampo that helps us interpret what he means when he uses the term “law” (*khrims*) or refers to the dichotomy of *chos* and *srid* or the “two traditions” (*lugs gnyis*) in subsequent sections of the book.

As exposited by Belmang, rather than setting out a detailed penal code, Songtsen Gampo’s “royal laws” set out the “virtues” or moral principles by which the king expected his subjects to orient their social relations. In this respect, the “laws” reflect the original meaning of the word *chos* as “custom.” The king’s laws, therefore, were an

⁶⁴² Belmang, *History*, 503:4-504:2.

⁶⁴³ Belmang, *History*, 502:2-4.

⁶⁴⁴ Belmang, *History*, 502:3.

⁶⁴⁵ Ian MacCormack, “Querying the Political and the Theological in Tibetan Intellectual History” (unpublished paper), 10. MacCormack traces the origins of this idea to at least the *Testament of Ba* (*dba' bzhet*) an eleventh or twelfth century text. MacCormack also cites Stein (2010 [1986]): 215), who has labeled this idea a “pious fiction” of later Tibetan scholars.

articulation of the “pure customs of the people,” the phrase by which the laws were popularly known. Although in this one case we can observe the older, imperial-period understanding of *chos* as “custom,” peeking through into Belmang’s *History*, in the rest of the text the author uses *chos* is to indicate the teachings of the Buddha—the Dharma and “religious” activities more generally. These usages of *chos* are in keeping with the understanding of the word following the second assimilation of Buddhism in Tibet after the tenth century.

Belmang repeatedly notes the manner in which Songtsen Gampo’s sixteen laws have informed the later development of what might be called the “second tradition” (*srid*): the law codes or established practices that informed temporal administration and jurisprudence. Often translated in English as “politics” or the “mundane,” Belmang’s interest in *srid* seems focused on “administration” or “governance” (*rgyal srid, chab srid*) and the “laws” (*khrims, bka’ khrims*) or “statutes” (*zhal lce’*) issued by rulers.⁶⁴⁶ Over the course of the book he discusses several law codes that were applied to Tibet, including “Yuan law” (*hor khrims*) and “Chinese laws” (*rgya khrims*).⁶⁴⁷ In Belmang’s presentation, these later codes are much more than moral precepts and refer both to criminal law as well as statutes delimiting the constitution of the government and regulating official behavior. For instance, Belmang uses the label “Chinese laws” to refer to the system of central administration of the Ganden Podrang government ushered in

⁶⁴⁶ It is interesting to point out that the language Belmang uses to articulate or describe the “two traditions” is different at different points in his historical narrative. For instance, Belmang discontinues the use of term *rgyal khrims* after describing the laws of the imperial period and the *chos khrims/rgyal khrims* binary fades from view.

⁶⁴⁷ See for example, “Chinese laws,” 519:4, 609; “Yuan laws” 589; “Mongol laws” (*sog po’i khrims yig*), 606; “the Mongol legal tradition” (*khrims lugs sog po*), 610; the laws of Desi Sangyé Gyatso’s “The Clear Crystal Mirror of Laws” (*khrims yig dwangs shel me long*), 610:3.

under Qing supervision during the 1750s.⁶⁴⁸ However at the conclusion of his book, Belmang Pandita engages in a final, yet essential excursus on the development of law in Tibet.⁶⁴⁹

In this section Belmang identifies those laws and codes that represent the core legal tradition of Tibet in chronological order. The list includes Songtsen Gampo's "Sixteen Laws of the Pure Human Customs," the laws of the "Great Sakya" (which he admits he has not seen), the "thirteen regulations of the Desi Pakmodru" (which he notes were later expanded to fifteen), "the law code of the Tsang king," and finally the laws of Gushri Khan. From this list are excluded the laws introduced under the Yuan or Qing as are the codes of the Great Fifth and his regent, Desi Sangyé Gyatso. Belmang finds, however, Gushri Khan's laws are "in harmony with" all the preceding codes. In fact, Belmang's subsequent presentation of an annotated list of fifteen laws precisely matches the legal code issued by the first Pakmodru ruler Jangchup Gyaltsen (Byang chub rgyal mtshan, 1302-1364).⁶⁵⁰ In Belmang's treatment, then, Gushri Khan's legal order is not a new or separate code, but rather the most recent articulation of a single stream of jurisprudence. Belmang's list of the fifteen laws is best understood as a list of statute headings under which one might expect further detail.⁶⁵¹ But the list nonetheless

⁶⁴⁸ Belmang, *History*, 519:4, also 655:1. In another interesting case, Belmang refers to the administrative and legal system imposed on Tibet during the Yuan as the "Chinese tradition of law" (*khrims las rgya lugs*, 609:6), suggesting the degree to which the Yuan/Hor could be conflated with China/Rgya in Belmang's thinking.

⁶⁴⁹ Belmang, *History*, 661-664.

⁶⁵⁰ See Belmang, *History*, 661:6-662:3 and the "Code of Fifteen Laws" of the Phagmodrupa as listed in Krang dbyi su (Zhang Yisu), *bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, 2380.

⁶⁵¹ Brief descriptions of the fifteen laws are as follows, in the order they appear in Belmang's text: 1) Defending the country from external enemies (*dpa' bo stag gi zhal lce*), 2) Surviving invasion by powerful external enemies (!! *sdar ma wa'i zhal lce*), 3) Compensation and fines for

succinctly conveys an argument for the appropriate scope of government jurisprudence and the moral principles that should guide it. And if there was any confusion about the significance of the laws, Belmang spells it out for the reader in the next paragraph. To paraphrase: the first two laws provide the method for defeating the external enemies of the state and establishing domestic peace; the third law, which prohibits capital punishment and establishes a schedule of compensation for murder is meant to “discourage killing,” as does the twelfth law; the fourth and fifth laws “discourage” stealing and adultery, respectively; and the eighth and ninth laws “tame the malevolent and ill-intentioned.”⁶⁵² As in the case with the laws purportedly issued by Songtsen Gampo, Belmang explicitly points to their origin during the reigns of the enlightened Buddhist rulers, stating “Those laws are nothing more than the way in which the previous bodhisattva kings and ministers sought to spread the teachings and the happiness of the

murder (*bsad pa stong gi zhal lce*), 4) Compensation and fines for theft (*brkus pa 'jal kyi zhal lce*), 5) Fines for adultery (*byi byas byi rin gyi zhal lce*), 6) Methods for determining the truth of arguments made by litigants in lawsuits (*zhu bzhes bden rdzun gyi zhal lce*), 7) Methods for revealing treachery and falsehoods (by means of oaths, trials, seeking signs from deities, etc. *bston ham mda' dag gi zhal lce*), 8) law on arresting and punishing criminals by restraining and binding (*bzung bkyigs khirms ra'i zhal lce*), 9) Law on recidivism (*dran 'dzin chad las kyi zhal lce*), 10) Regulations for officials appointed to local office (*sne mo las 'dzin gyi zhal lce*), 11) Regulations for the provisioning and support of officials by civilians (*hor 'dra za rkang gi zhal lce*), 12) Punishments for those who have caused injury resulting in blood-loss (*rmas pa grag gi zhal lce*), 13) Law concerning serious punishments resulting in bodily disfigurement such as blinding or amputation (*nag chen grag sbyor gyi zhal lce*), 14) Law on assigning property or compensation in cases of divorce (*nye 'brel 'bral 'dum gyi zhal lce*), 15) Law concerning the death of rented or borrowed animals (*nam phar tshur gyi zhal lce*).

⁶⁵² Belmang, *History*, 662:3-5. In this short exegesis of the fifteen laws, Belmang does not address the significance of laws nine and ten, which concern regulations of officials appointed to local offices and the provisioning and logistical support offered by subjects to officials in the field. Perhaps Belmang ignores these statutes because they would have been more obviously out of date by the nineteenth century and also of little relevance to the Amdo region where the central Tibetan government did not appoint local officials.

people,”⁶⁵³ and also, “In summary, in accordance with the discernment that arose from the instructions of the kings, these [laws] are elaborations of the Sixteen Laws of Pure Human Customs established during the time of the Three Buddhist Kings.”⁶⁵⁴ Thus Belmang advocates the continued use of these laws as the guiding principles for jurisprudence and governance in Amdo. It is also important to note that in doing so he is simultaneously positioning Amdo and central Tibet within the jurisdiction of a single legal regime—and asserting an even more expansive vision for the Tibetan legal tradition (and perhaps Tibet) than perhaps even the Pakmodrupa rulers had imagined.

Belmang’s discussion of law in Tibetan history also makes a second argument. The principle characteristic of “law” in Belmang’s *History* is that it binds the ruler as much as it does his subjects. As both executive and exemplar, the ruler has only himself to blame if the realm is wracked by conflict. Belmang attributes the collapse of the first Tibetan empire to the inability of the rulers to rule within the laws (or perhaps more precisely, the “pure customs”) that they themselves had promoted. Belmang writes, “As a result of mistakes in the religious law (*chos khrims*) and royal law (*rgyal khrims*), royal authority (*rgyal srid shor*) over the base in Ü and Tsang slipped away, and the throne-holder Trashi Tsekpa (Khri Bkra shis brtsegs pa) moved to upper Tsang.”⁶⁵⁵ Belmang

⁶⁵³ Belmang, *History*, 662:3.

⁶⁵⁴ Belmang, *History*, 662:5-6.

⁶⁵⁵ Belmang, *History*, 506:4-5. Several pages earlier in his summary introduction to Tibetan history, Belmang explained the fragmentation of the Tibetan empire similarly: “During the time of king Lang Darma, as a result of the degeneration of the laws of the dharma and the laws of the kings, the descendants of the Dharma Kings moved to Ngari. Other than being known as the kings of Ngari, they were never again powerful kings” (499:3-4). Belmang also notes that the revolt against the Tibetan kings in the era following the rule of Lang Darma began with the “vassals of Amdo.” Perhaps he wishes to send potential rulers (or the banner elite) a less-than-subtle reminder that the Tibetans in his home country were particularly unruly.

elaborates on this theme further in the conclusion of the book where he writes, “Regardless of whether the king’s deeds are good or bad, the subjects will follow their example. Therefore if rulers and ministers of the temporal world are familiar with the treatise of the two traditions in order to rule according to the system of karmic causality (*las 'brang kyi srol*), their powers of the mind and heart will increase, and, not being overwhelmed by negative things, they will eventually become the victorious one.”⁶⁵⁶ Thus in Belmang’s interpretation, the “law” must tame the absolutist tendencies of a monarch as much as it does the “ill-tempered” subjects.

The Conversion Narrative

The first part of Belmang’s book consists of four chapters that present concise histories India, Shambhala, Tibet, and China, respectively. At the end of the last of these chapters, Belmang offers a brief assessment of India, Tibet, China, and Mongolia, wherein he states that, “Generally speaking, if one compares their history, vast differences have arisen. However, if one compares the history India and Tibet in particular, although there are some minor differences, the original and pure explanations have been followed.”⁶⁵⁷ In other words, Mongolia and China are fundamentally different from Tibet, despite the fact that he notes that the “teachings” (*bstan pa*) arrived in China

⁶⁵⁶ Belmang, *History*, 663:3-4.

⁶⁵⁷ Belmang, *History*, 526:6-527:1.

(possibly from Mongolia/*hor sog*!) during Han dynasty.⁶⁵⁸ However, this assessment presents a paradoxical question: If Mongolia and China are both so different from Tibet, what makes Gushri Khan's subsequent conquest of Tibet so praiseworthy from Belmang's perspective, while his description of Qing rule leaves the impression that it is something to be endured not celebrated?

According to Belmang, the answer lies in the particular and unique nature of the conversion of the Mongols that occurred following the meeting between Altan Khan and the Third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso in 1578. For Belmang, the continued significance of the conversion lies in the fact that it resulted in an explicit break from past Mongol customs and a thorough embrace of new traditions as expressed by the laws of Tibet. In other words, what distinguished the establishment of relations between first Altan Khan and later Gushri Khan from those established with the Qing, is that the former resulted not merely in political and material support for the Gelukpa, but entailed a transformation of civilizational proportions. And it was at heart a legal transformation.

Before turning to a more detailed examination of the ramifications of conversion as understood by Belmang Pandita, it is necessary to first address what is meant by "Mongol" in his text. Belmang employs two terms to refer to Mongolia, *hor* and *sog*. At four points in the text (as well as in the title of the book), they appear together as a

⁶⁵⁸ Belmang, *History*, 522-523. Belmang's determination that Buddhism arrived during the Han dynasty distinguishes his history from several other influential histories of China written by Tibetan-Buddhists in Tibetan during the 18th century. For instance, in the *Rgya nag chos 'byung* ("History of the rise of the Dharma in China") by printed in 1736, the author, Gombojab (Mgon po skyabs), traces the origins of Buddhism in China to the pre-Zhou period. See Guislaine Mala, "A Mahayanist Rewriting of the History of China," in *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition; Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Königswinter*, ed. Bryan J. Cuevas and Kurtis R. Schaeffer (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 150.

copular expression “*hor-sog*,” also referring to “Mongols” broadly conceived.⁶⁵⁹ Yet the two terms also have distinct usages in Belmang’s text. For instance, in his chapters on the history of Tibet and China, the polity and institutions of the Yuan are referred to exclusively using “*hor*,” as in the “Yuan kings”⁶⁶⁰ (*hor gyi rgyal po*), the “Yuan military” (*hor dmag*), and the “Yuan laws” (*hor khriṃs*). “*Sog*,” on the other hand, has a broader implications, referring to concepts that signal more fundamental aspects of “Mongol” identity such as “Mongol lands” (*sog yul*), the “Mongol written language” (*sog yig*), or the “Mongol tradition/customs” (*sog lugs*). “A Mongol person” is also rendered used *sog* (i.e. *sog po*). Allowing for a handful of exceptions, in his treatment of the post-Yuan history of the Chingsids, Belmang’s label of choice for the Mongol princes and their polities, including those of Gushri Khan and his descendants is “*sog*.⁶⁶¹ Although Belmang occasionally refers to “Mongolia” as *hor*, the use of the term *sog* is much more frequent.⁶⁶² Thus it might be possible to venture the idea that by including *hor* and *sog* in the title of his work, Belmang is not using the phrase “*hor-sog*” as a catchall for “Mongolia,” but rather “*Hor and Sog*,” referring to Yuan and then later Mongol khanates, especially that of Gushri Khan. These usages of *hor* and *sog* carried over into the scholarship of his student Drakgönpa in his *Oceanic Book*. Belmang further breaks the Mongols into three distinct groups. For instance, in his description of the Mongols just prior to the emergence of Chinggis Khan, he writes, “In general, there are three [sorts] of

⁶⁵⁹ Belmang, *History*, 522, 596, 619, 625.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 525:6-526:1.

⁶⁶¹ The exceptions are generally from quotations of other authors.

⁶⁶² For instance *sog* appears 86 times in the text while *hor* appears only 41 times, and almost always in the context of the Mongol Empire/Yuan period or as a syllable in personal names.

Sogpo: Mongols (*mong gwol*), Khalkha (*hal ha*), and Oirat (*o'u lod*). Previously most were under the dominion of China. At that time the Tanguts had taken possession of some.”⁶⁶³ Although Belmang does not use the name “Mongol” (*mong gwol*) elsewhere in the text, it seems that he is referring here to the Tumed, Chahar, and other Mongol *ulus* residing in Ordos and other areas of “lower Mongolia” (*smad phyogs kyi sog po* i.e. Inner Mongolia).⁶⁶⁴

The positioning of the account of the meeting of Altan Khan and Sonam Gyatso in Belmang’s *History* is significant. Although Belmang mentions in passing the meeting at two points earlier in the text,⁶⁶⁵ and there are several places where one would have expected him to introduce it (such as his chapter on the history of Tibet), he withholds mention of the story until his discussion of the establishment of preceptor-donor relations between the Fifth Dalai Lama and Gushri Khan and subsequently the Shunzhi emperor. Belmang introduces the story at this point in order to draw into greater relief the contrasting results of the encounters between the lama and the two monarchs.

According to Belmang Pandita, shortly after Gushri Khan had begun his military campaigns in support of the Fifth Dalai Lama (in 1640), the Second Panchen Lama suggested that they also reach out to the Manchus. The Panchen Lama advised, “Since

⁶⁶³ Belmang, *History*, 528:4-5. “spyir sog po la/ mong gwol dang/ hal ha dang/ o'u lod gsum yod pa las/ snar phal cher rgya nag rgyal po'i mnag' 'og dang/ skabs 'dir mi nyag gis 'ga' zhig la bdag byas nas...”

⁶⁶⁴ Several pages later Belmang presents another classificatory scheme for the period following the defeat of Ligdan Khan and the Chakhar by the “Jurchen”: “Having surrendered and given up the permanent seal (of the Yuan rulers), subjects were allocated to his two sons and they were known as the lords (*dpon po*) of the Chakhar. Although they had been the lords of all that was called the forty-nine great *tsho* of the Mongols of the lower area (*smad phyogs kyi sog po tsho chen zhi dgu*), it was said that the descendants of Chinggis Khan was no more. Similarly the rest [of the Mongol] royal lineages were distinguished as the Khalkha (*hal ha*), Torgut (*thor god*), and Junghar (*jun gar*), et cetera” (531:3-5).

⁶⁶⁵ Belmang, *History*, 580, 587.

the Jurchen kings descended from Nurhaci (*nor gan cha'i brgyud jun jid kyi rgyal po*) control all of Mongolia (*sog yul*) except the Khalkha and Oirat, as well as many thousands of cities of China, they possess vast power. Should they not be benefactors of the teaching?”⁶⁶⁶ This outreach bore fruit when, following the conquest of the Ming, the “Manchu King Shunzhi” extended an invitation to the Dalai Lama.⁶⁶⁷ According to Belmang’s narrative, by this point Gushri Khan and the Fifth Dalai Lama had already established a preceptor-donor relationship (in the “eleventh month of the iron-snake year” i.e. early 1642).⁶⁶⁸ Belmang writes, however, that Gushri also invited the Fifth Dalai Lama to visit him on the shores of Lake Kokonor before he departed for Kham. Unfortunately, “Although the Tibetans (*bod pa rnams*) had planned on traveling there in order to please the lords and *kho lo chi* [of Kokonor], they were unable to coordinate the timing.”⁶⁶⁹ Belmang then recalls for the reader what had transpired at that location seventy years earlier:

Previously, when the Victorious One Sonam Gyatso was invited by Altan Khan [to Kokonor], the Arik donated a thousand horses and ten thousand head of cattle. Furthermore, it was widely proclaimed, ‘In general, in the past, after the death of a Mongol, according to his status there was the custom of killing his wives, servants and livestock. Having brought this to an end, a [new] custom of donating an appropriate number of horses and livestock to merit making was established.’⁶⁷⁰ Previously murder resulted in execution and if livestock were killed [punishment] was imposed for the crime. If a monk was struck, the home of the one who raised their hand

⁶⁶⁶ Belmang, *History*, 605:5-6.

⁶⁶⁷ Belmang, *History*, 606:6-607:1.

⁶⁶⁸ Belmang, *History*, 597:1.

⁶⁶⁹ Belmang, *History*, 607:2.

⁶⁷⁰ The *Oceanic Book* (28-29) conveys the meaning here more clearly, indicating that the livestock are to be donated to the sangha.

would be destroyed. Previously, there was the practice called “*od god*” that involved preparing an effigy of the dead and giving it a name. Offerings of flesh and blood would then be made to it. [Now] those who have not removed and burned their *od god* will have their homes destroyed. Whenever livestock are killed, the [robber] will be fined tenfold.⁶⁷¹ In the place of *od god*, the custom will be introduced whereby each [household] shall install an image of the six-armed Mahakala and make offerings of the three whites to it. On the three ritual days of the month, one-day vows shall be observed; and in China, Tibet and Mongolia there will be no unnecessary robberies. Necessary laws will be established in accordance with those of U-Tsang.’ This is the unimaginable liberation that comes from the [encounter of] donor and preceptor.⁶⁷²

The proclamation of the Mongol nobles contained in this passage is a close paraphrase of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s account of the meeting in his biography of the Third Dalai Lama.⁶⁷³ However, as repurposed by Belmang, it serves to remind the reader of the

⁶⁷¹ Sentence not in version in *Oceanic Book*.

⁶⁷² Belmang, *History*, 607:2-608:2.

⁶⁷³ Rgyal dbang lnga pa chen po, *Rgyal dbang sku phreng rim byon gyi mdzad rnam: sku phreng dang po nas bzhi pa'i bar gyi rnam thar* [The life of the Third Dalai Lama] (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2010), 554-555. In the original, the Fifth Dalai Lama attributes this speech to a great-nephew of Altan Khan, Sechen Hung Taiji (1540-1586). A translation of the larger passage from which Belmang drew his quotation is as follows:

At the center of this crowd of a hundred thousand, the preceptor and patron were paired like the sun and moon. As Hung Taiji spoke it was translated by Gushri Bakshi: ‘In the past, the heavenly lineage of the Chakhar (Cha dkar) had great strength that halted karma. The three [countries] of China, Tibet and Mongolia (*Hor*) were vigorously subjugated, and having established a preceptor and donor relationship with the Sakya, the Dharma spread. Later after king *Zi mur* [Temür?], the Dharma was broken. Partaking of flesh and blood as food and doing evil, it was like a dark sea of blood. [However], due to the grace of the sun and moon-like pair of preceptor and donor, and relying on the holy Dharma, the sea of blood was transformed into milk. And by means of this kindness, in this direction, China, Tibet, Hor and Sog must all establish/abide in the law of the ten virtues. Today, the Chakhar Mongols (*sog po*) in particular institute these laws. Previously, after a Mongol (*sog po*) died, in accordance with their rank their own wife, servants, horses and other livestock would be slaughtered. Henceforth, a sum similar to the value of the horses and livestock that would have been killed will be given to the sangha and lamas, a dedication prayer (*bsngo ba smon lam*) will be requested. And [we] will not kill [anyone] in order to send them on to

implications of entering into a preceptor-donor relationship: True commitment to Buddhism requires a thorough replacement of one's laws—from the traditions that have governed the domestic spaces of one's household to criminal codes, and the model for that transformation can only be central Tibet, the model Buddhist realm. Moreover, by reimagining the establishment of preceptor-donor relations between Gushri Khan and the Dalai Lama using the imagery from the encounter of Sonam Gyatso and Altan Khan, Belmang presents Gushri Khan as the realization of the promise made by Altan Khan.

Only after a further page praising the conversion of the Mongols, does Belmang finally turn to the Fifth Dalai Lama's trip to Beijing and only lingers long enough to quote from the “emperor, King Shunzhi's” (*gong ma shun tsi rgyal po*) edict bestowing a seal on his guest.⁶⁷⁴ Belmang then returns to the subject of Gushri Khan and spends the next four pages (2 folios) discussing the development of successive law codes under Gushri Khan, his sons, and later the regent Desi Sangyé Gyatso. As he does in the essay on law that concludes the book, in this passage Belmang also makes the case that the

look after the deceased. In the past, if a murder of a person occurred, according to the law [the murderer] would be executed (Lit. their life-essence would be separated from their body). If horses or livestock were killed, those of the [killer] would be entirely confiscated according to the law. If someone wearing the attire of a lama or virtuous one was struck, the property/home of the one who struck with his hand would be entirely destroyed... (554-555)

This is followed by the proscription of the use of effigies, here referred to as *ong bkod*. The speech concludes as follows: “[One] must not commit unnecessary robberies of China, Tibet and Hor. In sum, in our country here we must act according to what is done in Ü-Tsang of the Tibetan country.’ Thus the laws were proclaimed” (555).⁶⁷⁵

For further information on Sechen Khung Tayiji, see: Veronika Veit, “The Eastern Steppe: Mongol Regimes after the Yuan (1368-1636),” in *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 157-181.

⁶⁷⁴ Belmang, *History*, 608:5-609:2.

laws issued by Gushri Khan and his descendants represented legitimate improvements on the indigenous legal tradition.⁶⁷⁵

Belmang, like several other authors from Amdo such as Sumpa Khenpo before him and Drakgönpa afterwards, strongly asserts the sovereignty of Gushri Khan during the years following his defeat of Tsang king in 1642 and his death in 1655.⁶⁷⁶ In his chapter on the history of Tibet, Belmang states, “The king ruled personally as king of Tibet for twelve years.”⁶⁷⁷ Later, he notes that the territory Gushri Khan granted to the Fifth Dalai Lama did not include all of the “thirteen myriarchies of Tibet” since Tsang had been given to the Panchen Lama.⁶⁷⁸ The adamancy of Belmang’s statement perhaps suggests that nature of Gushri’s bestowal and the potential sovereignty of the Ganden Podrang government was very much a subject of debate among Tibetan historians in the

⁶⁷⁵ Belmang, *History*, 606, 609:5-612. For instance, he notes how Gushri Khan reformed various popular operas (*zlos gar*) that had flourished during the periods of Rinbungpa and Tsangpa rule (610:1). Much of this section concerns the reform of “regulations” (*las tshan*) and “charters” (*bja'yig*) concerning the deportment, salaries, and organization of civil officials as well as military officers. The Desi Sangyé Gyatso’s 1689 *Khrims yig dbangs shel me long* (“Clear crystal mirror of the laws”) is mentioned in this context (610:3).

⁶⁷⁶ Sumpa Khenpo repeatedly asserts Gushri Khan’s authority over Tibet and the Dalai Lama in his *Annals of Kokonor*. Yang Ho-chin (trans.), *The Annals of Kokonor* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1969), 39-40. Gray Tuttle has noticed that in the *Oceanic Book*, Drakgönpa also asserted the ascendancy of Gushri Khan over the Dalai Lama as ruler of Tibet: Tuttle (2011), 140-141.

⁶⁷⁷ Belmang, *History*, 518:4: “*rgyal po rang nyid kyis bod kyi rgyal po lo bcu gnyis mdzad/*”

⁶⁷⁸ Belmang, *History*, 535:4. The full sentence is: “In fulfillment of their desires, [Gushri] invited the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama. The region of Tsang was granted to the Panchen Lama and the rest of Tibet’s thirteen myriarchies were bestowed on the Dalai Lama. As a result the prestige of this pair reached the highest level possible in cyclic existence.” (“*de nas rgyal ba yab sras gnyis bsam 'grub rtser gdan drangs te/ gtsang gis cha rnams paN chen rin p ocher phul zhing/ gzhan bod khri skor bcu gsum rgyal bar in p ocher phul bas/ yab sras dbu 'phang srid rtse'i bar du mtho bar gyur/*”).

early 1800s.⁶⁷⁹ Yet Gushri Khan, in this portrayal, is both sovereign and servant—to a Buddhist tradition of governance. Belmang also does not hide the fact that there were those who viewed Gushri Khan’s conquest as a “foreign invasion” (*mtha’ dmag*).⁶⁸⁰ Yet such commentators were supporters of the Tsangpa Kings and Gushri Khan’s conquest is clearly legitimate due to his manifest support for the Dalai Lama and the Gelukpa. In this respect, Belmang’s account is quite similar to that of Sumpa Khenpo, who takes pains to point out that Gushri Khan established himself as king specifically in order to ensure that the Gelukpa would prosper. Sumpa Khenpo writes:

⁶⁷⁹ Some indication of the debate over the interpretation of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s historical significance appears just after the sentence concerning Gushri Khan’s division of Tibet between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. In verse, Belmang writes: “Furthermore, according to the root tantra of Manjusri, ‘At the end of time when the world has deteriorated, there will be the royal way of the monk. With regards to this there are no doubts that it will occur...[unclear phrase].’ According to some, it was Phagpa Lama. Some others say that it was the Great Fifth. However I wonder how certain we are that there can only be one?” (“de yang ‘jam dpal rtsa rgyud las// dus mthar ‘jig rten nyams pa na// sddom brtson rgyal po‘i tshul du ni// ‘byung bar ‘gyur ba the tshom med// yi ge ma zhes gzhon nu zhig/ zhes pa ‘ga’ zhig gis/ ‘gro mgon ‘phags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan dang/ ‘ga’ zhig gis lnga pa chen po la bkral kyang/ gcig kho nar ma nges snyam mo//” 535:5-6).

On the basis of this passage, it does not seem that Belmang would deny that the Fifth Dalai Lama, like Phakpa nearly four hundred years earlier, possessed political authority. However from Belmang’s perspective, it was authority wielded within the context of Gushri Khan’s sovereignty. In this passage, Belmang is expressing doubts about the overall historical significance of the Fifth Dalai Lama in light of what seem to be millenarian predictions of the Manjusri tantra.

The subject of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s “sovereignty” vis-à-vis Gushri Khan elicits strong views among modern historians of Tibet. Samten Karmay, for instance argues forcefully for singular sovereignty of the Dalai Lama. See: Karmay, “The Fifth Dalai Lama and His Reunification of Tibet,” in *Lhasa in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Francoise Pommaret (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 65-80. Elliot Sperling, on the other hand, has begun to formulate a more nuanced view of the power relations between the Dalai Lama and the Mongols. Sperling, “Pho-lha-nas, Khang-chen-nas, and the Last Era of Mongol Domination in Tibet” *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* LXV, Z.1 (2012): 195-211. However, this modern debate has perhaps missed the degree to which 18th and 19th century Tibetan historians also disagreed on this issue. This debate had significant contemporaneous implications because claims about the “true” nature of the Ganden Podrang government during the reign of the Great Fifth also served to legitimize local political structures (or political ambitions). The debate over Gushri Khan’s political authority had, therefore, very real implications for both his princely descendants in Amdo and their monastic counterparts.

⁶⁸⁰ Belmang, *History*, 595:4.

Then, many of the [Tibetan] people said: ‘All who are independent are happy; all who depend on others are miserable’; or, no matter what, one is narrow-minded if he does not give freedom to others. Nevertheless, the Khan himself still thought about long-range benefits; so in order to vanquish hatred toward the Dge-ldan-pa [i.e. the Gelukpa] if it should rise again, to be a military aide to the holy people, monks, and patrons who believed in [the Dge-ldan-pa], and to establish the custom of making his own descendants kings of Tibet, as stated above, [the Khan] first raised himself to the throne.⁶⁸¹

As will be further discussed below, these portrayals of Gushri Khan as sovereign starkly contrast with Belmang’s description of the Qing rulers after their establishment of sovereignty in Tibet in the 1750s. At this point, however, I would like to suggest that Belmang’s juxtaposed descriptions of the establishment of donor-preceptor relations highlights the degree to which the encounter with the Qing paled in comparison to that of Gushri Khan/Altan Khan. In particular, the establishment of donor-preceptor relations with the Qing rulers as described by Belmang entailed no subsequent transformation of customs and laws among the Manchus or in China more generally. Unlike Mongolia, China remained irrevocably different to Belmang, a difference that appears most salient in the contrast between the legal systems of China and Tibet.

In this sense, the account of the conversion of the Mongols under Altan Khan appears in Belmang’s hands to be a perfect inversion of prevailing Qing ideology at the time of composition, an ideology of which it is clear that Belmang was not unaware, especially since his own pilgrimage to Tibet coincided so neatly with the aftermath of the Gurkha campaign and the restructuring of the Ganden Podrang government that followed. As seen in Chapter One, for Qianlong the most important measure of a civilization was its justice system—an attitude Belmang appears to have shared. Yet Belmang’s

⁶⁸¹ Yang Ho-chin, trans. *Annals of Kokonor*, 40; for the original text, see: Sum pa Ye she dpal ‘byor, *Mtsho sngon lo rgyus tshangs glug sar snyan* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe sgrun khang, 1982 [1786]), 16.

conversion narrative implicitly rejects the Qianlong argument that Buddhism offered no framework for jurisprudence. On the contrary, Belmang explicitly asserts the legitimacy of Tibet's legal tradition, especially its criminal codes, over both Mongolia and China and its essential basis in Buddhist virtues. Moreover, both Belmang and the Qianlong emperor's arguments pivot on the same point: capital punishment. The underlying purpose of the conversion narrative is the avoidance of killing and shedding of blood regardless of the circumstances. The adoption of the "laws of Ü-Tsang" provides a framework for handling crimes and conflicts without resorting to further bloodshed. Therefore what for Qianlong represents the epitome of justice served, is for the abbot of Labrang Monastery the absolute mark of barbarity.

"Gold Dust Mixed with Blood": The Problem of Heterodoxy

Belmang's message, of course, was not primarily directed at the Qing court, but a local audience including the jasak rulers of the Mongol banners and the hierarchs of the Gelukpa monasteries in Amdo. Thus, although he may have been trying to highlight for his readers the incompleteness of the Qing's transformation into benefactors of Buddhism, the primary goal of Belmang's discussion of the conversion of the Mongols and the establishment of donor-preceptor relations between the Gelukpa and Altan Khan and later Gushri Khan, was the promotion of Buddhist jurisprudence in Amdo. On the basis of Wangchen Kyab's 1848 history of the Henan princes, we know that Buddhist jurisprudence was not a given and that the occasional execution of bandits in the banners was a major source of friction with Labrang and especially with the Second Jamyang

Zhepa. According to Wangchen Kyab, these frictions came to a head during the reign of the fifth-generation *junwang* Ngawang Dargyé. Belmang's *History* devotes an impressive fourteen pages to a discussion of Ngawang Dargyé, and his scathing critique of the prince expresses a third major argument underlying the *History*: that not only must one's jurisprudence be Buddhist, but one must support the Gelukpa to the exclusion of all other sects.

The account of Ngawang Dargyé begins on a positive note. According to Belmang, Ngawang Dargyé was well-educated in both Tibetan and Mongol literary traditions. He was proficient in the various "sciences," had read numerous "histories and biographies." Furthermore, although a layman, he had been extensively trained in the Gelukpa teachings. Belmang also writes that he was "kind to his subjects" and it was for this reason that we are led to believe that he was appointed *junwang* in 1771.⁶⁸² The previous *qingwang*, Wangden Dorjé Palam (Dbang ldan rdo rje pha lam) had died in 1770 without issue and, if Belmang is to be believed, the decision on how to replace him largely fell to Changkya Rolpé Dorjé and the second Jamyang Zhepa, both of whom happened to be in Beijing when the matter came to the attention of the court. In Belmang's narrative, Changkya is presented as having authority over the nominations for the position. Although the names of two other Mongol nobles had already been added to the list of potential nominees, the Jamyang Zhepa suggested that Ngawang Dargyé, whom they had both just met because, coincidentally, the nobleman was also in the capital for an imperial audience, be nominated because "he had heard that the jasak [i.e.

⁶⁸² Belmang, *History*, 565:6-566:2.

Ngawang Dargyé] was good to his people, he should obtain the title of ‘wang’.”⁶⁸³ Changkya subsequently nominated Ngawang Dargyé, who was duly confirmed by the emperor as prince.⁶⁸⁴

The presentation of this story reveals the extent to which the abbots of Labrang believed (or wanted to argue) that the power relations in Amdo had been flipped since the founding of the monastery. According to Belmang’s vignette, the Jamyang Zhepa and Changkya had not only inserted themselves in an unprecedented fashion into the nominating process for the highest ranking Mongol noble in the Amdo region, but had essentially abrogated the final decision-making authority from the emperor. Wangchen Kyab, in his 1848 retelling of this event presents the authority of Changkya Rolpé Dorjé in even stronger terms as he states that the hierarch submitted a nomination form (*‘os tho*) with only one name on it.⁶⁸⁵ The story also suggests that the new prince should have had a promising career and must have been on quite good terms with the Jamyang Zhepa. And, at least for a while, relations with Labrang remained strong. Belmang writes that Ngawang Dargyé “acted in the manner of a true ‘king of religion’” and proceeded to Labrang to meet with the Jamyang Zhepa before assuming his duties in the banners. The initial relations between the Jamyang Zhepa and Ngawang Dargyé were such that they “came together as one mind.”⁶⁸⁶

Only three folios later the reader is introduced to the “evil prince Ngawang Dargyé”—very strong wording for a patron of Labrang who had only passed away in

⁶⁸³ Belmang, *History*, 565:3.

⁶⁸⁴ Belmang, *History*, 565:5-6.

⁶⁸⁵ Wangchen Kyab, 336-337. This account cites Belmang as its source.

⁶⁸⁶ Belmang, *History*, 566:3: “*thugs yid gcig tu bdros/*”

1808.⁶⁸⁷ Belmang first criticizes the prince for maintaining a large military force, the burden of which fell heavily on his subjects. He notes that, “Although the land was peaceful, he asked for many hardships from his subjects... and they became utterly fed up with the army whenever it arrived.”⁶⁸⁸ The prince’s primary sin, however, was that he committed himself primarily to supporting and teaching the Nyingmapa tradition. Belmang suggests that the prince had been sympathetic to the Nyingmapa teachings for some time, but that it was the encouragement of an oracle (*chökyong*) in central Tibet that persuaded him to become a major proponent of the school in Amdo. Belmang records that even at the time contemporaries perceived this marked a major break with the Gelukpa school, one which the regent in central Tibet tried to reverse by counseling the prince that he had been misled by the medium and that the deity he had spoken with was not a protector but rather a malicious trick.⁶⁸⁹ The *History* then relates how the prince’s faith in the efficacy of the Nyingmapa was deepened when Nyingma adepts were able to assist his wife in delivering a healthy son.⁶⁹⁰

The prince’s mistakes culminated, according to Belmang, when he decided to convert the small monastery located near his primary administrative encampment (his “*urge*”) in the vanguard banner of the southern Khoshots into a center for the Nyingmapa. The first Jamyang Zhepa had helped found the monastery during the reign of Cagan Danjin (the founding patron of Labrang) for the sake of propitiating the Gelukpa teachings and ensuring the stability of the prince’s realm. For Belmang, the

⁶⁸⁷ Belmang, *History*, 573: 3: “*ngan wang ngag dbang dar rgyas*”

⁶⁸⁸ Belmang, *History*, 567:3-4.

⁶⁸⁹ Belmang, *History*, 573:4-574:3.

⁶⁹⁰ Belmang, *History*, 575-576.

attempted conversion of the monastery and the resulting dissolution of the monastic community marked the final straw.⁶⁹¹

Belmang writes that the political crisis of the Mongol banners derived from their support for the Nyingma teachings. “The prophecy of the beginning and end, rise and fall, of Kokonor came to fruition and a rain that was neither goats nor sheep fell... That which had been feared in the prophecies came to pass when many of the donor and preceptor relations maintained by the princes of Kokonor switched to Nyingma.”⁶⁹² Belmang traces the prophecies of which he speaks to the era when the Fifth Dalai Lama first established the preceptor-donor relationship with Gushri Khan. He reports that, “The Great Fifth stated, ‘In the future, if the Mongols, and especially those of Kokonor, in particular those of the lineage of Gushri Khan, do the Nyingma, it will not be good.’”⁶⁹³ Perhaps in order to minimize the perception that such statements were merely made with the political interests of the Gelukpa in mind or that he himself was motivated by prejudice against the other schools, several pages later Belmang explains he is not necessarily opposed to the teachings of other schools, but that that the teachings cannot be mixed together without losing their logic and efficacy.⁶⁹⁴ The result according to Belmang was a dangerous and unrecognizable product: “neither goat nor sheep.” Mixing the teachings led to clouded moral judgment and weak rule that undermined the political stability of Amdo.

⁶⁹¹ The full name of this monastery is *Urge grwa tshang gsang sngags smin rgyas gling*. See Ricard “Translator’s Introduction” xxii for information on this monastery. Some discrepancies from Belmang’s account.

⁶⁹² Belmang, *History*, 577:5-578:1.

⁶⁹³ Belmang, *History*, 578:1-2. Belmang repeats this statement on 624:5.

⁶⁹⁴ Belmang, *History*, 581.

He then moves on to an even more detailed and stern warning from another contemporary of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Tülkü Drakpa Gyeltsen (*Sprul sku grags pa rgyal mtshan*) about the dangers of mixing the Nyingmapa teachings in with those of the Gelukpa:

‘Having mixed blood with gold dust, the children of demons and hungry ghosts will run and jump about. The waves of the ocean will froth in turmoil.’ In accordance with this [prediction], many communities of herders were scattered because of enemies and bandits. Having gathered their treasure and [royal] encampments they crossed over from south of the Yellow River and regrouped in the area of upper and lower *Gshi*, *Dgu dur*, and *Sdom*. It then became necessary for them to offer tribute to the nomads of the snowy mountain of *Rma chen* [i.e. the Goloks]. Most of the other princes of Kokonor, were subsequently scattered by the hostile bandits, as was foretold in the prophecy: ‘In the year of the snake, a demoness will be reborn. The next dragon year will become infamous as a year of war. In the year of the horse, the turquoise lake will boil like a galloping horse, and in the year of the sheep the communities will all flee like the wind.’⁶⁹⁵

The historical record, Belmang therefore argues, has borne out predictions about the dangers of supporting the Nyingmapa. For the years of the dragon, snake, horse, and sheep (1796-1799), Qing official sources provide ample documentation of a major crisis in the Mongol banners of Kokonor. For instance, according Wenfu, who served as Xining amban between 1808-1811 and composed the “Concise Account of Events in Qinghai” for internal use within the amban’s office, the year 1796 marked a major turning point. In

⁶⁹⁵ Belmang, *History*, 578:4-579:1: “gser sil ma'i phung bo khrag dang 'dres/ 'dre yi dwags phru gu rgyug cing 'phyong/ mtsho rba rlabs 'khrugs pas khad kyi nyams zhes 'byung pa ltar/ dgra jag gi rkyen gyis ru sde mang bo 'thor/ mdzod dang urge sogz mdor bsdus/ lho phyogs kyi rma chu brgal nas/ gshi stod smad dgu ngur sdom sogz bryud nas/ rma chen gyi gangs ri bar du skyas 'degs dgos pa sogz byung/ mtsho sngon gyi dpon khag gzhan phal cher kyang/ dgra jag gi rkyen gyis 'thor bas/ ma 'ong lung bstan las/ sbrul gyi lo la bdud mo sprul bzhin nyul/ 'brug lor dus 'khrugs 'brug bzhin grags pa dang/ rta lor g.yu mtsho'i phyogs su rta bzhin rgyug lug lor sde rnams phal cher 'ur zhing 'bros zhes pa ltar byung ste/”

that year, the court approved a request from Ngawang Dargyé and the amban Tsebak to move the five banners from the region south of the Yellow River to new pastures north of the river and south of Kokonor Lake. However, citing memorials from 1797 through 1799, Wenfu reveals that the migration triggered a cascade of further troubles as the raiders followed their quarry northward. In October of 1799 (JQ 04/09), the amban Kuišu memorialized that the violence had spread to such an extent that the previously unaffected banners situated around Kokonor Lake were also fleeing northward.⁶⁹⁶

Wenfu's "Concise Account" also bears witness to the degree to which Qing field officials in Gansu and Qinghai struggled to solve the crisis. In both 1797 and 1799, Xining ambans were cashiered for failing to quell the violence. In the latter case, Wen-fu notes that Ngawang Dargyé forced the dismissal of the amban Kuišu when he traveled in person to Beijing and lodged the accusation that the amban was suppressing reports of the conflict.⁶⁹⁷ The fecklessness of "Chinese officials" is on view in Belmang's *History* as well, where he accuses them of pursing a policy of appeasement against the raiders. He writes:

The Chinese officials advised that, 'The time has come when you must flatter them.' In this respect, the chief Chinese official was thinking only of his own happiness. However, again [Mongol] herders gradually settled Rtse mdo as the base. Some settled where there were already herders, others scattered outwards. According to the emperor's instructions the Chinese army launched a counter attack and some [bandits] fell, after which *Sbra nag* [in Golok] made an oath do not raid again, yet contrary [to the promise, the raiding] increased many fold.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁶ Changbai Wenfu, *Qinghai shiyi jielu* (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1993 [1810]), 14-16. "Changbai" was probably Wenfu's sobriquet. It is possibly an allusion to the Manchu ancestral home, the Changbaishan mountains in Manchuria.

⁶⁹⁷ Wenfu, 16.

⁶⁹⁸ Belmang, *History*, 579:1-3.

In this passage, Belmang is most likely referring to the events of 1800 when, under the leadership from the new governor-general Sungyun, Qing military forces launched a punitive campaign against the Tibetans south of Xunhua subprefecture.⁶⁹⁹ The passage expresses disillusionment with the Qing dynasty's ability to guarantee the overall security of the Amdo region. Belmang suggests that Qing capabilities were declining at several other points in the text as well. He describes, for instance, how the regent of the third generation *qinwang* had also raised the issue of raiding from Golok during two audiences with the Qianlong emperor prior to 1770. After the first audience, "The Chinese army made a show of force which established peace." Several years later, however, when the prince reported threats against his nephew's banner, the emperor merely said that, "Your own Mongol troops (*sog dmag*) should be self-reliant. If you cannot handle it yourself, make another request." Subsequently, a Mongol military force was annihilated and raiders from Repkong (*rong phyogs*) killed numerous bannermen.⁷⁰⁰

Although critical of the Qing's anemic response to the problems in Qinghai, Belmang directs his censure primarily towards the Mongol elite for their support for the Nyingmapa. Moreover, according to Belmang it was not just the Kokonor Mongols who were undone by their interest in the Nyingmapa teachings. When discussing the conflict between the Junghars, the Khalkha, and the Qing state in the late seventeenth century, Belmang again attributes the "calamitous history of the Mongols" to their "curiosity in

⁶⁹⁹ Wenfu, 17-18. It is possible, however, that this is a reference to 1807, when the Xining amban Nayanceng and governor-general Cangling also organized military expeditions south of the Yellow River to push back the Tibetans (22).

⁷⁰⁰ Belmang, *History*, 564:4-6. The emperor stated, "*khyod rang gi thub tshod kyi dmag rgyob/ ma thub na nga la shod gsungs pa ltar*"

the Nyingma.”⁷⁰¹ Here, Belmang again reminds his readers of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s warning that the Mongols should not study the Nyingmapa teaching. In order to clarify what might be perceived as hypocrisy on the part of the Great Fifth who was well known for his interest in the Nyingma, Belmang reports that although the Great Fifth studied the Nyingmapa teachings, he adamantly refused to share these teachings with Mongols.⁷⁰²

Claims of impartiality aside, Belmang’s biography of Ngawang Dargyé and analysis of Mongol history more broadly was clearly intended to remind his readers that once established, the donor-preceptor relationship was an exclusive relationship. The marriage between Gushri Khan and the Gelukpa was intended to be monogamous. Moreover, Belmang argues that he was not alone in this belief. He states that, “with regards to what occurred in the past [i.e. the establishment of donor-preceptor relations between the Fifth Dalai Lama and Gushri Khan] I myself heard the Second Jamyang Zhepa give the same advice.”⁷⁰³ Later historians at Labrang such as Wangchen Kyab and Drakgönpa also leveled criticism at Ngawang Dargyé.⁷⁰⁴

Ngawang Dargyé has, however, had his proponents. Shabkar, a Nyingmapa yogin from Amdo whose autobiography is considered one of the great achievements of nineteenth-century Tibetan literature, claimed the prince as his guru and extensively praised him. From Shabkar’s perspective, Ngawang Dargyé was much more than a

⁷⁰¹ Belmang, *History*, 614:3, 615:1.

⁷⁰² Belmang, *History*, 614-615.

⁷⁰³ Belmang, *History*, 578:2.

⁷⁰⁴ Wangchen Kyab, 339-340; Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 250, 255. Drakgönpa is less critical than either Wangchen Kyab or Belmang. Like Belmang he also praises Ngawang Dargyé for various meritorious activities on behalf of the Gelukpa and especially his great efforts to bring supplies to Central Tibet after the second Gurkha invasion.

layman with a passing or utilitarian interest in the Nyingmapa teachings. On the contrary he was a fully enlightened being possessing a complete mastery of the teachings of several schools and a generous and influential teacher himself. Ironically, Shabkar credits Ngawang Dargyé with encouraging him to study the Gelukpa teachings of Tsongkhaba.⁷⁰⁵ Belmang's criticism of the prince appears to have been well known in southern Amdo, especially since the Labrang abbot also composed a separate work of poetry mocking the prince. In response to this poem, Shabkar himself is reported to have addressed a letter to Belmang Pandita in which he attempted to set the record straight.⁷⁰⁶ Modern historians from the Henan Mongol Autonomous County have also perceived Belmang's treatment of Ngawang Dargyé as a sectarian attack. One of these historians, Zhao Shunlu, has gone as far as to argue that Belmang was not merely offering an analysis of the prince's declining fortunes, but actively seeking to undermine the prince's authority and draw a wedge between the ruler and his subjects.⁷⁰⁷

Belmang's critique of Ngawang Dargyé is part of his larger project of outlining for his readers how a temporal ruler constitutes an ideal "benefactor" (*sbyin bdag*) or candidate for a donor-preceptor relationship. As outlined above, dedication to Buddhist jurisprudence and a commitment to thorough social transformation were essential. The biography of Ngawang Dargyé adds to this a third pillar: exclusive service to the Gelukpa. As previously mentioned, Gushri Khan was an exemplary benefactor. Yet when looking back on recent history, Belmang also singles out the Junghar rulers for praise.

⁷⁰⁵ Shabkar, *The Life of Shabkar*, trans. Matthieu Ricard (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2001), 43, also "Appendix 3: Chögyal Ngakyi Wangpo's ancestry," 565-568.

⁷⁰⁶ Zhao Shunlu, 298.

⁷⁰⁷ Zhao Shunlu, 299-300.

Galdan Boshoqtu, Tsewang Rabdan, and Galdan Tseling are all model “benefactors” of the Gelukpa. With regards to the war between the Junghars and the Khalkhas, and subsequently the Qing (1686-1697), Belmang is sympathetic with the Junghar cause and finds merit in Galdan’s claim that the Jebtsundamba Kūtuktu had insulted the representatives of the Great Fifth.⁷⁰⁸ However it is on the figure of Tsewang Rabdan that Belmang lingers the longest. He notes approvingly that when Tsewang Rabdan first came to power he purged 3,500 monks from the monasteries of the Ili Valley. The remaining thousand monks were subject to strict discipline and a Gelukpa curriculum (focused on study of the vinaya and Tsongkhaba’s Stages of the Path/*lam rim*). In this manner, “the assembly of learned monks increased to over ten thousand.”⁷⁰⁹

Belmang’s affinity for the Junghars is expressed at several other points in his *History*. This affinity stems in no small respect from the intimate historical ties between the Khoshots and Junghars. For one, both Belmang and his student Drakgönpa note the ways in which Gushri Khan’s conquests of Amdo, Kham and finally Ü and Tsang were facilitated with the support of their fellow Oirats, the Junghars. The Junghar defeat of Lhazang Khan in 1717 is portrayed as an anomalous break from historically “harmonious” relations.⁷¹⁰ Additionally, it appears that the potential support or at least refuge offered by the Junghars was a key part of Lobzang Danjin’s calculus when he decided to fight against the Qing in 1723.⁷¹¹ The ties that bound not only the Khoshots of

⁷⁰⁸ Belmang, *History*, 626:5-6.

⁷⁰⁹ Belmang, *History*, 627.

⁷¹⁰ Belmang, *History*, 618:6.

⁷¹¹ Belmang, *History*, 630-631.

Amdo, but also Labrang to the Junghars are evident in the following vignette concerning the birth of Ngawang Dargyé's son in 1771:

Following the instructions of the interpreter of the oracle, several pure monks were invited and many rituals were performed and as a result our present prince Trashi Jungné was born. At that time the Vajra-Holder [Jamyang Zhepa] had a dream in which the noblewoman Rindzin Wangmo [the wife of Ngawang Dargyé] give birth to a son who immediately grew into adulthood. He was clothed in yellow and held a weapon. The next evening, he dreamed that he asked 'Who are you and in what great battle have you passed away? [The warrior] replied, 'I am soldier of Amursana.' I personally transcribed this from the record book of the chamberlain Tenpa Dargyé.⁷¹²

Here, Belmang appears to be implying that the Trashi Jungné is a reincarnation of a Junghar noble. Amursana (d. 1757) was a Junghar prince whose attempt to reestablish an independent Junghar khanate in 1755 was ruthlessly crushed by the Qing in 1757, leading to a large-scale massacre of Junghar Mongols. There is evidence to suggest that either via the Khoshot or directly, Labrang Monastery maintained ties to the Junghars both before and after the Qing eliminated the khanate in the 1750s. For instance, among the reincarnate estates at Labrang there was one known as the "Junghar estate" (Tib. *cun gar tshang*). Also, despite injunctions from the Qing court, Labrang dispatched donation-seeking and teaching missions to Jungharia during the nineteenth century.⁷¹³ Moreover,

⁷¹² Belmang, *History*, 576:2-5: "smra ba mgon bla bcas rab byung gtsang ma kha shas gdan drangs/ rim gro mang du mdzad pas/ da lta'i bAang bkra shis 'byung gnas sku 'khrungs/ de dus rdo rje 'chang gi mnal lam du/ dpon mo rig 'dzin dbang mo la sras gcig dang/ de ma thag sras gcig 'khrungs pa dgung lo cher lon zhing go lag ser po gyon pa rmis/ de'i phyi nub dmag chen zhig 'gro gi yod par su yin dras pas/ a mur sa na'i dmag yin zer ba rmis zhes gsol dpon bstan pa dar rgyas kyi zin tho las bdag gis bshus so//"

⁷¹³ Little is known about the so-called "Junghar estate" at Labrang. The lineage of reincarnate lamas who owned the estate were probably responsible for outreach and proselytization among the Junghars, much as Labrang's "Chinese estate" (Tib. *rgya nag pa tshang*) was responsible for outreach to the Qing court. The history of Labrang's outreach to the surviving Oirat and other

Belmang prefaces his segment on the history of the Junghar and Khalkha conflict with a suggestion that the Oirat polity represented the resurrection of Songsten Gampo's empire:

'The territory of the Oirad is the territory of Songtsen Gampo; the territory of the Khalkha is that of Chinggis Khan.' Having said this they heaped praise on the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama and paid attention to their teachings and political administration. The Mongols also said, 'As we are under the Dalai Lama and Panchen lama, by means of our respect and irreversible faith we pray.' The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama states furthermore, 'The Mongols enjoy blood and meat, therefore it is difficult for them to take a rebirth in higher realm. However, the signs indicate that the majority of them are reborn as divine beings or human beings because of the power of their strong faith in the Three Jewels.' I find this to be exactly so. And it is [their faith] that has subsequently differentiated them from the others.⁷¹⁴

In pointing out the congruities between the territory of the Tibetan empire and the Oirat state, this passage confirs a sense of historical legitimacy to the Oirat polity as the natural inheritor of Songtsen Gampo's hegemony. It also presents a powerful statement about the underlying unity of Mongols and Tibetans—a unity achieved by the Mongol assimilation of Tibetan customs under the tutelage of the Gelukpa since the time of the Great Fifth. Here again one can observe the degree to which the establishment of preceptor-donor relations between Mongol rulers and Gelukpa hierarchs entailed the erasure of difference.

Mongol communities in northern Xinjiang is well attested to in the documents concerning the life of Künga Gyeltsen (Tib. *kun dga' rgyal mtshan*), a Labrang-trained monk who was dispatched to Xinjiang in the 1850s and ended up playing a major role in suppressing the Muslim uprisings of the 1860s-1870s. See, Skal bzang legs bshad, *Rje bstun byams pa mthu stobs kun dga' rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dbe grun khang, 1994).

⁷¹⁴ Belmang, *History*, 625:5-626:2. "o rod kyi gdan sa srong btsan gyi gdan sa dang/ hal kha jing gir gyi gdan sa yin gsungs nas bkur bzos che ba gnang ba sogs rgyal ba yab sras kyi bstan srid kyi thugs gtad sa yin la/ sog po rnames kyis kyang/ dA le bla ma dang paN chen 'og to zhes zlog tu med pa'i dad gus kyis gsol ba 'debs pas na/ du ku lar/ hor sog 'di sha khrag la spyod pa'i stabs/ mtho ris su skye dka' ba 'dra zhig 'dug rung/ skye brtag la mi'i yang srid bzung ba mang tsam yong gi 'dug pa/ mchog gsum la dad pa brtan pa'i mthu'm snyam/ zhes gsungs pa kho na ltar yod kyang/ phyis su rang gzhans gnyis ka de dang mi dra bar song/"

Belmang's statement is also simultaneously a statement of unity with the people whom the Qing rulers considered to be their most dangerous opponents.

The Manchu Rulers of China

So what then, did Belmang Pandita make of the Qing dynasty? In contrast to the Mongols, and especially the descendants of Oirat benefactors of the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, the Qing, or more accurately the “Manchu” (*manju*) or “Jurchen” rulers of China remain a separate, yet sovereign presence in Belmang’s *History*.

Belmang attributes the extension of Qing sovereignty to Tibet to the reorganization of Tibetan government that followed the “killing of Dalai Batur by the law of the emperor” in 1750. Dalai Batur, better known as Gyurmé Namgyel, was the younger son of the Polhané, who had reigned as the “king” (*mi dbang*) of Tibet from the 1730s until his death in 1749. On the suspicion that Gyurmé Namgyel was preparing to ally the Tibetan government with the Zunghars, the two Lhasa ambans lured him into their quarters and personally killed him. Although Belmang writes that this occurred at the command of the emperor, Petech has pointed out that the order had not yet arrived when the ambans felt compelled to act. As is recounted in Belmang’s History, the “two Chinese officials” were subsequently killed in an outburst of revenge violence that swept the city of Lhasa. Of the several hundred “Chinese soldiers” and other camp followers, “not more than five or six survived the slaughter.”⁷¹⁵ Yet according to Belmang, it was other Tibetans who eventually brought the situation under control:

⁷¹⁵ Belmang, *History*, 654:5.

Batur Kun [Doring Pandita] went to Tibet and suppressed the conflict between China and Tibet. For his intervention in what became known as the ‘War of the Dam Mongols, China, and Tibet’ he received the title of ‘beise’ from the emperor and ‘Batur Daiching’ from the [Tibetan] government. However, various people including the chamberlain of the so-called Sde ba rwa sha [the household of Gurmé Namgyel] fell into the hands of China. As if in accordance with the laws of the God of Hell, for their acts of murder the leaders of Tibet were placed under the hand of China. At the command of the emperor, the system of the four kalön and stationing of ambans in Lhasa began.⁷¹⁶

The story of Gyurmé Namgyel’s death and subsequent establishment of the council of ministers (the “Kashag” consisting of four ministers, or “kalön”) are discussed in an equally dramatic fashion at the conclusion of the short chapter on the history of Tibet in the first part of his *History*:

Although [Polhané's] son Dalai Batur Gyurmé Namgyel ruled for four years, he was killed according to the law of China, after which the four kalön were established. After the death of the Victorious One Kelzang Gyatso [1757], it has been said, ‘Thereafter the tradition was destroyed and supplications where made to beings on the outside.’ According to this statement, the tradition of the joint residence of the regent and ambans was instituted. Oh my! The three worlds are impermanent like the autumn clouds. Birth and death is like attending a dance. Our passing lives resemble lightening in the sky, transmigrating with the speed of a waterfall pouring off a precipitous mountain. All those things you have gathered, discard them without exception! Having reached the highest point, you can only come down; having been born you can only die! At that time, since the noble Dharma is the only refuge, solemnly discriminate between the consequences of good and evil actions!⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁶ Belmang, *History*, 654:5-655:1: “*bA thur kun bod du phebs pas rgya bod kyi 'khrugs pa mgo mnas/ 'dam sog rgya bod 'khrugs pa'i grangs su 'bror ma bcug par mda' tshan du bkod nas gong mar phul bas be' si'i cho lo gnang/ gzhung nas kyang bA thu ta'i ching gi cho lo gnang/ sde ba rwa sha zhes grags pa mgon gnyer blo bzang bkra shis sogs kyang rgya'i lag tu tshud de/ dmyal ba'i gshin rje'i khriims lta bu'i gsod pa'i las la sbyar zhing bod kyi mgo rgya'i 'og tu tshud/ bka' blon bzhi gong nas bsko ba dang/ lha sar a 'ban sdod pa'i mgo tshugs/*”

⁷¹⁷ Belmang, *History*, 519:4-520:1: “*de'i sras dA le bA thur 'gyur med rnam rgyal gyis lo bzhi rgyal po byas kyang/ rgya'i khriims kyis bdad nas bka' blon bzhi bskos/ rgyal ba bskal bzang rgya mtsho gzhegs nas/ ji skad du/ de o'g lungs ni rnam zhig cing/ /gyi rol skye dgus nye bar spyod/ ces gsungs pa ltar/ rgyal tshab dang/ ambhan zung 'brel du sdod pa'i srol btod pa'o// e ma ho/ srid*

As presented in this manner, Belmang leaves the impression that the establishment of “China’s” control over Tibet was not only a misfortune for Buddhism, but marked the end of Tibetan history more generally, especially since the death of the Seventh Dalai Lama is the last event that the author discusses in his chronological summary of Tibetan history. Moreover, Belmang treats the establishment of Qing control quite separately from any discussion of the initiation of patron-priest relations. Tibet “fell under the hand of China” in the 1750s not because Qing rulers had arrived at a new articulation of their support for the Gelukpa, but rather because Gyurmé Namgyel had failed to govern the country properly. Therefore, Belmang portrays the transfer of sovereignty to “China” as the punishing effects of negative karma. It must also be noted that for Belmang, the initiation of Qing sovereignty is also inaugurated with a characteristically non-Buddhist act: capital punishment. Thus Qing sovereignty is expressed primarily through the imposition of “Chinese law” and only secondarily by the presence of ambans and a Qing-sanctioned administrative arrangement (the Kashag).

Belmang’s perception of the Gurmé Namgyel affair and its implications for Tibetan sovereignty presents a strong contrast with the understanding of the Qianlong emperor and Qing officials, both in the 1790s and in the 1750s. As Petech has documented in his history of Sino-Tibetan relations during the first half of the eighteenth century, when the Qianlong emperor and his staff approved the elimination of the position of “king” and the elevation of the Seventh Dalai Lama Kelzang Gyatso to a

gsum mi rtag ston ka'i sbrin dang 'dra// 'gro ba'i skye 'chi gar la blta dang mtshungs// 'gro ba'i tshe 'gro nam mkha'i glog 'dra ste// ri gzar 'bab chu bzhin du myur mgyogs 'gro// 'dus pa 'bral zhing bsags pa mlus mdzad// mthon po'i mtha' rgud skye ba'i tha ma 'chi// de tshe dam chos kho na skyabs yin pas/ dkar nag las 'bras blang dor nan tan mdzod//”

position of authority over temporal affairs in 1751, they were under the impression that they were restoring the regime that had existed under the fifth and sixth Dalai Lamas until 1705.⁷¹⁸ This view persisted within the Qing court until the 1790s. As discussed in Chapter One, during the course of the Gurkha War, Qianlong and his inner court officials reappraised their Tibet policy and ultimately reorganized the Tibetan government in a fashion that explicitly established the two ambans resident in Lhasa as representatives of the Qing's sovereign authority (*Ma. toose*). However, in keeping with his view of the killing of Gurmé Namgyel as the watershed moment, Belmang gives scant attention to the Gurkha wars and their aftermath.⁷¹⁹

Although Belmang identifies the Qing rulers as “Manchu kings,” their realm is indistinguishable from “China” and the sovereignty they exercise over Tibet is as “kings of China.” Thus, the *History* describes Tibet as becoming a subject of “China” and not a component of a greater, all-inclusive Gelukpa “Qing” empire. There is no concept of a “Greater China” either, as can be found in the geographical work of Belmang’s approximate contemporary, Tsenpo Nomunhan.⁷²⁰ Kokonor, Jungharia, and finally Tibet

⁷¹⁸ Luciano Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century: History of the establishment of the Chinese protectorate in Tibet* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, Monographies du T'oung Pao vol. 1, 1972), 232.

⁷¹⁹ Belmang, *History*, 567:5, 659:5-6.

⁷²⁰ Bstan po no mon han ‘Jam dpal chos kyi bstan ‘dzin ‘phrin las, ‘Dzam gling rgyas bshad (Gangtok: Dzongsar chhentse labrang, 1981 [1820/30], TBRC W22138), 128. Also see Turrell Wylie’s transcription of this text in *The Geography of Tibet According to the 'Dzam-gling rgyas-bshad* (Rome: Instituto Italiano Per Il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Serie Orientale Roma XXV 1973), 10. According to Tsenpo Nomunhan the concept of a “Greater China” (*rgya nag chen po*) is analogous to the idea of “Greater Tibet” (*bod chen po*). He writes that much as “little China” is a part of “greater China,” “little Tibet” (by which he means Ü-Tsang) is not separate from but part of the “greater Tibet” to which Amdo and Kham also belong. It seems he was correcting those who spoke of “little Tibet” and “greater Tibet” as separate entities.

successively “entered under the authority of China,” but remained distinct, separate, and alienable entities, not constituent parts of a greater whole.⁷²¹

Belmang firmly places the history of the Qing within his chapter on the history of China and as the last representatives of a succession of Chinese rulers that has stretched “4,092 years” from the first “king” to the first year of emperor Qianlong’s reign.⁷²² As portrayed by Belmang, unlike the Mongols, the “Manchu kings” appear to have had only a short historical existence prior to their occupancy of the capital of China. He presents no details about their history prior to the conquest of the Ming and makes no observations of any traits that might distinguish them from the Ming emperors. The court’s “ambans” in Lhasa and Xining, are “Chinese officials” and Belmang makes no observations that would distinguish them as bannermen. In this respect, the Qing rulers appear as a meteoric, almost supernatural historical force—an impression only enhanced by the unusual story Belmang relates concerning the fall of the Ming:

The next year, the Jurchen obtained [the realm]. Prior to this Yongle, the king of China, painted a thangka and left a testament in his will stating that, “If the seal is ever broken by anyone, the capital will be lost. Do not open it!” Seven generations later King Chongzhen broke open the seal and revealed a thangka that depicted Chinese offering food to a Manchu person. For these interdependent reasons Öndor Boktu [Shunzhi or possibly Dorgon?] of the Manchus became the king.⁷²³

⁷²¹ According to Belmang, Emperor Kangxi brought Kokonor under his control when the Khoshot princes of the region accepted his invitation to audience in 1697: “From then on, Kokonor began to enter under the authority of China” (626:4-5: “*de nas bzung ste mtsho sngon rgya'i 'og du tshud pa'i mgo tshugs/*”). As for the Junghars: “The Junghars as well fell under the dominion of China in wood-monkey year [1764?]” (631:3-4: “*jun gar yang shing sprel lo rgya'i mgna' 'og tu chud/*”).

⁷²² Belmang, *History*, 522:1.

⁷²³ Belmang, *History*, 606:5-6: “*de'i phyi lo rgyal jur jid kyis thob/ de yang sngon rgya nag rgyal po yong bus thang ka gcig bris nas rgya btab 'dis rgya sus bshig du/ rgyal sa 'chor bas ma bshig ces kha chems bzhag mi rabs bdun pa khrung ci rgyal pos bshig pas/ thang kar manju'i mi la rgya nag gis zan 'dren pa'i tshul 'dug de'i rten 'brel gyis manju'i on dor bo gto rgyal po byung/*”

It is unclear from what source Belmang derived this apocryphal account of the end of the Ming dynasty. But his discussion of the Qing conveys an impression of unfamiliarity that strongly contrasts with the deep historical knowledge he possessed of the Oirat and the eastern Mongol peoples.

Writing from the perspective of early nineteenth century on the eve of the centennial of the Lobzang Danjin rebellion of 1723, in the world according to Belmang, the Qing remained a sovereign and an influential presence in Amdo. However, the continued status of the Qing rulers and their local representatives as “benefactors” (*sbyin bdag*) of the Gelekpa or “holders of the teaching” (*bsdan 'dzin*) is much more ambiguous. As noted previously in this chapter, Belmang described in unequal terms how the Shunzhi emperor and the Great Fifth as establishing a patron-priest relationship: “According to the edict offered by the emperor to the one in the west who is omniscient of all directions, ‘As for the investiture of the [Great Fifth] as master of the teachings of the world, the Lord of the Teachings and the Benefactor of the Teachings (*sbyin bdag*) have achieved the unsurpassed liberation from having entered into a state of union.’”⁷²⁴ Furthermore, later in the book Belmang notes how both the Tukwan Rinpoche and Changkyia Rolpé Dorjé entered into patron-priest relations with the Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors:

In the year that Kelzang Gyatso went to Tibet, emperor Kangxi died and Yongzheng took the throne. This king presented the Reverend Ngawang Chökyi Gyatso with the title “Tukwan the Vajra-holder” and offered his forehead. After Yongzheng passed away in the year in which the Vajra-

⁷²⁴ Belmang, *History*, 609:1-2: “gong gi yi ge gsum gyis nyi ma nub phyogs mtha' dag shes su bcug pa'i 'ja' sa gnang ste/ 'dzam gling gi bstan pa'i bdag por mnga'i gsol ba ni/ bstan pa'i mnga' bdag dang/ bstan pa'i sbyin bdag zung du 'jug pa'i rnam thar bla na med pa'o/”

holder Changkya [Rölpé Dorjé] traveled to Tibet, Qianlong took the throne. Due to the beneficent force that arose from the [relationship] of preceptor and donor established between the Vajra-holder Changkya and this king, such joy and well-being arose that it rivaled that of the first Perfect Age [of the aeon] when the beings and teachings had still not differentiated.⁷²⁵

In this passage Belmang is clearly arguing that both the Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors successively took Gelukpa hierarchs as their personal gurus. This is indicated both by the reference to Yongzheng bowing before the Tukwan Rinpoche (“offered his forehead”) and because these monks were titled “Vajra-holders,” which is the title a disciple offers to their personal tutor or “root guru.”⁷²⁶ The patron-priest relationship between the Gelukpa and the Qing seems to have born fruit in other, more concrete ways as well. For instance, Belmang argues that the eighth Dalai Lama helped the Qing prevail during the Second Jinchuan War of 1774:

Although the ruler of Gyelrong possessed little military might, their geographic advantages allowed them to pursue the war vigorously. The cost of pack yaks rose to twenty or more taels of silver. The [Dalai Lama] brought together his treasure, power, superior knowledge and magical skills and by means of these forces destroyed the [Gyelrong]. The people were gathered as subjects of the emperor and the Bonpos were changed into Yellow Hats.⁷²⁷

⁷²⁵ Belmang, *History*, 655:2-4: “gyal ba skal bzang rgya mtsho bod du phebs pa'i lo gong ma khang shi gshegs nas yung Ting khrir phebs/ rgyal po 'dis rje ngag dbang chos kyi rgya mtshor mtshan gsol pa thu'u bkwan rdo rje 'chang gi gong ma dbu'i gtsug tu mchod/ lcang skya rdo rje 'chang bod du phebs pa'i lo yung Ti gshegs nas chen lung rgyal sar 'khod/ lcang skya rdo rje 'chang dang rgyal po 'di gnyi mchod yon gyi bka' drin la brten nas ris med bstan 'gro rdzogs ldan 'gran bzod pa'i bde skyid rgyas/”

⁷²⁶ Tony Duff, “*rdo rje ‘chang’*,” *The Illuminator Tibetan-English Encyclopaedic Dictionary* (Katmandu: Padma Karpo Translation Committee, 2000).

⁷²⁷ Belmang, *History*, 655:5-6.

However, these relationships and the benefits that accrued from them are discussed in the past tense and there is no statement in the book that indicates that the preceptor-donor relationship had been reaffirmed in recent times. Both monks mentioned as having served as preceptors in the Qing court were figures of the Kangxi, Yongzheng and early Qianlong reigns. The Tukwan Rinpoche mentioned in this passage is not Lobzang Chökyi Nyima (1737-1802), but rather the second Tukwan, Ngawang Chökyi Gyasto (1680-1736). One wonders if from Belmang's perspective, the relationship of the third Tukwan to the Qianlong emperor never rose to the importance of previous patron-priest relationships. By the time that Belmang composed his *History*, perhaps thirty years had elapsed since the passing away of Changkya Rolpé Dorjé in 1786. There is no mention of the Jiaqing emperor as a "benefactor" of the Gelukpa, and concerning the later decades of the Qianlong reign, Belmang is silent on the court's relations to Tibet or the Gelukpa. As a result, the impression Belmang leaves concerning the recent history of the dynasty is the one evoked by the emperors' seeming abandonment of its Khoshot princely allies in Amdo and their inability to guarantee local security.

Belmang's presentation of the Qing rulers, and especially the Qianlong emperor, contrasts strongly with another influential work of historical literature produced around the same time as the *History*: Démo Kūtuktu's (1778-1819) biography of the Eighth Dalai Lama (1811). In this work, Démo Kūtuktu, whom we recall as developing a close relationship with Belmang Pandita during the latter's visit to Tibet, vigorously affirms not only the association between Qianlong and Manjursi, but the idea that the emperor had decided to become a monk in his retirement. As the passage below reveals, however, this was not an idea that received universal affirmation:

For the purpose of increasing the joy and well-being of central Tibet, and especially in accordance with the tradition of offering prostrations that is the custom of all the upper classes of China and Tibet, the Manjusri emperor bestowed a image of himself in the costume of a fully ordained monk and Vajra-holder. Because there were those who were not enthusiastic [about worshipping this image], the [Dalai lama] decreed, ‘The emperor is himself Manjusri, the father of all the victorious ones [i.e. Buddhas], and complete exemplar of those lords of men. He is the object to which all the world, including the gods, prostrates. Since his commands express compassion for all the people of the snowy lands and in particular honors/worships the tradition of those who wear the golden-hued crowns, nowadays the precious teachings of the conqueror Tsongkhaba have flourished. This is due to the emperor's great kindness. Myself and all of us must with admiration for his accomplishments worship and serve all of his likenesses ('dra thang).’⁷²⁸

Belmang's own student, Dragönpa would also later identify Qing rulers as “Manjusri” in the *Oceanic Book*, although only infrequently.⁷²⁹ But it seems that Belmang Pandita might have been one of those who were “not enthusiastic” about the worship of Qianlong and other Qing rulers as Bodhisattvas had he been present for the unveiling of Qianlong's thangka in 1798.

Conclusion: The Defense of Buddhist Governance

Belmang Pandita's *History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia* claims to have been written as a guidebook for the contemporary temporal rulers of Amdo. Yet, as a result of its explicit and implicit criticisms of the prevailing order, his history is as much a work in search of new “benefactors” as it is a celebration of the existing rulers. The first intended

⁷²⁸ Démo Kūtuktu, 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho'i rnam thar (Lha sa: Dga' ldan pho brang', Bras spungs, 1811, TBRC W2CZ7847), 269ka:3-269kha:2. This quote comes from a section dated to September 12, 1798 (JQ 03 “Earth-horse year”/08/03).

⁷²⁹ Drakgönpa identifies Qing rulers as “Manjusri” approximately four times in 783 pages. Qianlong is the most common recipient of the moniker (ex. 72), yet Yongzheng (280) and Daoguang (442) also receive the label.

audience of the book, the traditional patrons of Labrang—the neighboring Mongol princes of Amdo, are portrayed as struggling to retain their people and maintain their historical commitments to Labrang. Belmang depicts the new *junwang* Trashi Jungné as a promising new ruler (after all, he may be reincarnated Junghar noble!), but facing major challenges ahead.⁷³⁰ As for the Qing emperors, they appear increasingly incapable of guaranteeing local security and disinterested in fulfilling the commitments implied by the establishment of preceptor-donor relations between previous emperors and Gelukpa hierarchs. Although Drakgönpa would later on describe the late 1790s and early 1800s as the moment when the Qing stepped into the role of primary patron of the Jamyang Zhepas and Labrang Monastery, this is not the vision of Belmang Pandita at the time. Moreover, Qing official sources reveal that in 1809, the Jiaqing court rebuffed an attempt by Labrang officials to send the third Jamyang Zhepa and the fifth Cagan Nomunhan to Beijing for an imperial audience.⁷³¹ One could speculate that this incident as well influenced Belmang’s perception of Qing commitments to the monastery.

The major arguments presented in Belmang’s *History* reflect a local political order in flux. Belmang’s sectarianism can be read perhaps not only as his diagnosis of why the banners collapsed but also as an expression of his worries about what might happen if the Mongol nobility of the region increasingly divided their patronage between the Gelukpa and other schools. Ngawang Dargyé’s sudden transfer of material and human resources to the Nyingma posed a problem to Labrang and other Gelukpa monasteries in Amdo if it was allowed to set a precedent. Belmang’s attempt to deter other Mongol nobles from following the example of Ngawang Dargyé by linking their

⁷³⁰ Belmang, *History*, 582:5-583:1.

⁷³¹ Wenfu, 25.

political crisis to their support for the Nyingmapa was one possible strategy for containing the damage. A generation later the Fourth Jamyang Zhepa took a different track: Instead of attempting to proscribe the Nyingma teachings, he invited Nyingmapa to settle at Labrang, thus making the monastery a focus of patronage regardless of sectarian sympathies.

Securing the undivided attention of the Mongol nobility in Kokonor meant more to Belmang than merely assuring the wealth and security of Labrang. Much as the Yongzheng emperor and Nian Gengyao had a century earlier, Belmang believed that “Since Kokonor is the vital juncture of China, Tibet, and Mongolia, it is essential to control it.”⁷³² The region remained key to the overall security of the Geluk school in general. After all, it was the Gelukpa cultivation of the Mongols and especially the Oirats around the shores of lake Kokonor that had originally provided the military backing necessary to capture and transform central Tibet into the bastion of Gelukpa orthodoxy. The undoing of the Pakmodrupa and Tsangpa rulers, Belmang writes, had been the fact that they ignored Kokonor. The Gelukpa, on the other hand, had grasped early on the importance of the north and Kokonor in particular. And the region had not lost its strategic significance: “It has been said that at present, the teaching of those who wear the Yellow Hats depends on the peace of Kokonor and the benefactors of the north who are nearby.”⁷³³ The continued assimilation of the Mongols of Kokonor therefore was of strategic import to the Gelukpa cause. A key component of this transformation for

⁷³² Belmang, *History*, 624:6-625:1: “*mtsho sngon 'di rgya bod hor gsum 'du ba'i sa gnad yin pas/ khur len gal che tshul/*”

⁷³³ Belmang, *History*, 625:3-4. “*deng sang zhwa ser 'chang ba'i bstan pa 'di byang phyogs kyi sbyin bdag rnam dang khad nye bar/ mtsho sngon phyogs kyi dus bde dog la rag las gsungs nas/*”

Belmang was the promotion of Buddhist jurisprudence based on the codes of central Tibet.

In the early nineteenth century, Amdo was not only a pluralistic religious environment—a marketplace of “chos”—it had also become a pluralistic legal order.⁷³⁴ Belmang’s argument that the aspiring “world guardian” (*jig rten skyong ba*)⁷³⁵ ground their temporal governance in the Tibetan tradition of Buddhist jurisprudence (the “second tradition”) implied a rejection of the other legal options available in Amdo. As the Mongol secretary at Labrang, Wangchen Kyab, reports in his 1848 history of the region, the second Jamyang Zhepa and Labrang officials such as Belmang had been critical not only of the Mongol princes’ dalliances with the Nyingmapa but also of their adherence to what were perceived as traditional Mongol criminal codes and traditions of punishment. As shall be discussed in chapters five and six, the establishment of the office of a Qing amban in Xining and subprefects in Guide and Xunhua also presented alternate venues for seeking justice that increasingly competed with Gelukpa authorities at Labrang and other monasteries in the region. Although Belmang does not mention the new Qing subprefectures in his book, his dislike of “Chinese” jurisprudence and administrative systems is a subtext to his argument that entering into a formal preceptor-donor relationship was an expression of faith in the teachings of the Gelukpa and also a promise to adopt Tibetan jurisprudence.

⁷³⁴ Belmang’s *History* identifies several different types of *chos* or “religions” in the Amdo region. In addition to speaking of a “Nyingmapa *chos*,” he also discussed the “Salar *chos lugs*,” or the “religious tradition of the Salars,” i.e. Islam. With regards to the latter, Belmang notes the large-scale violence in the region caused by the “conflict between the old and new religions of the Salar” (659:4: “*Za lar chos lugs gsar rnying gi 'khrugs pa*”).

⁷³⁵ Belmang, *History*, 663:3. It is to this figure that he addresses his final exhortations to “observe the treatise on the two traditions” (*lugs gnyis kyi bstan bcos*).

For the abbot of Labrang monastery, faith and law were intimately linked. Jurisprudence was a crucial vehicle for promoting the Gelukpa teachings and demarking his Gelukpa-Tibetan civilization in the face of Mongol backsliding and new Qing magistrates to the north and east. By promoting Tibetan legal culture, Belmang helped create an infrastructure for a unified Gelukpa-Tibetan civilization that embraced the distant and peripheral regions such as Amdo in the absence of a centralized and independent political regime ruled from Lhasa. Although the Ganden Podrang government held some estates on the margins of the Amdo region (west of lake Kokonor and in the Chaidam region), it had no direct administrative control over the Amdo region. The expansion of jurisprudence based on the legal culture of central Tibet in the Amdo region was therefore entirely a local initiative—an ongoing transformation of legal culture driven from the bottom up and from the margins in.

The adoption of Tibetan jurisprudence in the Mongol banners of Amdo was a result of the advocacy of Gelukpa hierarchs such as Belmang Pandita and the Jamyang Zhepas, but also a result of the contingent actions of banner subjects who sought out Buddhist justice from Gelukpa monks, advocated for its extension to their home communities, and in some cases, eventually chose to emigrate to “Tibetan” communities when their own banner nobility failed to deliver. As a result of these activities, one might argue that the availability of a parallel system of Gelukpa jurisprudence at neighboring monasteries may very well have been an important factor contributing to the erosion of the hereditary Mongol nobility’s authority in the banners. When Belmang argued that the Mongols nobles could save their patrimonies by rededicating themselves to the Gelukpa and the observance of Tibetan jurisprudence, he was essentially instructing them on how

to become proxies for the Gelukpa hierarchs of Labrang. One can imagine that this was hardly a recipe for continued autocracy in the banners, as the case of Trashi Jungné, the fifth-generation *junwang* demonstrates. Belmang praises the new prince and presents him as a contrast to his father, especially with regards to his dedication to the Gelukpa. Wangchen Kyab's chronicle reveals, however, what such praise may have entailed: the prince apparently reconciled himself to diminished authority and handed over judicial authority to Labrang and its affiliated monks. The territorial integrity of his polity increasingly relied on the personal efforts of the third Jamyang Zhepa.⁷³⁶ In these details we can observe, possibly, an alternate explanation for a historical transformation that has been largely taken for granted. The long-term acculturation of Mongols in Amdo to Tibetan ways was not some sort of organic, inevitable process driven by the magnetic power of a superior Tibetan Buddhist civilization, but rather the contingent outcome of aggressive actions and policies of Gelukpa prelates such as Belmang Pandita, who as abbot of Labrang envisioned the assimilation of the Mongols to be a strategic necessity. It was furthermore a transformation in which Tibetan jurisprudence played a major role.

As stated in his introduction, Belmang had a second audience in mind as well, namely other Gelukpa monks who held responsibilities for the administration of lay communities. With regards to this group, Belmang's *History* insinuates one further argument: if neither the traditional patrons of the church nor the Qing rulers are capable of stepping up to guarantee the peace and stability of the Amdo region, this responsibility must and can be born by the Gelukpa hierarchs themselves. He makes this case not by any discussion of the Great Fifth, but rather indirectly through his repeated mention of the Cagan Nomunhan, a reincarnate lama who, as shall be discussed in more detail in the

⁷³⁶ Wangchen Kyab, 356-357.

following chapter, had held joint political and religious control over a large community of Tibetans and Mongols in Amdo since at least the mid-seventeenth century. Belmang first mentions this reincarnate lineage in the context of the appointment of Ngawang Dargyé as the replacement prince in 1771. Perhaps more accurately, it is Changkya Rolpé Dorjé who mentions the Cagan Nomunhan in this context:

When it was time to submit a list of names for the position, only the names of Tsézung Tusalakchi (?) and Tsépak Taiji, the sons of Apo Noyön were listed. However, [Jamyang Zhepa] suggested to [Changkya] that because he had heard that this jasak [Ngawang Dargyé] was kind to his people, he should obtain the title of prince. [Changkya] responded, ‘If, like the Cagan Nomunhan who is also both lama and jasak of Kokonor, you also similarly received ownership of the prince’s nomadic communities, there would be happiness and prosperity both for yourself and others.’ However, [Jamyang Zhepa] did not agree, finding this unsuitable. He suggested that, ‘The steady protection provided by princes from a lineage of rulers is the better way.’ Things were handled according to this suggestion. Therefore the jasak [Ngawang Dargyé] obtained the title of prince.⁷³⁷

We learn in this passage that no less a personage than Changkya Rolpé Dorjé had floated the idea that the Jamyang Zhepa should replace the descendants of Gushri Khan as the leading prince of Kokonor. According to Belmang, the Cagan Nomunhan had pioneered the combination of the “two traditions,” and the Jamyang Zhepa could replicate his success on an even grander scale. Lest the reader miss the significance of Changkya’s reference to the Cagan Nomunhan and in what would otherwise seem like a non-sequitor, Belmang returns to this lama again in the final pages of his book. He

⁷³⁷ Belmang, *History*, 565:3-6: “di nas 'os tho phul ba la/ a po no yon gyi sras thu sa lag ci tshe gzungs tshe dpag the ji songs las med kyang skyabs mgon mchog nas/ ja sag 'di ru sde la byams pa sogs gsan nas/ bAng gi thob 'ong rgyu'i mgo 'dren lcang skya rdo rje 'chang la zhus par/ rdo rje 'chang gi zhal nas/ tsha gAn no mon han/ mtsho sngon gyi bla ma dang/ ja sag gnyis ka yin pa ldar/ khyed kyis kyang de 'dra'i thob cig blangs nas/ ching wang gi ru sde la bdag gnang na/ rang gzhan la bde skyid yong gsungs kyang/ de 'dra thugs 'thang med tshul dang/ dpon zhig gi rigs brygud gtan 'jags kyis bskyangs na legs tshal zhus pa ltar/ khong nas mgo 'dren gnang ste/ ja sag la bAng gi thob byung nas/ rang yul du phebs/”

devotes a full folio to providing further documentation of how successive generations of the monk had served as both “lama and minister” and adds a magniloquent description of how the splendor of his royal encampment surpassed that of Ngawang Dargyé.⁷³⁸

By turning to the Cagan Nomunhan at the conclusion of his book, Belmang suggests a future for the Amdo region and Tibet quite different from that envisioned by Qianlong and his ministers at the end of his reign. Where the Qianlong emperor had argued for replacing Buddhist-based governance with the “way of the emperor” and law codes based on those of China-proper, Belmang reasserted the importance of the Tibetan tradition of jurisprudence and advocated its expansion through the Mongol banners. This may have been the vision he had for the future of the third Jamyang Zhepa, who was assuming his temporal and spiritual duties as abbot of Labrang as Belmang finished his *History*.

Shortly after Belmang composed his history, the attention of the Qing court would also turn to the Cagan Nomunhan. However, from the perspective of Qing officials dispatched to the grasslands of Amdo, this monk became a symbol of how untenable the prevailing system of governance in the region had become and the continued dangers of rule by reincarnate lamas. The Cagan Nomunhan served, therefore, as a catalyst for an attempt to thoroughly rethink Qing policy in the region. The head of the dynasty’s mission was the Manchu official Nayanceng, coincidentally a perfect contemporary of Belmang Pandita (both men were born in 1764). His collected memorials on Tibetan and Mongolian affairs were published perhaps just five years after Belmang completed his *History*. It is to Nayanceng’s reports of his encounters with the Cagan Nomunhan and other Gelukpa hierarchs of Amdo that we now turn.

⁷³⁸ Belmang, *History*, 656-657.

Chapter Five: To Be “One’s Own Master:” The Monastic Domain of the Cagan Nomunhan Kūtuktu

Introduction: The Collapse of the Mongol Banners of Kokonor

In the winter of 1822-23, the Manchu official Nayanceng (Ch. 那彥成, 1764-1833), president of the Board of Punishments and provisional governor-general of the provinces of Shaanxi and Gansu (Ch. 延甘總督), submitted a memorial to the throne describing an unusual meeting between himself and the Fifth Lamo Cagan Nomunhan Kūtuktu (Ma. *cagan Nomunhan*, Ch. 察漢諾們罕呼圖克圖, 1797-1831), an influential reincarnate Gelukpa lama from the grasslands south of the Yellow River.⁷³⁹ This meeting had been sought by the monk and agreed to by the Qing official in the hope of resolving a series of conflicts that threatened to destabilize the western districts of Gansu Province

⁷³⁹ Nayanceng, *Pingfan zouyi* 平番奏議 ([Qing]: Lanyuan a gong ci, 1853), fascicle 2:5b-10a (1823-1-5). This blockprint is hereafter abbreviated: PFZS 2:5b-10a.

“Nomun han” is the Manchu transcription of a Mongol title combining the concepts of “khan” (ruler) with expertise in the Buddhist sutras (“nomun”). The title has its origins in India and is therefore often glossed as “Sutra Prince” or “Dharma Raja.” See for instance, William Frederick Mayers, *The Chinese Government* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1897), 115. During the seventeenth century, successive Dalai Lamas bestowed the title on reincarnate monks such as the Cagan Nomunhan who governed large lay populations. For instance, the Ganden Phodrang government entitled the Shartsang Rinpoche of Rongwo monastery, who administered twelve tribes in the Repgong region, a “nomunhan” in 1703. Qing rulers beginning with Kangxi appear to have adopted the title from the Ganden Phodrung and either re-confirmed existing usages of the title or awarded it to other kūtuktu who had not previously received the title. The Qing, like the Ganden Phodrung government, reserved the title “nomunhan” for reincarnate monks whom the state viewed as holding significant secular/lay administrative responsibilities. Thus, as will be discussed in this chapter, several of the *jasak* lamas of Inner and Outer Mongolia received the title, as did the kūtuktu who served as regent in central Tibet. The earliest example of this was the first Tsemonling kūtuktu, Ngawang Tsültrim (1721-1791), who received the title upon taking up the job of regent for the eighth Dalai Lama in 1777 (Petech, *The Dalai-lamas of Tibet*, 138). The seventh Phagpa Lha Kūtuktu, who governed large lay communities in Kham, also received this title from Qianlong in 1791 after making extensive gifts to the emperor in advance of his eightieth birthday (see Chapter Two). The importance of the title as a label denoting local political authority was further underlined in 1839 when Daoguang ruled that lamas serving as state preceptors (國師) could not concurrently hold the title of nomunhan (Zhao Yuntian ed., *Qinding Daqing huidian shili lifanyuan*, 153).

and the indirectly administered pasturelands of Kokonor (Ch. 青海 Qinghai) that lay just over the frontier.

By the beginning of the Daoguang reign (1821-1850), the political order that the Qing court and its military forces had imposed on the borderlands of Gansu a hundred years earlier in the aftermath of the Lobzang Danjin rebellion (1723-24) had crumbled. The Mongol banners surrounding Kokonor Lake were facing a demographic collapse that had left them unable to defend their increasingly empty pastures from raiding and occupation from other nomadic communities further south. Nayanceng identified the majority of these raiders as “nomadic Tibetans” (Ma. *aiman-i fandze*, Ch. 野番). Qing prefectures as far away as Liangzhou and Ganzhou (present day Wuwei and Zhangye, respectively) along the Hexi Corridor were flooded with destitute refugees—a crisis that the court worried would threaten the stability of the strategic route between the interior and Xinjiang. A survey of the banner populations completed in February, 1823, revealed the scope of the destitution: of the twenty-four banners originally located to the north of the Yellow River, only three banners could claim a population that matched its population in 1810. Seven banners reported populations less than half of what they had been in 1810.⁷⁴⁰ To the south of the Yellow River, in the pastures that bordered the Qing subprefectures (Ch. 廳) of Guide and Xunhua, large migrations were underway as herding communities there struggled over pasture.

Since the Yongzheng reign (1723-1735), the Qing court had recognized successive reincarnations of the Cagan Nomunhan as *jasak lama* and lord of his own “nomadic lama banner” (游牧喇嘛旗 or 游牧喇嘛部落), a unique institution among the

⁷⁴⁰ PFZS 2:39b-40b.

other twenty-eight Mongol banners in Kokonor.⁷⁴¹ During the spring and summer of 1822 the young fifth Cagan Nomunhan, Pendé Wangchuk Getsun Gyamtso (Tib. Phen bde dbang phyug mkhas btsun rgya mtsho), had directed troops from his banner to assist Cangling (Ch. 長齡 1758-1838), Nayanceng's predecessor as governor-general, conduct a punitive expedition against Tibetan raiders south of the Yellow River. With court backing, in July 1822, Cangling issued the Cagan Nomunhan a grain ration worth one thousand silver *liang* and a license permitting him to occupy territory north of the Yellow River on the condition that he guarantee the security of the Yellow River fords against further incursions and raids.⁷⁴²

Thus the meeting between Nayanceng and the Cagan Nomunhan could have been a cordial coming together of near equals: two lords united by their common cause—the maintenance of the mutually beneficial Qing order in Inner Asia under the banner of Qing patronage of the Geluk church. Yet the lama arrived in Xining under a cloud of suspicion: Daoguang and Nayanceng had become convinced that the Cagan Nomunhan's banner had become a conduit for Tibetan raiders, not a bulwark against them. According to the emperor, the lama and his banner were at best opportunists—“shilly-shallyers (首鼠兩端),” or at worst bandits themselves.⁷⁴³ At their meeting in the winter of 1822, Nayanceng confronted the Cagan Nomunhan with accusations that this lama, his subordinate officials, and commoners from his banner had colluded with nomadic Tibetans to attack

⁷⁴¹ The *Qing Huidian shili* 欽定大清會典事例－理藩院 (Collected Statutes and Precedents, Guangxu edition, 1899), lists seven nomadic lama *buluo* in the empire. The Cagan Nomunhan banner was the only such institution in Kokonor, the other six were located in Inner and Outer Mongolia. See modern PRC reprint, Zhao Yuntian, ed., *Qinding Daqing huidian shili, lifanyuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2006), 48.

⁷⁴² *Xuanzong shilu* (Veritable records of the Daoguang reign), 37: 661 (DG 02/06).

⁷⁴³ PFZS 1:2a-b.

other Mongol banners north of the Yellow River, occupy their territory, and then redistribute and launder the plunder using networks of Muslim traders from the interior.⁷⁴⁴

Nayanceng's ultimate interview with the lama was a deliberately paced confrontation:

On the day of the winter solstice, [I] first ordered the [Xining] circuit intendant and prefect to confront the [Cagan Nomunhan] with the cases of raiding carried out by his banner. That Nomunhan was unable to argue in self-defense, and only looked right and left [at his subordinates], not daring to speak. It seems as though he takes orders from his subordinates and *is not his own master*. On the next day I ordered the Nomunhan to meet me alone, at which time [I] proclaimed to him the majesty of the emperor's virtue, which includes both the inner and outer, and that the foolish Tibetan banners (蠶爾番旗) must not shut themselves off from civilized ways. I repeatedly interrogated him about how it was that the people of his banner could become bandits. How could it be that as a jasak he was unable to restrain the Tibetans and Mongols and thus allow serious crimes to be committed? On the one hand I severely censured him, on the other I instructed him.

The Nomunhan threw himself to the ground and while prostrating pleaded that he was only twenty-seven and, until last year, had been studying sutras in Lhasa. Only recently had he returned to start governing banner affairs. By that time the people below him had already become set in their ways. He did not report these matters, but only left it to Heaven to censure them. Now the Mongols have been thoroughly instructed but have only just awoken to the truth. [He] is willing to lead the people across the river and back to the original pastures and eliminate their old habits, in order to make up for their past sins. However, his subordinate captains and lamas have already held power for a long time, and accumulated power far exceeding their status. It is truly difficult to subdue them. [He] implores us to come and punish them on his behalf. His state of deep remorse and fear was such that through the entire [meeting] he cried and wept.⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴⁴ PFZS 2:5b-10a (DG 02/11/24; 1823-1-5).

⁷⁴⁵ PFZS 2: 7b-8b. Emphasis added.

The portrait of the Cagan Nomunhan that emerges from this description is not that of a lama who is being patronized or otherwise courted by the Qing for his religious knowledge, tantric powers, sage council, or diplomatic savvy. Nayanceng's collected memorials from this conflict reveal no pretense of the patron-priest relationship that serves as a framework for understanding Qing-Tibetan relations in contemporary Tibetan-language chronicles. To the contrary, this is an image in which the lama is carefully removed from the protective trappings of his office, humiliated, and placed in a position of unambiguous subordination to the court and its field officials. The Cagan Nomunhan emerges as little more than the feckless pawn of his subordinates, his long monastic education evidently having left him with none of the practical skills necessary to handle the responsibilities of his office.

Presented in this manner, Nayanceng calls into question the effectiveness of the administration of the Cagan Nomunhan Kūtuktu and the legitimacy of Buddhist knowledge and reincarnation as a basis for rule. The administration of the Cagan Nomunhan was emblematic of all that was wrong with the contemporary administration of the Gansu frontier region. The governor-general's memorial reconstructs this encounter with the monk as an unprecedented invitation to the Qing state to intervene more directly in the administration of local Tibetan and Mongol affairs and as a legitimization of the broader project to transform this frontier more fully into the civilization of the interior.

The texts and memories of this meeting, and the grassland conflicts that swirled around it, are an invitation to explore the intersection of Qing and indigenous forms of administration in Amdo and the divergent attitudes and knowledge Qing officials and

local actors brought to bear on local crises. Local Tibetans also produced contemporaneous accounts of the domains of the Cagan Nomunhan Kūtuktu and the grassland conflicts that led to the disenfranchisement of the Mongol Banner elite and the destitution of Mongol commoners. For the purposes of this chapter, I will primarily be referencing descriptions of the Cagan Nomunhan domain that appear in the works of Belmang Pandita and his student Drakgönpa—the two most influential chroniclers of the local scene in the first half of the nineteenth century. These works will be supplemented with the early twentieth-century account of Yongzin Lobzang Khédrub Gyamtso (Tib. *yongs 'dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mthso*), a monk who grew up in the Cagan Nomunhan community and served as tutor to later incarnations.⁷⁴⁶ These indigenous, Tibetan-language descriptions of the lama's domain, its history, and its position within the larger political, economic, and religious structures of Kokonor differ in significant ways from Qing official accounts and analysis.

This chapter will argue that, despite the fact that the Qing court recognized this lama as a legitimate part of the Qing governing structure in Kokonor, the Qing official understanding of his “proper” role and the boundaries of his domains did not correspond to indigenous understandings or aspirations. Qing border making in the eighteenth century had not only cut the Cagan Nomunhan’s domain in half—separating his territories in the high pastures from his monastic seat and agricultural communities along the Yellow River, but had also driven a line through the center of “Amdo country,” an indigenous geographic sensibility that had been split into Gansu province in the east and Kokonor in the west. Thus, activities, community structures, and aspirations that

⁷⁴⁶ Yongz ‘dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mthso, “La mo tsha kan hu thog thu bla rabs kyi lo rgyus mdor bsdu” (manuscript in collection of author, date uncertain, probably 1990s).

appeared legitimate and natural in Tibetan texts appear as flagrant violations and transgressions in Qing government reports.

Tibetan, Manchu and Chinese-language documents from the region also reveal that in the early nineteenth century, Kokonor and Gansu province were experiencing a profound social transformation in which categories such as “Chinese,” “Tibetan,” “Mongol,” “commoner,” “nomad,” and even “Muslim” had popular currency and meaning yet were hardly predictive of individual or community identity and behavior. Nayanceng was shocked to discover not only that the ostensibly “Mongol” banner of the Cagan Nomunhan was full of Tibetan nomads but also that the subjects of the banner had become intimately linked to the economy and people of the interior through the illegal activities of traders and innkeepers from Gansu province, the majority of whom were Muslims (Ch. 回民). The memorial quoted above reflects this confused state of affairs: Nayanceng alternately refers to the Cagan Nomunhan’s banner as either “Tibetan” or “Mongol.”

This chapter proceeds as follows: The first section will examine the history of the Cagan Nomunhan domain as understood by indigenous observers and the Qing court prior to Nayanceng’s service in the region. It will demonstrate that the complexity and administrative span of the Cagan Nomunhan polity was largely invisible in Qing official sources. The second section of the paper focuses on Nayanceng’s account of the conflict with the Cagan Nomunhan banner. An examination of both Nayanceng’s published account of the conflict and the larger historical context reveals that Nayanceng’s Kokonor policies were informed by a particular school of contemporary discourse on “statecraft” that advocated a novel approach to handling frontier affairs. Like his predecessors,

Nayanceng's policies in Kokonor hinged on the exercise of court-sanctioned violence, but he shed blood in new ways and with a new rationale. Instead of mounting the usual military campaign against nomadic communities suspected of raiding, Nayanceng directed the civil and military officials of the region to round up the merchants who dared conduct unsanctioned trade with Tibetans and Mongols. Dozens of merchants from Gansu and Shaanxi, most of them Muslims, would die in Qing custody in a matter of months. Moreover, Nayanceng envisioned his work in Kokonor as part of a broader program for reconsolidating court authority along all of the Qing's frontier regions. Nayanceng's memorials from Gansu were simultaneously a testament that his analysis and policies were effective and an application for future assignments elsewhere on the Qing frontiers. The final section contrasts subsequent understandings of the violence of the 1820s within the Cagan Nomunhan community with those of Chinese commentators. Of particular importance are the writings of Yongzin Lobzang Khédrub Gyamtso (Tib. *Yongs 'dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mthso* 1908-2004), a monk affiliated with Lamo Dechen monastery and the larger community of the Cagan Nomunhan.

The History of the Cagan Nomunhan Principality/Banner as seen from Tibetan-language and Qing Sources

If Nayanceng represented the apex of Qing authority in the region, then Pendé Wangchuk Getsun Gyamtso, the fifth rebirth (Ma. *hūbilgan*; Tib. *sprul sku* or *skye sprul*) in the Cagan Nomunhan lineage, represented the apex of local forms of authority. The Cagan Nomunhan Kūtuktu, known in Tibetan as the Lamo Zhabdrung Karpo (Tib. *zhabs drung dkar po*) or more simply as the "Lamo Kūtuktu," and in Chinese as the *baifo seng* (

白佛僧), was in the early nineteenth century one of the most illustrious incarnation lineages (Tib. *sku phreng*) in the Amdo region and inheritor of one of the wealthiest and largest corporate estates (Tib. *bla brang*) in the Tibetan-Buddhist world. He was not only a well-educated lama in charge of a network of approximately twenty-five monasteries, but also a political ruler, the supervisor of a heterogeneous community of herders and farmers who inhabited a strategic and prosperous stretch of the Tibetan plateau. According to the garrison commander of Xining who conducted a census of the lama's subjects in 1823, the banner consisted of 2,332 households, or 18,198 persons, split up across twenty "communities" (Ch. 族).⁷⁴⁷ The lineage remained a significant force in the region well into the twentieth century: the eighth-generation incarnation eventually rose to the position of head of the Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and vice-chairman of the Qinghai Peoples' Political Consultative Conference in the first decade of the People's Republic of China.⁷⁴⁸

With the exception of a short introductory article written in French, the lineage has not received any scholarly attention in the West.⁷⁴⁹ This is remarkable since European chroniclers of the Qing political order writing in the late nineteenth century singled out

⁷⁴⁷ Murandai's report (稟) of census figures was included in Nayanceng's memorial of DG 03/02/27 (PFZS 3:55a-58b). This is a substantial population by the standards of the Amdo region. Consider that according to Rockhill, the permanent population of the region's major city, Xining, was only thirty to forty thousand souls in the 1880s. Rockhill, *The Land of the Lamas: Notes of a Journey through China, Mongolia, and Tibet* (New York: The Century Company, 1891), 50.

⁷⁴⁸ Debu Chelie 'ao sai, *Xiarong gabu zhuan* (A Biography of the Zhabdrung Karpo) (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 1996).

⁷⁴⁹ Yontan Gyatso, "Le monastere de La-mo bde-chen dans l'Amdo," in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, Fargnes 1992, ed. Per Kvaerne (Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994, Vol. 2.), 981-989.

the Cagan Nomunhan as an important feature of the dynasty's Inner Asian "colonial" order.⁷⁵⁰ Their interest in the Cagan Nomunhan was probably a reflection of the fact that their descriptions were based on Guangxu-period editions of the Qing *Huidian*—a text in which the Cagan Nomunhan, on account of his position as a Mongol jasak, featured prominently. For nineteenth-century observers writing in Tibetan, the institution of the Cagan Nomunhan was also an important feature of the local political landscape. Drakgönpa and his tutor Belmang Pandita devote considerable attention in their writings to the history of the Cagan Nomunhan. The analysis in this section is based primarily on the Drakonpa's *Oceanic Book*, and secondarily on the description of the Cagan Nomunhan that appears in Belmang's *History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia*.⁷⁵¹

Drakonpa places the lineage of the Lamo Zhabdrung Karpo in several different contexts, the first being geographic. The overall narrative structure of the history leads the reader river by river in a watery circumambulation of the Amdo region (*figure 2*). Thus the lineage is first introduced as the founders of Gur and Lamo Dechen monasteries, two large and influential monasteries situated within the "great bend of the Ma Chu" (Yellow River), at the heart of "Amdo country" (Tib. *yul mdo smad*) as envisioned by Drakgönpa.⁷⁵² According to this vision, Amdo stretches from the Qiliang mountains in the north to the marshy highland pastures to the south of the Yellow River in present-day Sichuan province, and from the pastures around Kokonor (Ch. Qinghai) in the west to the

⁷⁵⁰ See descriptions in William Frederick Mayers, *The Chinese Government* (115), and H.S. Brunnert and V.V. Hagelstrom, *The Present Day Political Organization of China* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Limited, 1912). Both texts identify the Lifanyuan as a "colonial" institution.

⁷⁵¹ Belmang Pandita, *History*, 656-657.

⁷⁵² *Oceanic Book*, 23-24, 268-288.

upper watersheds of the Daxia, Tao, and Min rivers in the east. The monasteries of the Cagan Nomunhan lineage are also the seats of two other important reincarnation lineages—Lamo Serkhri (Tib. *la mo gser khri*), and Lamo Dragkan (Tib. *la mo grags rgan*). All three monks anchor a “mandalized” religious space centered on the permanent chronological presence of the incarnate lineage and permanent physical structures such as monasteries, mansions, farms and pastures.⁷⁵³ The “Amdo country” of the *Oceanic Book*, is also firmly within the sphere of “Greater Tibet,” (Tib. *bod chen po*) a concept that is defined first as a legacy of the Tibetan empire’s successful campaigns against the Tang and second as a result of the “Tibetan” (Tib. *Bod*) character of its monasteries and religion.⁷⁵⁴ Drakgönpa’s conception of Amdo as an integral part of Greater Tibet was shared by earlier writers from the region, most notably Sumpa Khenpo and Tsenpo Nomunhan.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵³ See Charlene Makeley’s description of “mandalized” religious space around Labrang monastery. Makley, *The Violence of Liberation: Gender and Tibetan Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2007), 33-39.

⁷⁵⁴ *Oceanic Book*, 23, 28. In the introductory chapter at least, *bod* seems to function more as a cultural-religious identifier than an ethnonym.

⁷⁵⁵ Bstan po no mon han ‘Jam dpal chos kyi bstan ‘dzin ‘phrin las (Tsenpo Nomunhan), 128; Sum pa ye shes dpal ‘byor, *Mtsho sngon lo rgyus tshangs glu gsar snyan zhes bya ba bzhugs so* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe sgrun khang, 1982 [1786]), 47-48

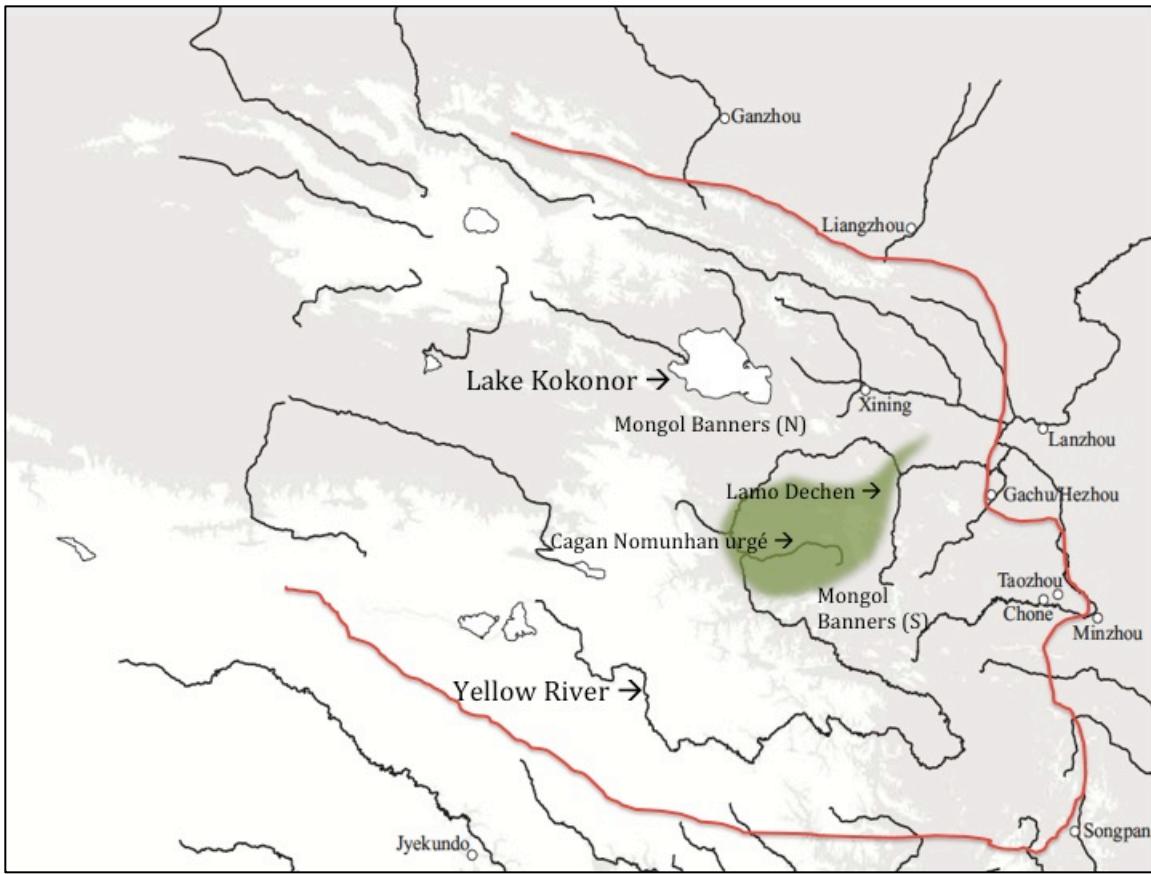


Figure 4: Amdo according to the *Oceanic Book*. The red line indicates the approximate boundaries of Amdo. The green polygon approximates the domains of the Cagan Nomunhan Kūtuktu. The locations of Lamo Dechen monastery and the kūtuktu's mobile tent-camp government are both indicated.

The second context is the role of the Zhabdrung Karpo lineage in the transmission of the teachings of the Geluk school from central Tibet to Amdo, their propagation among the Mongol aristocratic polities of the region, and the subsequent involvement of the Lamo incarnations and their patrons in the struggle among the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism for dominance in Tibet. In the late 1500s, following the establishment of a priest-patron relationship between the Third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso and the Altan Khan at the edge of lake Kokonor, the third Dalai Lama dispatched Tsoknyi Gyatso (Tib. *tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho*, d. 1609) of Lamo Rinchen Gang (in central Tibet) to the

region. This lama received the patronage and support of the Tumed ruler and settled at the monastery of Ngagar Jangchupling (Tib. *rnga sgar byang chub gling*) in the region that would later become central to the domain of his subsequent incarnations (present-day “Chentsa” county, Tib. *Gcan tsha*, Ch. 尖扎县).⁷⁵⁶ The Mongol nobles conferred upon him the title “Cagan Nomunhan” in honor of the accomplishments of his ministry. As this title was generally granted to reincarnate lamas who also carried an administrative portfolio, it may have been that Tsoknyi Gyatso had already assumed some duties for governance in the region. After his death, his reincarnation, Lamo Lodrö Gyatso (Tib. La mo Blo gros rgya mtsho 1610- 1659) was born to a local aristocratic “lineage of the Tumed” and thus began the lineage of reincarnations (or “garland of emanated bodies” Tib. *sku phreng*) known as the “Lamo Kūtuktu.”⁷⁵⁷

It was during the lifetime of the second Lamo Kūtuktu that his estates began to take shape as a political institution. This occurred despite considerable upheaval in the Amdo region. Civil war among the Khalkha led to the expedition in 1632 of the army of the Khalkha Choghtu Khan (Tib. *chog thu*) into Kokonor. The Choghtu Khan’s conquest of the region brought to an end fifty-four years of Tumed rule in Amdo and threatened the position of the Geluk school and the Lamo incarnation in the region.⁷⁵⁸ A decade later, in 1642, the dramatic conquest of “Gushri Khan of the Junghars”⁷⁵⁹ reversed the fortunes

⁷⁵⁶ *Oceanic Book*, 28, 268-9. According to Drakgönpa, when Sonam Gyatso first arrived in the region, he was received in the place of Arik (Tib. A rig), a community that would become closely intertwined with the fortunes of the Cagan Nomunhan.

⁷⁵⁷ *Oceanic Book*, 269.

⁷⁵⁸ *Oceanic Book*, 31.

⁷⁵⁹ *Oceanic Book*, 269. The identification of Gushri Khan as a “Junghar” here is unusual. Qing official texts, for instance, typically identify him as Oirat or Khoshot.

of the Lamo incarnation and of the Geluk more generally. “Having defeated the Choghtu Han, [Gushri Khan] and Batur Hong Taiji, having esteem for [the Lamo Tülku], with reverence made donations of large communities of farmers and nomads [to the Cagan Nomunhan].”⁷⁶⁰ On the basis of this new patronage, the second Lamo Kūtuktu was able to establish the Gur (Tib. *mgur*) monastery along the bank of the Yellow River in the early 1640s.⁷⁶¹

Yongzin Lobzang Khédrub Gyamtso, an incarnate lama who resided at Lamo Dechen monastery in the early twentieth century and composed a history of the monastery based on his knowledge of the monastery and its archives prior to liberation, offers some further details on the origins of the Cagan Nomunhan Kūtuktu that correspond closely to those in the *Oceanic Book*. He writes that the second Lamo Kūtuktu initially received one hundred households of Tumed herders (Tib. *thu med kyi ru ba ‘brog khrim brgya*) that became his “religious estate” (Tib. *lha sde*). Fifty of these households then formed the farming community (Tib. *shing sde*) below Gur monastery. The other fifty herding households became the basis of the “nomadic section” (Tib. *nyin thebs sde*,) of the lama’s estate. Later, after settling a dispute to the north of the Yellow River in Kaligang (in present-day Hualong county 化隆縣) the lama received another donation of villages that became known as the “Zhabdrung Hora” (Tib. *zhabs drung ho*

⁷⁶⁰ *Oceanic Book*, 269.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid: the text reads, “[In 1646] the year after the Jurchens (*jur cid*) obtained the throne of China he established a monastery, and because it was originally in a tent, it was called ‘*mgur*’ monastery” (*Oceanic Book*, 269). The round, domed felt tent typical of the Mongols is known as a “ger.” The Tibetan term is a transcription of the original Mongol word.

ra) after the position of the official dispatched by the Zhabdrung Karpo to administer the region.⁷⁶²

The accumulation of estates and monasteries accelerated during the lifetime of the third Lamo Ngawang Lobzang Tanpé Gyaltsan (Tib. *ngag dbang blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan*, 1660-1728). Shortly after completing his religious education in Lhasa, the third Lamo, together with his companion and future abbot and lineage founder Lamo Drakganco Lobzang Trashi (Tib. *Grags rgan po blo bzang bkra shis*, 1647-1713), founded Lamo Dechen monastery in 1682, a day's travel to the east of Gur Monastery. Drakgönpa records that a local lord, the Daiching nangso (Tib. *DA'i Ching nangso*, Ch. 岱青昂索) sponsored the monastery. A tax levied on communities both around Kokonor lake and in the pastures south of the Yellow River provided the funding for the construction.⁷⁶³

This monastery quickly grew into one of the largest in the region. The *Oceanic Book*, looking back at the history of the early eighteenth century, describes the institution of the Cagan Nomunhan as the “leading principality” (Tib. *dpon khag*) of the thirty-three principalities of Kokonor. The author at this point identifies the office of the Cagan Nomunhan as an “urgué” (Tib. *u rge*), a loan word from Mongol meaning a circular

⁷⁶² Yongs 'dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mthso, “La mo tsha kan hu thog thu bla rabs kyi lo rgyus mdor bsdu” (date uncertain) 252-3. See also the biography of Yongs 'dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mthso in Mkha' 'gro skyabs's privately circulating history of Lamo Dechen (manuscript in collection of author).

⁷⁶³ *Oceanic Book*, p. 270. “In the thirty-seventh year after the founding of Rma mgur, La mo bde chen chos gling was founded on the order of nangso DA'i Ching (Dai Qing/ 岱青昂索), on the basis of the entire monastic community of Mgur and the “monk tax” levied from Mangra, ‘Bal, and Bya; Sbra, Nag, and Kha; and Bayan.”

encampment of royal tents.⁷⁶⁴ Drakgönpa alternates this loan word with an indigenous Tibetan term “garzhung” (Tib. *sgar gzhung*), which also connotes an administrative office located in a mobile encampment. Quoting the Seventh Dalai Lama, he states that, “As the chief spiritual teacher (Tib. *dbu bla*) of all the principalities of the encampments (Tib. *ru*) to the right and left of the lake, the peace that he established inside and outside his urgé was such that it resembled the holy mansion of Indra.”⁷⁶⁵ That the Seventh Dalai Lama would praise the realm of the Cagan Nomunhan is unsurprising given that the later had formally recognized the former as the Dalai Lama and seen to his bodily preservation and education during the conflict that followed the disappearance and death of the Sixth Dalai Lama.⁷⁶⁶ The scale of the political and religious achievements of the third Zhabdrung Karpo evidently lingered in local historical memory. Belmang Pandita, writing in the early nineteenth century, noted that the urgé of the lama surpassed those of the other lords of the “Mongol lands” as it was composed of “several tens of urgé that resembled the orb of the moon fallen to earth.”⁷⁶⁷

It was during the last years of the life of the Third Lamo Kütuktu that the Qing court made its first major intervention into the politics of Amdo. It is only at this point

⁷⁶⁴ Urga also became the name for the government of the Jebtsundamba Kütuktu of Outer Mongolia. Later, the term *urga* gave its name to the capital of independent Mongolia in the early twentieth century. Similarly, in Qinghai, what was originally the term for the mobile government of the Lamo Zhabdrung Karpo, became a name of a specific place in present day Guinan county. Although originating as a term that could describe the encampment of a major Mongol lord, it seems that during the course of the Qing (17-18th centuries), this term was increasingly reserved for the encampments of major lamas.

⁷⁶⁵ *Oceanic Book*, 271.

⁷⁶⁶ *Oceanic Book*, 270-71.

⁷⁶⁷ Belmang, *Rgya, Bod, Hor, Sog gyi lo rgyus*, 656:6-657:1. Given the significance that these Labrang-based historians placed on the estate of the Cagan Nomunhan, one comes to suspect that it may very well have been a model for the Jamyang Zhepa, the Lamo Kütuktu’s close friend, when he founded of Labrang monastery in 1709.

that Drakgönpa's description of the Cagan Nomunhan polity directly touches on its relationship to the “Jurchen” (i.e. Manchu) Qing dynasty.⁷⁶⁸ The aftermath of the Lobzang Danjin rebellion (1723-24) witnessed the re-organization of the Mongol principalities of Kokonor into twenty-nine banners and the complete dismantling of the Khoshot Khanate that had dominated these polities since the 1640s. Given the long history of cooperation between Lobzang Danjin and the Cagan Nomunhan in support of the candidacy of the Seventh Dalai Lama Kelzang Gyatso (Tib. *Skal bzang rgya mtsho*), it is remarkable that the communities and monasteries of the Lamo Kūtuktu's estates did not get dragged into the violence (*figure 4*). The Cagan Nomunhan was apparently in Lhasa at the time of the rebellion. His return to the region shortly afterwards did not go unnoticed by Qing officials.⁷⁶⁹ The package of proposals submitted by general Nian Gengyao to the court includes a list of “Twelve matters that are forbidden in Qinghai,” the very last of which is a singular and explicit warning to the Cagan Nomunhan to “not gather [people] together in his temples to discuss and memorialize on [political] matters.”⁷⁷⁰

⁷⁶⁸ In his description of the first three Lamo incarnations, there is almost no reference to the Qing. He records that the Kangxi emperor bestowed a name on Lamo Dechen monastery, but beyond this the author even seems to celebrate the lack of contact, noting that unlike those lamas who have frequent contact with “Mongolia and China,” the third Lamo lived a life of rigorous discipline untainted by the customs of those places.

⁷⁶⁹ *Oceanic Book*, p. 271-272.

⁷⁷⁰ Nian Gengyao (“禁約青海十二事”), Zhongguo Diyi Lishi Dang’anguan, comp., *Yongzheng chao hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian* (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1989), 27-43. Also, *Shizong shilu* 20:336.

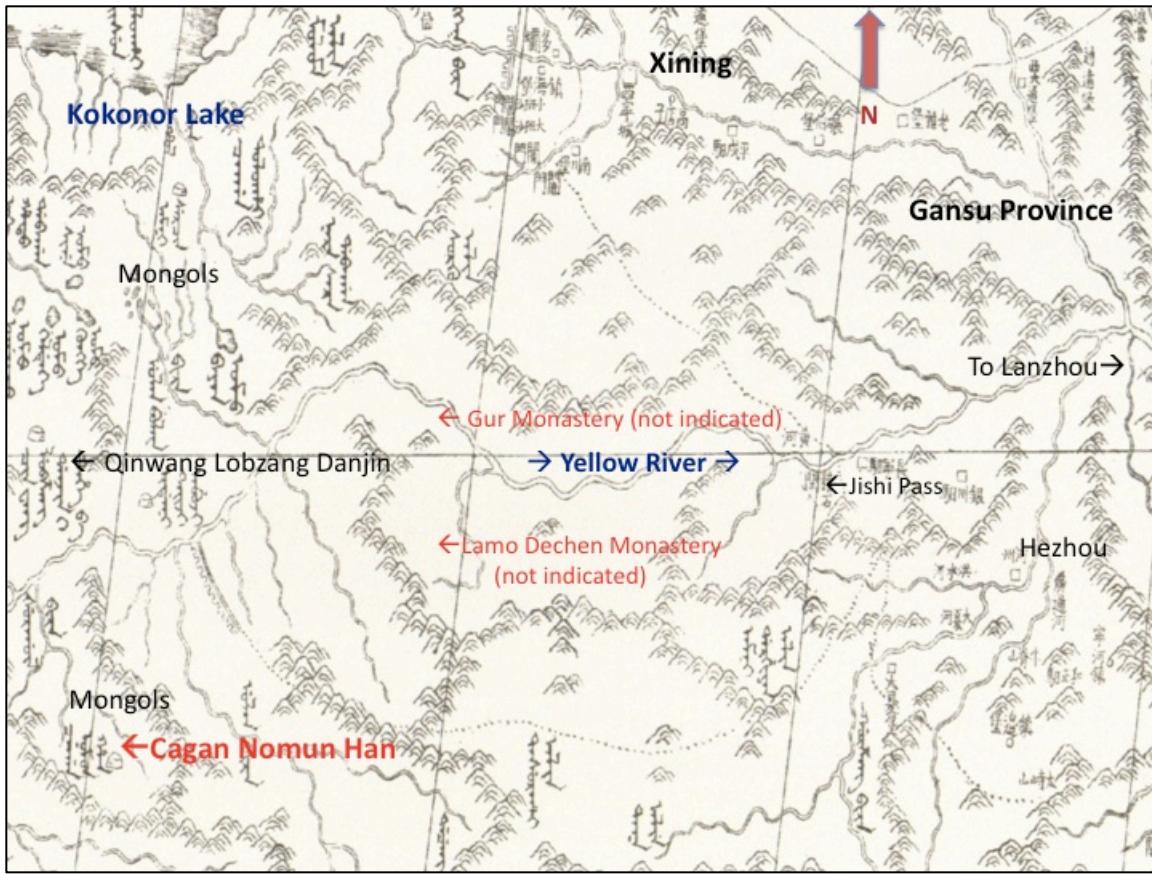


Figure 5: Detail of the Gansu frontier, prior to the Lobzang Danjin rebellion and the incorporation of Kokonor Mongols into banners. Map indicates position of the Cagan Nomunhan's rangeland, but not Lamo Dechen monastery. *Huangyu quanlan tu* [Kangxi Atlas], 1717, plate 4.4.

In 1725, the Cagan Nomunhan polity was incorporated into the new administrative structure of Qinghai as one of the twenty-nine “Mongol banners” of Kokonor, part of a policy the court labeled “planting the banner and delimiting the land” (Ch. 插旗定地) intended to establish Qing supervision over the Mongol aristocracy and limit its movements to specific rangelands. Appointments to the position of banner commander, “jasak,” subsequently required the approval of the court. As a result of these reforms, by the early nineteenth century the community of the Cagan Nomunhan appeared in official Qing sources as a specific type of institution, a “nomadic lama

banner” (Ch. 游牧喇嘛旗 *youmu lama qi*), with a specifically delimited range and specific type of subject population: Mongol herders. The *Imperially-Sanctioned Collected Statutes and Precedents of the Court of Colonial Affairs* describes the Cagan Nomunhan banner as “affiliated with the Mongol nomads of Lake Kokonor.” It delimits his range as a narrow band of pasture with the Yellow River to his west, the central banner of the Khoshot’s ‘south-left’ wing to his south and east, and the Tibetans of Guide sub-prefecture to his north.⁷⁷¹

Following the establishment of the Mongol banners, the Qing court steadily attempted to extend the civilian administration of the neighboring districts of Gansu province to the Tibetan (“Fan” 番) communities who had previously been subjects of the Khoshot principalities. In the mid-eighteenth century, the court established “sub-prefectures” (Ch. 廳) in the fortified towns of Xunhua (1762) and Guide (1792), and assigned the subprefects (Ch. 同知) the task of supervising the surrounding Tibetans (*figure 5*).⁷⁷² The establishment of these two jurisdictions reflected the Yongzheng court’s conviction, first articulated by Nian Gengyao, that the Tibetan people living along the borders of Xining and Lanzhou prefectures should be governed as commoners of the interior, while the Mongol principalities should remain beyond the frontier, governed indirectly through the banner nobility. Nian argued in 1724 that the western Tibetans

⁷⁷¹ *Qinding Daqing huidian shili, lifanyuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2006), 48.

⁷⁷² See Nayanceng’s memorial from 1812 concerning administrative reforms and the affairs of the Qinghai amban, Xining daotai, and Shaan-Gan governor general. 奏请将甘肃循化同知改隶西宁府并西宁府知府缺改由本省拣员题调事, Palace memorial 04-01-12-0370-016 (道光三年正月十八日). See also Ma Haiyun’s account of 18th century Qing administrative reforms in Xunhua, “Fanhui or Huifan? Hanhui or Huimin? Salar Ethnic Identification and Qing Administrative Transformation in Eighteenth-century Gansu” *Late Imperial China* 29.2 (December 2008), 1-36.

(Ma. *tanggūt* or *aiman i fanze*) of Kokonor (西海) had “already turned towards transformation” (Ch. 西番皆已向化) and could be considered and governed as commoners of the interior.⁷⁷³ Thus from the perspective of the Qing court from the Yongzheng reign onwards, “Kokonor” (Ch. 青海) meant only the Mongol-inhabited pastures surrounding Lake Kokonor that were supervised by the office of the Qinghai amban in Xining, not the broader “Amdo” region.

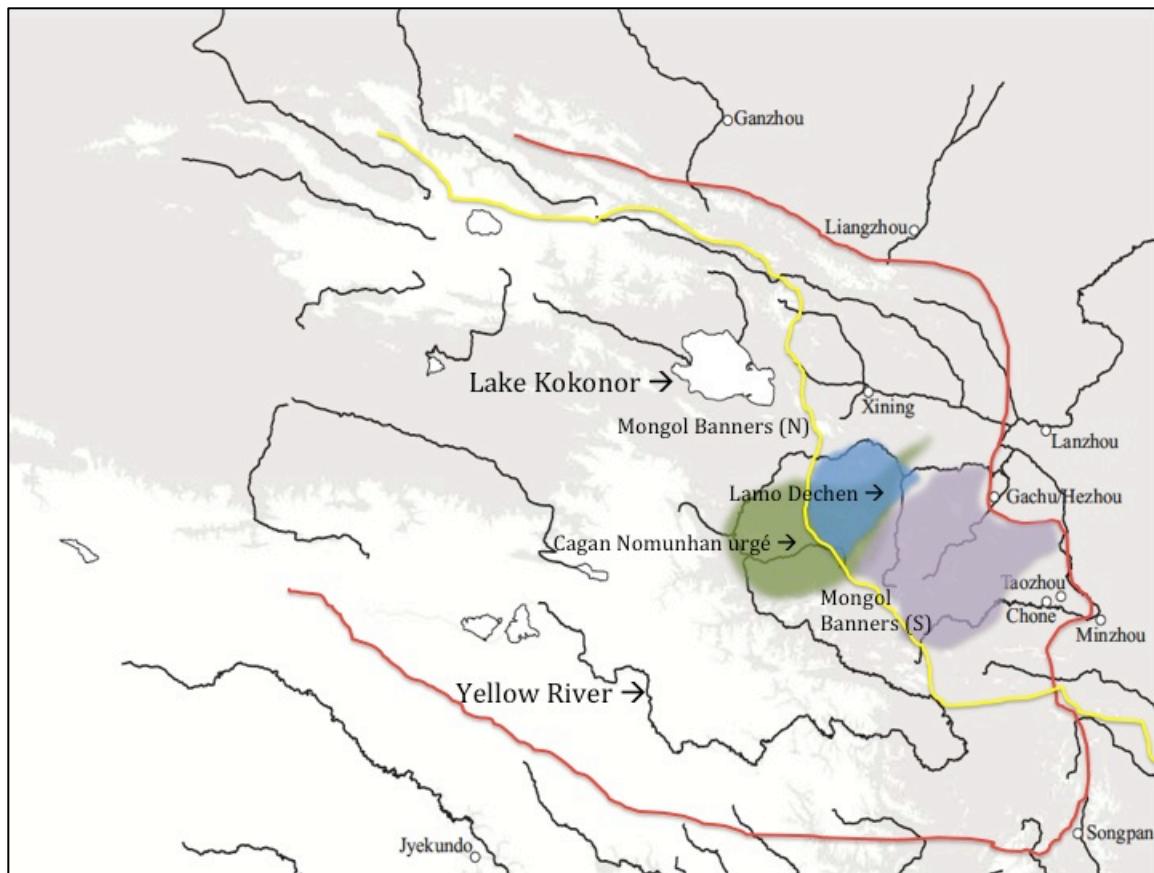


Figure 6: Approximate boundaries of Guide subprecure (blue), Xunhua subprefecture (purple), and Gansu provincial boundaries (yellow), 1820s. Sketched on the basis of maps included in Nayanceng, *Pingfan zoushu*, 1:2b-4a.

⁷⁷³ *Yongzhengchao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe*, 3.33b.

Drakgönpa and other Tibetan-language commentators in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries discuss neither a new provincial border cutting straight through the middle of their “Amdo country” nor the narrow geographic zone to which Qing administrators attempted to restrict the Cagan Nomunhan’s domain. Although Drakgönpa notes the existence of the towns of Guide and Xunhua, he does not recognize (or even mention) their administrative functions or boundaries. He continued to list communities that ostensibly fell under the jurisdiction of the sub-prefects as major constituencies of the Cagan Nomunhan. From a Qing perspective, the location of even the lama’s monastic throne at Lamo Dechen and his original agricultural estates were located deep in Guide sub-prefecture.⁷⁷⁴ The estates of the Cagan Nomunhan cut across multiple Qing jurisdictions and were neither simply Mongol nor Tibetan but a heterogeneous mix.⁷⁷⁵ It should be noted, however, that indigenous geographic conceptions also had recognized a distinction between “Amdo” (or “Domé,” Tib. *mdo smad*) and “Kokonor” (Tib. *mtsho sngon*), although there seems to be differing ideas about whether Amdo included Kokonor or was separate from it.⁷⁷⁶

⁷⁷⁴ This can be demonstrated from an examination of Qing maps. For example, the Qianlong edition of the *Huangyu quanlan tu* in *Qingting san da shice quantu ji* (清廷三大實測全圖集) (Beijing: Waiwen chubanshe, 2007) v. 3; the maps of Xining and Lanzhou prefectures in the *Daqing Huidian*, Jiaqing edition, Gansu fascicle; and the map of Xunhua and Guide (循化貴德所屬番境圖) included in Nayanceng’s *Pingfan zouyi* (PFZS 1:3b-4a).

⁷⁷⁵ *Oceanic Book*, 288.

⁷⁷⁶ Sumpa Khenpo writes, “Above [Lanzhou] is *Dpa ris* and *A mdo* which are inside *Greater Tibet*. To the west of that is Kokonor where previously Tibetans (*bod*) and others resided. Now there are the Oirats. [North] of that are the Sarik Uyghurs (*hor sha ra yu gur*) and the black lance Tibetans (*bod mdung nag*)” (Sumpa Khenpo, 47-48). From this quote one can also observe that Sumpa Khenpo distinguished the Kokonor region from Amdo. Tsenpo Nomunhan shared Sumpa Khenpo’s sense of distinction between the Amdo/Domé and Kokonor. However, in his conception, Kokonor appears as a distinct region *within* greater Amdo (cited in Wylie, 105, 112).

Indigenous sources do note the existence of a banner population, but identify it as only one of the lama's constituencies. According to Yongzin Lobzang Khédrub Gyamtso, for the Lamo estate the establishment of the banner primarily meant only that the herding community (Tib. *ru sde*) of Nyintep was reorganized “following the Mongol pattern” into four companies (literally, “arrows,” Tib. *mda' tshan gzhi*).⁷⁷⁷ Over the course of the eighteenth century this sub-community of the Cagan Nomunhan institution gradually came to be known simply as the “Four Companies” (Tib. *mda' gzhi*). Moreover, during the life of the fourth Lamo Cagan Nomunhan, Lozang Tupten Gélek Gyatsen (Tib. *blo bzang thub bstan dge legs rgya mtshan*, 1729-1796), his urgé continued to acquire large new communities. For instance the political and religious oversight of the herding community (Tib. *ru sde*) of Balzhung (Tib. *'bal gzhung*, a valley in present-day Tongde county) was given to the Cagan Nomunhan when the jasak of the banner to which it belonged died without heirs.⁷⁷⁸ By the early nineteenth century, nomads belonging to the Cagan Nomunhan estate were spread across three major valleys—the Mang, Bal, and Sha (Tib. *Bya*)—that descended into the Yellow River to the west.⁷⁷⁹ The lama also retained control over estates around Gur and Lamo Dechen monasteries and north of the river in Bayan sub-prefecture (in present-day Jianzha and Hualong counties).

⁷⁷⁷ Yongs 'dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mthso, 254.

⁷⁷⁸ Yongs 'dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mthso, 256-7.

⁷⁷⁹ Bya (沙沟 *Bya gzhung*) was the northernmost valley and lies in present-day Guide County. Mang (芒曲 *Mang gzhung*) was middle valley of the Cagan Nomunhan's territory. It lies in present-day Guinan County. 'Bal (巴溝 *'Bal gzhung*) was the southernmost valley. At present it forms the center of Tongde County. This river drained two holy mountains, one the patron deity of the Mongol Qinwang and the other the patron of the Zhabdrung Karpo. Mkha' 'gro skyabs, 17-22.

If there was any attempt to curtail his political power, it is not apparent to the author of the *Oceanic Book* who, in the section on the fourth Lamo Cagan Nomunhan, writes:

Granted [the title] ‘jasak’ by China, he necessarily served both as lama and a governor (Tib. *bla dpon*), and established an urgé in the regions of Sheulung (Tib. *She'u lung*) and Mangra, and thus resided permanently in the Mongol lands (Tib. *sog yul*). Although endowed with a great fortune, his deeds of the two traditions (i.e. political and religious) were extensive and his conduct was tempered, disciplined and pure. He put great effort into his teachings on both the general and specific, and thus attained increasingly efficacious methods. His urgé was surrounded by fields full of great tents. Adorned as they were with various ornaments, the three holy tents [of the lama], stood out in splendor and majesty at the center of the principalities of Kokonor.⁷⁸⁰

The Qianlong emperor’s 1794 attempt to force the Cagan Nomunhan community to comply with his 1792 regulations concerning the identification of reincarnate lamas reveals the deference that even the Qianlong emperor paid to his local authority. The emperor commanded that future reincarnations be confirmed using the Golden Urn ritual. Yet he simultaneously granted the Cagan Nomunhan an exemption from the corollary regulation that candidates could not be sought among his relatives or other nobles of his banner. A Tibetan-language version of this edict held in the Qinghai Museum reads:

As a special case because the Jasak Lama Cagan Nomunhan of Kokonor is not only a tülku but also has status as a jasak who administers a community of subjects and is central in the affairs of the land of the great lake... In the future when this tülku is no longer, there will be great practical benefit in proceeding in accord with the wishes of his own officers and subjects and whatever it is they wish to do... Henceforth, having delivered [the names of candidates] to the Xining amban...[he] must place the names of the candidates into the golden urn to

⁷⁸⁰ *Oceanic Book*, 272-73.

be selected regardless of whether or not they are kinsmen or close followers, in accord with the desires and will of his subjects.⁷⁸¹

Ultimately, even this concession was in vain. The Fourth Zhabdrung Karpo passed away two years later and his successor was located without the use of the Golden Urn ritual. In fact, it would not be until 1837—fourteen years after Nayanceng’s departure from Gansu, that a reincarnation of the fifth Cagan Nomunhan would be identified using the urn ritual.⁷⁸²

Thus throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, the patrimony of the Cagan Nomunhan banner defied the Qing state’s attempts to limit, define, categorize, control, and finally transform. The lama’s supervision of such mixed communities of Tibetan and Mongolian speakers made his banner unique among the seven nomadic lama banners of the Qing. Having grown from the gradual accretion of communities and monasteries during the course of several hundred years, by the early eighteenth century it had become a hybrid polity, unified and legitimated ultimately by the authority the Cagan Nomunhan could claim on both the temporal and spiritual realms as a reincarnated Buddha. It was a “hybrid polity” also in the sense that it welded together two different Inner Asian governing institutions: first, the ger-camp palace (*urga*) of the *kütuktu* was an institution descended from the historical traditions of the Mongol aristocracy and, second, the corporate estate of the reincarnate lama (*labrang* and *lhade*), a tradition pioneered by Tibetan Buddhists. Combined, the Cagan Nomunhan

⁷⁸¹ Photograph and transcription of this edict in the collection of the author.

⁷⁸² *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan Manwen Lufu dang* (Manchu-language copies of palace memorials held by the Grand Council, hereafter abbreviated MWLF): 207-0107 (3-2-4178-029).

state was flexible and mobile across space, but also a *permanent* chronological presence guaranteed by the chain of rebirths.

Moreover, as a religious master, beyond those subject communities that owed him specific duties such as the ‘Four Companies’ (Tib. *Mda’ gzhi*) that appear as his ‘banner’ population in Qing documents, the lama’s community also consisted of a wide range of teachers, disciples, patrons, and pilgrims spread across the Amdo region and extending to central Tibet and even as far as Beijing.⁷⁸³ The Cagan Nomunhan domain therefore had both hard and soft boundaries, the latter of which could reach much further than Qing observers imagined. And from the local perspective, one cognizant of the centuries of discourse between the Cagan Nomunhan and communities across the Amdo region, both around Lake Kokonor and in the pastures south of the Yellow River, Nayanceng’s refusal to countenance the migration of a portion the Cagan Nomunhan banner to unoccupied pasture north of the Yellow River near Kokonor must have seemed obtuse and shocking.

Nayanceng’s Diagnosis and Treatment of the Tibetan-Mongol Conflict in Kokonor

Like they had in the 1720s, in the 1820s, Qing officers were again struggling to assess where the Cagan Nomunhan stood in the violence that was sweeping the Gansu-Kokonor region. The institutional memory of the Lobzang Danjin revolt and the strategic importance of Kokonor on the crossroads of the main routes between Tibet and Mongolia and between the interior and points further west in Xinjiang clearly weighed on the mind of the Daoguang emperor when he dispatched first one and then a second seasoned

⁷⁸³ *Oceanic Book*, 280.

official to the post of governor-general.⁷⁸⁴ Cangling and Nayanceng took dramatically different approaches to the turmoil in Kokonor. Cangling implemented a strategy that recognized the weakness of the Mongol banners around Qinghai lake as irreversible. He therefore sought to empower those “Mongol” leaders who still appeared strong—such as the Cagan Nomunhan, and co-opt groups of “Tibetans” who appeared to be rising powers, encouraging them to take positions to defend the existing order.⁷⁸⁵ Nayanceng, however, saw things quite differently.

As Nayanceng’s investigation of the grassland violence proceeded in the fall of 1822, the complexity of the Cagan Nomunhan’s domain and the Tibetan communities ostensibly under the supervision of the sub-prefects in Guide and Xunhua gradually became visible in his reports to the Throne. Nayanceng’s exhaustive surveys of the Mongol and Tibetan populations in Gansu and Kokonor revealed the extent to which the Cagan Nomunhan banner was home to Tibetans—the Qing eventually counted twenty different sub-communities (Ch. 族), as well as the “Mongol” constituency, and that the monk had permitted extensive trade by sojourning Muslims. Yet although the governor-general came to appreciate the complexity of the Cagan Nomunhan domain, he was not prepared to tolerate it. The lama’s domain, according to his analysis, was a combustible mix: nomadic Tibetans led the Mongols out on raids while “criminal merchants” (Ch. 奸商) and “criminals from the interior” (Ch. 漢奸) laundered the booty and supplied the raiders with gunpowder and grain. Where Cangling had seen a conflict over “water and

⁷⁸⁴ PFZS 1:1b.

⁷⁸⁵ Cangling’s position is characterized in the following reports, *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan Hanwen lufu* (China Number One Historical Archive, Grand Council file copies of palace memorials), #51-1635-4 (DG 2/5/12), #51-192-9 (DG 2/3/13); Also *Xuanzong shilu* 33:592 (DG 02/04/13), and 33:624 (DG 02/05/09).

grass” between nomadic Tibetans and Mongols in the distant pastures of Kokonor, Nayanceng saw a chronic failure of the Qing’s existing field administration in Gansu to adequately supervise and segregate their subject peoples.

Therefore, whereas Cangling had deemed it sufficient to dispatch a military expedition against the most intransigent Tibetan raiders and co-opt the rest with offers of pasture, titles, and money, Nayanceng pushed through a reform of the provincial administration and initiated a thorough reorganization of Tibetan communities south of the Yellow River in order to break up indigenous centers of political authority and establish greater supervision by the local sub-prefects of Xunhua and Guide.

Nayanceng’s views also mark a significant departure from those of Nian Gengyao, who had designed the overall administrative structure of the Gansu borderlands in the 1720s. Nian’s primary concern was the elimination the Khoshot khanate of Lobzang Danjin as a military threat. Moreover, Nian, who was optimistic about the possibility of transforming the Tibetans into “Hua” (Chinese), envisioned the Tibetans as a “fence” against the Mongols.⁷⁸⁶ In contrast Nayanceng reckoned the Tibetans and criminals from the interior (Ch. *hanjian* 漢奸) as the major threats to the long-term stability of the Kokonor-Gansu frontier.⁷⁸⁷ At the same time, Nayanceng argued, the Mongols needed to be succored and reformed to the point where they could stand as a bulwark against the Tibetans. In short, where Nian saw the Tibetans as a buffer against the Mongols, Nayanceng saw the Mongols as a buffer against the Tibetans.

⁷⁸⁶ *Yongzhengchao zhupi zouzhe*, 3:27b, 33b (Nian Gengyao, palace memorial, YZ 02/05/11).

⁷⁸⁷ Wu Mi, “Hanjian kaobian,” *Qingshi yanjiu* 4 (2009): 110. Often translated as “Han traitors,” in this article Wu argues that until after the first Opium War, *hanjian* was understood in Qing discourse as “Han criminals,” i.e. people from the interior (*neidi*) who committed crimes or caused other trouble in frontier regions or other places not under the standard administration.

In considering the origin of his novel diagnosis and treatment of the crisis in Kokonor, it is important to observe that Nayanceng arrived in the field with a particular intellectual agenda, one deeply rooted in a contemporary discourse on “statecraft” (Ch. 經世) that was changing the way Qing officials dealt with rebellions and unrest in border regions. His experience putting “statecraft” policies into practice on other Qing frontiers over the course of the Jiaqing reign (1796-1820) informed his approach to the problems in Kokonor. His very appointment was an indication that the court expected a certain kind of solution to the problem.⁷⁸⁸ Moreover, Nayanceng saw his handling of the affair in Kokonor as an exemplary case of “applied statecraft thinking” and wished to see his policies transferred to other frontiers. The strongest evidence for this is that shortly after he departed Gansu, Nayanceng personally oversaw the publication of sixty-one reports to the court he had composed while serving in the region together with the edicts the emperor had issued in response. The resulting volume entitled *Pingfan zouyi* (“Memorials concerning the pacification of the Tibetans”) was one of only two such books he had published during his lifetime.⁷⁸⁹ At the time of publication of *Pingfan zouyi* Nayanceng was positioning himself in the debate over how to deal with instability in southern Xinjiang. And his efforts were not without results: A year later, he was appointed head of

⁷⁸⁸ That this was the case, and that the appointment of Cangling represented a different kind policy orientation, is evidenced by the fact that the Jiaqing and Daoguang courts repeatedly appointed these two officials one after the other to deal with a host of conflicts around the empire. In 1807, 1822, and 1827, Cangling’s appointment to a given post would be followed with the appointment of Nayanceng, either as his assistant (1807) or his replacement (1822 and 1827).

⁷⁸⁹ Song Tingsheng, “Nayancheng Qinghai zouyi yu” [Introduction to Nayanceng’s memorials from Qinghai], in *Nayancheng qinghai zouyi* (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1997), 9.

post-rebellion reconstruction in Kashgar. In Xinjiang Nayanceng attempted to implement a package of reforms that closely resembled those of Kokonor.⁷⁹⁰

The collection also includes an exchange of letters between Nayanceng and Yan Ruyi (1759-1826), who edited the volume and appended a celebratory appraisal of Nayanceng's Kokonor policy.⁷⁹¹ Yan Ruyi, a pillar of the statecraft movement during the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns, was contemporaneously recognized as the foremost expert on pacification and reconstruction in mountainous frontier regions, therefore his endorsement of Nayanceng's policies in Kokonor carried much weight. The "statecraft" school of statesmanship was a self-conscious network of likeminded officials and scholars who shared a conviction that moral righteousness alone was insufficient for good governance. Instead, this orientation held that officials must be pragmatic and plastic in their governing practices, when possible cultivating "practical" knowledge in order to develop policies that maximized the state's power and society's wealth.⁷⁹² In 1800, having labored for several years on the staff of the Hu-Guang governor-general during the Miao wars, Yan suddenly rose to a position of prominence when he placed first on an special exam held by the Jiaqing emperor designed to locate experts on rebellion suppression.⁷⁹³ Yan came to the attention of Nayanceng, who subsequently sponsored his

⁷⁹⁰ Laura Newby's account of Nayanceng's tenure in southern Xinjiang strongly resembles his time in Kokonor. Newby, *The Empire and the Khanate: A Political History of Qing Relations with Khoqand c. 1760-1860* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 127, 150-151.

⁷⁹¹ The original printing of this collection may have been under the title 《經略蒙番節略》 ("A brief guide to the strategic management of Mongols and Tibetans"), PFZS 4:44a-48b.

⁷⁹² William Rowe, *Saving the World* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 3.

⁷⁹³ Daniel McMahon, "The Yuelu Academy and Hunan's Nineteenth-Century Turn Toward Statecraft," *Late Imperial China* 26.1 (June 2005): 91. See also by the same author, "Identity and

career, and even invited the Chinese official to accompany him to Guangdong in 1805 to tackle the pirate crisis there.⁷⁹⁴

Nayanceng's Kokonor policies shared a number of core principles with the policies Yan Ruyi had pioneered in Hunan and Shaanxi province. First was the idea that "rebellions" in frontier regions were less a result of the strength or ferocity of non-Han than a sign that the Qing administrative methods were corrupted or ineffective. Yan stressed that pacification must focus first on creating secure, carefully supervised communities that could defend themselves and only secondarily on defeating the enemy. Moreover, the unsupervised movement of commoners from the interior into frontier zones was destabilizing, especially if they "turned away" from the "morally superior" culture of the interior. Han who traveled across the border were both corrupted by the experience and corrupters of the frontier barbarians. Therefore boundaries between communities (i.e. between Han commoners and Tibetans) had to be preserved if adequate plans were not in place for the transformation of the Other. Thus conceived, the immediate military campaign was less important than comprehensive reconstruction and administrative reform.⁷⁹⁵ Second was a conviction that large state intervention in the economy and environment could be effective and transformative. Finally, there was a shared belief that detailed knowledge of the frontier and its people was a prerequisite to

Conflict on a Chinese Borderland: Yan Ruyi and the recruitment of the Gelao during the 1795-97 Miao Revolt," *Late Imperial China* 23.2 (December 2002): 53-86.

⁷⁹⁴ McMahon, "Reforming the Garden: Yan Ruyi and the Civilizing of China's Internal Frontiers, 1795-1805" (PhD Diss., University of California, Davis: 1999), 219-20. If it is possible to speak of a "patron-priest" relationship involving Nayanceng, then surely it can only be the one between himself and Yan Ruyi.

⁷⁹⁵ McMahon (1999), 7, 23, 216.

effective policy development.⁷⁹⁶ In many respects this final conviction explains the unprecedented detail of Nayanceng's memorials and maps, as well as his wish to see them made available to other officials.

Nayanceng's Diagnosis

If one wishes to sever the inner thread that links the Mongols to the Tibetans, one must punish the criminals from the interior. And if one wishes to prevent the Tibetans from marching north, one must clean up the Mongols.⁷⁹⁷

Upon arriving in Xining in November of 1822, Nayanceng faced two conflicting concerns. On the one hand the Court wished to see the Mongols protected and nourished: “The various Mongol princes and taiji of the region have been obedient servants of the dynasty for a long time and cannot be compared to the barbarians of the outside.”⁷⁹⁸ On the other hand, Nayanceng quotes the emperor as stating, “It is not possible to permanently station troops in order to protect the Mongols.”⁷⁹⁹ Thus Nayanceng was acutely aware that continued large-scale military operations, such as the one mounted just

⁷⁹⁶ According to McMahon, Yan Ruyi was particularly famous for his thorough administrative guides to frontier management that included maps and much detailed information. McMahon (2005), 95.

⁷⁹⁷ PFZS 3:37b-42a (DG 03/02/09, 1823-3-21).

⁷⁹⁸ PFZS 1:13a.

⁷⁹⁹ PFZS 1:14a.

months earlier by Cangling, were not sustainable over the long term. Even feeding the Mongol refugees was a problem as they insisted on only eating tsampa.⁸⁰⁰

Nayanceng's ultimate diagnosis was harsh.⁸⁰¹ He attributed the demographic collapse and insecurity of the banners primarily to the exploitation of the banner nobility, who were "avaricious and barbarous."⁸⁰² In an early assessment that would become standard in later memorials, Nayanceng writes:

Generally speaking the nomadic Tibetans are flourishing and thus lust after the water and pastures of the region north of the river. How is it that they come to know the wealth and poverty of the Mongols and the emptiness of the land? It is because the Mongol princes oppress their subjects, and their subjects, having become impoverished, defect therefore to the nomadic Tibetans in order to survive. Later the [defectors] lead the nomadic Tibetans back to pillage their former masters.⁸⁰³

Thus Nayanceng quickly overturned the perceived wisdom concerning the Mongols. The crisis appears no longer as a simple conflict over resources or historical grievances, but rather as the result of collaboration between individuals for whom traditional loyalties to banner and lord mattered very little.

Yet as Nayanceng's investigation evolved, he came to identify a graver concern, and one that had eluded his predecessor, Cangling. Nayanceng argued that left to their

⁸⁰⁰ PFZS 3:17b-18a. Nayanceng, especially in some of his orders to the magistrates of Liangzhou, Xining and other departments that were sheltering Mongols, is quite adamant that the Mongols must be treated as "human beings." The refusal of Mongols to eat anything but tsampa (the roasted barley dough central to the Tibetan diet) perhaps demonstrates the degree to which they had become acculturated to Tibetan/Fan cultural practices.

⁸⁰¹ See for instance the analysis of Song Tingsheng, who, directly quoting Nayanceng's memorials, has no difficulty attributing the Mongol collapse to the "exploitation" of the "feudal aristocracy." Song Tingsheng, 3-6.

⁸⁰² PFZS 3:37b.

⁸⁰³ PFZS 1:14b-15a.

own devices, the raiding of the nomadic Tibetans would pose little threat. What was truly disturbing, however, was the commercialization of the conflict and the profits that were purportedly being reaped from it by people from the interior.

I humbly advance the opinion that at this time the nomadic Tibetans' furtive migration north of the river reflects nothing more than their lust for pasture and water and that their raiding is nothing more than the pursuit of trivial gain. However, the collaboration of Muslim commoners (Ch. 回民) and the agricultural Tibetans (Ch. 熟番) with cunning people of the interior (Ch. 奸民) is becoming common practice and their gangs are truly wicked. If not quickly punished, the peril to the interior will be greater than that of the foreigners (Ch. 外番). Therefore I must first clear up matters in the interior and only afterwards consider what to do with the nomadic Tibetans.⁸⁰⁴

Yet as he began the investigation, the scope of the problem was still not clear:

Who are these criminals from the interior (Ch. 漢奸)? How many of them are there? If one calls them 'Muslim' people (Ch. 回), then where are they from? If they are Mongol, then which Mongol banner (Ch. 旗)? And how many of them are there? Since no one knows, they are just given the label 'Tibetan bandit' (Ch. 賊番). Now these Tibetan bandits have occupied the regions north of the river, but which community (Ch. 族) is where? And who are their leaders? Which Tibetan community (Ch. 族) contain Mongols? Which community (Ch. 族) contain criminals from the interior? Not a single person knows! In sum, since no one has done the investigative work and we don't know what is going on, how can we grasp the crux and take control of events?⁸⁰⁵

Even while en route to Xining, Nayanceng's attention had turned to the trading communities of the market towns that lined the Gansu frontier. In particular he suspected that it was the commercial resources and organizational capacity of traders from the

⁸⁰⁴ PFZS 1:16b, (*waifan* seems to imply not just Tibetans, but all groups, Mongol and Tibetan who are not in the interior.)

⁸⁰⁵ PFZS 1:15b

interior that provided the knowledge and the incentive to bring Tibetans and Mongols together in networks that could move stolen goods from the highlands down into border markets within Gansu province. Long-standing law prohibited commoners from the interior from conducting trade across the border in Kokonor. In principle, Mongols and select groups of Tibetans were permitted to enter the interior to conduct trade. In market towns such as Guide, Xunhua, Taozhou, Dangar, and Xining, a unique institution had come into existence to handle this trade, the *xiejia* (Ch. 歇家). Literally meaning “rest houses” but often used to refer to the proprietor himself, these institutions were primarily brokerages that lodged their clients from the grasslands free of charge, provided translation services, and then took a commission from handling the marketing of the grassland products. By the early nineteenth century (and probably much earlier), *xiejia* and a variety of unlabeled trading ventures, often no more than a handful of men and their capital were increasingly finding ways to slip across the frontier and bring their services directly to their clients in the grasslands, working either out of their own mobile dwellings or residing among the tents of nomad hosts. The ubiquity of this commercial sojourning in the grasslands and the apparent permissiveness of the local officials disturbed Nayanceng. As a result of these suspicions, Nayanceng ordered the complete closure of the frontier between Kokonor and Gansu and the arrest and investigation of all those caught trading beyond the passes. In addition, he ordered the closure of all privately run *xiejia* within the borders. The remaining “official” *xiejia* (*xiejia* that were either directly owned and managed by the government or had received official business

licenses) were required to keep detailed registers of their guests and deliver these registers to the local magistrates at regular intervals.⁸⁰⁶

Subsequent arrests and confessions over the course of the fall and early winter confirmed his suspicions. There were indeed many private traders operating in the grasslands. Their trade had expanded from essentials such as grain, tea, and finished leather and metal goods to gunpowder and weaponry. They also revealed the remarkable and unexpected involvement of both the institution of the Cagan Nomunhan and his subjects in the illegal grassland economy. It furthermore appeared that their partners were usually Muslim. A month after arriving in Xining, Nayanceng submitted a major report that included a long list of individuals who were under investigation for involvement in the raiding.⁸⁰⁷ The memorial began with a case concerning the discovery of men from the Cagan Nomunhan banner among a large group of raiders who had attempted to attack border posts east of Xining. This information was added to the growing list of accusations against the Cagan Nomunhan Banner. But it was the actions of a Muslim commoner from Hezhou, Gansu province, Ma Mugou (麻木溝), who ultimately provided an example of the type of character Nayanceng was most concerned about.

When captured in a remote valley of in the Qilian mountains, Ma Mugou was found armed and dangerous. Having been brought to Xining for interrogation, he admitted to leading Tibetans from communities (族) subordinate to the Cagan Nomunhan as well as Mongols and Tibetans from several other banners in numerous raids. Among these was the attack of August 22nd, 1822 on an imperial horse farm in Ganzhou

⁸⁰⁶ PFZS 4:18a-29b, “貴德番族易買糧茶章程。”

⁸⁰⁷ PFZS 1:25a-35a (1822-12-5).

Prefecture.⁸⁰⁸ Nayanceng felt that this man was so important that he kept him alive three extra months in order to ensure that all possible information was extracted and personally oversaw the interrogation.⁸⁰⁹

Ma Mugou admitted to having spent nearly two decades engaged in a mixture of long distance trade and raiding together with a rotating group of Muslim acquaintances who hailed from towns all across Gansu and Shaanxi provinces.⁸¹⁰ He had also overseen a series of gold mines in the Qilian Mountains that provided funds for armaments, men, and other supplies, as well as a base of operations. What bothered Nayanceng most was his ability to organize Mongols and Tibetans from a wide range of backgrounds and locales into successful raiding parties. On several occasions this raiding even involved monks from the Cagan Nomunhan banner. Still, the bulk of Ma Mugou's accomplices were Muslim commoners from the interior and destitute Mongols. Nayanceng describes their strategy thus:

They wear Tibetan clothing. Moreover, they frequently marry Mongol and Tibetan women and adopt Fan children. Thus when they head out on raids, the majority of them wear Tibetan coats and hats to disguise themselves as Tibetans. Thus in the eyes of their victims they appear to be Tibetan, but who and of what community (族) they do not know. Actually, real Tibetans live two or three thousand li away!⁸¹¹

Nayanceng's statement reveals much about the social life of categories such as "Mongol" (Ch. 蒙), Muslim (回), Tibetan (番), community (族), and banner (旗) in the

⁸⁰⁸ PFZS 1:33a-b. This horse farm was located at least four hundred kilometers from the pastures of the Cagan Nomunhan.

⁸⁰⁹ PFZS 2:23b-24a.

⁸¹⁰ PFZS 2:24a-25a. HWLF 03-3916-040.

⁸¹¹ PFZS 2:16b. HWLF 03-3916-040.

early nineteenth century. First it demonstrates that from the perspective of Mongol victims and Qing officials, the categories of Mongol or Tibetan, and especially nomadic Tibetan (野番), were obvious and essential divisions that carried transparent meanings and were imbued with stereotyped expectations of culture and behavior. Only when a category like “Tibetan nomad” had a relatively stable meaning across the many particular communities of the Gansu borderlands could a Muslim commoner dress as a Tibetan nomad and expect to frighten Mongols into relinquishing their property. Second, Nayanceng’s memorials also reveal that Qing officials expected that residents of Kokonor could identify themselves not only as Mongol or Tibetan but also by affiliation with the indigenous political institutions of banners or community (族) if pressed forcefully enough (and in confessions most people ultimately could present themselves in a manner ‘legible’ to the state). What the actual case of Ma Mugou and many other individuals who supply confessions in *Pingfan zouyi*, make clear, however, is that bonds and alliances were constantly forming and reforming across these categories, despite the state’s efforts to stop them. People were re-configuring themselves in temporary and opportunistic alliances that have little to do with community or banner, let alone broader categories such as Mongol or Tibetan.

Ma Mugou was not an exceptional case. The case of Su Cheng (蘇城) is also illustrative not only of the types of relationships established between Cagan Nomunhan subjects and Muslims, but also of the mortal perils that could befall an individual trying to navigate between the Qing state and the grassland monastic domains. Su Cheng was a Muslim commoner and native of Dangar in Xining prefecture. From a young age he had accompanied his father on trading missions outside the border of the prefecture to the

Mongols and Tibetans and eventually he brought his own sons into the business. He was fluent in Mongol and Tibetan, he had conducted trade for many years with Mongols and Tibetans subject to the Cagan Nomunhan banner, as well as nomadic Tibetans of the Gangzan community (Ch. 剛咱族).⁸¹² Every year, he and his sons usually led at least one or two trading expeditions. He could also handle visits by Mongols and Tibetan clients to the interior and would help arrange accommodations (at *xiejia*) and the purchase of grain.

Su Cheng first came to the attention of the governor-general in December of 1822, due to a report filed by the military commandant of Xining, Murandai, and the prefect, Bayanju. But Su Cheng had previously come to the attention of other officials when he and his sons were captured under suspicion of illegal trading on October 27, 1822. After some investigation it was revealed that the Su family had established bonds of brotherhood (“結為兄弟”) with the leader of the Gangzan *zu*, one of the more obstinate groups occupying pasture to the north of the river. Su Cheng’s son Su Sijiu (“Su Forty-nine” 蘇四九) was accused of forewarning the Gangzan leadership that Cangling was leading an expedition of troops in the third lunar month of that year. It was also discovered that in the seventh lunar month (late August-early September), Su Sijiu had organized an illegal expedition together with Maga Manla (馬尕滿拉) to trade flour, tea, potatoes, and other items for hides in the tent of Duoli, the Gangzan leader.⁸¹³

These were serious crimes and capital offences, yet the Su family preserved themselves by offering to put their grassland expertise in service of the state and work as

⁸¹² PFZS 2:1b.

⁸¹³ PFZS 2:3b. His Muslim collaborator may have been a religious professional of some sort. In the local Huihui patois, “manla” is a title of a religious student.

spies to capture bandits. The state accepted this offer and on November 11th, they headed off, leaving several family members as hostages. Su Cheng returned on January 9th 1823, with four “suspicious” Mongols from the Cagan Nomunhan’s banner.

Shortly thereafter, however, Su Cheng’s position began to fall apart. A conflicting petition arrived from the Cagan Nomunhan himself accusing Su Cheng (whom the kūtuktu identified as a “Han” not a Muslim commoner) of leading thirty people from the Gangzan to attack his people. The lama wrote that Su Cheng had arrived in his territory and claimed an official mandate to punish the Cagan Nomunhan for not having made reparations for murders the latter had previously carried out on the Gangzan.

Faced with two conflicting stories, the Qing officials tortured Su Cheng. He ultimately confessed that before arriving at the Cagan Nomunhan banner to spy, he stopped at the camp of Duoli. Duoli told Su Cheng that the Cagan Nomunhan had killed some of his tribesman and wanted reparations. Su Cheng offered to help and proceeded ahead to the Cagan Nomunhan encampment where he not only conveyed Duoli’s demands but also requested *ula* (labor/transportation service) and grain. When the kūtuktu did not acquiesce, the Gangzan attacked. Because they caught a group of the Cagan Nomunhan’s people in the midst of moving camp (and thus relatively defenseless), they are able to make off with fourteen families (a total of sixty-five people) as captives and all their livestock.⁸¹⁴

Nayanceng, outraged, condemned Su Cheng to decapitation and ordered his sons dispatched to distant frontiers to serve as military slaves. His memorial presents this case as a textbook example of the dangers of permitting people from the interior to roam

⁸¹⁴ PFZS 2:4b.

beyond the borders. From his and Yan Ruyi's perspective, it was clearly *minren* ("commoners") that were the *agents provocateurs* in the grassland conflict.⁸¹⁵ The commercialization of grassland raiding by Sino-Muslim traders represented a grave threat to the stability of both Kokonor and Gansu. Moreover, the degree to which people from the interior were "turning away" from Chinese culture—learning to speak Tibetan, taking local wives, adopting the nomadic diet and attire—threatened the entire rationale for Qing colonial governance in the Gansu borderlands. As Daniel McMahon argues in his dissertation on the frontier policies of Yan Ruyi, statecraft thinkers directly linked the dynasty's ability to instruct and transform its frontiers to its overall health and stability.⁸¹⁶ Thus cultural backsliding by Gansu province's trans-frontiersmen was a sure sign that the dynasty itself was in peril.

Such fears about cross-cultural mixing were also most likely an important reason for the intense scrutiny of the Cagan Nomunhan. Nayanceng's treatment of this kūtuktu is singular. Although he would later write to Yan Ruyi expressing concern with the size and influence of Labrang, Tsongkha, and Rongwo monasteries, no other lama or monastic institution was targeted in the manner with which he pursued the Cagan Nomunhan. Confessions such as those of Ma Mugou and Su Cheng together with other investigations revealed the heterogeneous nature of the Cagan Nomunhan's polity. As a harbor for refugee "Mongols" and a collaborator with "nomadic Tibetans," his institution was also an instrument of transformation—in this case into Tibetan nomads. Moreover, as an apparent hub (and probably also a bank) for the trans-frontier trading network, the Cagan Nomunhan could not be left unreformed. By early December of 1822 suspicions had

⁸¹⁵ PFZS 2:5a.

⁸¹⁶ McMahon (1999), 216.

hardened into a concrete policy: on December fifth, Nayanceng requested permission to forcefully blockade and harass the Cagan Nomunhan banner in its new territory north of the river until they agreed to return south.⁸¹⁷

Nayanceng's Treatment:

Eliminate traitors in the interior in order to cleanse the outside of trouble.⁸¹⁸

Nayanceng's approach to reconstruction in Kokonor was a dramatic expression of the idea that the ultimate source of instability was the administrative and economic system of regions inside the passes. On February 28th, 1823, Nayanceng provided statistics on the numbers of men engaged in private trade and/or raiding who had been flushed out of the banner and *zu* (族) communities of Kokonor. It was a considerable body count: thirty-three men beheaded, thirteen hanged, seventy-six sent to serve as military slaves; another fifteen men received various lesser punishments. A further one hundred and thirty individuals were still awaiting investigation. In total two hundred and sixty-seven men had been caught. There were so many open cases that Nayanceng complained that the jails of Xining had run out of capacity to house further convicts. And a further twenty-two accused traders were still at large.⁸¹⁹ This creeping purge of the Gansu trading community seemed to know no bounds. Each new trader caught in the net

⁸¹⁷ PFZS 1:31b.

⁸¹⁸ PFZS 4:44a-48a: “先在絕內奸以清外患。”

⁸¹⁹ PFZS 3:11a-12a.

ultimately exposed a new circle of acquaintances and thus confirmed the governor-general's suspicion that the *hanjian* "cancer" had spread across Gansu.⁸²⁰ Even the yamen of the Qinghai amban was not immune from his assault: the entire staff of translators (Ch. 通事) was fired in December of 1822 on suspicion that they, too, had become complicit in the illegal cross-border trade.⁸²¹

Nine key elements can be identified in Nayanceng's reforms: 1) the resettlement of Mongols in their original pastures with guarantees of Qing official military support during the winter and the forced removal of nomadic Tibetans to points south of the Yellow River;⁸²² 2) a reform of the collection of tribute tax from the Tibetans of Yülschu (a district in the far southeast corner of present-day Qinghai province) in order to alleviate the hardships of Mongols along the route;⁸²³ 3) resurrection of a licensed trading system in designated markets; 4) administrative reforms in Gansu; 5) division of Tibetans into new decimal-based units of administration based on extensive new surveys and the appointment of new local headmen; 6) investigation and surveillance of monasteries; 7)

⁸²⁰ PFZS: 4:44a-b.

⁸²¹ PFZS 1:30b-31a.

⁸²² The major reform instituted among the Mongols was the establishment of a league-chief (*mengzhang*) position to broadly coordinate between the banners. Since Nian Gengyao forbade inter-banner alliances in the aftermath of the Lobzang Danjin rebellion, the Mongol banner nobility in Qinghai had had difficulty organizing a coordinated response to incidents such as the Fan raiding. The overall decline of the Mongol banners in Kokonor also probably resulted from the rigidity of the banner system. Since it limited population transfers between banners and movement across banner territory, the increasingly ossified banner system prevented the banner populations from evolving in ways that might have offset the challenges they faced.

⁸²³ PFZS 2:30a-32b. Nayanceng's unprecedented set of regulations instituting tribute tax on the *fan* of Xunhua, Guide, the Cagan Nomunhan banner and points further south was known as the "Horse Tribute Regulations" (Ch. 貢馬章程). Although labeled a "horse tribute tax," it was already a monetized tax, with a perceived burden of about 1-2 *qian* per household. (PFZS 2:46a-b).

reorganization of the military deployments of the provincial garrison;⁸²⁴ 8) the use of harsher sentencing guidelines from the legal system of the interior to punish offenders from beyond the passes;⁸²⁵ and finally, 9) employment of Tibetan monks to promulgate and explain the reforms to the non-Chinese speaking population. The following section will discuss these reforms primarily as they related to the Cagan Nomunhan banner.

As noted above, Nayanceng's chief tool for "pacifying" the nomadic Tibetans of the Cagan Nomunhan and other groups was a strict economic blockade—not another military campaign. In fact he was able to force the Tibetans south across the Yellow River to their "original" rangeland without any significant fighting. In order to make this successful, however, Nayanceng spoke overtly of the regulation of individual Tibetan diets and bodies.⁸²⁶ Only the careful regulation of food would assure that the Tibetans were too weak to resist Qing management. As Nayanceng noted in his report on the submission of the Cagan Nomunhan, the collapse of nomadic Tibetan resistance occurred more quickly than he anticipated. He took this as a sign that the ubiquity of the illegal commercial network had created a degree of dependence on supplies from the interior that had not existed in the past. In a memorial dated January 29, 1823, Nayanceng cited an interview with a Mongol who escaped from the Fan to demonstrate the effectiveness of his policies. The Mongol reported that difficulties began shortly after trade was first

⁸²⁴ PFZS 2:16a. "Regulations for Patrols and Sentries and the inspection of *baojia* in the mountain valleys" ("巡防會哨及稽查山內各保甲章程").

⁸²⁵ Nayanceng took advantage of the Qing code to allocate harsher punishments for the criminals. Where Cangling saw a lighter offense, Nayanceng found a more serious statute to throw at the criminal; where Cangling would cite the Mongol or Tibetan law code, Nayanceng requested permission to apply the laws of the interior. Nayanceng also advocated applying statutes (on private trade) from the Miao wars (Memorial 80, also PFZS 3:23b-28a.)

⁸²⁶ PFZS 2:45a.

cut in the ninth lunar month (October-November 1822). The herders then began eating their flocks, but were soon suffering from disease. Three months later, at the time when he slipped away, many Fan had already died of starvation.⁸²⁷ Nayanceng believed these hardships had hastened the Cagan Nomunhan's submission earlier in the month. In the same memorial, Nayanceng noted that local officials in Xunhua and Guide had reported that, "No less than twenty thousand people from the Cagan Nomunhan, as well as nomadic Tibetans of various *zu*, have been able to cross the river at the fords because the water is now low. Their cattle, sheep, camels, and horses number in the hundreds of thousands and Tibetan tents crowd along the banks of the [Yellow] River for three hundred *li* in Guide and Xunhua."⁸²⁸

Nayanceng envisioned the eradication of unsupervised trade in Kokonor as a permanent policy. Therefore its long-term success hinged on the concurrent implementation of a series of administrative and trading policies to remove the incentives that drove the trade. He outlined these policies for the first time on January 5, 1823. At the heart of his approach was a system of licenses (Ch. 票) to be granted to cooperative Tibetan headmen. The licenses would authorize the headman to trade for a specific quantity of grain, tea, and other essentials based on an exact census of his population and a calculation of how much this population required for survival. The license would then allow the headman to oversee trading in a specific market town at specific government-supervised shops that would sell at government-authorized prices. Licenses were good for one year, and authorized two yearly market transactions; they were neither transferrable

⁸²⁷ PFZS 2:43b.

⁸²⁸ PFZS 3:14b.

nor extendable. Chiliarchs (Ch. 千戶) were required to reapply each year at their local sub-prefectural (廳) or battalion (營) yamen for new licenses. Nayanceng was confident that these “Regulations for the Exchange of Grain and Tea” (Ch. 《易換糧茶章程》) would eliminate entirely private merchants from the marketplace. To further incentivize the Tibetan leadership, he ordered that all outstanding debts to “criminal merchants” (奸商) need not be honored and that anyone trying to collect a debt would be prosecuted.⁸²⁹ These regulations were also a statement of Nayanceng’s confidence that the state could deliver goods more cheaply than the market.⁸³⁰

These economic regulations went hand in hand with the administrative reform of the Cagan Nomunhan banner and other nomadic Tibetan communities in Guide and Xunhua. In order to issue the appropriate licenses, Nayanceng’s officials had to break the Tibetans into legible units so that their dietary intake could be accurately assessed. This policy also served the purpose of distributing power and authority away from major local leaders (such as the Cagan Nomunhan) and inserting state supervision at a lower level. In an early discussion of this policy, Nayanceng argued that by reorganizing herding households into equally sized units, he could not completely eliminate raiding but at least he could reduce its scale.⁸³¹ He wrote, “we must break up their strength so that they

⁸²⁹ PFZS 2:13a-15a. HWLF 03-2800-026 (microfilm 199-0764). A system of licenses/tickets (*piao*) was not a new phenomenon on the Gansu frontier. It had precedents in the “tea and horse” trade system of the Ming. And the Qing had supervised such a system since the beginning of the dynasty. However, as Nayanceng noted in an earlier memorial, the system was rife with abuses and did not offer the level of control and supervision he deemed necessary. See also PFZS 1:18b-19a.

⁸³⁰ PFZS 4:18a-29b.

⁸³¹ PFZS 2:10a.

cannot again tyrannize people.”⁸³² Nayanceng clearly stated that his reforms among the nomadic Tibetans should not be considered the establishment of direct rule. As the nomadic Tibetan spoke a different language and lived “beyond the frontier,” it was still inappropriate to place them under the direct rule of Han or Manchu magistrates.⁸³³ Still, Nayanceng hoped that this measure would help extend the *baojia* collective security system of the interior to the sub-prefectures of Guide and Xunhua and thus lay the groundwork such that the nomadic Tibetans would “spontaneously return to our system and thus be ruled effortlessly.”⁸³⁴

With regards to the Cagan Nomunhan banner, these reforms were much more difficult, a reflection of the fact that this polity was neither a straightforward “Mongol” banner nor a collection of “Tibetan *zu*,” but rather an ambiguous combination of the two. Memorials from the Jiaqing and early Daoguang reigns concerning the Cagan Nomunhan polity generally referred to it as a “Mongol banner.” Initially, Nayanceng assumed that the nomadic Tibetans discovered to be sheltering in the Cagan Nomunhan banner were merely opportunistic criminal associates. However, by the time he met personally with the kūtuktu he recognized that the banner did in fact include twenty *zu* of Tibetans. Yet, even during the course of this memorial, Nayanceng swings from labeling this polity a “foolish Tibetan banner” (蠶爾番旗) to referring to the lama’s people simply as “Mongols.” He then ordered the Tibetan portion to be reorganized “according to the old

⁸³² PFZS 2:11b. “亦須分弱其勢，不能再事鴟張。”

⁸³³ PFZS 43a-45b.

⁸³⁴ PFZS 2:15b-16a. “又命令其自然歸我法制，似可不勞而理。”

Mongol statutes.”⁸³⁵ In the winter Nayanceng switched track and ordered that the Tibetans be organized into a “chiliarch-centurion” (Ch. 千戶-百戶) system together with the other Tibetans of Guide and Xunhua.⁸³⁶ It appears Nayanceng expected that after these reforms, the Guide magistrate would more closely supervise the chiliarchs and centurions from the Cagan Nomunhan banner.

Further complicating the Qing’s efforts to reform the Cagan Nomunhan banner was the fact that officials discovered that it was full of “captives.” In February Nayanceng memorialized that one hundred households of captured Mongols that had been extracted from the Cagan Nomunhan banner were returned to their original banners. An additional twenty-three households of Arik “Tibetans” (番子) were returned to the Arik headman.⁸³⁷ One can only speculate about how these people ended up part of the Cagan Nomunhan banner. Perhaps they had indeed been acquired through raiding. Or perhaps officials were trying to delegitimize the Cagan Nomunhan’s acquisition of certain communities either because they had been donated to his estates (which the Qing may have considered invalid) or because they had sought refuge there for economic reasons (and this was an embarrassment to the Mongol aristocracy). There is no indication in Tibetan sources that the Cagan Nomunhan’s estates were acquired (even partially) through warfare.

Nayanceng and Yan Ruyi both held the deep conviction that the conquests of their ancestors in the Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns had established an unprecedented peace

⁸³⁵ PFZS 2:9a.

⁸³⁶ PFZS 2:43a-45b.

⁸³⁷ PFZS 3:14b (1823-2-18).

on Qing empire's frontiers, frontiers that they correlated with "China." In his letter to Yan Ruyi, Nayanceng identified Qing pacification of the Tibetans (番) with the historical relationship between the Tibetans and China ("中國"), noting the contrast between the Tang dynasty's defeat by the Tufan (吐蕃) and his present dynasty's success. His swift defeat of the Cagan Nomunhan, the "strongest banner of them all" and a descendent of the Tibetans of the Tibetan empire, is understood here as an opportunity. Citing Tang sources that advocated military settlements (屯) on the upper Yellow River, Nayanceng argued that the region was indeed tillable and ready for state-supported settlers from the interior.⁸³⁸ Yan Ruyi, in his response, agreed, pointing out that settling Kokonor would be like the ancient settlements established by the Western Han and Tang dynasties in Yiwu and Luntai (near Barkol and Kuche, respectively, in Xinjiang), thus drawing an implicit parallel between Kokonor and the Qing's far western territories in Xinjiang.⁸³⁹ The position of Tibetans in this new order was ambiguous at best. As we have seen above, Nayanceng held the belief that some the "raw" and "cooked" Tibetans—those Tibetans who were agriculturalists or participated in a mixed agricultural economy—who fell under the jurisdiction of Guide and Xunhua might be susceptible to "transformation." Yet Nayanceng's sights were trained primarily on the land, not the people of Kokonor. The region would be transformed by settlement and colonization from the interior and the Tibetans—especially the nomadic Tibetans—would be marginalized.⁸⁴⁰

⁸³⁸ PFZS 4:44a-48a.

⁸³⁹ PFZS 4:48a-51b.

⁸⁴⁰ The court, however, remained hostile to such initiatives, citing concerns about harming the Mongols' access to pasture and water. Nayanceng had previously made a similar proposal which was rejected by the Jiaqing emperor. *Nayancheng Qinghai zouyi*, 73 (JQ 12/11/03).

Nayanceng concludes his publication by noting that danger that even the Tibetan monasteries posed to the dynasty: “The monasteries of Labrang, Tsongkha, and Rongwo call together twenty to thirty thousand monks. Their temples are too vast, their monks are too plentiful, and it is difficult to guarantee that their ranks do not harbor traitors. Their lamas must not freely come and go, otherwise information from the interior will leak across the frontier. If a monastery hides traitors like Gönlung monastery (Ch. 鄭隆寺), one must incinerate their scriptures and burn their hermitages.”⁸⁴¹ The potent possibility of a trans-frontier alliance between nomads and monks, as in the case of the Cagan Nomunhan banner, was still a major concern.

Local Legacies and Understandings

Regardless of the short-term devastation Nayanceng’s policies certainly wrought on local merchants and herders, they had little long-term effect. By the 1850s, a large portion of the Cagan Nomunhan community had successfully completed a long-term migration to formerly Mongol banner pastures north of Kokonor Lake (*figure 7*).⁸⁴² By most accounts, the slow deterioration of Mongol aristocratic fortunes was not reversed. Muslim trading networks continued to expand across the Mongol and Tibetan pastures of northern Tibet and Kokonor.⁸⁴³ Most significantly the influence of individual Qing

⁸⁴¹ PFZS 4:48a. This is a reference to the support of the monks of Gonlung Monastery for Lobzang Danjin.

⁸⁴² Yongs ‘dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 258-9.

⁸⁴³ Archival sources from Xunhua subprefecture from the 1870-1890s demonstrate this. See for instance reports filed concerning the weakened position of the Mongol lords, QSDG: 7-YJ-2697 (GX 06/10/15), 7-YJ-2730 (GX 09/10/01).

administrators and their policies seems completely absent from the historical memory of members of the Cagan Nomunhan polity as recorded in historical chronicles and biographies from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact, Tibetan authors locate the origins of the nineteenth conflict in reasons that are completely invisible in Qing reports and place their history within a completely different framework.

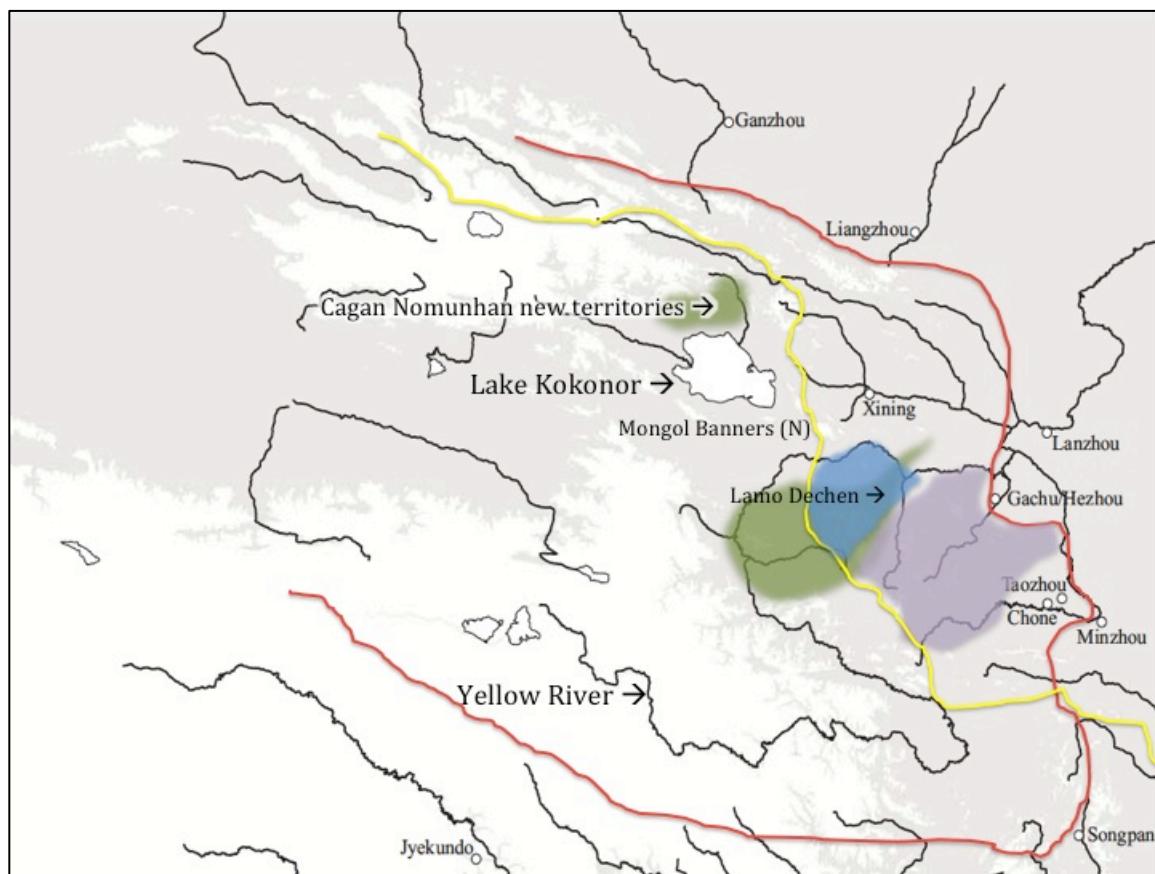


Figure 7: Approximate location of new territories of the Cagan Nomunhan in the 1850s (green polygon).

Late nineteenth-century descriptions of this grassland violence in Chinese sources generally portray these events as an ethnic conflict between Mongols and Tibetans. The

New Comprehensive Gazetteer of Gansu of 1908 describes the Cagan Nomunhan as a traitor, castigates Cangling as “foolish” for relying on him, and then reports on the 700-man strong cavalry detachment sent to bring the lama to heel. Yet, although the gazetteer directly quotes from several of Nayanceng’s memorials, this retelling omits the economic story and the reconstruction measures of which the governor-general was so proud.⁸⁴⁴ Later local official assessments of the grassland conflicts of the nineteenth century understood it primarily as a story of Tibetan revenge on the Mongol banners for their occupation of what had originally been Fan pastureland around Kokonor in the seventeenth century. Thus over the course of the nineteenth century what Qing officials had once been considered a “Mongol” banner had come to be conceptualized as a fully Tibetan (“Fan”) enterprise. This portrayal of these events as a stark ethnic conflict influenced twentieth century Chinese historians, as well as the most influential English-language commentator on the history of Qinghai, Louis Schram.⁸⁴⁵

The Tibetan language accounts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries present a very different picture. The migrations north are not motivated by a desire to recapture lost homelands. There is no master narrative of conflict between Tibetans and Mongols. Rather, the origins of the conflicts over pasture are more local, particular, and above all more tragic. Far from being a triumphant march northward against the Mongols, monastic chronicles from the domain of the Cagan Nomunhan portray the

⁸⁴⁴ Sheng-yun, Chang-geng, eds., *Gansu xin tongzhi* 甘肅全省新通志 (1908), 46:62b-63b.

⁸⁴⁵ Louis Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Frontier* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1954-61), 616. Schram’s account of ethnic conflict in Qinghai was picked up by Joseph Fletcher Jr., “Heyday of the Ch’ing order in Inner Asia,” in *The Cambridge History of China vol. 10, Late Ch’ing 1800-1911*, ed. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 402.

event more as an exile—a painful response to being displaced themselves by raiders from other nomadic communities further to the south and west.⁸⁴⁶ Since the *Oceanic Book* is largely silent on the history of the Cagan Nomunhan Kūtuktu and his institution after the fourth incarnation (d. 1796). Therefore the primary source on the subsequent history of the Lamo incarnations are monks affiliated with Lamo Dechen monastery who wrote during the twentieth century, among whom the account of Yongzin Lobzang Khédrub Gyatso has been particularly influential.⁸⁴⁷ This highly nuanced narrative deserves close attention for what it reveals about local conceptions of communities and boundaries in Amdo.

Yongzin Lobzang Khédrub Gyatso devotes considerable attention to the events that transpired during the life of the fifth Zhabdrung Karpo. Unlike the Nayanceng and Yan Ruyi's portrayal of the monk as cunning, deceitful, powerful and ultimately weak, Yongzin Lobzang Khédrub Gyamtso argues that the fifth Zhabdrung maintained his lineage's reputation for diplomacy in the Amdo region. He writes:

Through the combined spiritual deeds of this lord together with those of the Shar Nomun Han (Tib. *shar no min han*) and Arik Geshé, (Tib. *a rig dge bshes chen mo*) tranquility was established in the district to the north and south of the great river (Yellow River). He became renowned for both his scholarship and practice by having met individually with many tens of teachers at Lamo Dechen and Gur monasteries and on account of his

⁸⁴⁶ Yongs 'dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 258-9.

⁸⁴⁷ Yongs 'dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho's narrative is closely paraphrased by a number of other Tibetan-language local histories published in the last two decades. See for instance: Debu-Chenlie Aosai *Xiarongga 'bu zhuan* (Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 1996; and Mkha' 'gro skyabs's history of the Lamo Zhabdrung Karpo lineage (unpublished manuscript in collection of author).

zealous study of both the exoteric and esoteric of the Hinayana and Vajrayana sciences.⁸⁴⁸

Yet in the narrative that follows this description, the fifth Lamo Kūtuktu plays no significant role in dealing with the violence that engulfed his community. The text is silent on the topic of what kind of relationship this incarnation had with Qing officials. Instead, it is secular leaders from the Cagan Nomunhan community and neighboring communities who are the influential historical actors.

The conflict that would ultimately force the Cagan Nomunhan to flee to the north of Qinghai Lake began after the death of a “minister” (Tib. *blon chen*) of the Mongol Danzin Wang.⁸⁴⁹ This official was in charge of many nomadic encampments in the region around the valley of the Bal River (present-day Tongde county). This valley also included many communities of nomads who belonged to the estate of the Cagan Nomunhan. Known as “the tiger of Bal,” the leadership of this minister had been the key to a general peace in the pastures to the south of the Yellow River. Upon his death, nomads from the Rebgong region, the *Hor sbra nag* (the “black-tent Hor” nomads), began to encroach on the pastures of the three valleys of *Mang*, ‘*Bal*, and *Bya*.⁸⁵⁰ There subsequently ensued “several years of conflict between Hor and Mongols (*sog*).” Because the nomadic

⁸⁴⁸Yongs ‘dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 258. Shar Nomunhan is an important incarnation series affiliated with Rongwo Monastery in Rebgong. Arik Geshé was an influential lama who played a major role in the region just to the south of the Cagan Nomunhan’s estate and founded a number of important monasteries, most significantly Rabjya Monastery in 1769.

⁸⁴⁹The name of this Mongol official was “Al der ho sho’i chi” which may mean “Alder of the Khoshot Banner.” But it seems like Al der ho sho’i chi is currently remembered as a proper name. Yongs ‘dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 259. The crucial role that the Mongol prince’s strongman played among the Mongol banners south of the river should give us pause to consider what types of inter-banner political structures still existed, despite Qing restrictions.

⁸⁵⁰Yongs ‘dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 259.

subjects of the Cagan Nomun Han lived in such close proximity to the nomadic communities of the Mongol Qinwang, they too were caught up in this conflict.⁸⁵¹ Around 1830, the situation had become untenable and the very survival of the Cagan Nomunhan's nomadic communities was in doubt. The *Hor sbra nag* “army” soundly defeated and dispersed the Four Companies (Tib. *mda' bzhi*) and the urga of the Cagan Nomun Han, as well as numerous monasteries supervised by the lama. Therefore, under the leadership of the headman (Tib: *dpon po*) of *Bya*, Gyaltsan Zangbo (Tib: *rgyal mtshan bzang bo*), the Four Companies and the urga of the Lamo Kūtuktu (including his personal chapel) migrated from their original pastures and regrouped at a new encampment on the north shore of Kokonor Lake (Tib: *bo ro chu 'gag gzhung*, Ch: 海晏水峡).⁸⁵²

According to this narrative, Qing authorities did not pose an obstacle to this migration to new pastures north of the Yellow River. Nor does the Tibetan-language account suggest that the Yellow River was the proper boundary of their community. To the contrary it was local Mongols living in these “new” pastures who threw up objections to the immigration. Here, however, Yongzin Lobzang Khédrub Gyamtso, citing local oral histories, throws in a surprising twist: In order to overcome the Mongols’ objections and earn a place in the Mongol pastures, Gyaltsan Zangpo, together with the headman (Tib: *spyi dpon*, Ch: *qianhu*) of “seventeen black-tent” communities, hatched a clever scheme: the latter would attack the Mongols and the former would fake a counter-attack. According to plan, a “bandit army of black-tent *Bod*” (i.e. Tibetans) attacked the Mongols

⁸⁵¹ Yongs ‘dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 259.

⁸⁵² Yongs ‘dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 262-3.

on the north shore of Kokonor, driving off many head of livestock. Gyaltsan Zangpo then led the Four Companies in “pursuit.” After exchanging blank shots with the Tibetans, they succeeded in “defeating” the raiders. The Four Companies then returned a number of “poor quality” animals to the Mongols and were able to claim a reward from their Mongol hosts. In return for rescuing the Mongol flocks, the local Mongols granted the Cagan Nomunhan’s herders the right to nomadize within their territory to the north of Lake Kokonor.⁸⁵³

Conclusion

The narrative of Yongzin Lobzang Khédrub Gyatso both confirms and confounds Nayanceng’s account of the Cagan Nomunhan polity and the grassland conflicts of the Daoguang period. On the surface, this story confirms Nayanceng’s suspicion that people from the Cagan Nomunhan banner were colluding with nomadic Fan to deceive and rob the Mongols. The absence of the Cagan Nomun Han Kūtuktu from any direct involvement in the crisis might also support Nayanceng’s contention that the lama had very little influence over the governing of his community. However, the status of the Cagan Nomunhan banner as ambiguously “Meng/Mongol” or “Fan/Tibetan” from the perspective of outsiders presented opportunities for Cagan Nomunhan insiders to manipulate shifting assumptions about the identity of their community to suit their circumstances. In this case, the astute lay commander of the remaining Cagan Nomunhan communities was able to manipulate the perception that they were a “Mongol Banner” as a screen to fool their Mongol hosts. The polity’s diversity allowed it to tap into the multi-

⁸⁵³ Yongs ‘dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 260-1.

cultural resources of Amdo in order to form alliances and survive in the competitive political landscape of the Qinghai highlands.

This indigenous description of the conflict indicates that the communities subject to the government of the Cagan Nomunhan had intimate relations with neighboring Mongols. Their original camps and pastures had, in many places, been mixed among those of nomads belonging to the Mongol banners from south of the Yellow River. The ‘Four Companies’ nomadic estate (Tibetan: *ru sde*) had been organized explicitly “according to Mongol custom” in the 1720s. Moreover, it would appear that to some extent, in a period when their own leader was weak (in his infancy or in the midst of his education), the nomadic estates of the Fifth Lamo Cagan Nomunhan relied on a neighboring Mongol banner strongman for their security. Yet although core constituencies of the Cagan Nomunhan had clearly been organized in Mongol administrative fashion, Yongzin Lobzang Khédrub Gyatso does not identify them as ethnically “Mongol” (*sog*). Nor are they identified as “Tibetan” (*bod* or *bod pa*) as are the neighbors of the Cagan Nomunhan estate who live in the “black tents.” Thus this twentieth-century Tibetan-language narrative implies that the community boundaries and identity were delimited primarily by status as subjects of the tent-camp government (*sgar gzhung/urga*) of the Cagan Nomun Han Kūtuktu.

In contrast to the essentialized categories of “Tibetan,” “Mongol,” “Han,” and “Hui” (Muslim) that frame Nayanceng’s account, the Tibetan-language accounts and the details of Nayanceng’s reports reveal a landscape in which such broad categories have little relevance and are seldom employed. For instance, Nayanceng’s reports contain detailed confessions from individuals who had crossed boundaries, learned multiple

languages, dressed as nomads, and pursued personal relationships that did not accord with their “official” status. Nayanceng is dismayed to discover that nomadic “Tibetan” raiders are more often than not, Mongols or even Muslims masquerading in “Tibetan” clothes in order to frighten potential victims. The migration of nomads from regions to the south of the Yellow River north into the pastures of the Mongol banners around Lake Kokonor led to the impression in Qing reports from the mid to late nineteenth century that the region around Kokonor lake was becoming “Tibetanized” (or “Fanicized”) at the expense of local Mongols. The documentary record from this period demonstrates, however, that rather than “Tibetans” displacing “Mongols,” it was the “Mongols,” “Muslims,” and even “Han” who were actively adopting social and cultural trappings associated with nomadic “Tibetans.”

The case of the Cagan Nomunhan polity is perhaps only the most salient example of a broader phenomenon: the importance of affiliation with highly localized political structures and ways of life (like nomadizing in black-tent encampments), and lineages (Tib: *rus*, literally “bone”) over broader categories such as “Tibetan,” “Mongol,” or “Muslim.” In fact, the very existence of these categories is highly suspect, especially from the perspective of Tibetan sources. The present-day ethnonym *Böpa* (“Tibetan” Tib. *bod pa*) appears only rarely in nineteenth-century sources. In Belmang’s *History*, for instance, *Böpa* is generally used to refer to lay officials and monks from Ü-Tsang, not as a term that necessarily includes people in Amdo or Kham.⁸⁵⁴ Drakgönpa appears to have followed his teacher’s usage. In his biography of Belmang Pandita, he writes, of “two lay Tibetan officials (*bod pa drung 'khor gnyis*)” from Lhasa. In the *Oceanic Book* as well,

⁸⁵⁴ Belmang, *History*, 576-577, 606-6-7.

Böpa is used almost exclusively for people from central Tibet.⁸⁵⁵ There are no signs of the modern regional self-identifier “Amdowa” (Tib. *a mdo pa*, “person of Amdo”) either. Thus one struggles to find an indigenous category in Amdo to match the Chinese and Manchu concepts of *fan* or *fandze*, respectively. Tibetan-language local histories such as the *The Oceanic Book* and the account of Yongzin Lobzang Khédrub Gyatso, writing as they were for a local audience, present a view of society in which individuals were primarily recognized not by large categories such as “Tibetan” but rather through affiliation with regional political structures labeled variously *déwa* (Tib. *sde ba* “polity” or “domain”), “lhadé” (Tib. *lha sde* “religious domain”), or *pönkhag* (Tib. *dpon khag* “principality”), smaller subdivisions or communities called *tsowa* (Tib. *tsho ba* or *tsho khag*), and also by economic culture into *rudé* (Tib. *ru sde*, “herding group”) or *shingdé* (Tib. *shing sde*, “farming group”). Thus this twentieth-century Tibetan-language narrative implies that the community boundaries and identity were delimited primarily by status as subjects of the mobile, tent-camp government (Tib. *garzhung* or *urgé*) of the Cagan Nomunhan Kūtuktu.

On the frontier and away from court, Qing patronage of the Geluk Buddhist aristocracy entailed no smooth cooperation between church and empire, especially when Qing officials were dealing with incarnate lamas who were also local rulers. Although local authors note that Qing rulers had patronized the Lamo Kūtuktu’s monasteries since the Kangxi reign and Qing official compendiums recorded the Cagan Nomunhan as having entered the ranks of the Qing elite as a banner *jasak*, there is no agreement between these two perspectives over the scope of his realm or his role. The Qing state and the Geluk

⁸⁵⁵ Drakgönpa, BMNT, 160; *Oceanic Book*, 40, 43, 46, 216, 251, 371.

church had created profoundly different “maps” of the Gansu borderlands. The political jurisdiction of the Cagan Nomunhan’s office, the economic relationships of his subjects and monasteries, and the religious role of the lama himself all transgressed the “proper” boundaries as understood by the Daoguang emperor and Nayanceng.

The differing “maps” of Amdo/Gansu were also expressions of competing imperial enterprises. The major texts considered for this chapter all harbor imperial visions legitimized by the rhetoric of a civilizing mission. According to both Belmang Pandita and Drakgönpa, successive generations of the Cagan Nomunhan, as embodied Buddhas and virtuous and effective rulers, had not only brought peace to his own vast estates but also been crucial agents in the overall transformation of the Amdo region and its various peoples into the domain of Gelukpa Buddhism. Belmang Pandita’s Manchu contemporary Nayanceng, in his exchange of letters with his editor and mentor Yan Ruyi, positioned the Cagan Nomunhan as a bit player in the historical conflict between the civilization of China (“中國”) and the barbarity of the Tibetans in which the Qing had finally and permanently gained the upper hand. Moreover in both narratives the catalyst for expansion was the “request” of the untamed and unruly Mongol aristocracy of Kokonor.

The conflict with the Cagan Nomunhan reverberated well beyond Nayanceng and Yan Ruyi. Wei Yuan’s enormously influential military history of the dynasty, the *Shengwuji*, published in several successive editions between 1842 and 1846, depicted the Cagan Nomunhan as the most obdurate threat to the stability of Qinghai. Wei Yuan’s account not only rehearsed the monk’s supposed role in the conflicts of the Jiaqing and

Daoguang reigns, but also accused him of being the prime instigator of the Lobzang Danjin rebellion.⁸⁵⁶

The hostile meeting between the Cagan Nomunhan and Nayanceng marked a moment when what had been a mutually beneficial cooperation between Gelukpa Buddhists and the Qing dynasty began to give way to mutual suspicion and hostility as each side found itself stymied by the other in its attempt to fully realize its imperial ambitions, visions that as early as the 1820s left increasingly little room for re-interpretation and acceptance by the other side. The contrast between the relatively harmonious relationship between Tibetan Buddhist hierarchs from Amdo and the Qianlong court and the increasingly tense relationship during the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns is stark. Qianlong’s “reform” of Tibetan affairs in the 1790s following the Gurkha wars laid the legal basis and historical precedent for a much more interventionist approach to managing political and religious affairs in Tibet, Amdo, and Mongolia. Yet the expectations of nineteenth-century rulers and administrators far outstripped their ability to actually influence local affairs. Beset with crises elsewhere, the rulers of the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns were limited to periodic campaign-style interventions in Amdo such as the ones led by Cangling and Nayanceng. During the second half of the nineteenth century, indigenous institutions and leaders would increasingly eclipse Qing officials as the center of political power and influence.

Despite these developments, however, Tibetan involvement with Qing institutions increased, as did contact between Tibetans, Mongols, Muslims, Han, and many other smaller ethnic groups across both Qing administrative frontiers and the Tibetan-conceptualized divide between Amdo (or “Tibet,” *bod chen po*) and China. As will be

⁸⁵⁶ Wei Yuan, *Shengwuji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 139-142.

discussed in the remaining two chapters, Qing colonial jurisprudence acted as a key agent in the continuing transformation of the political-economy of Amdo. Much as the allure of Gelukpa jurisprudence had undermined Khoshot political authority in the eighteenth century, the opportunities presented by the appearance of alternate Qing legal forums posed new challenges for both Gelukpa hierarchs and Qing magistrates.

Chapter Six: The Creation of the “Tibetan” Codes and the Qing Colonial Legal Order in Xunhua Subprefecture

Introduction: An Historical Juxtaposition and a Paradox

The foundational elements of what would eventually become the civil and military apparatus of the Xunhua Subprefecture were laid in the 1720s with a simple goal in mind: to “remake the Tibetans as Chinese.”⁸⁵⁷ In 1726, the Yongzheng emperor accepted the advice of one of his field commanders Danai that a “subprefect for pacifying the Tibetans (撫番同知)” be established in Hezhou and delegated the responsibility for administering the Tibetan populations that lived along and beyond the borders of Hezhou.⁸⁵⁸ Just four years later, a military garrison was moved across the frontier and established in a new fort labeled “Xunhua” (循化), the meaning of which can be approximated as, “Obedient Transformation.” The fort was situated on a narrow plain of agricultural land located on the southern bank of the Yellow River. Separated from Hezhou in Gansu province by the Jishi mountain range and several days of rugged backcountry travel, the region had been part of the domain of the Khoshot khanate until the Lobzang Danjin rebellion in 1723. Even the Yellow River made its way from Xunhua into Gansu only with great effort—it had forced its way through the Jishi mountains,

⁸⁵⁷ Gong Jinghan, *Xunhua Zhi* (“Xunhua Gazetteer,” Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1981 [1792]), 25. Gong is citing an imperial edict that posits that after Tibetans living along the frontier are subjected to an administrative system modeled after that of the interior, “Thus the Tibetans will be transformed into Chinese and will know how to be good people of the borderlands (則化番為漢。悉作邊地良民。).”

⁸⁵⁸ Deng Chengwei, *Xiningfu xu zhi* (“Supplement to the Xining prefectoral gazetteer,” Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1985 [1883]), 31-32.

carving out a gorge that dropped the river several hundred feet before reaching the broad valleys of Hezhou.

The Xunhua garrison was established to coordinate the defenses of two smaller fortified outposts, Qitai and Bao'an, located, respectively, to the southeast and southwest of Xunhua. These two forts, along with another military outpost of Guide (貴德所) several days journey westward up the Yellow River, traced their roots to the Ming period, but had been a largely dormant, if not non-existent, presence beyond the frontier. The *Xunhua Gazetteer* observed that in the late Ming, the officers of the garrisons at Qitai and Bao'an had moved to Shuangcheng, a fortified hamlet “within the passes” of Hezhou and had remained there through the Kangxi reign.⁸⁵⁹

That the re-establishment of this military apparatus marked an expansion beyond the traditional frontiers of “China” and Gansu Province was explicitly recognized both by Nian Gengyao (as noted in the previous chapter) and subsequent officials who continued the work of rearranging the administration of the Gansu-Qinghai region after Nian Gengyao was recalled to the capital. However, they were optimistic about the prospects for incorporating the region into the “interior.” In 1725, Yue Zhongqi memorialized to the throne that he had observed that Tibetans (番) living within the passes had already intermingled with the regular commoners (百姓), spoke “Chinese” (漢語), and had acquired the morals of the interior (歸誠). On this basis he argued that since the Tibetans had demonstrated that they could easily be governed according the routine administrative system there was no need to subject Tibetans beyond the passes to various forms of

⁸⁵⁹ Gong Jinghan, 22-24. This retreat probably coincided with the Mongol takeover of the region, first by Tumed Mongols during the mid 1500s and later by the Khoshots under Gushri Khan.

indirect rule through indigenous authorities (土司).⁸⁶⁰ A year later, Danai seconded Yue Zhongqi's advice. Danai had "exited the border" (出□) and conducted surveys of "Fan" populations south and west of Xining and Hezhou. Danai suggested that the subprefect in Hezhou be given responsibility for collecting taxes from the Tibetans across the mountains.⁸⁶¹ For the author of the Xunhua Gazetteer of 1792, Danai's suggestion that the Hezhou subprefect take up responsibility for the civil administration of Tibetans across the border marked the origins of the Xunhua subprefect.⁸⁶² Thirty-six years later (1762), in order to facilitate greater oversight of tax collection and Tibetan affairs, the office of this subprefect would be moved to the fort of the Xunhua battalion, thus formally marking the beginning of Xunhua subprefecture. Subsequently, the boundaries of Gansu were understood as having rolled westward and the province was seen as standing astride the old dividing line between "inner and outer."⁸⁶³

The optimism of some Qing officials regarding the prospects for incorporating and assimilating Tibetan regions is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the discussions of which legal tradition should prevail in the new territories. In response from a request

⁸⁶⁰ Memorial quoted in Gong Jinghan, 24-25.

⁸⁶¹ Memorial quoted in Gong Jinghan, 26.

⁸⁶² Gong Jinghan, citing the Qianlong-era edict moving the subprefect "across the frontier (移於邊外)," also noted the subprefect's origin as a Ming-period officer charged with supervising the tea and horse trades (30).

⁸⁶³ Many years later, in 1898 (1898-5-22, GX 24/04/03), the Qinghai amban referred to Gansu as being both "inside and outside the passes" (甘肅關內外及青海). QSDG (1898-5-22, GX 24/04/03), 7-YJ-130: 《欽差署理西宁办事大臣聯札循化廳》. This is not to say that the Jishi mountains and the gorge of the Yellow River through these mountains, did not remain a symbolic marker of the limits of "China." Tao Baolian, in the 1890s wrote that, "Having passed the Jishi [mountains] the [Yellow River] becomes a river of China" (逕積石而謂中國河。). See Tao Baolian, *Xinmao shixingji* (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 2002 [1896?]), 233-234.

from the Jiaqing emperor to investigate the history of the “Tibetan Codes” (番例), the Qinghai amban Wenfu provided the following synopsis:

I have learned that when the Tibetans were first attached to the interior, after consulting with Ortai et. al., the Yongzheng emperor, in the eleventh year of his reign [1733], ordered the Xining amban Danai to identify those commercial and criminal articles in the Mongol Code that pertained to Tibetan subjects and compile them into a Tibetan Code. Five years after their promulgation, matters were to be handled according to the Law Code of the interior.⁸⁶⁴

Thus according to Wenfu, the Tibetan Code was originally intended as an expedient and provisional measure. Civil and military officials from Xining and Hezhou would handle cases involving Tibetans according to the Tibetan code for a brief transition period, after which the Tibetan Codes would sunset into oblivion and the newly incorporated and assimilated Tibetans would be subject to the same criminal code as other Chinese subjects of the empire.⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶⁴ *Xining Qinghai fanyi cheng li* (《西寧青海番夷成例》) in *Zhongguo zhenxi falü dianji jicheng, bing bian*, vol. 2 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1994 [1809]): 379: “伏查番子內附之始，雍正十一年間，經大學士鄂等會議，令西寧辦事大臣達鼐於蒙古例內摘選關係番民易犯條款，纂成番例。聲明俟五年後，再照內地律例辦理。” A similar account of the creation of the Tibetan Code can be found in the biography of Wenfu in the *Qingshi gao*, 11407-11409.

⁸⁶⁵ Donald Sutton, in his study of the contemporaneous Qing attempt to assimilate the Miao areas of Hunan has noted the degree to which Qing officials were divided between those who held “optimistic” and “pessimistic” views on the prospects for the assimilation of non-Han regions. He suggests that officials who hailed from the banners and perhaps had both more experience in frontier regions and personal interest in cultural preservation had more sanguine views of the assimilation of the Miao. He also argues that Qing officials, almost uniformly, mistook acculturation for assimilation. Danai and Yue Zhongqi’s statements about the apparent transformation of Tibetans living within the borders of China into Chinese certainly seem to fit into this habit of thought. However, I find that officials such as Danai were more difficult to parse into “optimistic” or “pessimistic” camps, as they held shifting and seemingly contradictory opinions about Tibetans. Sutton, Donald S. Sutton, “Ethnicity and the Miao Frontier in the Eighteenth Century,” In Pamela Kyle Crossley et. al., eds. *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California, 2006), 190-228.

Yongzheng and his field officers would probably have been surprised to learn that 180 years later, when the last Qing emperor abdicated the throne, the Tibetan Code was still in effect as the underlying framework for dealing with crimes and conflicts involving Tibetans in Gansu. As Donald Sutton has pointed out, even during the rush to “return” frontier regions to regular civil administration during the Yongzheng reign, many highly placed officials were themselves dubious about the prospects for the swift transformation of the non-Han populations. The actual implementation of the policy often allowed for continued indirect rule through indigenous elites.⁸⁶⁶ Thus one suspects that although Ortai built a “sunset clause” into the code, the officials who drafted the laws might have sensed that they could be “provisionally” in effect for the foreseeable future. Danai, for instance, was bullish on the prospect of collecting tribute tax from the Tibetans along the border,⁸⁶⁷ yet strongly supported the idea of drafting a separate code for them, noting that, “The Tibetan people are foolish and know nothing of legal systems.”⁸⁶⁸ However, even Yongzheng-era officials cognizant of the differences between Tibetans and people of the interior would have been taken aback by the description of Xunhua left by Tao Baolian, the son of Tao Mo, the Governor-general of Shaanxi and Gansu provinces from 1895-1899, after traveling extensively through the Tibetan regions of Gansu in 1896:

What in Chinese are called ‘temples,’ the various Tibetan tribes see as palaces. The sons of the Tibetans are happy to become lamas. Minor lamas are like our tribute students.⁸⁶⁹ Major lamas are like serving officials. Stewards⁸⁷⁰ are thus their generals and kūtuktus are like their sovereigns...

⁸⁶⁶ Sutton (2006), 197-198.

⁸⁶⁷ Gong Jinghan, 26.

⁸⁶⁸ Danai, quoted in *Xining Qinghai fanyi cheng li*, 381: “得據達奏稱，番人等愚蒙不知法度...”

⁸⁶⁹ “貢士,” entry-level licentiates who purchased their status as opposed to those who sat for and passed the county-level exams.

Previously, when Tsö monastery and Labrang monastery fought over territory, the military conflict lasted for many years and an innumerable quantity of people lost their lives. Unwilling to surrender [to Labrang], Tsö avoided this fate by become a vassal of Rongwo [monastery].

These Buddhist states are like the Warring States, among which Labrang is but a small player. To its south is there not also Ü and Tsang? How would it be to place these regions within the prefecture and county system? The law is imperfect and the officials are inept, unable to even protect themselves! Even if Guan Zhong or Zhu Geliang took up such a post, the situation would still spin out of control. [Yet] what if we simply leave things to continue as they are? It would be like giving weapons to pirates and grain to bandits⁸⁷¹ and I fear that from among them a superior power would gradually rise up. When one considers the western lands, it is impossible to not be concerned! Some may say I should not reveal how tenuous our control is, but these distant people already know this for themselves!⁸⁷²

In this passage, Tao Baolian presents a familiar dilemma: On the one hand, the administrative practices which seemed to have worked so effectively in China proper appeared impracticable in non-Han regions. On the other hand, continued reliance on indigenous authorities empowered them in ways that threatened the peace of the frontier and the security of the dynasty. Yet Tao describes a political landscape that would have sounded unfamiliar to previous generations of frontier officials who had served in Gansu or Qinghai, including Nayanceng. As noted in the previous chapter, in his later memorials from Gansu, Nayanceng had argued that the size and wealth of monasteries such as

⁸⁷⁰ “商卓,” probably a reference to the position of “steward,” Tib. *phyag mdzod*.

⁸⁷¹ In other words, aiding one’s own enemy.

⁸⁷² Tao Baolian, 240: “華言謂之寺，彼族視為公宮也。番之子樂為喇嘛，小喇嘛猶貢士，大喇嘛猶居官。商卓，則將相也。呼圖克圖，則國主也。佛國亦戰國，拉布楞猶小焉者也。其西南不有衛藏耶？將郡縣之乎？而法弊官冗，不克自保。管葛任之，亦徒召亂。將聽之乎？則寇兵盜糧，恐或有賚而籍之者。顧此西土，能勿警惕！或謂余不當泄此機緘，不知遠人之泄之也久矣！”

Labrang and Rongwo augured poorly for the peace of the region, but his attention was directed primarily towards dealing with the sorties of nomadic Tibetan raiders emanating from Xunhua and points further south and the commercialization of the frontier economy that he perceived as incentivizing the violence.⁸⁷³ The principle antagonist of Nayanceng and previous Qing administrators since the mid-Qianlong realm, therefore, had been Tibetan tribes, not Tibetan monasteries. This was despite the fact that in the case of the Cagan Nomunhan, Nayanceng believed he had caught Gelukpa hierarchs profiteering from the raiding and harboring the criminals.

Tao Baolian's hyperbolic portrayal of the Gansu borderlands as dominated by confederations of aggressive state-like monastic domains was entirely original in comparison to commentators from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But the idea that monasteries and their reincarnate hierarchs—not Mongol or Tibetan tribes and their aristocratic lords—were the chief strategic competitors of the Qing state in Inner Asia was increasingly voiced by Qing officials serving in Gansu during the Guangxu reign (1875-1908). In the archival record that survives from this period, Qing officials from a variety of positions within the bureaucratic hierarchy, from the subprefects posted to Taozhou, Xunhua, and Guide, to governor-generals such as Tao Mo, Tao Baolian's father, can be found expressing amazement at the vast and seemingly ever-expanding gulf that separated rulers and ruled despite nearly two hundred years of contact.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷³ PFZS 4:48a.

⁸⁷⁴ See, for instance, the following letter of instruction from Tao Mo to the Xunhua subprefect concerning the proper handling of "Tibetan cases" in which he reminds his subordinates of why the fundamental differences between Tibetans ("Fan") and the interior necessitates use of separate

The archival record, however, reveals an important paradox lurking behind Tao Baolian's statement. The Tibetan monasteries in Xunhua had experienced tremendous growth in terms of monastic population, material wealth, physical infrastructure, and administrative scope during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, yet this growth had been accompanied by intensifying use of the resources of the Qing administrative apparatus. Thus, where Qing officials perceived an increasingly autonomous threat on their southern and western flanks, the archival record presents an alternate story of increasing imbrication of Qing institutions in local Tibetan society. This chapter contends that the rise of Labrang and other monastic polities in Amdo was not the result of the withdrawal or decline of Qing authority in the region and therefore an expression of the autonomous development of Tibetan society, as has been previously suggested. Instead, the shifting configurations of monastic polities were profoundly shaped by ongoing and contingent interactions between indigenous actors and representatives of the Qing state.

Ironically, the primary vehicle that drove the embedment of Qing officials in Tibetan and Mongol society was the “provisional” legal order that had begun to take shape during the late Yongzheng reign. In fact, one of the primary complaints of Qing officials from the Qianlong reign-on was the seemingly unceasing stream of litigation that Tibetans from all stations brought to the gates of the their field offices—the “yamens” (衙門), and sometimes even directly to the office of the governor-general in Lanzhou. Contemporaries, both Tibetan and Qing, often interpreted local violence and the resulting litigation as arising from competition between Labrang monastery and its neighbors, most

criminal code: QSDG (GX 24/04/15, 1896-6-3), 7-YJ-4164: 《陝甘總督為查辦賣吾、黑錯番案的札》.

importantly Rongwo monastery to the west, Terlung monastery to the north, and Tsö monastery to the southeast.

In a recent pioneering study of the archival record from Xunhua, Yang Hongwei has argued that the Qing court manipulated these cases as part of an overt strategy of “divide and rule” and sought to create a formal alliance of monasteries to counterbalance the influence of Labrang.⁸⁷⁵ While recognizing that the containment of Labrang was indeed a goal expressed by some Qing officials, I find that this was more often than not a retrospective assessment—the spin by which Qing agents rationalized their involvement in local conflicts. In practice, the outcome of cases in which Qing officials became involved was highly contingent and provisional and imperiled the prestige of local officials and the authority of the dynasty. Qing officials recognized these dangers and in communications with one another frankly lamented their inability to enforce verdicts and even, in some cases, to locate and bring both sides of a dispute together in court. The fact that Tibetans sought out Qing jurisprudence was taken not as a sign of Qing control but of its failure. For centers of judicial authority among the Tibetans as well, the presence of alternative legal forums posed risks. Just as the presence of an alternate and competing judicial system at Labrang had undermined the administrative authority of successive Mongol princes south of the river (Chapter Four), the presence of the Xunhua magistrate threatened the authority of the Jamyang Zhepa and the ecclesiastic government at Labrang.

⁸⁷⁵ Yang Hongwei, “Zhishi yu zhixu: Gansu Xunhua ting Zangqu quanli jizhi yanjiu” [Knowledge and order: research on the mechanisms of power in the Tibetan areas of Gansu Xunhua subprefecture] (PhD diss., Lanzhou University), 2009.

When the institutions of Qing governance were first established, Qing officials had anticipated that their primary responsibility would be the collection of taxes and the occasional resolution of criminal activity. Instead, as will be discussed in greater detail below, almost immediately after the move of the office of the subprefect from Hezhou to Xunhua in 1762, the magistrate became embroiled in the combustible politics of Tibetan monastic establishments (*figures 8 and 9*). Not only that, this and subsequent subprefects were compelled from both above and below to resolve cases according to the “Tibetan Laws and Statutes (番例番規),” a tradition of jurisprudence with which Qing officials had varying degrees of expertise (often none, as some magistrates admitted in their correspondence). Try as they might, Qing administrators were unable to extract themselves from the burden of Tibetan litigiousness. The stream of petitions arriving from Tibetan communities became yet one more mark of the their fundamental difference and resistance to transformation. This chapter will explore in greater detail the process by which Tibetans, Qing officials, and other intermediaries created a Qing-centered, pluralistic legal order in Xunhua during the late Qing.

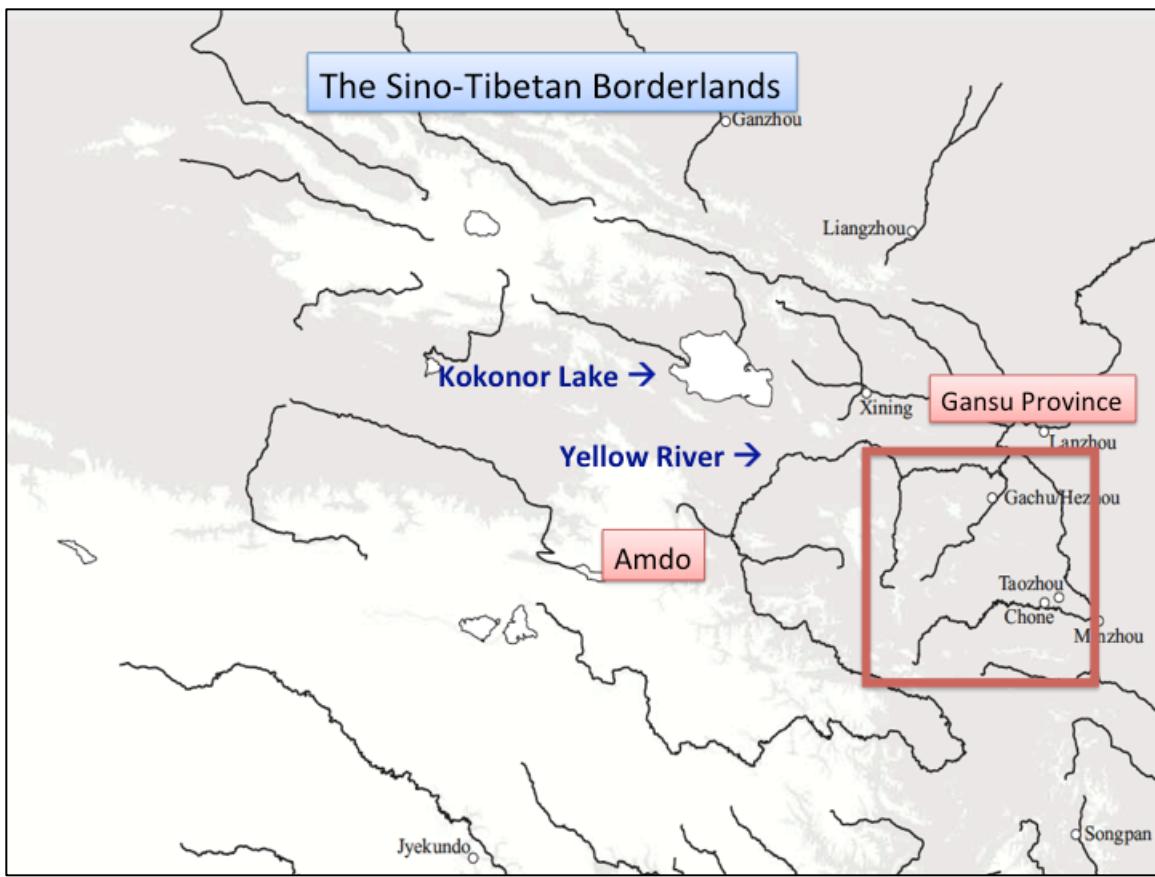


Figure 8: The Sino-Tibetan borderlands. Area of study for chapters six and seven is indicated by red box (see *figure 9*).

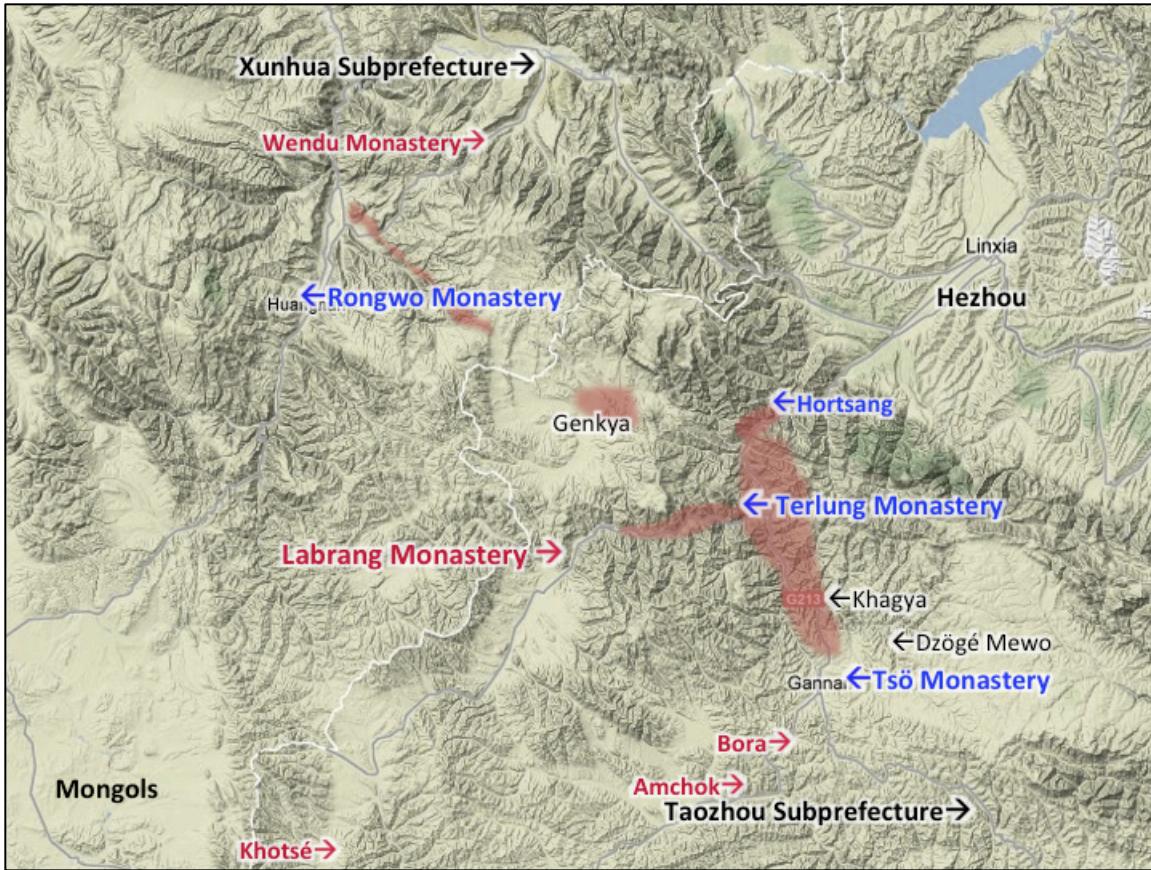


Figure 9: The “Warring States.” Red labels indicate monasteries and communities affiliated with Labrang monastery. Blue labels indicate monasteries and communities affiliated with Rongwo monastery. Red polygons indicate sites of conflict.

Xunhua as a Qing-Centered Pluralistic Legal Regime

Between the initial incorporation of the region later known as Xunhua in the 1720s and the collapse of the Qing in 1911, the legal culture of the Amdo region gradually shifted from a multi-centric legal regime to a state-centered legal regime in which agents of the Qing emperor and legal codes developed and sanctioned by the court played an ever greater role in Tibetan society. In this respect, developments in Xunhua

paralleled processes in other colonial states during the same period as described by Lauren Benton in her 2002 comparative study of colonial law.⁸⁷⁶

Benton's study begins by noting that during the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, expanding imperial states, be they based in the Iberian or Anatolian peninsulas, shared a "single institutional framework" for managing the existence of multiple centers of legal authority in their realms.⁸⁷⁷ In Spanish, Portuguese, and Ottoman empires, sovereigns were but one of several centers of legal authority. Ecclesiastical jurisdictions, for instance, were relatively independent from royal oversight and separate from the jurisdictions of secular or royal law. This framework was both facilitated by and facilitated the ubiquitous presence of large and influential diaspora communities. Rulers were accustomed to accommodating diaspora communities that observed their own traditions of jurisprudence. Lest this be an overly reductionist portrayal of early modern empire, Benton demonstrates that jurisdictional boundaries were neither fixed nor uncontroversial. However, diaspora or minority populations as well as rulers developed a shared repertoire of strategies for managing the complexity. It was these shared strategies together with the rise of intermediaries expert in coping with pluralistic legal orders that constituted "institutional continuity" across culturally distinct imperial polities.⁸⁷⁸

Benton's concern lies in understanding the process by which colonial empires gradually assumed first centralized oversight of the different legal traditions they found in their realms and later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, asserted the hegemony of

⁸⁷⁶ Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁸⁷⁷ Benton (2002), 25.

⁸⁷⁸ Benton (2002), 58.

a single, state-centered law over alternate legal traditions and jurisdictions, often to the point of formally eliminating legal pluralism. She argues that previous historians have missed the degree to which this transformation was driven not by the goals of sovereigns or jurists from the metropole, but rather that it was propelled by agitation at the margins in the course of local conflicts over jurisdiction.⁸⁷⁹ Benton refers to this field of activity as “legal politics,” a term she has subsequently defined as, “the experience of strategic engagement with the law,” and a phrase that, “reminds us that law is fluid and contingent, not a phenomenon reducible to legal codes, legislation, or even rules or norms.”⁸⁸⁰

In Xunhua, the “law” was similarly a field of activity not easily defined by a set of codes dictated by Qing officials. The Qing court formally sanctioned a “Tibetan Code” and indigenous Tibetans clamored for its application, but the use and interpretation of this code in practice was highly dependent on specific events and personalities and was unevenly interpreted over time and space. In Amdo, the reorganization of Mongol and Tibetan administration following the Lobzang Danjin rebellion can be interpreted as an expression of the Qing court’s belief that it had become imperative to supervise the pluralistic legal order and a first step toward its centralization under a single sovereign authority. Previously, following the submission of the Khoshot aristocracy to the Kangxi emperor in 1697, jurisprudence in the Mongol domains remained largely an issue to be worked out between the Mongol nobility, Tibetan lay elites, and a diverse range of monks and hierarchs from different Buddhist traditions. A lack of historical materials from this region prior to 1724 means that our knowledge of this period is hazy, but on the basis of

⁸⁷⁹ Benton (2002), 6-10, 24, 253.

⁸⁸⁰ Lauren Benton, “Forum on Law and Empire in Global Perspective: Introduction,” *American Historical Review* 117 n. 4 (October, 2012): 1093.

the information on debates over whether to use Tibetan or Mongol jurisprudence and the appropriate boundaries of lay and religious jurisdictions during the eighteenth century available in Tibetan-language works such as Belmang's *History* and Wangchen Kyab's *Lessons of the Ancestors*, one can assume that legal politics during this period was fractious.⁸⁸¹

Little is known about the process that lay behind the creation of the Tibetan Code beyond what can be gleaned from the brief accounts available from the original memorialists and later redactors. This information, however, is sufficient to demonstrate that, much like other colonial powers encountering an unfamiliar legal tradition, the attempt to produce a standard “Tibetan” legal code for the reference of Qing magistrates was a highly creative process.⁸⁸² In 1808, the Jiaqing emperor learned from Wenfu that the original Tibetan code (“番例”) had been extracted from the existing Mongol Code (“蒙古例”), not a preexisting Tibetan legal tradition. The court was also reminded that prior to 1733, Qing officials had already developed “Codes for Tibetan People (番子律例)” for Tibetans in Yushu and Nakchu that were also based on Mongol laws.⁸⁸³ That Qing local officials should reach for Mongol statutes, is perhaps not so surprising since, as noted above, the man initially charged with the task, Danai, had dismissed any possibility that the Tibetans already possessed a distinctive system of jurisprudence.

⁸⁸¹ A Manchu-language document in the archives of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, that has recently come to my attention and may shed light on the legal culture of pre-Lobzang Danjin Qinghai. It appears to be a Kangxi-era (possibly 1697) framework for handling relations between the Khoshot princes: 《為青海諸部盟所訂例法事項》(Doc. # 125.411000059).

⁸⁸² See, for instance, Benton's discussion of the invention of a “traditional” Hindu legal tradition in the 1700s in colonial India. Benton (2002), 128.

⁸⁸³ *Xining Qinghai fanyi cheng li*, 381.

Moreover, since Mongol rulers had dominated the region from the late fourteenth century until the first year of the Yongzheng reign, it is only natural that the Qing would turn to the “Mongol” administrative traditions of Gushri Khan and his descendants. The following year (1734), the Yongzheng emperor approved modifications to the Mongol statutes in order to accommodate the differences they perceived between Mongols and Tibetans. For instance, the compensation standards were altered to account for the different relative rankings of Tibetan headmen (“番人頭目”) and also in recognition of the belief that “Tibetans typically raise few horses but many yaks.”⁸⁸⁴ After these changes had been made, the statutes were translated into Tibetan and a copy was sent to the appropriate board in the capital for safekeeping (one suspects this would have been the Lifanyuan).

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, despite the fact that the codes initially were intended as a temporary measure to smooth the transition to the criminal code of the interior and direct rule by Qing magistrates from the regular civilian administration, the production of an imperially sanctioned “Tibetan Code” had the unforeseen effect of carving out a legitimate space for Tibetan jurisprudence within the Qing empire. Although conceptualized as a privilege, not a right, once granted by the Yongzheng emperor, it proved difficult to retract—had subsequent rulers even desired to do so. As Wenfu recorded in his introduction to a new redaction of the Codes in 1808, the laws had remained in continuous effect since their promulgation. The Qianlong emperor granted extensions in 1736, 1740, and 1743. Finally, in 1748, the emperor—speaking of the Tibetans along the Gansu frontier—declared:

⁸⁸⁴ *Xining Qinghai fanyi cheng li*, 381.

The Tibetan subjects live in a far away and desolate place and have their own customs. Therefore, since they are not familiar with all of our Code, it is not convenient to subject them to the laws of the interior in their entirety. If one cannot let the Tibetans govern themselves, at least one must compromise with their foreign dispositions. Later, if there are cases of murder or raiding, resolve the cases by fining them according to the Tibetan statutes. It is not necessary to request further extensions.⁸⁸⁵

Moreover, from the perspective of the Qing court, not only had the laws achieved a semi-permanent status, but also the purview of the code had expanded from the “Tibetan territories attached to the interior” to the entire jurisdiction of the Qinghai amban. In both Wenfu’s memorial and the Jiaqing emperor’s edict of 1809 sanctioning the continued use of the code, it was stated that the laws applied to Mongols as well as Tibetans.⁸⁸⁶ Wenfu argued to the court that in the event of “rebellion” or other large-scale violence that threatened the overall security of the frontier, the court should reserve the right to execute the instigators. However, he warned that experience had proven that introducing capital punishment for localized violence—murder or raiding, would only lead to a prolonged cycle of vengeful feuding. The cycle of revenge and escalation could be broken if Qing officials helped broker compensation between the concerned families or communities in accordance with the Tibetan Code.⁸⁸⁷ Persuaded by Wenfu’s argument that the Tibetan Codes had proven themselves effective in heading off long-term feuds among Tibetans and Mongols, the emperor wrote that, “these statutes match the ones originally compiled in 1733 on the basis of selections from the Mongol Code. Since they

⁸⁸⁵ *Xining Qinghai fanyi cheng li*, 379-380. “嗣准刑部議覆：番民僻處要荒，各因其俗，於一切律例索不通曉，未便全以內地之法繩之。不若以番治番，竟於夷情妥協。嗣後，自相戕殺命盜等案，仍照番例罰服完結，毋庸再請展限。等因具奏。”

⁸⁸⁶ *Xining Qinghai fanyi cheng li*, 380.

⁸⁸⁷ *Xining Qinghai fanyi cheng li*, 380. See also *Qingshi gao* [Draft history of the Qing], 11407-11409.

have been in place for over seventy years and have kept the peace, there is no need to alter or excise.”⁸⁸⁸ In summary, an attempt to assert a uniform “Qing Code” across both China proper and the Tibetan populations in Amdo had resulted in a legal order that formally guaranteed the continued availability of “Tibetan” jurisprudence in the yamens of Qing local officials to Tibetan and Mongol litigants. But what did this mean in practice?

I have yet to locate a specific reference to the “Tibetan Code” of either 1734 or 1809 in an eighteenth or nineteenth century Tibetan-language text.⁸⁸⁹ Ortai and Yongzheng left the final form of laws and their promulgation up to Martai (馬爾泰), a Manchu bannerman who had served in Qinghai with Danai since 1732 and is reported to have had experience with Tibetan regions. He was ordered to make sure that the laws were appropriate for Tibetans.⁸⁹⁰ That such an order would have resulted in consultations with Tibetan or Mongol lay and monastic elites is highly probable, but is a point that requires further corroboration.

The Chinese-language edition of the Tibetan Code from 1809, which claims to be a faithful reproduction of the original 1734 code, consists of sixty-eight statutes in

⁸⁸⁸ *Xining Qinghai fanyi cheng li*, 380. As noted in the previous chapters, the idea that the region was at peace was based on either an analysis of Qinghai and Gansu relative to other regions of the empire or a degree of wishful thinking. After all, Jiaqing’s review of the Tibetan Code occurred less than two years after the court had felt compelled to dispatch eight thousand troops under the command of Cangling, Nayanceng, and Šingkui to stamp out another incident of raiding by Tibetan nomads. See, Wenfu, *Qinghai shiyi jielüe*, 22.

⁸⁸⁹ Neither Belmang’s *History* nor Drakgönpa’s *Oceanic Book* mentions these codes. It is possible that the codes are referenced in the biographies of the second, third, and fourth Jamyang Zhepas since, as the chapter will discuss below, all three of these monks were engaged in protracted legal conflicts that involved the Qing local officials. However, I have yet to come across such a reference in my readings of these sources to date.

⁸⁹⁰ *Xining Qinghai fanyi cheng li*, 381.

addition to the imperial edicts approving the promulgation of the code. In terms of quantity and specificity, the code appears to have been much more elaborate than any of the Tibetan legal codes described by Belmang Pandita in his *History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia*. Whereas the fifteen laws enumerated by Belmang establish what might be considered a set of “first principles” for establishing peace and defending the realm, dealing with crime, handling relations between the sexes, and the deportment of government officials, the Qing Tibetan Code is an attempt to provide a comprehensive list of punishments for all conceivable crimes. The Qing Tibetan Code sanctions capital punishment in only four situations: 1) for low-ranking headmen who commit murder while leading large groups in raids; 2) in the event of murders committed by commoners while raiding; 3) in the event of arson resulting in death; and 4) for servants who kill their masters (in this case the criminal is to be executed by slicing, for the other crimes, the punishment was beheading). Given that the code sanctioned capital punishment for only a minority of violent crimes, one might hypothesize that Tibetans like Belmang, if they were familiar with the code might have viewed it as in keeping with the aversion to executions that had been expressed in previous law codes from the Tibetan legal tradition. To the extent that Tibetan observers knew that the code had been based on Mongol statutes, it is also possible to imagine that they found this acceptable if they shared Belmang’s opinion that Gushri Khan and his descendants had, until the mid eighteenth century, based their jurisprudence entirely on Tibetan codes. Still, until more contemporaneous Tibetan-language descriptions of the Qing “Tibetan Codes” can be located, these suggestions remain unsubstantiated.

Similarly, our partial glimpse of the Xunhua archival record (roughly 1300 documents out of potentially 100,000 pages of materials) finds the subprefects consistently citing “Tibetan Codes” in their jurisprudence, but only rarely indicates precisely what type of text or code they based their decisions on. For instance, a reference copy of the imperially sanctioned *Tibetan Code* has yet to be found in the Xunhua archives.⁸⁹¹ The Jiaqing emperor’s 1809 edict sanctioning the continued use of the statutes reveals that successive Qinghai ambans had consulted the *Tibetan Code* to personally adjudicate major conflicts and crimes involving Mongols and Tibetans.⁸⁹² A draft memorial from 1900 held in the Xunhua archives reports that when adjudicating a particularly thorny “Tibetan case” that had vexed the provincial authorities since 1898 they had carefully made use of “statutes and precedents issued in the twenty-fourth year of the Jiaqing reign [i.e. 1819].”⁸⁹³ This is most likely a reference either to revised edition of the *Regulations of the Lifanyuan* (理藩院則例) that were produced in 1817 or the 1809 *Tibetan Code*.⁸⁹⁴ Until greater access to the Xunhua archives or the Labrang monastic archives held in the Gannan Prefecture Archives becomes possible, it is as yet difficult to state definitively that the frequent mention of “Tibetan” laws and statutes in

⁸⁹¹ Associate professor Yang Hongwei, of Lanzhou University, who has the most extensive knowledge of the archive, has also not seen a copy of the codes or any other manual or compendium of regulations or statutes for Tibetans in the Xunhua documents. Personal communication.

⁸⁹² *Xining Qinghai fanyi cheng li*, 379. Jiaqing notes that his desire to learn more about the Tibetan codes was piqued when Gungcukjab reported that he was planning on administering fines and punishments according to the “Tibetan statutes (番例).

⁸⁹³ QSDG (GX 25/12/28, 1900-1-28), 7-YJ-2925: 《會辦番案詳報擬結折稿》.

⁸⁹⁴ For useful summaries of the history of the *Regulations of the Lifanyuan* see Zhang Rongzheng’s introduction to *Qinding Lifanbu zeli* (Tianjin: Tianjin guiji chubanshe, 1998), and Zhao Yuntian’s introduction to *Qianlong chao neifu chaoben ‘Lifanyuan zeli’* (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe, 2006), 2.

archival sources from Xunhua (many of which were authored or submitted by Tibetan petitioners) bears any connection to the imperially-issued codes.

Having thus qualified our discussion, let us return to the main argument: The repeated promulgation of the “Tibetan Codes” provided imperial approval for Qing local officials in Amdo to exercise “Tibetan” jurisprudence. However, the precise meaning what constituted “Tibetan” jurisprudence and just where and to whom its jurisdiction would extend was open to multiple interpretations and the pressures various actors could bring to bear on the case. With regards to the imperially sanctioned “Tibetan Code,” for instance, Wenfu was careful to leave room for the imposition of punishments from the criminal code of the interior. “Cases that affect the overall security of the frontier,” he wrote, “should be handled on a case by case basis according to imperial instructions in order to make manifest the laws of this dynasty.” As we have already seen in the cases handled by Nayanceng, higher-ranking provincial authorities, especially the amban and the governor-general had enormous discretion to interpret to whom and in what circumstances the Tibetan statutes applied.

Qing officials, however, were not alone in their ability to define the boundaries of Tibetan jurisprudence. Through their strategic engagement with the entire range of Qing officials in both Xunhua and Gansu more broadly, Tibetans from Xunhua also exercised an enormous influence on the jurisdiction of both “Tibetan” law and Qing local administration. Archival sources from Xunhua reveal that Tibetans, both individually and as representatives of their villages, nomadic communities, or monasteries, not only regularly availed themselves of Qing authorities in their pursuit of justice, but they often phrased these requests as pleas for the court to “take charge (作主)” and assert its

sovereignty over the region. Such demands, however, were usually couched in the expectation that Qing sovereignty would be exercised according to the “Tibetan laws and statutes (番例番規),” the general label for Tibetan jurisprudence found in the Xunhua archives. Thus, the arrival of Qing officials at the edges of Tibetan communities and the promulgation of the Tibetan Code in the late Yongzheng period did indeed lay the groundwork for the advance of Qing sovereignty. Yet, much to the chagrin of Qing officials, Tibetans drove the process as they attempted to manipulate the Qing colonial apparatus. In this respect, the shift to a more Qing-centered legal order in the Amdo region during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries resembled what occurred in British India and Russian Central Asia where the strategic engagement of people at the margins of empire with the pluralistic legal order led to greater centralization of judicial authority.

In both India and in the Russian empire, colonial authorities first attempted to formally establish separate courts where indigenous judges adjudicated for an indigenous population according to the indigenous legal tradition. Responding to pressure from both the metropole and Indian litigants for access to “British” law, the local courts came to be nested in an appellate hierarchy supervised by the British East India Company and later imperial judges.⁸⁹⁵ In Russia, beginning with Catherine the Great, the Romanov dynasty supported the creation of an Islamic ecclesiastical establishment—a “church” to parallel the bureaucratic institutions of the Orthodox faith, which gradually grew to become a complimentary pillar of the state’s central bureaucracy. Starting with the Orenburg Assembly in 1788, the state-affiliated Muslims clerics and jurists began to manage not

⁸⁹⁵ With regards to India, see Benton (2002), 131-132, 135-137, 151-152.

only spiritual matters but also provide legal services to the Muslim subjects of the growing empire.⁸⁹⁶ As Jane Burbank has pointed out, the institutionalization of an Islamic legal order was but one example of a broader strategy of “inclusionary legalism” by which the Russian empire recognized and incorporated unique regimes for its diverse population.⁸⁹⁷

The history of Xunhua tells of a distinctive trajectory to a state-centered pluralistic legal order. In Xunhua, Tibetans brought in representatives of the state to practice indigenous jurisprudence. The burden of maintaining the “tradition” of indigenous jurisprudence thus was placed squarely on magistrates of Chinese or Banner origins. In their own words, Tibetans sought out Qing sovereignty, yet this “sovereignty” remained expressed in the vernacular of Tibetan jurisprudence.

The legal situation in Xunhua exhibited in certain respects what Benton refers to as “strong” legal pluralism.⁸⁹⁸ For the period that is the primary focus of this chapter and chapter seven, from the late 1700s through the early 1900s, imperial instructions had formally sanctioned the use of two different traditions of jurisprudence by the subprefect: the “Tibetan Codes” in cases involving Mongols and Tibetans and the standard “Qing Code” for cases involving Han, Hui, Salars or any combination of any of these groups. In practice, deciding which law to apply was hardly straightforward and the process of making such a jurisdictional decision was the focus of intense “legal politicking” by

⁸⁹⁶ For the book-length treatment of this institution and its successors, see Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁸⁹⁷ Burbank, “The Rights of Difference: Law and Citizenship in the Russian Empire,” in Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, & Peter C. Perdue, eds. *Imperial Formations*. (Santa Fe, NM: School For Advanced Research Press, 2007), 77-111.

⁸⁹⁸ Benton (2002), 11.

litigants. While the implications of the decision of which law to apply and how was a thorny one from the perspective of the magistrate, manipulating the issue had obvious advantages for litigants. Furthermore, the magistrate was himself the singular embodiment of the plural legal order. As a result, formal protections for legal pluralism were exposed to slippage and blurring when a single jurist was expected to practice both Tibetan and Chinese law. The magistrate's outsider status, general lack of expertise in both Tibetan jurisprudence and local affairs, and the enormous size of the subprefecture also left him highly reliant on intermediaries and Tibetan elites. Both by default and by design, indigenous authorities such as reincarnate Gelukpa hierarchs, hereditary lay Tibetan rulers, and the Mongol banner elite were the first point of contact for the vast majority of criminal acts and other social conflict and themselves often brought conflicts to the attention of the magistrate or where themselves litigants. In the following sections of this chapter, we will examine the contingent relationship between the subprefect and other persons possessing judicial authority in Xunhua, as well as the ways in which various parties pushed and pulled at the boundary between "Chinese" and "Tibetan" jurisprudence and often arrived at settlements that combined aspects of both yet were firmly labeled "Tibetan."

Characteristic Features of Xunhua's Litigation Culture

For the period for which we have archival records from the yamen of the Xunhua subprefect, roughly 1872 through the early 1900s, it is possible to identify elements of a shared legal culture—principles that unified a fractious and diverse region. First, there

seems to have been a shared conviction among Tibetan litigants and Qing officials that conflicts should be settled according to the “Tibetan laws and statutes (番例番規).” What this meant differed from case to case, litigant to litigant, magistrate to magistrate, but the general idea of “Tibetan laws and statutes” provided a mutually recognizable discursive terrain in which to hammer out agreements. Second, Tibetan litigants expected that prior jurisprudence demarcated the territory of the “Tibetan laws and statutes.” Litigants typically framed their petitions as requests for the Qing court to reaffirm earlier decisions or contracts and reestablish previous arrangements. The profoundly conservative orientation of the legal culture was remarkable to Qing officials as well. While attempting to deal with the 1889-1891 case (Chapter Seven, “Case Three”), the Xunhua subprefect Cangyun (Ch. 長贊) expressed his exasperation with his inability to settle the conflict by “going down a new road (新路).” The litigants, he reported to his superiors, insisted on following the “old road” (i.e. following precedents), yet interpretations of the old road were so divergent, and the existing decisions so ambiguously written, that he despaired of ever working out an accord that would be acceptable to all of the concerned parties.⁸⁹⁹

The emphasis on historical precedent brings us to the third feature of the Qing-centered legal-order: the significance of written documents, particularly those maintained in the offices of the Xunhua subprefect, Qing military forces, or higher ranking provincial officials and the Xining amban. Accords or contracts adjudicated by indigenous authorities, including by high-ranking lamas such as the Jamyang Zhepa, took on added gravitas if approved by Qing officials and filed in government archives. This point should be qualified, however, by noting that the Qing records were not necessarily more

⁸⁹⁹ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2684: 《會辦委員等為請示辦結辦法上的稟》.

legitimate than indigenous records, but that the possession of Qing documents or documents that *matched* official records were seen as key to building a case that would persuade the Qing to intervene on one's behalf. The authenticity and integrity of the documentary record, and the potential for manufacturing or manipulating official documents, therefore, frequently became a focus of the judicial process. As we shall see below, the multilingual nature of the written record, and the fact that a large portion of the Xunhua subprefect's official archive had been destroyed in the conflagration following the Muslim uprisings in 1864, posed enormous challenges to the resolution of conflicts.

Fourth, Tibetans in Xunhua engaged in what scholars of legal pluralism have referred to as “forum shopping”—the strategic use of different offices of the Gansu provincial administration and the Qinghai amban in hopes of achieving advantageous judgements.⁹⁰⁰ Tibetans in Xunhua not only sought out the Xunhua subprefect, but also, either in person or via letters or representatives, filed suit (or counter-suits) in the yamens of the Lanzhou prefect, the Xining prefect and circuit intendent, the Gansu lieutenant governor and provincial prosecutor, and finally the governor-general. The archival record reveals that Tibetans observed shifts in personnel and would attempt to resubmit suits if they felt that the new occupant of the post might provide a more favorable hearing. The fact that conflicts often straddled Qing administrative boundaries also presented litigants with opportunities for forum shopping. For instance, conflicts involving the Henan Mongols and Rongwo fell under the jurisdiction of both the Qinghai amban and Gansu provincial authorities. During the early Guangxu period, the Qing court shifted the

⁹⁰⁰ For the first use of this term, see, Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, “Forum Shopping and Shopping Forums: Dispute Processing in a Minangkabau Village,” *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 19: 117-159. Also Benton (2002), 106.

jurisdictional boundaries of Taozhou further westward, giving it supervision over communities that had previously been entirely within Xunhua. Unfortunately, however, ongoing feuds continued to bind communities on both sides of this border, thus leaving the subprefects of both Taozhou and Xunhua responsible for their ongoing adjudication. Tibetans litigants were cognizant of this overlap and carefully moved back and forth between both yamens, taking full advantage of the jurisdictional complexity.⁹⁰¹

Finally, Qing officials and Tibetan litigants communicated with each other (in the documentary record) by means of mutually intelligible tropes that spanned the cultural divide. The first of these was that of the “violent Tibetan.” Tibetan litigants strategically manipulated the stereotype that Tibetans were untamed, martial, and prone to uncontrollable outbursts of vengeance if provoked. The archival record is replete with petitions from Tibetan authorities, both lay and monastic, that presented Qing authorities with the “choice” of intervening on their behalf or facing the unpleasant consequences of the Tibetans’ unrestrained and violent instincts. However, as easily as Tibetans could adopt the script of the “violent Tibetan,” they could also “speak Chinese,” sometimes even in the same petition.⁹⁰² Depending on circumstances, Tibetan litigants appealed to the paternalistic instincts of their “father and mother officials” and manipulated the rhetoric of transformation, begging for protection or support from less civilized enemies. Less frequent, however, is evidence that Qing officials, especially at the local level, ever

⁹⁰¹ This last phenomenon was most salient in the 1890s feud between Labrang, Tsö monastery, and Dzögé Mewo.

⁹⁰² See, for instance, the following petition from the fourth Jamyang Zhepa in which he refers to Qing civil and military officials as “mothers and fathers of the people” and begs for their intervention, but also notes that the Tibetans are “foolish people” and more prone to violence than the Chinese: QSDG (GX 25/11/12, 1899-12-14), 7-YJ-2936: 《委署西寧道會辦番案甘肅候補道歐陽為移知事》.

spoke from scripts derived from the concept of the relationship between preceptor and donor. In dealings with the reincarnate monks of the region, I have located no document in which the Xunhua magistrate referred to himself as a patron or disciple. Such rhetoric appears to have been limited to contact between the Xining amban or governor-general and lamas who possessed imperial titles and/or kūtuktu status such as the Jamyang Zhepa.

Tibetans in Xunhua not only chose to speak to Qing authorities from a violent script, but also practiced violence. The scale of the violence perpetrated by Tibetans against other Tibetans, the majority of whom were at least nominally all followers of the Gelukpa teachings, may surprise some readers of this chapter. Gelukpa monasteries such as Labrang raised and maintained military forces that were used to attack or harass neighboring Gelukpa monasteries. By the late nineteenth century, the large monasteries of the region were also operating prisons in which they held captured soldiers and subjects from non-aligned communities. By the early nineteenth century, Labrang's jail was notorious throughout the region and fear of incarceration prompted many would-be pilgrims and traders from traveling to the monastery. Indigenous military forces that included both laymen and monks targeted monasteries and monks, Buddhist images and texts, homes and barns, livestock and crops, forest and water resources, and noncombatants including women and children. The archival record reveals that in Xunhua alone, from 1872 to 1908, at least one thousand Tibetans died directly from armed conflict while perhaps thousands more suffered indirectly from the destruction of crops, animals, and homes. Moreover, evidence from the Xunhua archives suggests that much of this violence was calculated and tactical in nature.

Litigation in Xunhua was not something that necessarily occurred subsequent to violence. Filing a lawsuit was not merely an addendum or afterthought to the pursuit of one's goals through coercion, raids, or other military action. Rather violence and, as mentioned above, the threat of violence was an integral part of the legal process and often unfolded simultaneously as litigants or their proxies filed petitions and conducted negotiations with each other and with Qing authorities. Violence had to be carefully calibrated in order to maximize one's leverage and strengthen one's bargaining position vis-à-vis one's opponents and the Qing administration without triggering a punitive expedition by Qing military forces. As a result, litigants engaged in tactics of escalation and brinkmanship. Reports from Qing officials and petitioners reveals that the warring parties kept records not only of their own losses, but also estimates of how many people they had killed or injured and other damages they had inflicted on their opponents. Such records were essential given that final settlements would result in compensation—exchanges of property in which litigants stood to lose or gain, often irrespective of the original reasons behind the conflict or the ultimate assignment of blame. Furthermore, disputants sought to represent themselves to the court as suffering disproportionately from the violence for the obvious reason that as victims they stood a greater chance of gaining sympathy and, most crucially, military support from the Qing.

Violence, therefore, was often an integral component of a strategy for prevailing in the Qing-centered legal system in Xunhua. However, actors who decided to engage in tactical violence often overestimated their ability to control the results. An illustrative case concerns the attempt of the elder and younger Rongwo nangso (the lay “officer” in charge of the Repgong region) to dictate the terms of a peace agreement to the Henan

Khoshot Prince (probably the seventh generation junwang, Ch. 春津 or 朝日吉勒, dates uncertain). Tibetans under the supervision of the nangso had been engaged in tit for tat raiding with Mongols and Tibetans affiliated with the junwang for several years when in June of 1883 the nangso led a military force of three thousand including both monks and laymen into the Mongol pastures. The Rongwo nangso had threatened such action several times in letters to the Xunhua magistrate but had evidently not received satisfaction that the Qing would act on Repgong's behalf. The intimidated Mongol prince agreed to parlay, but the negotiations proved more tortuous and protracted than the Repgong side had expected. For reasons that remain murky, on the night of July 7, apparently after a final agreement had been hammered out and then suddenly rejected by the elder of the two Rongwo nangso, a melee broke out that costs the lives of over fifty men from Rongwo and many more injuries. Many more died before the Rongwo expedition was able to return to home.⁹⁰³

Over a year later it was a deputized committee of Muslim military officers from Hezhou together with the Shingza Tulku from Ragya monastery who were finally able to work out a peace accord between Repgong and Henan that held.⁹⁰⁴ The Muslim committee members noted, pointedly, that they adjudicated the case according to the “Tibetan Codes (番例)” and would now submit it to the Xunhua subprefect for

⁹⁰³ A selection of documents relevant to this case: QSDG (GX 09/06/15), 7-YJ-2726: 《循化廳役為查訪隆務寺出兵攻打蒙古事》; QSDG (GX 09/06/20, 1883-7-23), 7-YJ-2726: 《循化廳為蒙古、隆務寺打仗具體情形上的稟》; QSDG (GX 09/09/02), 7-YJ-2729: 《會辦蒙古、隆務案委員上的稟》; QSDG (GX 11/07/14), 7-YJ-2743: 《署任陝甘總督與前青海大臣為辦結蒙番積案上的奏摺》.

⁹⁰⁴ QSDG (GX 10/?), 7-YJ-2739: 《會辦委員為蒙古與隆務仇殺案結案上的詳》.

approval.⁹⁰⁵ The prominence of Muslim military officers in the pacification and resolution of the crisis illustrates another facet of the Qing-centered pluralistic legal order in Xunhua: the significant role of intermediaries and Muslims in particular.

As discussed in the previous chapter, prior to the Muslim rebellions of the 1860s, Muslims from Gansu and especially Hezhou had already played an essential role in the trade between the interior, the Tibetan communities of Xunhua, and the Mongol banners. The Qing state had sanctioned some of this work. “Official” brokers (官歇家) had been licensed to operate both in “outer” trading posts such as Guide and Xunhua, while others remained within the borders at markets such as those of Hezhou. And despite Nayanceng’s regulations, an unofficial and illegal cross border trade had also continued. Many Muslim *xiejia* in Xunhua had found work in another capacity, as tax collectors working on behalf of the subprefect. The Xunhua archives contain a petition from one such “grain-tax broker,” Ma Laichi (馬來遲) who described how his ancestors had migrated from Hezhou to Xunhua during the Yongzheng reign and had been licensed to collect the tribute tax from a particular circuit of Tibetan communities around Wendu Monastery (Tib. *bis mdo'i dgon chen bkra shis chos 'khor gling*, 邊都寺/文都寺) for over “150 years.”⁹⁰⁶ In this role Hui *xiejia* were well placed to both assist Tibetans bring petitions to the Xunhua yamen and also provide information to the subprefect and facilitate his adjudication of local conflicts. Ma Laichi’s petition had in fact been prompted by circumstances related to his involvement in a local feud. He was petitioning the Xunhua subprefect to clear up slanders against him that had been made during the

⁹⁰⁵ QSDG (GX 10/09/15), 7-YJ-2739: 《會辦委員為蒙古與隆務仇殺案結案上的副詳》.

⁹⁰⁶ QSDG (GX 09/12/18), 7-YJ-2724: 《歇家馬來遲等為被誣告上的稟》.

course of representing the Tibetans of Wendu against the Tibetans of Sho'ong (Tib. *sho 'ong* or *zho 'ong dpyis*, Ch. 雙朋) in a case before the magistrate.

As demonstrated by the situation of Ma Laichi, in the aftermath of the Muslim rebellions, many Hui resumed their work as *xiejia* brokers. Other Muslim families with roots in the cross-border trade were able to capitalize on their prominence during the rebellion to establish an entirely new role for themselves in the post-rebellion political order. Ma Zhan'ao (馬占鰲, 1830-1886), the overall commander of the Muslim forces in Hezhou during the rebellions, and a close associate, Ma Haiyan (馬海晏, 1837-1900),⁹⁰⁷ have generally been identified by secondary scholarship for their initial prominence as religious leaders within the Khafiya order.⁹⁰⁸ They both hailed, however, from Monigou (漠泥溝), a valley on the western edge of Hezhou through which passed a main trade route to the Tibetan and Mongol territories. Their prestige may have derived from their religious expertise, but their strength in arms surely derived from the wealth the community had earned from cross-border trade, both legal and illegal.⁹⁰⁹ The post-rebellion accommodation of Ma Zhan'ao and his allies as “Muslim gentry (回紳)” and the loose incorporation of their military forces into the Hezhou military apparatus meant

⁹⁰⁷ Ma Haiyan's son, Ma Qi (馬麒) was a leading force behind the establishment of Qinghai as a province in 1928, and served as the first governor. As a younger man, Ma Qi, like his father, was also involved in Tibetan affairs in Xunhua. Tibetans in Amchok filed suit against him in the early 19th century: QSDG (GX ??/01/29), 7-YJ-4686: 《阿木輶合八溝寺院為受馬家軍欺負上的稟》.

⁹⁰⁸ Lipman, *Familiar Strangers*, 126.

⁹⁰⁹ For information on the historical connections of Ma Zhan'ao, Ma Haiyan, and Ma Qianling to the regions beyond the passes, see reproductions of genealogies and tomb inscriptions in *Linxia xian wenshi ziliaojiji* (临夏县文史资料, 第七辑, Linxia: Zhongguo Renmin Zhengxia xieshanghui, Linxia xian weiyuanhui, ed. 2007).

that Chinese Muslims were better positioned than ever to insert themselves into Tibetan affairs and profit from their ability to manage local conflicts on behalf of Qing administrators.⁹¹⁰ Moreover, in a period when Qing military forces were stretched thin, the enforcement of Qing jurisprudence increasingly hinged on the actions of Hui-commanded military units. Thus it is no surprise that in 1883-84, when a serious crisis broke out between Repgong and Henan, it was Ma Zhan'ao and Ma Haiyan who could muster the requisite resources and skills to orchestrate a solution. Thus both Qing officials and local Tibetans and Mongols had to take into consideration the interests and capabilities of Muslims when dealing with local conflicts.

Having identified in broad strokes the distinctive features of the pluralistic legal order in Xunhua, the remainder of this chapter as well as Chapter Seven turns to a chronological examination of three salient periods of social conflict in order to demonstrate the ways in which they shaped the evolution of Labrang and other monastic domains and the manner in which they helped articulate Qing sovereignty. The first case involves an astonishing nineteen years (1772-1790) of nearly continuous litigation stemming from the attempt of Labrang monastery to impose an abbot on Tsö monastery, its neighbor to the southeast. Not only did this case set a precedent for Qing involvement in disputes between monasteries, but it also established the principle that “each monastery should govern itself (各管各寺).” While initially intended to ensure that each monastery remained independent from its neighbors, the nineteenth century principle was soon reinterpreted to restrain *confederations* of monasteries from further expansion.

⁹¹⁰ Ma Zhan'ao's military forces were reorganized as three brigades of cavalry and foot soldiers (“馬步三營旗”). In the Xunhua archival documents, Ma Zhan'ao is referred to as a *zongbing* (總兵), “regional commander” (Hucker, 533). He appears to have been only nominally subordinate to the overall commander of the Hezhou garrison (河州鎮).

Chapter Seven will take up the second case, dating to the years shortly after the Qing recovery of Hezhou following the surrender of Ma Anliang's military forces in 1872, stemmed from a feud between the Tibetan communities of Khagya (Tib. *kha gya*) and Rong'ar (Tib. *rong ngar*) over territory, tenants, revenue, and monastery resources. The conflict escalated as Labrang and Rongwo monasteries, as well as the newly "loyal" Muslim military officers threw their weight behind competing litigants. Zuo Zongtang oversaw the composition of the final accord. This accord resulted in the establishment of a new political and religious authority in Xunhua sanctioned by the imperial court. Entitled the "General Administrator of Terlung" (Ch. 沙溝總管), the Sétsang kūtuktu was elevated to be a third major center of power to balance out Labrang. The third case concerns the violence that broke out as the consensus about the meaning and utility of the Terlung general administrator frayed in 1889. The conclusion will briefly touch on a fourth case, dating to 1899, in which the governor-general Tao Mo found himself dealing with the unpredictable nature of reincarnation. All four of these cases had a major influence on the organization of Labrang and other neighboring monasteries and set precedents for Qing involvement in local affairs.

Case Study One: Labrang Monastery and Tsö Monastery, 1772-1790

In 1772 Labrang monastery filed suit with the Xunhua subprefect over its ability to appoint the abbot of Tsö monastery. According to the *Xunhua Gazetteer*, Labrang had been appointing abbots since 1748, yet it had recently encountered resistance from the Tsö community itself who wished to appoint their own candidate. Unwilling to entertain this request, the second Jamyang Zhepa had filed the suit. The dispute, however, had

much deeper roots in the conflict over the identification of the reincarnation of the first Jamyang Zhepa that began after his death in 1721. These roots, however, are largely invisible in the two historical texts consulted for this case, the Drakgönpa's *Oceanic Book* and the *Xunhua Gazetteer*.

The founding of Tsö Monastery (Tib. *gtsos dgon dge ldan chos gling*; also known as *rgya khar dgon*—“Gyakhar” Monastery) can be dated to the generation proceeding that of the first Jamyang Zhepa. The *Xunhua Gazetteer* dates the founding of the monastery to 1682-1683. The *Oceanic Book* provides no date for the founding of the monastery, but identifies the founder as Bé Shérap Chöden (Tib. *'be shes rab chos ldan*), a local monk from Amdo who had achieved the geshé lharampa degree in Ü and then, at the invitation of a lay ruler in the Tsö region, returned to his homeland to propagate the teachings of the Geluk school. Bé Sherap Chöden's reincarnation, Ngawang Techok Wangchuk (Tib. *ngag dbang theg mchog dbang phyug*) was among a group of laymen and monks from Amdo who, in 1704, traveled to Lhasa to invite the Jamyang Zhepa to return to Amdo to found what would become Labrang monastery. Drakgönpa records that in 1710, just a year after the founding of Labrang, during a visit of the Jamyang Zhepa to Tsö, “the monks and lay rulers, all sharing the same aspiration, donated the ownership of the monastery [to the Jamyang Zhepa].”⁹¹¹ Following the death of the first Jamyang Zhepa, however, the monks of Tsö monastery sided with the faction of the Sétsang Lama in the dispute at Labrang over the reincarnation of the first Jamyang Zhepa. The Sétsang Lama, a close disciple of the first Jamyang Zhepa and abbot of Labrang at the time of the

⁹¹¹ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 555: “*bla dpon thams cad 'dun pa chig dril gyis dgon paphul ba bdag gir bzhes/*”

first Jamyang Zhepa's death, believed that his master would not reincarnate.⁹¹² The monks of Tsö monastery were joined in this dispute by the surrounding community and also the main lay patron of the monastery, the second generation Henan *qinwang* Tendzin Wangchuk. As discussed in chapters Three and Four, while he retained the throne at Labrang, Sétsang and his supporters were able to fend off the alternate candidate and his supporters, including the wife of the first generation Henan *qinwang*. Yet following the death of the Sétsang Lama in 1738, his opponents, led by the treasurer of Labrang, the Detri Lama, were able to confirm and enthroned their own candidate as the second Jamyang Zhepa.⁹¹³

According to Nietupski's account of the conflict between the Sétsang and Detri lamas, the tensions continued to simmer despite attempts to reach accommodations.⁹¹⁴ The Detri Lama recognized a reincarnation of the Sétsang Lama in 1746. And the second Sétsang even attained the position of overall abbot of Labrang in 1760 despite the fact that the man the first Sétsang Lama had refused to authenticate—the second Jamyang Zhepa Könchok Jigmé Wangpo, retained overall ownership of the monastery.⁹¹⁵ The young Sétsang Lama and his supporters, however, were forced out of Labrang in 1762, leading to a permanent schism in the region.⁹¹⁶

⁹¹² Yang Hongwei, Ph.d. dissertation (2009), 123.

⁹¹³ Nietupski (2011), 126.

⁹¹⁴ Nietupski (2011), 126.

⁹¹⁵ Zhou Ta and Chen Xiaoqiang, *De'erlong si yu libei saicang huofo* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1994), 49-50.

⁹¹⁶ Zhou Ta and Chen Xiaoqiang, 51-52.

Relations between Tsö and Labrang remained tense as well. These tensions were apparently exacerbated in the late 1740s, when, as reported by Drakgönpa, the second Jamyang Zhepa and Tenzin Wangchuk, the Khoshot Prince, invited the throne holder of Ganden Monastery in Lhasa, Gyaltsen Senggé (Tib. *rgyal mtshan seng ge*) to Labrang Monastery. Upon arrival, the monk apparently perceived a slight in the position of his throne and departed for Tsö. It is in this vignette that Drakgönpa allows the reader to catch a glimpse of the friction between Tsö and the supporters of the second Jamyang Zhepa at Labrang. While at Tsö monastery he instituted a new debate curriculum and his disciples subsequently served as the first instructors. Shortly after his departure, however, it seems that Labrang gained control over appointments of instructors and also started installing their own candidates for abbot.⁹¹⁷ One suspects that what was offensive about these abbots was not the fact that Labrang appointed them, but rather that the death of both the First Sétsang Lama (d. 1738) and Tenzin Wangchuk—the Henan prince (d. 1749), meant that Labrang was now dominated by the faction that had supported the reigning Jamyang Zhepa. Thus appointments made by “Labrang” or the Jamyang Zhepa, where more precisely appointments made by a faction within Labrang with which Tsö had become opposed.

According to the *Xunhua Gazetteer* it was the death and reincarnation of Gyaltsen Senggé that triggered the conflict with Labrang. The throne-holder (“Serkhri” Tib. *ser khri*) from Lhasa had evidently made a strong impression on Tsö. Gong Jinghan reports that having heard that his reincarnation had been found nearby, they invited him to the monastery to be raised as their abbot. Gong Jinghan, on the basis of the archival

⁹¹⁷ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 556; Gong Jinghan, 253. Gong’s account is more succinct, merely noting that after he arrived in the region at the invitation of the Mongol prince, the “Galdan Kütuktu (噶爾旦胡圖克圖)” became the abbot of Tsö. Drakgönpa details his teaching initiatives.

documents in his yamen at Xunhua, writes that, unwilling to accept such a move, the Jamyang Zhepa filed suit.⁹¹⁸ From Drakgönpa, we learn that despite the tensions between Tsö and Labrang, the young reincarnation of Gyaltsen Senggé (the second Tsö Serkhri) had entered Labrang for his monastic training. However, because the young man took his vows of full ordination from the second Sétsang lama, he was “accused of wrongdoings,” and, one assumes, also driven out from Labrang monastery.⁹¹⁹ On Labrang’s refusal to countenance the installation of the Tsö Serkhri as the abbot at Tsö, Drakgönpa is silent. Instead, he blames unruly elements at Tsö monastery for causing trouble and destroying the Jamyang Zhepa’s property: “In the Water dragon year [1772] a quarrel arose and the Jamyang Zhepa’s residence at Tsö was destroyed. A monk from within [Tsö] Trashi Gyatso [*bkra shis rgya mtsho*] then in a wanton and unrestrained fashion appointed himself abbot.”⁹²⁰ Drakgönpa notes neither the appeal of the Jamyang Zhepa to Xunhua subprefecture in 1772 nor the tortuous cycle of countersuits that followed. Instead, he simply states that in 1777, Labrang and the Mongol prince regained control of Tsö. For a detailed account of the involvement of the Qing provincial administration in the conflict, it is necessary to turn to Gong Jinghan’s reconstruction of the case.

According the documents Gong Jinghan found on hand in the archives of the subprefect’s yamen, the Qinghai amban Wu-mi-tai (Ch. 伍彌泰) and the subprefect Zhang Chunfang (張春芳), “without careful investigation,” ruled in favor of Labrang on

⁹¹⁸ Gong Jinghan, 523.

⁹¹⁹ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 556. Drakgönpa charitably states that the accusations were false and that the young lama went on to an accomplished career. Still, the passage provides evidence for the depth of the discord between the supporters of the Sétsang lama(s) and the second Jamyang Zhepa, as well as the alliance between Tsö and Sétsang.

⁹²⁰ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 556.

the basis of “prior tradition (照舊).” Yet Tsö refused to obey the decision. Thus Labrang filed suit for a second time (“又控”). At this, the Qinghai amban organized a committee consisting of a court-affiliated lama, a translator (most likely from the staff of the Qinghai amban, but perhaps from the Lifanyuan), and the subprefect to work out a new decision. This time, the committee issued the judgment that, “Each monastery should govern only itself (各管各寺) and that the abbot should be appointed autonomously by Tsö.” However, subsequent to this decision the amban Wu-mi-tai was transferred to Tibet and the Jamyang Zhepa attempted to overturn the decision with a new appeal (suit # 3). A new committee was formed consisting of several low-ranking officials from the civil administration of Gansu together with some staff from the Qinghai amban’s office. In January of 1775, this group issued a new interpretation: since the Mongol prince had sponsored the original construction of Tsö monastery, he could appoint the abbot. However, he was instructed not to appoint monks from Labrang. Unwilling to accept this verdict, in 1776 Labrang brought the case before a higher authority, the governor-general of Shaanxi and Gansu (suit # 4). The governor-general convened a committee of higher-ranking provincial officials including the Lanzhou prefect, the former Xunhua subprefect who had initially handled the case in 1772, Zhang Chunfang, and the current subprefect, Xie Huan (謝桓).

This committee also ruled against Labrang. Yet this time the governor-general produced a more extensively reasoned decision that examined the history of the relationship between Labrang and its neighboring monasteries and their relationship to the Qing state and the Mongol banners. At the heart of the decision was the determination that, “The Mongol lamas of Labrang in principle should have no involvement in Tsö

monastery. Since the Tibetan people provide for the [monastery], they may request an abbot, and the decision shall take into account what pleases them. The Jamyang Zhepa must not trespass on the people's [desires], nor may he impose his will upon them through force of arms. The monks and laypeople of [Tsö] monastery are tax-paying commoners of the interior. Mongol lamas in particular are forbidden from brazenly contending for their territory.”⁹²¹ In this decision, the panel of Qing officials resurrected the principle established by Nian Gengyao during the Yongzheng era of segregating Tibetans from Mongols. Having previously been placed under the jurisdiction of the Mongol banners of Kokonor, Labrang and the Jamyang Zhepa, regardless of their self-identification, were “Mongol” and therefore must remain separate from the affairs of those “Tibetans” supervised by civil officials from the Gansu provincial administration. The ruling also explicitly reversed a 1764 statement from Changkya Rolpé Dorjé in which the monk had determined that “all the territory to the southeast of the Mongol tribes until Songpan and including the six tribes of Khagya are within the administration [of the Mongol banners].”⁹²² Furthermore, the ruling reaffirmed the principle of monastic autarky (“each monastery should rule itself”) and requested that the Lifanyuan cancel the license previously granted to the Mongol prince to supervise the affairs of Tsö and other Tibetan monasteries.⁹²³

⁹²¹ Gong Jinghan, 253: “議以黑錯寺與拉卜楞寺蒙古喇嘛本無干涉，番民公共香火，延請法臺，自應聽從民便。嘉木樣本不得違眾強爭，而該處寺院僧俗悉屬內地粮民，蒙古喇嘛尤不得公然爭控其所”。

⁹²² Gong Jinghan, 254.

⁹²³ Gong Jinghan, 254.

Having failed to make the case with the governor-general, Labrang appealed for the fifth time to the Qinghai amban. In 1777 the amban ordered the Xunhua subprefect Xie Huan to bring both sides to the provincial capital to rehear the arguments. However, before the case was heard in Lanzhou, the conflict took a surprising turn: “Without authorization and on his own initiative Xie Huan led two thousand government troops to detain and interrogate the monks and laypeople of Tsö. This caused such consternation and fear at Tsö that they begged for peace and the Jamyang Zhepa was ordered to appoint an abbot.”⁹²⁴ The Qinghai amban then inscribed this fait accompli “in stone.”⁹²⁵ Gong Jinghan writes that this decision was bitterly endured by Tsö only because the reincarnation of the Serkhri lama Gyaltsen Senggé was still only a child. Twelve years later, in 1789 (QL 54), when the young man came of age, they drove out the abbot appointed by Labrang and installed the second Serkhri on the abbatial throne. At this, the Jamyang Zhepa filed suit in the office of the Xunhua subprefect for the sixth time in eighteen years. In August of the following year (1790), the Qing ruled against Labrang, expressly overturning the previous judgment: “The seven hundred lay and monastic households of Tsö have always been commoners of the interior who till the earth and submit taxes under the direct control of Xunhua subprefecture. Since Labrang monastery is under the administration of the Mongol *junwang*, how can obedient lamas of the outer regions presume to take ownership of the taxpaying households of the interior?”⁹²⁶ The ruling noted that Labrang had only been able to appoint abbots since 1748 and that claims

⁹²⁴ Gong Jinghan, 254.

⁹²⁵ Gong Jinghan, 254.

⁹²⁶ Gong Jinghan 254-255.

that Tsö had offered alms to Labrang prior to this date would not be considered evidence of the subordination of the monastery. The Lifanyuan subsequently reaffirmed this decision and the Qinghai amban was ordered to forcefully restrain the Jamyang Zhepa if necessary.

And so concluded the case, for the time being. From the perspective of Labrang, only one ruling seems to have stuck. Or rather, the monastery and its chroniclers chose to remember only one moment in the protracted legal battle. As mentioned above, in the *Oceanic Book* Drakgönpa only noted that in 1777 Labrang resumed appointing abbots. Drakgönpa did not state that the return of Tsö to Labrang's control was a result of Qing intervention, thus leaving the impression that the Qing state and its show of military power had nothing to do with Labrang's authority over Tsö. Drakgönpa does not mention the reversals the monastery suffered at the hands of Qing authorities.⁹²⁷ During the late nineteenth century, Labrang officials would more explicitly cite the 1777 judgment of the Qinghai amban and subprefect Xie during the course of renewed legal battles over Labrang's territory.⁹²⁸ Yet it appears that even among Labrang's supporters there were those who failed to see the point in pursuing a protracted legal battle for control of Tsö. Drakgönpa recorded the following conversation:

Previously, during the time of conflict, the superior protector (Jamyang 02), was asked by some people, 'What's the use of making peace with [Tsö] monastery? You still have to provide funds for the repair of the main prayer hall and, in addition to this trouble, there is nothing to be gained!' The [Jamyang Zhepa] replied, 'The valley is really a pleasant one and I

⁹²⁷ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 556.

⁹²⁸ QSDG (GX 15/07/03), 7-YJ-4640: 《拉布塄為被隆務寺兵搶殺上的稟》.

think that if we can appoint abbots to teach there perhaps a little bit of benefit might come from it.”⁹²⁹

As revealed in this passage, for partisans of Labrang the justification for the Jamyang Zhepa’s claim lay primarily in a sense of moral duty to edify the surrounding region. The Jamyang Zhepa felt obliged to appoint the abbots only to ensure that the monks of Tsö were adequately educated. Drakgönpa continues his description of Tsö by listing the extensive donations the second Jamyang Zhepa made to the main prayer hall at Tsö. He also notes how the Jamyang Zhepa resolved conflicts between the lay ruler of Tsö and his subjects. Drakgönpa thus insinuates that Tsö’s resistance to Labrang stems not from some unified rejection of Labrang, but rather from the machinations of various factions within the discordant politics of the Tsö community itself. The fact that Drakgönpa’s brief description of Tsö, which was written in 1865, is largely dedicated to laying out both the moral justifications for the Jamyang Zhepa’s ownership of Tsö and the historical proofs of that control (i.e. the “donation” of the Tsö monastery to the estate of the Jamyang Zhepa in 1710 and the Qing confirmation of that privilege in 1777), is therefore simultaneously a tacit recognition that Labrang had not been able to exercise effective control over Tsö since the 1790s and an exhortation to future action. Fifteen years after Drakgönpa wrote this description, Labrang officials would present these arguments again to Qing officials in the course of new attempts to assert its perceived prerogatives over Tsö and other neighboring monasteries.

⁹²⁹ Drakgönpa, *Oceanic Book*, 557: “sngar ‘khrugs pa’i dus skyabs mgon mchog la ‘ga’ zhig gis rgya mkhar la ‘grig nas ci byed/ ‘du khang ‘phub dgos pa sogs sku tshegs las thob bya ci yang med zhus par/ lung ba dga’ mo zhig yod pas khri ba re bskos nas ‘chad nyan byas na phan cung zad re e thog snyam pa yin zhes gsungs pa’i gsung rgyun ‘khrul med thos te/ tshul de rang zhan kun gyis shes dgos pa zhig yin no?’

The dogged pursuit of a favorable ruling in Qing court by the second Jamyang Zhepa was unprecedented in Qing legal history. Equally unprecedented was the involvement of Qing local magistrates in a conflict between Gelukpa monasteries.⁹³⁰ The arrival of the lawsuit just a decade after the founding of the subprefecture in 1762, and the protracted legal battle that followed had a profound impact on the jurisdiction of the Xunhua subprefect. The fact that the actions and decisions of both Qing and indigenous actors had such an enormous influence on the role that the subprefect and other Qing administrators was precisely why the author of the *Xunhua Gazetteer*, Gong Jinghan (1747-1802), devoted so much attention to the case.

Much in the same way as Nayanceng's *Pingfan zoushu* was a vehicle for promoting a particular strategy for handling frontier affairs, the *Xunhua Gazetteer* was a platform from which Gong Jinghan could evaluate the history Qing efforts to administer and incorporate the Tibetans and Mongols living beyond the original borders of Gansu Province. Like Yan Ruyi, Gong was also from southern China (Minxian in Fujian province) and had developed a reputation for innovative and effective governance in the hinterlands of the Qing empire. Fukanggan had helped launch his official career in Gansu, where Gong had already served eight years before arriving in Xunhua. Later, Gong would become best known for theorizing and implementing a policy of "Strengthening the walls and clearing the countryside" (堅壁清野) that proved effective in suppressing the White Lotus Rebellion in eastern Gansu and Shaanxi during the late 1790s. The policy consisted of building what Philip Kuhn has aptly labeled, "strategic hamlets" to

⁹³⁰ I know of no previous case of this nature in the history of Qing-Geluk relations in either Amdo or Kham. I suspect, however, that in Inner Mongolia, where the Qing possessed a much longer history of dealing with monastic affairs, it may have previously been involved in inter-monastic disputes of a similar scale.

gradually create a web of loyal villages defended by unofficial militias.⁹³¹ Gong had not invented the strategy behind “Strengthening the Walls and Clearing the land,” but he did write the book on it: His *Discourse on Strengthening the Walls and Clearing the Countryside* (《堅壁清野議》) became a key text in the nascent statecraft movement of the early nineteenth century.⁹³² The gazetteer, therefore, far from being a parochial celebration of local identity, was a text with an argument for an empire-wide audience. Gong served only briefly in Xunhua—perhaps only four months (a not atypical tenure for Xunhua subprefects), but evidently developed an acute belief that mistaken decisions taken by Qing officials throughout the bureaucracy of Qinghai and Gansu during the course of the Tsö-Labrang conflict had imperiled not only the prospects for the smooth transformation of the Xunhua region, but also the overall security of the region.

Although Gong Jinghan’s specific opinions on a range of matters can be found throughout the gazetteer, in the final fascicle, titled, “Foreign Dispositions (*yi qing* 夷情),” he restates his overall assessment of Qing policy in the region in a single essay. Gong’s essay can be reduced to at least four major points. First, returning to the period initially following the Lobzang Danjing rebellion, Gong argues that although the idea of subjecting the Tibetans to the rule of civil officials from the interior was not necessarily problematic, the implementation of the policy was. Citing the insights of Yue Zhongqi, he writes, “Although one says that the newly submitted Tibetans are subordinate to the officials of the interior and even deliver grain tax and have been otherwise reigned in, this is not the same as being able to arrange and order them as one does the commoners of the

⁹³¹ Philip Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980 [1970]), 41-42.

⁹³² Kuhn (1980), 45.

interior.”⁹³³ In other words, the attempt was bound to fail because the Qing had not implemented the complete system of the interior and lacked the capacity to do so. For Gong, the smooth functioning of the system hinged not on the superficial presence of civil officials, but the presence of a legal code and a self-enforcement mechanism for the population—the *baojia* system. It would require “excessive earnestness” and “galloping about” for the civil officials to actually maintain the peace on their own, and this was anyways out of the question in the difficult physical and cultural terrain of the Tibetan region.⁹³⁴ To illustrate his point, Gong selected a memorial from the subprefecture’s collection from 1741, in which even at this early date the author, the Qinghai amban, felt it necessary to inform the court that, “The borderlands and the interior are vastly different (邊地與內地迥異)” and continued to complain that there were no civil or military officers in the region who were capable of handling cases involving Tibetans.⁹³⁵ Without the requisite social infrastructure in place, Gong argued, the civil officials from Gansu had faced an impossible task and, “Having handled things in a muddleheaded and careless fashion caused the Tibetans to gradually come to disdain China.”⁹³⁶

Case in point was the handling of the Labrang-Tsö conflict. Gong’s reconstruction of the litigation in the gazetteer presented the Qing local administration as having transgressed the fundamental principle (established by Nian Gengyao) of segregating Mongols from Tibetans. The handling of the case had violated this principle first in the

⁹³³ Gong Jinghan, 304.

⁹³⁴ Gong Jinghan 304-305. One can imagine that Belmang might have offered the same critique of the Qing administrative system, referring to it as “neither sheep nor goat.”

⁹³⁵ Gong Jinghan, 298.

⁹³⁶ Gong Jinghan, 305: “顛頽了事啓番民輕視中國之漸。”

sense that Labrang had set a precedent for “Mongols” filing cases at the offices of Qing magistrates, both in Xunhua and elsewhere in Gansu province. The “Mongols” of Labrang had jumped the border between Qinghai and Gansu in order to file suit in the Chinese interior. The principle had also been violated because on several occasions Xunhua jurists had found in favor of Labrang, thus permitting a “Mongol” monastery to assert control over taxpaying Tibetans who were now considered to be under the administration of China proper/the interior.⁹³⁷ Gong warned that placing Tibetans unfairly under the control of the Mongols of Qinghai furthered the perception that the court was biased against the Tibetans and only embittered them against the Qing court.⁹³⁸

Citing both the Labrang case and another series of cases that were concurrently mismanaged by the Qing magistrate in Guide, Gong Jinghan concluded his essay by arguing in support of the recent proposal of the governor-general Leboo (勒保) and Qinghai amban Kuišu to place the subprefectures of Xunhua and Guide under the authority of the amban, a policy that was approved by the Throne in 1791, just before the composition of the gazetteer. Previously, it had been the responsibility of civil officials from the interior to handle criminal behavior among Tibetans. Danai, the first Qinghai amban together with the second amban Martai had jointly argued in 1733 that the jurisdiction of the office should be limited to the Mongol banners and the minority of distant Tibetans who had, “yet to enter the map (未歸版圖).”⁹³⁹ The primary responsibility for dealing with criminal activity by Tibetans lay with the civil officials

⁹³⁷ Gong Jinghan, 253-255.

⁹³⁸ Gong Jinghan, 306-307.

⁹³⁹ Such as the Tibetan of Yushu.

stationed in the “counties and prefectures” of Gansu province. Cases of Tibetan raiding on Mongols or merchants were to be handled jointly by these civil officials and the amban’s office.⁹⁴⁰ However, Gong Jinghan, supporting Kuišu and Leboo, argued that the notion that the office of the Xining amban would handle only Mongol affairs, and the civil administration of Gansu would handle the Tibetans in between had become untenable.

First, Gong noted that administrators had quickly faced the problem that the boundary between those “Tibetans” who had “entered the map” or were later identified as “cooked”—i.e. farmed and paid taxes, was in practice impossible to delimit. Second, the civil administration had not only proven inept at prosecuting raiding, but criminal activity had increased exponentially since the 1720s and especially since 1772.⁹⁴¹ The solution was to place both Mongols *and* the Tibetans of Xunhua and Guide directly under the supervision of the Qinghai amban. Guide county was to be converted into a subprefecture like Xunhua, and in matters involving Tibetans, the subprefects were to report directly to the office of the amban in Xining. Under this arrangement, cases involving Mongols and Tibetans could be resolved under a single authority and, perhaps more importantly, the state’s energies could be directed towards patrolling the boundary between Mongols and Tibetans and not distracted by the impossible task of weeding “cooked” Tibetans from “raw” ones. The memorial from Kuišu and Leboo thus

⁹⁴⁰ Gong Jinghan, 297.

⁹⁴¹ Gong notes a dramatic uptick in raiding cases begin in 1772, a fact he correlates with Qing mishandling of cases involving Mongol rulers by the Guide county magistrate and the Xunhua subprefect (299).

concluded by focusing on the need to energetically monitor the karun (卡倫) border posts between Mongols and Tibetans.⁹⁴²

The Labrang case, then, as understood by leading officials in the Gansu-Qinghai region, had profound implications for the overall arrangement of Qing administrative boundaries. The resulting edict repealed almost sixty years of civilian supervision of the Tibetans and, in a sense, reversed what might have appeared to some as the steady expansion of “China.” The establishment of the amban’s control over Tibetan affairs in Xunhua and the unification of Xunhua and the Mongols under a single legal framework—the “Tibetan code,” meant that the “frontier” had moved east, not west. As an advocate for this policy shift, the *Xunhua Gazetteer* was therefore a key text arguing for the centralization of authority over both Mongols and Tibetans in the office of the Qinghai amban. It might also be argued that the inclusion of these two subprefectures in the jurisdiction of the amban also expanded the meaning of “Qinghai,” thus marking a key step in the creation of the geo-body that would later become known as “Qinghai province.”⁹⁴³ Although modern Qinghai province is no longer ruled by an “amban,” the easternmost districts of the province represent the former territory of Xunhua subprefecture.⁹⁴⁴

Gong Jinghan thus composed the gazetteer just as a host of potentially transformative policies had been introduced. Just three months before he arrived to the

⁹⁴² Gong Jinghan, 307-309.

⁹⁴³ For the concept of the geo-body, see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

⁹⁴⁴ The modern Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, which represented the most easternmost portion of Xunhua subprefecture, was later placed within the boundaries of Gansu province.

post, the emperor approved a further proposal in February of 1792 from the amban and governor-general suggesting that a system of hundred and thousand-household chiefs be instituted among the “cooked” Tibetans.⁹⁴⁵ The purpose of this policy was to identify an intermediary network of indigenous leaders to perform the basic police work, filling the essential gap between magistrates and the population that Gong had identified in the previous administrative arrangement.

Gong’s analysis of the frontier policy in Xunhua and in Gansu shared several characteristic concerns with Nayanceng, but also differed in an important respect. Although both began by addressing the problem of Tibetan raiding on the Mongol banners, their analyses led to different diagnoses. Gong and his contemporaries focused on reestablishing the boundary between Mongols and Tibetans. Under the newly unified supervision of the amban, the *karun* (border posts between Mongol and Tibetan territories) could be better policed. The ultimate verdict on the Labrang-Tsö case similarly asserted the segregation of Mongol and Tibetan populations. Nayanceng shared these concerns, yet believed that regardless of how well the state policed the border between the Tibetans and Mongols, their efforts would be fruitless if the material incentives driving the collusion were allowed to persist. Therefore Nayanceng focused not on the border between Tibetans and Mongols but the one that needed to be constructed between Tibetans and commoners of the interior (especially Hui). To borrow a phrase from Sutton’s study of the Miao frontier, Nayanceng envisioned the Tibetans of Xunhua and Guide as inhabiting a “quarantine” zone, blocked from further movement

⁹⁴⁵ Gong Jinghan, 309-310.

south and west by Mongol sentries and sealed from China proper by the licensed trade system.⁹⁴⁶

The history of the Labrang-Tsö case reveals that the principle of separating “Mongol” and “Tibetan” populations was not obvious to Qing magistrates and even higher-ranking officials in Qinghai and Gansu. And the justifications used either to grant or block the access of the Jamyang Zhepa to Tsö monastery and its surrounding community shifted considerably over the course of nineteen years of legal wrangling. The idea that the Qing’s interests in the case were clear to Qing officials, or that they manipulated the case in order to break up the growing authority of Labrang is belied not only by the multiple instances in which Qing authorities sided with Labrang but also by the dispatch of a punitive military force against Tsö. If Labrang seems to have learned anything from this matter, it was that persistence might pay off, as would the strategic use of the entire scope of the Qing administrative system. The Jamyang Zhepa practiced what Lauren Benton as aptly referred to as, “forum shopping:” sending the case to different Qing officials and even repeatedly to the same office if they sensed a shift change might result in a more favorable ear. The Jamyang Zhepa also clearly used his status as a “kūtuktu” to appeal his case directly to the Qinghai amban and governor-general. As Gong Jinghan hints in his commentary, the only thing that seems to have brought the case to a conclusion was the death of the second Jamyang Zhepa in 1791.⁹⁴⁷

The process of handling the case had major implications for the local political arrangements within Xunhua as well as those at the regional level. First, the case forced

⁹⁴⁶ Sutton (2006), 195.

⁹⁴⁷ Gong Jinghan, 255.

Qing officials to clarify and define the relationship of the Xunhua subprefect to Tsö monastery as well as several other communities that neighbored Labrang, most importantly for our purposes, Khagya. What was initially a weak and ambiguous claim to Tibetan communities was gradually rearticulated in a more forceful fashion. For instance, during the second and third rounds of the case, the Qing first settled for a principle that countenanced Tsö's autonomy to outside authorities (the “各管各寺” principle) then decided to recognize the Khoshot *junwang*'s authority over the monastery. The idea that as taxpaying “Tibetan” community, Tsö should have an exclusive relationship with the Qing state came only later and was not fully expressed until the sixth round of the case. The final ruling noted that Tsö had “always been under... the direct control of Xunhua subprefecture,” but this was the first time that such a claim appeared in writing in an official document.⁹⁴⁸ Although it is impossible to tell to what degree such a relationship was desired by Tsö, as we shall see in subsequent cases, during the late nineteenth century Tsö and other rivals of Labrang would actively employ precisely this rhetoric to extricate themselves from the claims of Labrang.

Moreover, the case resulted in a novel and paradoxical articulation of the internal and external boundaries of Xunhua. As a “Mongol” territory, the subprefect had no prerogatives over the internal administration of Labrang monastery or the communities pledged to the estate of the Jamyang Zhepa. However, since Tsö monastery sat to the southeast of Labrang, the determination that Tsö was in fact under the jurisdiction of Xunhua not only delimited the southeastern boundary of Xunhua subprefecture, but it also had the effect of transforming Labrang into an enclave within Xunhua subprefecture.

⁹⁴⁸ Gong Jinghan 254-255.

Gong Jinghan captured this confusing situation in his brief description of Labrang monastery:

Labrang is located in Genkya, subject to the junwang of the Qinghai Mongols. The name of Labrang in Tibetan is ‘Trashi khyil.’ *It is within the territory of the subprefecture but not subordinate the subprefect.* The monks live in a disorderly fashion and rely on the power of the junwang. Squabbles with other Tibetans over land and the submission of lawsuits are not infrequent occurrences. [Labrang] often claims Tibetan clans of the interior as their own subjects or gives cover to those fleeing the law. This brings harm to the vital interests of Xunhua. Thus to avoid future trouble [we] have ordered the destruction of [monasteries] within the Mongol borders and forbidden them to build further temples in the interior.⁹⁴⁹

In conclusion, Labrang’s attempt to seek out justice via the Qing had delivered unanticipated results. On the one hand it had contributed to a general reformulation of the Qing dynasty’s strategic position in the Gansu region that now emphasized the difference of Tibetan and Mongol regions from the interior of the empire. Yet at the local level it had resulted in the articulation of greater Qing sovereignty over Labrang’s neighboring communities and set a precedent for Qing oversight of Labrang’s relations with neighboring communities. The tensions inherent in this situation and the ambiguities manifest in Gong Jinghan’s formulation—“within the subprefecture but not subordinate to the subprefect”—would continue to be the focus of legal politics for the rest of the dynasty.

⁹⁴⁹ Gong Jinghan, 258. Emphasis added. The original reads: “按拉卜楞寺番名札木奇爾寺。在廳地而非廳所屬。僧眾雜遷倚恃郡王之勢。屢與各番爭地控案不一而足。又招內屬番族為其屬，或藏匿亡命，此循化腹心之一害也。當令拆毀於蒙古界，別建寺宇不許在內地以絕後患。拉布楞即拉布楞番語也。”

Chapter Seven: The Warring States

Introduction

To the limited extent that the history of the rebellion of the Muslims of Hezhou against the Qing state in 1862 has been told, it has focused on the story of Ma Zhan’ao’s roots as a Sufi religious leader whose knack for military strategy enabled him to organize the Muslim population of Hezhou into a military force that ejected the Qing completely from a broad swath of Gansu province and ultimately handed Zuo Zongtang one of the most crushing defeats of his career in 1872.⁹⁵⁰ To the south and west of Hezhou, at Ma Zhan’ao’s rear, however, lay the Tibetan-populated highland regions of Xunhua. Ostensibly loyal to the Qing and a potential military threat, the region must not only have been a key source of military supplies (especially horses and leather), but also a partner in the trade that kept the economy of the Muslim regime in Hezhou afloat during the war. Although no archival sources from this period have survived, archives from the period of reconstruction (善後) that followed the return of Hezhou to Qing control hint that relations between Hezhou Muslims and certain Tibetan individuals and communities had deepened during the rebellion. Moreover, events that transpired during the rebellion sparked an outpouring of litigation in the immediate aftermath.

This chapter examines the conflict between Khagya (Tib. *kha gya*, 卡加) and Rong’ar (Tib. *rong ngar*, 隆哇) that, although sparked by events of the rebellion, soon

⁹⁵⁰ For a summary of this period and the importance of understanding the multiplicity of Muslim rebellions and not just the “Muslim Rebellion,” see Lipman, 125-129, and especially 130-138. For a detailed account of the events in Hezhou from the perspective of Qing official sources, see, Gao Wenyuan, *Qingmo xibei Huimin zhi fan Qing yundong* (Taipei: Xuehai shuju, 1989).

dragged in larger neighbors such as Labrang and Rongwo monasteries and exposed fault lines among Tibetans that had been deepening since the Qing had initially become involved in inter-monastic conflicts in the late Qianlong reign. Much like the Qianlong-period case, the encounter between Tibetans, Qing officials, and now, Muslim gentry in the context of a Qing centered legal order had unexpected consequences. This case resulted in the Qing court's enfeoffment of the third Sétsang lama Lobzang Tashi Rabgyé (1814-1879) as the “General Administrator” (Ch. *zongguan*, 總管, Tib. *tsung kon*) of Terlung with responsibility for the political administration of a large district to the north and east of Labrang. The establishment of Sétsang as *zongguan* was neither a straightforward case of imperial recognition of a local hero, nor was it simply a cynical attempt at containing the Jamyang Zhepa. Instead this new political institution was the outcome of contingent events and itself highly unstable.

Case Study Two: The Creation of the Terlung General Administrator, 1875

The conflict between Khagya and Rong'ar first came to the attention of the Xunhua subprefect, Wang Shengyuan (汪聲元), in a petition from the Gyangro tulku (Tib. 'gyang ro gong ma, Ch. 江落昂千戶) of Khagya monastery, dated to June of 1873. The monk began his letter by reminding the magistrate of his loyal service to the dynasty during the recent rebellion. Most importantly, in 1866 he had received orders from provincial authorities to raise a military force to “assist in exterminating the Muslim bandits (調番助剿兵回匪).” He had obeyed these orders and his Tibetan cavalry had

evidently fought together with Qing forces for the next eight years.⁹⁵¹ Two months prior to his petition, in April of 1873, the Gyangro tulku had been present at the recovery of Xunhua town from the rebels. On that occasion he met both the provincial prosecutor and the new subprefect, and received various bestowals, including the title of chiliarch (千戶), for his efforts on behalf of the dynasty.⁹⁵² He regretted to inform the magistrate, however, that when asked to draft soldiers in 1866, three of the villages he administered (所管), Menlung (Tib. *sman lung*, Ch. 麻隆), Tangar (Tib. *thang dkar*, 唐尕), and Xiangka (Tib. *zhing dkar?*, 香卡) had not only refused the draft, but had thrown their lot in with the neighboring lord of Rong'ar (the “Rong’ar honpo,” Tib. *Rong ngar dpon po*), whom Gyangro accused of refusing to aid the Qing cause. Since the re-conquest of Xunhua, the Gyangro chiliarch had asked the Rong’ar honpo to return the three villages to him. But not only had this request been rebuffed, but Rong’ar had violently resisted, leading to the death of the Gyangro tulku’s older brother and twenty other people.

Perhaps swayed by Gyangro’s appeal to the notion of loyalty to the dynasty and the “air of rebellion” (賊風) with which he had tainted Rong’ar, a fortnight later, the Xunhua subprefect found in favor of Khagya. He ordered the Rong’ar honpo to return all the “commoners (百姓)” of Menlung, Tangar, and Xiangka to the control of the chiliarch.⁹⁵³ A day later he dispatched a similar command directly to the headmen of the

⁹⁵¹ QSDG (GX TZ 12/05/11; 1873/06/5), 6-YJ-271: 《南番卡加寺千戶江洛昂為隆哇霸佔屬莊上循化廳的稟》.

⁹⁵² QSDG (TZ 13/11, December 1874-January 1875), 6-YJ-350: 《卡加寺千戶捏力哇為隆哇抗頑不遵官命呈循化廳新任同知的稟》.

⁹⁵³ QSDG (TZ 12/05/25; 1873/06/19), 6-JY-271: 《循化廳為麻隆三莊仍歸卡加千戶管轄給隆哇紅布的諭》.

three villages in question.⁹⁵⁴ That same month, Zuo Zongtang, the governor-general also bestowed a memorial tablet (匾額) on Khagya monastery, further marking the communities privileged relation with the Qing.⁹⁵⁵

The Rong'ar honpo, however, refused to comply. Over the next three months, the Gyangro tulku along with the manager of his domain (Tib. *gnyer pa*, *gnyer las pa*, Ch. 捏力哇) continued to submit petitions to Xunhua reporting the intransigence of Rong'ar and asking the magistrate to intervene on his behalf.⁹⁵⁶ Finally, in September of 1873, the magistrate wrote to both sides of the dispute that if the three villages were not returned, he would travel himself to enforce the law. He also sent instructions to the abbots of Tsö and Shangnanbula (Tib. ?, Ch. 上南不拉) asking them to intervene and “suppress and straighten out” the Rong'ar honpo.⁹⁵⁷ These efforts at enforcement, mediation, and intimidation from afar came to nothing, and on November 2, 1873, the subprefect announced that he was traveling in person to the conflict zone and requested that several

⁹⁵⁴ QSDG (TZ 12/05/26; 1873/06/20), 6-YJ-271: 《循化廳為麻隆三莊仍歸卡加千戶管轄給麻隆等三莊頭目的諭》.

⁹⁵⁵ QSDG 6-YJ-350: 《卡加寺千戶捏力哇為隆哇抗頑不遵官命呈循化廳新任同知的稟》, The tablet, which evidently hung in the monastery read, “Stalwart of the Frontier, Hater of Enemies (悍邊敵愾).” The significance of this tablet and its subsequent destruction by Rong'ar was of great interest to provincial officials. See, for instance, the opinion of the Xining circuit attendant: QSDG (GX 01/04/16), 7-YJ-2661: 《西寧兵備道為隆哇、卡加仇鬥給循化廳的憲牌》.

⁹⁵⁶ QSDG, 6-YJ-271: 《南番卡加寺江洛昂千戶為麻隆三莊不服官諭上循化廳的稟》(TZ 12/06/21, 1873/07/15); 《南番卡加寺江洛昂千戶為麻隆三莊梗頑藐法上循化廳的稟》(TZ 12/06R/18, 1873/08/10); 《隆三莊梗頑如故上循化廳的稟》(TZ 12/07/25).

⁹⁵⁷ QSDG (TZ 12/07/26, 1873-09-17), 6-YJ-271: 《循化廳為不得私行械鬥事給卡加寺千戶的諭》(TZ 12/07/26, 1873-09-17); 《循化廳為仍歸卡加寺給麻隆三莊得諭》; 《循化廳為速將麻隆等三莊歸還卡家管束給隆哇紅布的諭》.

local notables including Ngawang Tenpei Lama, the Mewo honpo, the managers of Tsö and Terlung monasteries to present evidence related to the case and assist in mediation.⁹⁵⁸

The trip, however, was not a success. The subprefect informed the provincial prosecutor that:

The villages administered by Rong'ar and Khagya of the southern Tibetans are side by side with the border running between them. The manager of the Khagya chiliarch has a rough knowledge of Chinese customs and language (粗知漢禮漢語) and therefore stands out from the other Tibetan headmen. According to the many petitions from the chiliarch that have piled up over the summer, he insists that he sincerely observes the law and will not feud [with Rong'ar] and requests that we objectively examine the case and take charge (作主)... Yesterday I proceeded to inspect Terlung and learned that the Rong'ar headman had brought a large party to meet me. I promptly confronted him with the need to consider people's feelings and the law and inquired about his attempts to dominate other tribes and his acts of burning and raiding. The headman firmly resisted directly to my face and insisted that the matter did not require my efforts at resolution. He used forceful language and refused further questioning. Instead, he insisted that Rong'ar was at peace and warned me not to enter his territory with further inquiries. At this juncture, had I acted rashly to arrest him, I fear that there would have been an incident and had we proceeded to his monastery, there would have been no way to avoid looking weak. I then proceeded to Khagya were I resided for a short time in order to further investigate the roots of this case and handle other matters.⁹⁵⁹

Further investigations at Khagya proved to the magistrate's satisfaction that the chiliarch's claims over the three villages were justified and recorded in Tibetan-language documents. Yet he reported to the provincial prosecutor that both his own attempt to resolve the case and that of the Hezhou garrison commander had resulted in only obstinate resistance from the Rong'ar honpo. Moreover he warned that if the conflict was

⁹⁵⁸ GSDG (TZ 12/09/13, 1873-11-02), 6-YJ-268: 《循化廳為調節卡家、隆哇番案給阿讓丹壩喇嘛、買吾紅布等的諭》.

⁹⁵⁹ QSDG (TZ 12/10/10, 1873-11-29), 6-YJ-350: 《循化廳稟覆巡查南番情形並隆哇番案不服查究由》.

left to fester, it would have implications for the overall peace of the region and the authority of the dynasty: “If we do not heavily punish [the honpo], not only will we be unable to resolve this case, but will be unable to impress all the Tibetans.”⁹⁶⁰

The Gyangro chiliarch’s manager was equally unimpressed with the performance of the subprefect. Evidently quite resourceful, the manager was able to get a petition directly into the hands of the governor-general. In this letter, he described how the subprefect had essentially become trapped in Khagya for over twenty days because Rong’ar, located along the main route between Khagya and Hezhou, had been able to impede travel. It was only with an escort from Khagya that the magistrate and the garrison commander from Hezhou had been able to travel back to Hezhou. Moreover, he reported that just days after the officials had departed, Rong’ar launched revenge attacks against Khagya resulting in two deaths and major destruction.⁹⁶¹

Despite the setbacks of the late fall, in early 1874 the prospects for settling the case increased. The subprefect Wang was replaced by a Manchu bannermen, Anfu, who would eventually become one of the longest serving magistrates in the history of the subprefecture (1874-1879). In January, the subprefect also received an offer of assistance from the senior of the two Rongwo nangso. Stating that, “Khagya and Rong’ar are Tibetans governed by me, the Rongwo nangso,” he requested authorization to adjudicate the dispute and expressed confidence that he could bring both sides to an agreement: “The war between these two communities is just a common occurrence among us

⁹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶¹ QSDG (TZ 12/10/10, 1873-11-29), 6-YJ-350: 《陝甘總督為卡加、隆哇番案給河州鎮、循化廳的劄》.

Tibetans (我番民). Your honor should not overly trouble yourself with this...”⁹⁶² The subprefect approved this motion and, sure enough, a month later the new subprefect Anfu was able to proclaim the terms of the agreement, which were as follows:

- Each household of Menlung must provide Khagya monastery with one *dou* of barley and fifteen catties (*jin*) of butter each year for eternity.
- Xiangka must perform one day of the *monlam* at Khagya monastery during the first month of the new year.
- Menlung is to be considered a tribe of Khagya monastery and, in accordance with past precedents, will be governed by Khagya.
- Fifty plots of land purchased by Khagya from Xiangka shall be returned to Khagya monastery.
- Irrigation water shall be supplied to Xiangka by Khagya according to the existing schedule; Xiangka will host⁹⁶³ one day of *monlam* each year at Khagya monastery, if on the scheduled days Xiangka does not receive water because the channel has been blocked, Khagya cannot request Xiangka to host *monlam*.
- Tangkar is to be considered a tribe of Rong’ar and, in accordance with past precedents, shall be governed by Rong’ar.
- All additional matters are to be handled according to precedent.
- Herders from Menlung who pasture on Khagya’s alpine meadows shall be permitted to graze their animals there according to tradition.
- All those common people who have been taken captive shall be returned to their previous tribes.
- Rong’ar shall compensate Khagya for all the property of Khagya monastery that they destroyed or looted.⁹⁶⁴

In summary, Menlung and Tangkar were formally placed under the authority of Khagya and Rong’ar, respectively. The status of Xiangka, however, remained ambiguous. The

⁹⁶² QSDG (TZ 12/12/03, 1874-1-20), 6-YJ-350: 《隆務寺昂鎖為卡加、隆哇番案上循化廳的稟》.

⁹⁶³ I have adopted Gerald Roché’s suggested translation of “host” for the Chinese verb *zuo* (作). Personal communication.

⁹⁶⁴ QSDG (TZ 13/02, 1874-3/4), 6-JY-187: 《循化廳為遵依議規給隆哇、卡加的諭》. According to a later petition from the Khagya manager, it was not Rongwo, but rather monks from Tsö monastery who worked as intermediary negotiators (“居中當響”). See: QSDG (TZ 13/11, 1874-December/1875-January), 6-YJ-350: 《卡加寺千戶捏力哇為隆哇抗頑不遵官命呈循化廳新任同知的稟》.

agreement articulated a regulated exchange of water for labor between Xiangka and Khagya, but was silent on how to interpret the political status of Xiangka vis-à-vis both Khagya and Rong’ar.

Unfortunately, the agreement did not hold. In August of 1874, Zuo Zongtang ordered Anfu to investigate accusations from Khagya of further raids from Rong’ar. He proceeded to Rong’ar together with the Taozhou subprefect. Upon arrival they learned that the headman had no intention of observing the agreement. Several days later Anfu received a further report that “bandits” from Rong’ar had also attacked a party of merchants. Neither Anfu nor his colleague from Taozhou were surprised when the Rong’ar headman also refused to hand over anyone suspected of banditry.⁹⁶⁵

Three months later in November of 1874, also on the orders of the governor-general, Anfu returned again to Rong’ar, this time with a much larger party that included the temporary assistant magistrate of Bayanrong (署西宁府巴燕戎格补用通判乔金镛) and perhaps two dozen cavalry led by the commander of the Xunhua battalion. The group made a base at a spot equidistant from Khagya and Rong’ar and invited both sides of the conflict to come and present their cases. However, only the Gyangro tulku appeared. The subprefect then dispatched a yamen runner and a *xiejia* to Rong’ar to sound out the headman. The messengers returned to report that the Rong’ar headman would not be party to any further discussions or agreements because, as far as he was concerned, the case had already been settled to his satisfaction by the Rongwo nangso. Moreover, he stated that he had seen no evidence of banditry among his people. The subprefect thus decided to proceed in person to Rong’ar:

⁹⁶⁵ QSDG (TZ 13/11/09, 1874-12-17), 6-YJ-247: 《循化廳為卡加、隆哇爭鬥上陝甘總督、青海大臣等的稟》.

Therefore, on the fourteenth we went to the small monastery at Rong'ar where we heard that the honpo was temporarily residing. I went inside to take a look. I sent a messenger in with the request that we meet and discuss the feud and the incident of banditry. He suddenly came out and, not only did not kneel, but also refused to answer questions or engage in discussion. He merely stated, "I have no need for officials. Why is it necessary to keep coming around to investigate?!" Just as we were about to commence a stern interrogation, his Tibetan cavalry swarmed around the monastery unexpectedly from the back and sides. Observing that the atmosphere was truly treacherous and fearing a major incident, I could only abandon my investigation and retreat.⁹⁶⁶

At this juncture the Rongwo nangso again attempted to find a solution to the conflict. In April of 1875, he reported to the Xunhua subprefect that he might have worked out a compromise. He noted that a sticking point in prior negotiations had been the Gyangro tulku's demand for continued material support from Rong'ar. The nangso had come to believe, however, that both sides might agree to a resolution in which Rong'ar supplied butter, barley, and wheat, but only to the monks of Khagya and not directly to the estate of the Gyangro tulku.⁹⁶⁷ Yet shortly after Xunhua had dispatched runners to arrange a new convocation between all parties, reports began to arrive from Khagya of large-scale violence.

In a series of reports that arrived in quick succession, the Gyangro chiliarch reported that since the night of April 29, his monastery had been under siege by a combined military force from Rong'ar and Terlung. The violence began ten days earlier when Rong'ar attacked and killed several people with firearms and other weapons. On the night of April 24, attackers from Tsö broke into the monastery and attempted to set

⁹⁶⁶ QSDG (TZ 13/11), 6-YJ-187: 《循化廳稟覆奉箚查明循化所屬隆哇番目橫行各情一案及隆哇不遵查辦情形由》.

⁹⁶⁷ QSDG (GX 01/04/05), 7-YJ-2661: 《循化廳為隆哇、沙溝圍打卡加稟道府憲》.

fire to the monastery. The chiliarch pointedly noted that among the damaged objects was the ceremonial tablet from the governor-general. He wrote, “Your humble monk pulled from the flames the surviving half of the tablet and I have sent it to [Governor-general] Zuo in order to file suit! Your humble servant’s situation is absolutely hopeless and I can only knock my head to the floor and plead that in your Heavenly mercy your honor will promptly take charge!”⁹⁶⁸ Runners from the Xunhua yamen provided a preliminary confirmation of the violence: At least three people had been murdered, including another brother of the Gyangro chiliarch, and the combined force from Rong’ar and Terlung amounted to well over three hundred armed men.⁹⁶⁹ Xunhua reported the matter to the Xining prefect, who then forwarded the information on to the Qinghai amban.⁹⁷⁰ The Gyangro chiliarch’s petition must have reached Zuo Zongtang as well, because in letter to the Xunhua subprefect, he complained that it was highly improper for the monk to write directly to the governor-general’s office. The governor-general did, however, express his concern for the situation and ordered the Xining prefect to direct the Hezhou garrison commander to lead troops to Rong’ar together with the Xunhua subprefect.⁹⁷¹ While the

⁹⁶⁸ QSDG (GX 01/03/??), 7-YJ-2661: 《卡加再稟控隆哇、沙溝圍打事》; also: 《卡加覆稟控隆哇、沙溝圍打事》.

⁹⁶⁹ QSDG (GX 01/04/05, 1875-5-9), 7-YJ-2661: 《循化廳為隆哇、沙沟圍打卡加稟道府憲》.

⁹⁷⁰ QSDG (GX 01/04/16), 7-YJ-2661: 《西寧兵備道為隆哇、卡加仇鬥給循化廳的憲牌》.

⁹⁷¹ QSDG (GX 01/05/18, 1875-5-22), 7-YJ-4223: 《陝甘總督左為卡家、隆哇番案劄循化廳》. In giving this order, Zuo was approving a motion made by the Xining prefect on GX 01/04/26. Zuo subsequently complained again about the continuing stream of letters from Khagya on GX 01/05/23 (7-YJ-4223): 《循化廳為奉札傳提卡加千戶捏力哇事》.

highest levels of the Qing field bureaucracy in Gansu and Qinghai worked their way through the problem, Khagya continued to petition with reports of additional violence.⁹⁷²

The Qing provincial military forces did not act swiftly, but they came on heavy when they did. A large military force departed Hezhou for Rong’ar on September 24, 1875. Among the troops were three companies of cavalry commanded by Ma Zhan’ao. This force quickly demonstrated its command of the local geography when it was able to take the fortified hamlet of Menlung from behind via an alternate route through the mountains. The major engagement of the expedition came at Xiangka, where the subprefect reported that over a hundred Tibetans were killed when they attempted to ambush the official troops. The Qing reached Rong’ar on September 30 with little further struggle, identified the local honpo and five other local leaders and promptly executed them.⁹⁷³

The Xunhua subprefect Anfu and Hezhou garrison commander Shen Yusui’s (沈玉遂) post-mortem investigation of Rong’ar’s “rampage (橫行)” produced a remarkably original analysis (compared with earlier understandings of the case) and an equally striking suggestion for a final settlement. It appears that it was only at this point that the Qing officials became aware of Rong’ar’s complaints against Khagya and the Gyangro tulku in particular. To paraphrase from Anfu and Shen’s subsequent reports to the governor-general: The Sétsang lama of Terlung had previously owned a residence at

⁹⁷² QSDG (date uncertain), 7-YJ-4745: 《青海大臣為江洛稟隆哇給循化廳的札》. The amban noted a petition he had received from the Gyangro chiliarch reporting that on GX 01/06/29 several hundred men from Rong’ar and Terlung had attacked and destroyed the crops.

⁹⁷³ QSDG (GX 01/09/16, 1875-10-14), 7-YJ-2661: 《甘肅西寧府循化同知安福為會辦卡加、隆哇案上的稟》. In total, Anfu reported that at least 125 Tibetans were killed during the course of resisting the Qing military expedition.

Khagya monastery and property in the surrounding valley. While initially relations with the Gyangro tulku were amicable, enmity arose between the supporters of the two lamas over the issue of donations. Khagya then burned the Sétsang's residence and occupied his land. Rong'ar, a long-time supporter of the Sétsang lineage, with the "covert encouragement and support of Terlung," had taken up the task of seeking redress, eventually through force, from Khagya.⁹⁷⁴ In light of this history, on the third day after occupying Rong'ar, the two officials gathered together the managers of the three monasteries to hash out a settlement to the longstanding feud according to the "Tibetan principles of mutual compensation (依番理互相賠償)." Moreover, "Discovering that the mood of the Tibetans is such that they all acclaim the principle monk of Terlung [i.e. the Sétsang tulku] as having always been fair and just, we therefore decided that henceforth, Rong'ar, Khagya, as well as upper and lower Labula (Tib. ?), shall all return to the administration of the principle monk of Terlung, Sétsang. In all matters Khagya shall consult the Sétsang lama of Terlung. Hereafter, Sétsang of Terlung shall be held accountable for all further instances of armed raiding or feuding."⁹⁷⁵ Zuo Zongtang approved Shen Yusui's motion that the Sétsang lama be appointed the "general administrator (總管)" and forwarded his recommendation to the capital in a memorial dated to October 26, 1875 (GX 01/09/28).⁹⁷⁶

⁹⁷⁴ QSDG (GX 01/09/16, 1875-10-14), 7-YJ-2661: 《甘肅西寧府循化同知安福為會辦卡加、隆哇案上的稟》. This information is also related in the report composed by Shen Yusui (see note 108).

⁹⁷⁵ QSDG (lacking date), 7-YJ-2663: 《河州鎮為會辦卡加隆哇番案上陝甘總督左的稟》. The same passage can be also found in Anfu's report dated GX 01/09/16 (see note 107).

⁹⁷⁶ Zuo Wenxiang (*Zongtang*) *quanji* (Taibei: Wenhui chubanshe, 1979): vol. 4, 1884-1885. This was duly approved the following month. See: *Dezong shilu*, 19: 305.

Assessment

The decision of Anfu and Shen Yusui to appoint the Sétsang lama as the “General Administrator” of Terlung, Rong’ar, and Khagya represented a very different outcome than the one anticipated by the Gyangro chiliarch and the manager of his estate when they first filed suit in 1873. Instead of regaining control of the three villages of Menlung, Xiangka, and Tangkar, the Khagya headmen found themselves abruptly placed under the supervision of the Sétsang lama, with whose allies in Terlung and Rong’ar they had been feuding since 1866, if not earlier. This transpired despite a seemingly highly effective campaign of suits and petitions to the local subprefect up to the governor-general and a host of offices in between. Unlike the Rong’ar headman, who attempted to evade the Qing system of jurisprudence altogether and forcefully chose not to present his side of the case when given the opportunity, Gyangro’s aggressive use of petitions enabled him to successfully shape Qing interpretations of the case right down to the execution of the Rong’ar honpo. Khagya’s petitions, once received by the subprefect or higher-ranking provincial officials such as Zuo Zongtang were extensively quoted in their subsequent communications and thus reverberated through the provincial bureaucracy. Khagya was particularly effective at dominating the official transcript following Rong’ar’s attack on the monastery in the spring of 1875. For instance, a letter from the Xining circuit intendant to the Hezhou garrison commander and Xunhua subprefect dated May 20, 1875, drew its understanding of recent events entirely from Khagya’s petitions. Thus the Gyangro’s cultivated self-image as an obedient and law-abiding servant of the dynasty victimized by an insatiable tyrant who threatened the peace and stability of the entire frontier by default received the imprimatur of the dynasty’s highest ranking officials in

Gansu. The detail about rescuing Zuo Zongtang's memorial tablet from the ashes appears to have been particularly effective. The destruction of the tablet was a personal affront to the governor-general that officials could not and did not ignore. This tidbit was even present in discussions of the conflict after April of 1875. Moreover, the Gyangro tulku repeatedly and effectively masked his desire to control a particular territory as a request for Qing sovereignty. What was at stake, he informed the Qing, was the dynasty's own writ, so they had better come and "take charge (作主)."

Only fifteen years later did Qing administrators learn a possible reason behind the Gyangro manager's fluency with the Qing legal system. In 1888, a reincarnate monk and abbot from Terlung (not the Sétsang tulku) reported that the Gyangro's manager was not in fact "Tibetan (番)," but rather a "Chinese monk (漢僧)" from Hezhou who had found refuge at Khagya monastery during the Muslim rebellions. On account of his profession he was welcomed and, "because he took over the task of leading troops and knew Chinese, he was appointed manager."⁹⁷⁷ The abbot from Terlung blamed the new "Chinese" manager for the subsequent feuds that had arisen between Khagya and its neighbors and for the subsequent litigiousness of the monastery. He requested, therefore, that, "Han who reside among Tibetans return to their native places and be forbidden from remaining in Tibetan territory."⁹⁷⁸ While one might interpret this statement as reflecting a desire that Tibetan regions remain ethnically exclusive, it is more likely that the petition was prompted by a straightforward wish to disarm Khagya of one of its most formidable weapons: its legal expertise.

⁹⁷⁷ QSDG (GX 14/05, 1888-6), 7-YJ-2687: 《札咱法台為遭驅逐上的稟》. This petition was submitted by a certain Zhazan abbot, whom remains to be positively identified in Tibetan.

⁹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* "現將駐番汗民飭歸本籍，不容番地留止等情。"

The Rong’ar headman was perhaps damned by his silence. Although it is unknown what lessons other local elites drew from his misfortune, the archival record reveals that in subsequent cases it was very unusual to not hear from both/multiple sides. To the extent that certain litigants might pursue tactics of evasion or delay, it was rare for them not to submit petitions or statements to investigating clerks from the subprefect’s yamen. But why did the Qing abruptly decide to establish a “general administration” under the Sétsang lama?

In a recent article on this subject, Yang Hongwei has argued that the decision was motivated by a desire to blunt the expansion of Labrang monastery. Citing the close historical ties between the Gyangro reincarnation lineage and Labrang monastery—the fourth generation (1773-1850) and fifth generation (1851-1928) Gyangro tulku had both been educated at Labrang and the fourth had even served as its abbot, he posits that the move was designed to arrest, for the time being, any further deepening of ties between the two monasteries.⁹⁷⁹ Yang’s argument rests on quotations from assessments of the case made by a subsequent Xunhua subprefect in 1891.⁹⁸⁰ The 1891 statement demonstrates that Qing officials thought of themselves as engaged in a systematic program of containment. However, while the sentiments expressed in this statement are quite representative of official reports on Tibetan affairs in the 1890s, the archival record from 1873-1875 contains no such language. In fact there is no mention of Labrang in any context related the Khagya-Rong’ar conflict. The silence of the official record concerning

⁹⁷⁹ Yang Hongwei, “Shagou zongguan shezhi yu qingdai xunhuating suo xia zangqu zuqun zhengce (The establishment of the Shagou zongguan and ethnic policies in the Tibetan regions of Xunhua subprefecture during the Qing period),” *Shixue yuekan* 12 (2012): 62.

⁹⁸⁰ Yang Hongwei (2012), 61. QSDG (GX 17/10/03, 1891-11-04), 7-YJ-2985: 《循化廳為番僧調查卡家一案給憲台的詳報》.

Labrang and any possible connections it might have had to either the Gyangro tulku or the Khagya community more broadly is all the more remarkable because Labrang was very much in the official eye from the fall of 1874 through the summer of 1875. During this period Labrang and Rongwo were openly engaged in armed hostilities in which both the Xunhua subprefect and the Qinghai amban also attempted mediation.⁹⁸¹

While Yang's interpretation cannot be entirely disallowed, in their reports to superiors, Anfu and Shen Yusui present their course of action not as a strategic move but rather as a seemingly workable expedient: They had become apprised that the Sétsang had historical ties to the monastery and, perhaps more importantly, their consultations with managers from all three of the monasteries involved affirmed the acceptability of the third Sétsang lama. That Qing officials abruptly turned to the Sétsang lama in 1875 was no coincidence. According to modern Tibetan sources, only a year earlier, in the winter of 1873-1874 the lama had finally returned to his home monastery after well over a decade of sojourning among Tibetan Buddhist communities elsewhere in the empire. Moreover, the kūtuktu was a known figure from the official perspective. He had a history of service to the Qing court (he had been present at the wedding of the Tongzhi emperor in 1872) as well as within the Ganden Podrang government in Lhasa, and officials in the provincial capital had feted his return to Gansu.⁹⁸² The appointment of this lama as the "general administrator" of this broad swath of territory in Xunhua subprefecture was therefore an obvious choice.

⁹⁸¹ See for instance the following document for an account of a particularly successful raid on Rongwo by forces from Labrang: QSDG (TZ 13/10/14) 6-YJ-187: 《隆務寺為所屬被拉卜楞寺番子搶劫上循化廳的稟》.

⁹⁸² Zhou Ta and Chen Xiaoqiang, *De'erlong si yu libei saicang huofo*, 66.

As in the case of the Gyangro tulku in 1873, the appointment of the Sétsang lama to the position of *zongguan* entailed more than just the recognition of the status quo political situation. On the contrary, in each instance, the appointment of a tulku to political rule resulted in the articulation of political claims that were highly controversial and exposed underlying tensions over the interpretation of the complex relationships that entwined monks and their lay supporters and, at a larger scale, monasteries to other monasteries. Such tensions and their resulting conflicts predated the Qing administration (as demonstrated by the origins of the feud between Tsö and Labrang). But the Qing administrative apparatus provided a new forum (the *yamen*) in which to contest the meanings of these relationships. As for the Gyangro and Sétsang lamas in 1873 and 1875, their confirmation as political “headmen” by the Qing forced moments of reckoning. The communities of Menlung, Tangkar, and Xiangka, for instance, had over time accumulated a variety of obligations to reincarnate monks affiliated with Khagya monastery, most importantly the Gyangro and Sétsang lineages. In 1873, however, the Gyangro tulku repeatedly and quite successfully made the argument that his routine receipt of goods from places such Menlung was evidence of an exclusive political relationship.⁹⁸³ The detailed nature of the agreement that was temporarily accepted in 1874 is a reflection of the degree to which it had become necessary to carefully document each relationship (such as water exchanges and labor service during the Monlam festival) and interpret its political implications. In approving the establishment of the Sétsang lama as *zongguan* of Khagya three years later, Zuo Zongtang and subsequently the Qing court implicitly (if not explicitly) accepted the argument that the historical existence of the

⁹⁸³ With regards to Gyangro’s claim to Menlung, see: QSDG (TZ 13/11) 6-YJ-350: 《卡加寺千戶捏力哇為隆哇抗頑不遵官命呈循化廳新任同知的稟》.

Sétsang lama's estate at Khagya legitimated his political supervision. The appointment of Sétsang also implied a hierarchy of patronage relationships: the relationship between lay people in Khagya to Sétsang took priority to their relationship to Gyangro.

The Qing knew that the 1875 resolution of the Khagya-Rong'ar conflict was tenuous at best. Moreover, the Sétsang lama had also been the lynchpin in working out peace between Rongwo, the Henan Mongols, and Labrang since returning to Amdo. Therefore, when the Sétsang lama passed away 1877, the Qinghai amban put his officials on alert.⁹⁸⁴ Sure enough, just eight days later the subprefect was issuing orders to his runners to investigate reports from Khagya that they had been raided by men from Terlung and Rong'ar.⁹⁸⁵ Two months later, an elder from Khagya reported six people killed by raiders from Terlung and Rong'ar and demanded the subprefect "take charge" and investigate the case.⁹⁸⁶ By the next year, the magistrate was receiving reports (again via the governor-general) from Khagya that over a thousand armed men from Terlung and Rong'ar had gone on the offensive and killed several people, including a chiliarch allied to Khagya.⁹⁸⁷ Not to be out litigated or underrepresented, this time Terlung also submitted petitions to Xunhua stating the righteousness of their actions under Qing law. They explained that according to the "royal statutes (王章)" (i.e., the 1875 settlement),

⁹⁸⁴ QSDG (GX 03/06/04, 1877-07-14), 7-YJ-2665: 《青海大臣豫為蒙番爭鬥給循化廳的批》. Zhou Ta and Chen Xiaoqiang provide a different date for the death of the third Sétsang lama. They write that he departed Amdo in 1877 and died in Alashan in 1879 (67).

⁹⁸⁵ QSDG (GX 03/06/12), 7-YJ-3131: 《循化廳飭差查辦南番卡加與沙溝事》.

⁹⁸⁶ QSDG (GX 03/08/05), 7-YJ-3131: 《卡加為受隆哇、沙溝攻打懇恩作主事》.

⁹⁸⁷ QSDG (GX 04/01/17), 7-YJ-2670: 《陝甘總督為查辦隆哇、卡家番案的札》.

they had attempted to exercise their right to appoint monks as overseers at Khagya, yet these monks had been harassed and had been unable to conduct their affairs.⁹⁸⁸

Adjudication was protracted and often violent. In May of 1878, in the presence of three companies of cavalry from Hezhou lead again by Ma Zhan'ao, and under the supervision of the subprefect and the garrison commander, unidentified “village elders” worked out a framework for Terlung to compensate Khagya for the murders. However, the implementation of the settlement proved problematic as Terlung dragged their feet on making the repayments. Meanwhile, the magistrate struggled to persuade Khagya to respect the manager from Terlung. When Terlung failed to completely compensate Khagya within the time allotted by the 1878 agreement, Khagya took matters into its own hands, attacking Terlung monastery in April of 1879. Khagya seems to have extracted a calculated toll from Terlung, killing just two and ensuring that the overall balance of dead still held in their favor. Finally, in May and June a veritable host of “Tibetan and Han village elders (番漢鄉老)” including the manager from Tsö monastery and shifting list of “Han” who were all clearly Muslims,⁹⁸⁹ signed their names to a series of pledges that resulted in a comprehensive program of compensation between the warring parties (in the balance, Khagya gained from the transaction).⁹⁹⁰

⁹⁸⁸ QSDG (GX 04/04/02, 1878-05-03), 7-YJ-3135: 《覆懇稟僧隆務昂鎖、沙溝寺捏力娃稟卡加搶殺事》.

⁹⁸⁹ For example, among the witnesses who signed the pledges on GX 05/04/03 were: “番漢鄉老人馬連喜、馬海隆、馬進忠、馬福望、黑錯捏力哇、阿群佛爺、馬仲有、辛六十保.”

⁹⁹⁰ QSDG (GX 05/04/03, 1879-5-23), 7-YJ-2676: 《沙溝所立永遠和氣字據》，《卡加為與沙溝和解所立字據》. QSDG (GX 05/05/08, 1879-6-27), 7-YJ-2676: 《番漢鄉老為解說調節經過上的稟》. QSDG (GX 05/05/09) 7-YJ-2676: 《沙溝、卡加所具結案甘結》.

The final settlement(s) contained no reference to the friction arising from the fact that, since 1875 Khagya monastery had in effect two masters: The Sétsang lama and subsequently the manager of his estate, and the Gyangro chiliarch/tulku. According to a remarkably frank analysis of his community's relationship to the Sétsang lama written around 1890, the manager of the Gyangro estate explained to Qing officials that, in practice, in accordance with the principle that "each monastery should govern itself," the Gyangro tulku/chiliarch remained de-facto in charge of affairs in-and-around Khagya monastery. The manager recognized, however, the Qing-accorded authority of the Sétsang estate to overall supervision, especially with regard to major matters involving Khagya and outside communities, and also continued to raise revenue from its own estates in Khagya. Yet the Terlung manager had little permanent administrative apparatus in Khagya.⁹⁹¹ Under this modus operandi, peace held for a decade. This arrangement began to fray, however, in the late 1880s after the fourth Sétsang tulku died prematurely at the age of nine in 1886. The lack of an adult Sétsang lama to inhabit the role of general administrator exposed the institution—and the accord that had established it—to increasingly diverse and incompatible interpretations among the partisans of the Sétsang estate at Terlung monastery and partisans of the Gyangro tulku/Khagya chiliarch.

Case Study Three: Mass Mobilization and Mass Litigation, 1889-1891

From 1889 through 1891, the Tibetan regions of Xunhua and Taozhou subprefectures experienced a paroxysm of generalized conflict on an unprecedented

⁹⁹¹ QSDG (undated, probably GX 16), 7-YJ-2678: 《卡家江洛捏力哇格勒漢堅相錯供稱與歲倉關係》.

scale. The way in which litigants and Qing officials discussed the violence and the reasons behind it was also distinct—at least in comparison to the feuds of the late Tongzhi and early Guangxu reigns. As argued in the previous section, Xunhua was certainly not conflict free in the aftermath of the Muslim Rebellions, but disputes like the one between Khagya, Rong’ar and Terlung, or between Tibetans from Repgong and the domains of the Khoshot Mongol princes to the southwest were handled without reference to the idea that the region was split between two grand confederations. In 1889, feuds that began in Terlung and Khagya, were quickly discussed by both Tibetans and Qing officials for indications of machinations by “great powers”—either Labrang monastery or the triumvirate of Rongwo, Tsö, and Terlung monasteries.

As discussed above, alliances between monasteries and, perhaps more aptly, reincarnate lineages, had begun to form during the late eighteenth century as conflicts stemming from the controversy over the reincarnation of the first Jamyang Zhepa began to split Labrang from Terlung and Tsö monasteries. Litigation before Qing magistrates further formalized and shaped this schism when it resulted in written “decisions (斷, or 碣判)” or “articles (章程):” in 1790, the Qing had prevented Labrang from appointing further abbots at Tsö, in 1807 Nayanceng delegated the governance of all the “western Tibetans” to Rongwo,⁹⁹² and in 1846 provincial officials placed Tsö formally under the supervision of Rongwo. The Qing official practice of requesting well-respected monks and/or lay “elders” to mediate disputes in other communities brought further “structure” to inter-community relations, helping to transform informal affiliations into formal alliances. In 1873, for instance, the Qing officials acknowledged no formal political

⁹⁹² Nayanceng, “會同寧夏將軍興公奎、陝甘總督長公齡奏為籌議西寧善後章程” (JQ 12/09/12, 1807-10-12), reproduced in Song Tingsheng, *Nayancheng pingfan zouyi*, 68.

hierarchy between Rongwo and disputants in Khagya and Rong’ar, yet the repeated Qing-sanctioned involvement of the Rongwo nangso and tulku from Tsö in the ongoing Khagya-Rong’ar-Terlung feuds established patterns of informal oversight that were cited as evidence for formal, state-sanctioned alliances in the 1880s. Yet there were countervailing developments that helped maintain networks of patronage, pilgrimage, study, and commerce among the Gelukpa monasteries of Xunhua. For instance, the third Jamyang Zhepa was born to the family of the leading reincarnation of Rongwo monastery. The oft-cited principle that “each monastery should govern only itself” also seems to have preserved the ability of smaller monasteries/communities to retain ties to a variety of different monasteries (case in point: Khagya monastery from 1875-1889).

However, in documents from the late 1880s on, the meaning of *ge guan ge si* (各管各寺) seems to have been more consistently interpreted as “each monastery shall govern its own monasteries.” Locals and colonial officials shared the conviction that all communities in Xunhua belonged either to Labrang or Rongwo. According to the Shartsang Rinpoche of Rongwo monastery, the notion that monasteries, monks, and lay communities could exist somehow outside these two confederations was an absurdity. In a letter to the Xunhua subprefect in 1889, the Rongwo nangso wrote:

Labrang is no different from the royal [Qing] law, it possesses its own jailers and indiscriminately detains Tibetans, Han and Hui. The fact that Tibetans from all over become his tax paying subjects and do his bidding is simply a matter of making vassals (栓頭) out of the poor and weak.

Everywhere [Labrang] goes it purchases commoners with cash. If there is no royal law, the poor and desperate will seek out his money and become his subjects. Your royal law not only does not govern him, but it is said that all his instruments of torture and coercion are permitted under the royal law! My Rongwo monastery is just like your Labrang. We also

possess three thousand lamas and ourselves supervise numerous headmen. And just like your Labrang, I will also take matters into my own hands.⁹⁹³

Couched in sarcastic derision of the Qing and the usurpation of imperial prerogatives by Labrang, the Rongwo nangso hereby warned the Xunhua subprefect that in the absence of imperial power (王法), the region was fast being carved into two opposing camps. According to the nangso, “everyone must serve a master, everyone is a vassal.” Some of the subordinates of the Repgong nangso, in a separate petition, described local affairs to the subprefect in much starker terms: “We're just Tibetans living in a dog-eat-dog world. We don't understand the underlying principles and can only beg for Your Honor's mercy.”⁹⁹⁴ Intense competition between monastic confederations led to heightened scrutiny of the political status of both reincarnate monks and lay communities. The new concern with identifying clear and exclusive lines of authority between subjects and rulers of monastic domains is marked in the archival record by the emergence of a new term to describe this relationship, “*shuantou* (栓頭／拴頭).” This term, unique to the legal discourse of Xunhua subprefecture from the 1880s-on, functions as both noun and verb, meaning, respectively “vassalage” (as in “栓頭關係”) and “to

⁹⁹³ QSDG (GX 15/08/29), 7-YJ-4535: 《沙力倉昂鎖等為拉卜楞私設監獄上循化廳的稟》：“沙力倉昂鎖等在命主大老爺上具的稟，拉卜楞與王法一樣，做有監獄者哩，將番漢回俱都禁押者哩。各處番子隨他當百姓納糧派差事的話，弱人大家栓頭哩，各處給銀錢買百姓哩。若莫有王法，是各貧人圖他的銀錢者，成他的百姓哩。你們王法亦不管他，說各樣刑具是王法們准哈這哩，我隆務寺，你拉布塄一樣這哩，我也有三千喇嘛哩，也管的頭人多，我照你拉布塄也要有行事的，求施恩。”

⁹⁹⁴ QSDG (GX 09), 7-YJ-2729: 《勒工十二族頭人等所供案情》：“小的們是番子，狗咬狗的，不懂理性哩，求施恩哩。” Note the use of the character *li* (哩). It marks the Tibetan verb “*ré*” (“to be,” “is,” “yes,” Tib. *red*) that is used at the end of many speech patterns in colloquial Amdo Tibetan. The use of this character indicates that the statement is transcribed from an oral testimony. It simultaneously serves to denote the difference of Tibetans and Tibetan language from the Han.

make a vassal” (see for instance the above quote from the Rongwo nangso). It is also has profoundly negative connotations.⁹⁹⁵ In most usages, to “*shuantou*” is to illegally subjugate individuals and communities for nefarious purposes. In the context of identifying and disputing the status of vassals, acts such as pilgrimage and almsgiving, participating in festivals, studying at neighboring monasteries and bonds of discipleship, were scanned for signs of *shuantou*. It was precisely in this politicization of religious activities and relationships that the litigation and violence of 1889-1891 originated.

Round One, 1889: “A Man Cannot Serve Two Masters”

According to the Terlung *zongguan*, who at the time was also the overall manager (Tib. *gnyer les pa*, 挹力哇) of the Sétsang kūtuktu’s estate,⁹⁹⁶ the trouble began with the *honpo* (“headman,” Tib. *dpon po*, Ch. 紅布) of the hamlet of Dangang (Tib. ?, Ch. 旦剛, 當剛, 丹果庄, 登果庄).⁹⁹⁷ The *zongguan* claimed the Dangang community as belonging to Terlung and that the headman had been induced with the promise of much financial reward to *shuantou* his community to the Jamyang Zhepa: “The Gyangro manager and the Dangang honpo [along with several other local leaders, including Pöntsang Lumogya] decided to sell the subjects of Sigou [寺溝, a place name] to Labrang and had received a

⁹⁹⁵ These connotations may stem from the root usage of the character *shuan* (拴): “to fasten” or “tie down,” usually used in Gansu to refer to tying down pack animals or attaching draft oxen to ploughs. “栓” and “拴” seem to be used interchangeably in official documents.

⁹⁹⁶ The fourth generation Sétsang lama had just recently passed away at the age of eight the year earlier (1888). The fifth Sétsang Lama (1889-1936) was perhaps not even born yet when the crisis began.

⁹⁹⁷ In the archival documents, “Dangang” alternately refers to the hamlet of which the *honpo* was in charge or is used as the personal name of the *honpo*.

lot of money. When Dangang tried to present his uncle Qilao [七老] with a portion of the money, the latter man was unwilling to accept it. Therefore [Dangang] killed him.”⁹⁹⁸

Runners from the Xunhua subprefect’s yamen confirmed parts of this story and added further details: “According to the report of a *xiejia* named Mama’erli (馬麻二力), the Khagya manager avariciously accepted bribes from Labrang and mischievously persuaded the headman of Qiexiantan [且先灘, i.e. Dangang] to lead his subjects (百姓) to submit to Labrang. He also convinced the woman headman of Wangga’tan (汪尕灘) to submit half of her subjects to Labrang. This resulted in Terlung mobilizing its troops and killing the Qiexiantan headman Dangang, torching his home, burning to death his wife, and murdering of two of their servants. At this, the Gyangro manager called up troops from Labrang and led them through Terlung to Nanmula [elsewhere “Labula”] where they killed one commoner and burned several homes. Terlung was enraged and planned on attacking both Qiexiantan and the female headman in Wangga’tan. However, I was able to convince Terlung to hold back.”⁹⁹⁹

Matters, however, quickly escalated and spread beyond the original points of conflict in upper and lower Labula, a string of agricultural villages located in the valley of the Sangchu River between Labrang and Terlung. The *xiejia* noted that the Gyangro manager had persuaded the Jamyang Zhepa to call up a “large military force” from its allies at Amchok, Mewo, Bora, and Khagya.¹⁰⁰⁰ Less than a month after the murder of Dangang on June 6, 1889 (GX 15/05/11), military forces allied to Labrang launched an

⁹⁹⁸ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2679: 《沙溝寺總管為起事緣由上的稟》.

⁹⁹⁹ QSDG (GX 15/05/26), 7-YJ-2686: 《循化廳為差傳拉卜楞寺香措捏力哇事》. The name Mama’erli suggests that this *xiejia* was Hui.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

attack on Tsö that resulted in the destruction of several hamlets on June 28 and 29 (GX 15/05/29, GX 15/06/01).¹⁰⁰¹ Rongwo responded in kind. Forces from Terlung, Hortsang, and Rong’ar rushed to the defense of Tsö while Rongwo’s militia launched a direct attack on Labrang, arriving during the night of July 14 (GX 15/06/17).¹⁰⁰² As the Qinghai amban and the governor-general later wrote in a memorial to Beijing, “From the 29th of the fifth month [June 27] through the latter half of the sixth month [July], the Southern and Western Tibetans from near and far engaged in a spree of arson and murder along a three to four-hundred *li* front. The conflagration burned with an intensity that proved nearly impossible to extinguish.”¹⁰⁰³ The fighting was only brought to an end when official troops from the Hezhou garrison under the command of Shen Futian (沈福田) arrived at Labrang and Tsö and inserted themselves between the warring parties, thus buying time for negotiations.¹⁰⁰⁴

According to the Rongwo nangso, who frequently spoke for Terlung and Tsö in subsequent litigation before provincial officials, the matter should have rested after the killing of Dangang. His death was justified in light of his insubordinate attempt to

¹⁰⁰¹ At the time the Rongwo nangso accused Labrang of abducting the Serkhri lama (age 13) from Tsö. QSDG (GX 15/08/23), 7-YJ-4535: 《隆務沙力倉昂鎖為拉卜楞攻打黑錯上的稟》.

¹⁰⁰² QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2678: 《會辦委員為照舊例查辦拉布楞搶殺黑錯的稟》. The losses suffered by Labrang during the attack were substantial. They are enumerated in great detail in: QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2681: 《查勘拉葛楞被隆務等番僧焚殺搶擄大概情形》.

¹⁰⁰³ QSDG (GX 16/01), 7-YJ-2965: 《陝甘總督楊、青海大臣薩為查明寺院構釁械鬥情形彈壓解散按照番例斷結恭折》.

¹⁰⁰⁴ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2684: 《會辦委員等為各處均已退兵上的稟》. Tsö later thanked the governor-general for dispatching troops and claimed that they had arrived just in time to prevent “20,000 troops from Labrang” from destroying them. They also described how they organized the escape of the young Serkhri incarnation to Choné. See: QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2689: 《黑錯寺給陝甘總督的謝恩稟》.

shuantou his people to Labrang. Therefore, the matter was really an internal one: “Their killing one of their own men is a matter with which Labrang had no right to interfere.”¹⁰⁰⁵

The Shartsang nangso of Repgong and the monks of Rongwo monastery portrayed the whole affair as stemming from the hegemonic desires of the Jamyang Zhepa: “That Jamyang Zhepa of Labrang may be a lama who knows his scriptures, but he isn't the lord of all places.”¹⁰⁰⁶ In a separate letter to the governor-general, they then called for his arrest and punishment:

The Jamyang of Labrang has been specially designated a living Buddha whose merit-making and recitation of scriptures blesses and protects those of all directions. Yet in order to take possession of monasteries subordinate to the Sétsang lama and the people of the Dangang headman, he mobilized the military strength of Bora, Amchok, and upper and lower Sangke and on June 27 attacked Zogé Geshi tribe, killing many people...[Several additional crimes are listed.] In this way Labrang ignores the royal law and brings disaster to the common people. As for the truth of these matters, just ask your local tax-collecting officials who know all about it... We dare to guarantee that in the region of Rongwo of Repkong there are no bandits. If the government can find any, you may harshly punish them in accordance with official statutes. Labrang, however, pays no heed to the royal law and I hope that Your Honor the Governor-General will judge this clearly. We only hope that Labrang will abide by the law and not oppress our weak tribes. How could we not obey the principles of the government's commands? We only hope that the governor-general will arrest the Jamyang Zhepa [and other Tibetan rulers], bring them to account for their crimes and return the ten tribes of Terlung and Rongwo to us Repgong. Thus we obey all your commands and will not trespass on our oaths.¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰⁵ QSDG (GX 15/08/23), 7-YJ-4755: 《隆務沙力倉工拭卜等所供旦剛紅布被殺及衝突事》. Accusation from Rongwo.

¹⁰⁰⁶ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ 4545: 《隆務沙力倉昂鎖控告拉布塄似的稟》:“拉卜塄寺加木樣，他不過是個念經的喇嘛，他不是各地方的主子。”

¹⁰⁰⁷ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-4542: 《隆務寺為受拉卜楞寺襲擊上陝甘總督的稟》. For further petitions from the Rongwo-Terlung faction, see: QSDG (GX 15/07/10), 7-YJ-4544: 《隆務寺沙力倉昂鎖為出兵事上的稟》(Concerns Rongwo's justifications for use of military force against Labrang); QSDG (GX 15/08/17), 7-YJ-4534: 《隆務寺昂鎖等因不滿官府處理上的告假稟》(Here, the Rongwo nangso disparage the local Qing officials for what they perceive as inept handling of the case so far.). For a petition from Tsö accusing the Qing officials of having

The Dangang honpo's view of this matter was unfortunately silenced before it could enter the official record. The “headwoman” of Wangga’tan, Pöntsang Lumogya (Tib. *dpon tshang klu mo rgyal?*, 還倉錄毛加/利毛加), however, along with “no small number of supporters,” had escaped to Labrang and survived to present their case to the magistrates.¹⁰⁰⁸ Lumogya and her supporters filed at least three briefs with the committee of Qing officials delegated to adjudicate the dispute. In all three, they forcefully asserted the rightful independence of her community from the Sétsang estate and the Terlung *zongguan*. Lumogya stated that she was descended from a continuous line of lay rulers and that if the community was to be considered subject to any monastery or tulku’s estate, it would be to their own two monasteries (Tib. ?, 郭芒札倉/果拉寺 or 南拉貢色寺/拉不拉寺) and the A-qiong tulku (Tib. *A skyong?*, 阿琼活佛/喇嘛阿群). Other than requesting prayers or divinations from the Sétsang lama, her people “had not become his vassals (拴頭).”¹⁰⁰⁹ In one of the petitions, Lumogya and her co-petitioners wrote, “There has been only one *honpo* here and certainly none of your royal law!”¹⁰¹⁰ This manager [i.e. the *zongguan*] acts as if he is even more important than you officials! [His claims] are

double-standards when it came to dealing with Labrang, see QSDG (GX 15/08/15), 7-YJ-4534: 《黑錯稟控拉卜楞寺欺壓》.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Yu Kuilong, a member of committee delegated with the task of resolving the conflict reported that Lumogya had gone into hiding at Labrang, which “she relies on as if it was Mount Tai.” See: QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-4503: 《委員余魁龍給循化廳同知的函》.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Interestingly, the A-qun lama cited by Lumogya himself submitted a statement to the Qing adjudicators arguing that he was in fact subordinate to Terlung. See: QSDG (GX 15/07/18), 7-YJ-2679: 《阿郡馬喇嘛等為拉卜拉與拉卜楞無干上的稟》.

¹⁰¹⁰ By this phrase she means to complain that Qing officials have not sufficiently restrained the leaders of Terlung.

new roads [i.e. unprecedented]. According to the old rules, we've had successive generations of our own *honpo* and when the lay people had problems, it was our *honpo* who dealt with them. Terlung had nothing to do with it.”¹⁰¹¹ Lumogya concluded her own deposition by clarifying the nature of her relationship to Labrang and Rongwo:

According to the historical statutes, Rongwo has no authority over any matter large or small, as these matters are the prerogative of the headmen. Monasteries are just monasteries. They are places we travel to worship, offer tea, and recite sutras. This is not my first time to make a pilgrimage to Labrang. How can you tell me that prostrating before the Buddha is a bad thing? I have been coming to the monastery to worship the Buddha and make offerings for many years, along with all those other Tibetans (藏民!) who consider Lhasa, Kumbum and Labrang to be holy places of pilgrimage. This is simply established custom.¹⁰¹²

Representatives of the Sétsang lamas estates, she thus argued, had grossly misconstrued not only the nature of her community's relationship to the Sétsang lama, but also to Labrang and the Jamyang Zhepa. They currently resided at Labrang, she petitioned, because it had become unsafe to remain in their homes. She and her fellow petitioners hoped that “in your investigations, you Chinese officials (漢官) can accurately understand the matter.”¹⁰¹³

¹⁰¹¹ QSDG (GX 15/09/02), 7-YJ-4544: 《還倉錄毛加並眾人等在各委員大人、循化大老爺上具的稟》.

¹⁰¹² QSDG (GX 15), 7-4542: 《利毛加等為受隆務欺凌上的稟》：“我不是初次到拉卜楞朝拜，如果說叩頭拜佛也是壞事，那我到寺院朝拜獻茶由來已久，拉薩、塔爾寺、拉卜楞寺是我全體藏民朝拜的聖地，這是老規矩了。”

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid.*

The statements above are drawn largely from petitions (稟) collected by the Xunhua subprefect Cangyun (長贊, served 1886-1894) and Zhang Shixi (張時熙)¹⁰¹⁴ after their arrival at Labrang in July (GX 15/06/04, 1889-7-1). Over the next several months the committee of Qing officials held court first at Labrang and subsequently in the subprefectural yamen in order to adjudicate the status of Dangang, Wangga'tang, and a handful of other communities or individual “tea-service tenant households” (Ch. 煮茶佃戶). In addition to the testimony of Lumogya and elders from her community, the two magistrates also met with the Jamyang Zhepa, the steward, and other members of the monastery’s governing assembly.¹⁰¹⁵ According to a subsequent report from Cangyun, the Jamyang Zhepa held a formal audience with the Qing officials at noon on July 2, in the main prayer hall of the monastery. The kūtuktu was seated on his primary throne while the Qing officials were arranged formally before him in rows to the left and right (lit. “to the east and west”). The monk then produced several Tibetan-language documents written on yellow silk issued by successive Dalai Lamas and the Changkya kūtuktus during the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong reigns. Of these, the subprefect

¹⁰¹⁴ Zhang Shixi appears to have been a magistrate-in waiting (候補知縣). The archives of the Xunhua subprefecture reveal numerous situations in which officials-in-waiting (候補官) were appointed to committees (委員會) tasked with investigating and adjudicating conflicts in Xunhua and Qinghai. It seems that successive governor-generals maintained large staffs of “officials-in-waiting” in Lanzhou and relied heavily on them for dealing with frontier issues and coordinating between the military garrisons in Hezhou and Xining. Several of the officials who performed “committee work” in Xunhua subsequently garnered actual posts as district magistrates, Xining prefect, or Xining circuit intendant. The right to appoint officials in Xunhua, Guide, Taozhou and other subprefectures on the Sino-Tibetan frontier was held by the Xining amban and governor-general of Shaanxi and Gansu, not by the Board of Civil Appointments in Beijing. For further information on the roots and expansion of appointment prerogatives, see: R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and their Provinces* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

¹⁰¹⁵ According to some reports, the Jamyang Zhepa was not in residence at Labrang when the violence first began, rather he was itinerating in the Mongol territories. It appears that he returned to the monastery at about the same time as the Qing officials arrived.

noted that the second and third documents had been issued by the Changkya Kūtuktu and recognized Labrang's control over Hortsang, Tsö, Khagya, Terlung, parts of Bayanrong subprefecture (north of the Yellow River across from Xunhua), as well as “a large number of territories in Sichuan, Tibet, Taozhou, and Minzhou.” Cangyun noted that these were the documents that had previously surfaced when the Qing adjudicated the Tsö-Labrang conflict in 1790: “These were items that had never been handed over when the former governor-general had requested that the Qinghai amban close the case. And that monastery has continuously considered them to be sacred objects.”¹⁰¹⁶ The Jamyang Zhepa also presented as evidence a document originally composed by Xie Huan, the provisional subprefect in 1777 who, as can be recalled from the gazetteer, had acted in favor of Labrang. Much like the certificates from the Changkya Kūtuktu, Cangyun notes that this document also, “after 1790 should have been handed over for annulment yet had not been.” The fourth Jamyang Zhepa was able to provide one further Jiaqing-period (JQ 20, 1815) certificate issued by the Xunhua subprefect and two local military officers stating that Terlung, Rong’ar, and Khagya all belonged to Labrang. However, Cangyun dismissed the document since it lacked official rescripts. He wondered:

If this is really an official decision, there should be a record on file. How could it only be preserved in the hands of this monk? Moreover, it also lacks any official stamp and has contains no mark of the governor-general. With just a glance one can tell that it is inadmissible as evidence. However, [the Jamyang Zhepa] considers it a treasured possession and if I alone were to point out that it is nothing but waste paper, he would have become deeply embittered and it would have been impossible to set him at ease.

¹⁰¹⁶ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2678: 《會辦番案委員等為赴拉布楞查辦情形上的稟》. It is possible that the Jamyang Zhepa also submitted a written attestation of these claims at this time. See: QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-4643: 《拉卜楞寺為黑錯族屬上的稟》. The Jamyang Zhepa is quite straightforward in this petition, stating, “This year, since it was determined that [the people of] Tsö were still my tribes, I punished them.”

Therefore I ordered my accompanying secretary to carefully transcribe each document and I have submitted them to you for further appraisal.¹⁰¹⁷

The subprefect continued his description of the audience by reporting that he confronted the monk with the partiality of its position and records. “[I] asked why it was that despite the possession of the document from 1777, they had not administered Tsö monastery.” To this, the Jamyang Zhepa responded by accusing Terlung of violently expropriating territory from Labrang. The subprefect then reported that he had reminded the monk that Labrang had not been the only victim of violence: “Not only has your monastery, on the basis of waste paper accumulated over many years seized the land and subjects of others, you have also purposely committed arson and murder at Tsö monastery. Are you the only one without guilt?”¹⁰¹⁸ Furthermore, he pointed out that the Jamyang Zhepa had been “not more than three or four postal stations from the monastery” and thus would have been well informed about the attack launched by Labrang on Tsö. The Jamyang Zhepa replied that he had indeed been in contact with the monastery throughout the violence, but had “not expected the troublemaking to rise to the degree that it did.”¹⁰¹⁹ Cangyun concluded the report by noting that despite the Jamyang Zhepa’s concerns that the Qing was not partial either in this case, he had been persuaded that the committee of Qing officials offered the most promising forum for a fair hearing: “The Jamyang Zhepa said, ‘With regards to this case I request that your Honors take charge

¹⁰¹⁷ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2678: 《會辦番案委員等為赴拉布塄查辦情形上的稟》.

¹⁰¹⁸ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2678: 《會辦番案委員等為赴拉布塄查辦情形上的稟》.

¹⁰¹⁹ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2678: 《會辦番案委員等為赴拉布塄查辦情形上的稟》.

and I will necessarily observe the decision. After Rongwo has presented its case, we will also come to court.”¹⁰²⁰

Of course, this letter is not a verbatim stenograph of the meeting with the Jamyang Zhepa. However, although Cangyun reconstructed this transcript of this “interrogation” of the Jamyang Zhepa for the benefit of the governor-general and, it might be added, his own career, the letter does reveal that Labrang did possess an archive of Qing documents and was prepared to muster them in defense of its claims. Labrang ultimately did submit several petitions stating its claim to Tsö and other contested territories that have been preserved in the archival record.¹⁰²¹ This report, as well as several others from the same period, also reveals the centrality of the 1791 *Xunhua Gazetteer* to Qing official understandings of Tibetan and Mongol affairs in Xunhua.

The subprefect reported that they brought with them what official documents they could find that might shed light on the political arrangements of Labrang and its neighbors. Perhaps because the subprefecture lacked archival sources from prior to the Muslim rebellions, for Cangyun and Zhang Shixi, the authoritative record was Gong Jinghan’s *Xunhua Gazetteer*, which Zhang brought with him in his luggage.¹⁰²² Upon arrival at Labrang one of the first acts of the investigating officials was to read aloud the

¹⁰²⁰ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2678: 《會辦番案委員等為赴拉布楞查辦情形上的稟》.

¹⁰²¹ See for instance: QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2678: 《拉卜楞寺為黑錯族屬上的稟》. In this document the petitioners from Labrang cite several Qing decisions (QL 37, 42) as evidence of prior Qing sanction of their claims. With regards to the Jiaqing-era decision to pass the supervision of Tsö to Rongwo, they write: “During the Jiaqing reign the four valleys of Tsö again changed their allegiance, this time going to Rongwo in Bao’an. After this official troops again arrived and after learning of [Tsö’s] error determined that they should again become a tribe subordinate to Labrang... This matter is on record with the officials [i.e., the Qing government at Xunhua]. After many years of not looking into this matter carefully, I recently discovered that Tsö was still one of my subordinate tribes, so I attacked Tsö.”

¹⁰²² QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2684: 《會辦委員等為請示辦結辦法上的稟》.

pertinent sections of the gazetteer to an assembly of monks. According an investigator's report, the reading, "sapped the anger from their hearts and as they subsequently understood the [true] facts of this matter were no longer willing to engage in violence."¹⁰²³

Yet, as Cangyun himself admitted in a memorandum for fellow officials concerning the resolution of the case, the nature of Xunhua subprefecture's jurisdiction over Labrang was not clearly stated in the gazetteer. After recalling Gong Jinghan's ambiguous formulation ("Labrang is within the territory of the subprefecture but not under the control of the subprefect"), Cangyun wrote, "According to the gazetteer, during the Qianlong reign it is said that each served itself (各服). Therefore I do not know when it entered the registry (jurisdiction?) of the subprefecture, nor are there any cases that I can check."¹⁰²⁴ Still, neither Cangyun nor his colleague Zhang doubted the legitimacy of their presence at the monastery. In a separate report to superiors, Zhang wrote that the arrival of the subprefect calmed what had been an extremely tense situation. "The monks of Labrang," he noted, "all felt that the Jamyang Zhepa had not handled things well, but in order to spare his feelings, spoke up for him and helped him explain the situation." In fact, Zhang came to the conclusion that there were many in the monastery who wished that a Qing official would reside permanently at the monastery, as a "protective talisman."¹⁰²⁵

¹⁰²³ QSDG (GX 15/07/08), 7-YJ-2678: 《為在拉布塄訪問情形上的肅稟》.

¹⁰²⁴ QSDG (15/06/10), 7-YJ-2681: 《循化同知長為續報查拉布塄焚殺勒降緊急情形》.

¹⁰²⁵ QSDG (GX 15/07/08), 7-YJ-2678: 《為在拉布塄訪問情形上的肅稟》.

The gazetteer's account of Labrang monastery, the Jamyang Zhepa, and the history of their conflict with Tsö monastery strongly influenced deliberations among Qing officials as they weighed their options for handling the conflict of 1889. In his letters from Labrang, Cangyun made it plain that he would neither recognize Labrang's claim to Tsö nor reverse what he understood from the gazetteer as an overall policy of "restraining the Jamyang Zhepa."¹⁰²⁶ However, he also informed his superiors that the situation in Xunhua was fundamentally different from the 1790s. Whereas during the early Jiaqing reign Labrang "relied on the power of the [Khoshot Mongol] *junwang* to vie with the Tibetans for territory," seventy years later, "the monastery has expanded to over sixty temples inhabited by numerous Tibetan and Mongol kūtuktus and their entourages. Its prestige and power ever increase and it bursts with prosperity. In its struggle for Tibetan territory it continues to broaden its reach and its avarice is insatiable."¹⁰²⁷ For Cangyun, Labrang was no longer simply a "Mongol" monastery administered and potentially restrained by the Khoshot princes. "Originally a Mongol monastery, now that the Mongols have weakened, the monastery grows stronger by the day."¹⁰²⁸ This transformation posed a thorny administrative problem: the Mongols could no longer be expected to control the monastery, but it was still distinct from the "tax-paying Tibetans" indirectly administered by the Xunhua subprefect. Moreover, the gazetteer offered no easy answers for how to adjudicate the current dispute over communities located in the valleys between Labrang, Terlung, Tsö, and Rongwo. In a private letter, Cangyun, speaking on behalf of the committee delegated with resolving the case, weighed the

¹⁰²⁶ QSDG (15/06/10), 7-YJ-2681: 《循化同知長為續報查拉布塄焚殺勒降緊急情形》.

¹⁰²⁷ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2684: 《會辦委員等為請示辦結辦法上的稟》.

¹⁰²⁸ QSDG (15/06/10), 7-YJ-2681: 《循化同知長為續報查拉布塄焚殺勒降緊急情形》.

dilemma for the governor-general, writing that approving Labrang's claims to communities in Khagya, Gyangro, and upper and lower Labula would garner compliance to an overall accord from Labrang, but “would not only mean discarding the license granted by the previous governor-general [i.e. the 1875 license granted by Zuo Zongtang to the Sétsang general administrator] as waste paper but would make it difficult for Tsö and Terlung to survive—an outcome Rongwo would not abide.”¹⁰²⁹ Moreover, Cangyun warned that they must avoid reproducing decisions such as that of Zuo Zongtong that oversimplified matters by granting whole districts such as Khagya to one side or the other. Any solution, Cangyun suggested, could only involve painstaking consultation with the “tax-collecting *xiejia* and villagers” who were familiar with “who governed each small place.”¹⁰³⁰ The magistrate was thus proposing a detailed survey of local Tibetan communities in order to assess their status relative to the two large confederations. One can imagine, however, that such a move only exacerbated the increasing politicization of rural life, as each “place” (“小地名,” a category that the magistrate leaves problematically undefined) was called on to declare its allegiance.

The committee of Qing officials brokered a final settlement between Labrang and the Rongwo-led alliance on October 10, 1889. In later years, this accord became known colloquially and in official Qing documents as the “White Earth Slope Case (白土坡案),” probably on the basis of the location where representatives from all parties met for final adjudication. I suspect that the site may have been below the white cliffs that loom over the northern limits of the Genkya grasslands—a broad stretch of pasture that lies at the

¹⁰²⁹ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2684: 《會辦委員等為請示辦結辦法上的稟》.

¹⁰³⁰ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2684: 《會辦委員等為請示辦結辦法上的稟》.

intersection of the main routes of communication between Labrang, Repgong, and Terlung. However, I have not yet located a precise description of the meeting point in official archives. In their own internal communications with provincial authorities, the committee wrote that it “decided the case according to the old cases from 1790, 1846, and 1875” and rejected the briefs brought by Labrang as “rubbish that is on the whole unreliable as evidence.” Although the committee faulted Terlung officials for their unauthorized murder of the Dangang *honpo*, they directed their censure primarily at the Jamyang Zhepa: “The Jamyang Zhepa of Labrang on the basis of a hundred years of worthless evidence sought to gobble up Tsö and recently colluded several times with Tibetan headmen from tribes subject to Terlung to establish relations of vassalage. They hoped to alter the statutes fixed by the decision of 1875. This created jealousy and animosity between the Tibetans and chiliararchs and managers of Terlung.”¹⁰³¹ The actual terms of the accord, however, were much more complex and offered a complete victory to neither Labrang nor Terlung monastery.

A copy of the accord appears to have survived in the Xunhua archives only in a fragmentary form. Several of the extant articles can be paraphrased as follows:

1. The Terlung manager Dajia (Tib. ? Possibly “Dargyé”, Ch. 大加) must make full restitution for the death of the Dangang *honpo*. Furthermore all the “incense grain” previously provided to Sétsang Lama of Terlung Monastery by the commoners governed by the *honpo* shall henceforth be due to the son of the *honpo*. The commoners shall also be governed by the son and shall serve as his support. Until the son becomes an adult and is tested for suitability as a Tibetan headman, the people of his patrimony shall be overseen by the Sétsang general administrator, who is not to abuse them.

¹⁰³¹ QSDG (GX 15) 7-YJ-2678: 《會辦委員為照舊例查辦拉布塄搶殺黑錯的稟》.

2. The son of Qilao (who was murdered by his nephew, the Dangang *honpo*) is currently being held by the Dangang household and shall be delivered to Terlung monastery.
3. With regards to Upper Labula, although previously the accord of 1875 decreed that the village was under the control of the Sétsang general administrator, this investigation has determined that prior to 1875 the village contained tenants (Ch. 佃戶) belonging to the estates (Lit. “nangchen,” Tib. *nang chen*, Ch. 昂欠) of reincarnate monks from Labrang, tenants belonging to estate of Terlung Monastery, as well as those who had been subjected (*shuantou’ed*) both to various estates at Labrang and to Terlung monastery. Following the accord of 1875, Terlung did not actually take control of this place according to proclamation. Yet recently the village was subjected to acts of arson and murder perpetrated by Rongwo monastery. Henceforth, the tax and labor obligations of commoners (百姓) in the area of Upper Labula shall be due directly to Xunhua subprefecture. Terlung monastery and estate-holders from Labrang, however, shall retain their rights to their original tenants (佃戶). But neither monastery is permitted to use force to levy additional funds from Upper Labula. Residents of the district are allowed to offer milk tea offerings at Labrang every five years, but Labrang shall not compel them to do so and neither shall Terlung obstruct their passage.
4. With regards to the woman headman Lumogya of Wangga’tan in Lower Labula: Originally she was a tenant (佃戶) of the estate of subordinate to Terlung monastery. Her ancestors offered alms to the monastery and were also effective rulers of local Tibetans. Their recent flight to Labrang was truly a result of their fear of misrule and assault at the hands of Terlung officials. According to statements, Terlung had previously taken possession of (*shuantou’ed*) over forty households from this village and two woodlots and had administered them for many years. On the basis of this history these will continue to be administered by Terlung. Yet if other households experience oppression from Terlung or are forcefully subjected (*shuantou’ed*), they are permitted to file suit with the subprefecture. The remaining hundred and ten households shall be managed by the Wangga’tan chief Lumogya. She shall receive official sanction as a hundred-household head. Yet in order to ensure that the Tibetan commoners are properly restrained, as before their overall administration shall be handled by the Sétsang kūtuktu. Lumogya must according to tradition continue to provide those alms that are due to the Sétsang kūtuktu.¹⁰³²

¹⁰³² QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-4723: 《因旦剛紅布被殺所起衝突的處理結果》.

The following two extant articles (Five and Six) concern arranging restitution between the various warring parties for loss of life, injuries, and physical damage to homes, religious structures, and crops according to “Tibetan custom (番俗).” On the basis of subsequent petitions from relevant parties such as Hortsang, Terlung, and Labrang reporting the exchange of reparations, one can assume that the missing articles laid out a fairly detailed and comprehensive tally of compensation requirements and schedules.¹⁰³³ Furthermore, in a jointly submitted memorial to the court in Beijing, the governor-general and the Qinghai amban reported that the accord had further stipulated that the managers of the concerned monasteries, including Terlung and Khagya, were to be replaced and never again serve in similar capacities.¹⁰³⁴

The terms of the agreement are significant in several respects. To begin with, despite a rhetorical posture of overall hostility to Labrang and other petitioners harbored and represented by the Jamyang Zhepa, the final accord did not grant Terlung monastery blanket authority to the contested region in the same way that Zuo Zongtang’s 1875 decision had. The descendants of the Dangang *honpo*, for instance, owed no further financial obligation to the Terlung Monastery and were promised a degree of political independence from Terlung as well, once the son of the Dangang *honpo* reached maturity. In the third article, the committee members also reduced the political authority of Terlung

¹⁰³³ The following document, for instance, reports the payment of reparations to Labrang by subordinates of Hortsang and Tsö: QSDG (GX 15/10), 7-YJ-2683: 《寺溝十頭、火力臧為賠當剛紅布銀兩上的稟》.

¹⁰³⁴ QSDG (GX 16/01) 7-YJ-2965: 《陝甘總督楊、青海大臣薩為查明寺院構釁械鬥情形彈壓解散按照番例斷結恭折》.

monastery by formally recognizing Labrang's claim to estates and tenants in Upper Labula. Moreover, the officials moved to place those Tibetans of this locale who were not tenants belonging to the estates of reincarnate lamas under the direct authority of Xunhua. In this respect, the accord marked a significant innovation over previous policies as the Qing officials were now distinguishing “commoner (百姓)” from “tenant (佃戶)” Tibetans. According to this clause, revenue from commoner households would henceforth no longer be divided between authorities in Terlung and Xunhua. In effect, the dynasty was now claiming direct ownership of these “commoner” households and creating what might be called “royal colonies” in the midst of other communities indirectly governed for the Qing by Terlung monastery and the Sétsang general administrator.¹⁰³⁵

The status of Tibetans subordinate to Rongwo and Terlung as “grain tax” Tibetans was not new. According to the *Xunhua Gazetteer*, the classification of Tibetans from Tsö, Khagya, and Repgong as “tax-paying commoners” was ultimately cited as the primary reason behind the decision to rule against Labrang's wish to appoint an abbot at Tsö.¹⁰³⁶ In 1889, the anti-Labrang faction adopted this principle as a key argument in their appeal for Qing intervention. For instance, in a petition to the Xunhua subprefect, three lamas from Hortsang (a district ostensibly under the jurisdiction of the Sétsang *zongguan*) wrote that “Hortsang is not willing to become the subjects of the great tulku of Labrang. Instead we should be considered commoners (百姓) of Xunhua subprefecture. The people of

¹⁰³⁵ The term “royal colony” or “crown colony” is borrowed from the vocabulary of the British Empire and suggests the sense of direct imperial or royal sovereignty over the people of the territory.

¹⁰³⁶ Gong Jinghan, 253.

Hortsang contend that a man cannot serve two masters... If one were to compel us to submit to Labrang, our opposition would be so strong that it would be easier to kill us!"¹⁰³⁷ This petition evidently made an impression as Cangyun quoted from it in subsequent reports to the governor-general.¹⁰³⁸ The petitioners' sentiment certainly echoed the notion held by Qing officials that Labrang should not be permitted to make inroads in those communities considered under the purview of Xunhua subprefecture. Yet the establishment of specific communities as directly ruled "royal colonies" was a novel and contingent (and perhaps an extreme not anticipated by petitioners from Hortsang themselves) outcome of the litigation process. In the early stages of litigation after first arriving at Labrang, Qing officials expressed no interest in establishing more direct rule over Tibetan communities in Upper Labula. This solution may have presented itself as the only feasible alternative to recognizing the claims of either Labrang or Terlung in their entirety. As will be discussed below, in the years after the White Earth Slope Accord, Qing officials increasingly adopted this expedient solution when faced with quarrels over people and land in Xunhua. Moreover, Tibetan communities that felt threatened by Labrang themselves advocated for and achieved status as royal colonies.

The 1889 accord also reveals an attempt by Qing officials to distinguish acts of piety such as alms-giving and pilgrimage from the obligations due from the tenants (or, dare I say, "serfs"?") of the corporate estates of reincarnate lamas ("*labrang*" or "*nangchen*"). Qing officials appreciated the degree to which the conflict between Labrang and its neighbors had been sparked by divergent interpretations of pilgrimage

¹⁰³⁷ QSDG (GX 15/06/06) 7-YJ-2681: 《橋溝三喇嘛為拉布塄強逼栓頭上的稟》.

¹⁰³⁸ QSDG (GX 15/6) 7-YJ-2681: 《循化同知長為續報查拉布塄焚殺勒降緊急情形》.

and donations to monastic estates in upper and lower Labula. In other words, the accord aimed to disentangle religious acts from political relationships. The accord clarified, for instance, that residents of Upper Labula had the right to travel unhindered to Labrang at regulated intervals and that such acts should not be confused with their political status vis-à-vis either the Qing state as subjects of the crown or as tenants of various estates.

Similarly, Qing officials appear to have been persuaded to some degree by the protestations of Lumogya and other elders from her community. While the fourth article of the accord did not formally recognize a right to pilgrimage to Labrang, it did affirm their assertion that their flight to Labrang had been mistaken for an act of political submission (*shuantou*). Article four not only recognized Lumogya's political authority but enhanced it: She was licensed as a hundred-household head within the *qianbaihu* system. Yet the nature of this authority was carefully parsed. Although her subjects were not *shuantou*'ed to the manager of Terlung monastery like the other forty households of Lower Labula, they were, however, still under the "general administration" of the Sétsang lama. This complicated arrangement of nested authorities most likely reflected an attempt at reaching a compromise between Labrang and Terlung. The discursive finesse of this clause conveyed a subtle distinction between the authority of the manager of Terlung monastery and the authority the Sétsang lama derived from his appointment to *zongguan* within the colonial bureaucratic apparatus. On paper, Lumogya and her subordinate households were independent of Terlung. Yet petitions from subsequent conflicts demonstrate that both partisans and opponents of Terlung saw little effective difference between the institution of the Sétsang *zongguan* and Terlung monastery. The Sétsang lama was the founder of the monastery and titular owner of its estates. Moreover,

during the 1880s through 1890s, in the absence of an adult Sétsang reincarnation (recall that the fourth Sétsang died in 1888 at the age of eight), monks from Terlung shouldered the responsibilities of the *zongguan*. Since Qing officials were surely not unaware of the fact that in 1889 the Sétsang lama was at best an infant, it is also possible to imagine that they thought that placing Lumogya under the overall supervision of the Sétsang *zongguan* was feasible precisely because there was in fact no genuine *zongguan*. Thus there might be little cause for conflict between the *zongguan* and Lumogya. Yet regardless, the blurred boundaries between Sétsang Kūtuktu and Terlung monastery and the ambiguous separation of administrative authority between Sétsang general administrator and local headmen/women such as Lumogya or the lay and ecclesiastical chiefs in Khagya proved an ongoing source of conflict and litigation.

In the White Earth Slope Accord, Qing officials attempted to deliver peace by clarifying local relationships and inscribing them in imperially-sanctioned charters. Although it might be possible to interpret this process as an example of what James C. Scott has described as the desire of modernizing states to make society more “legible” and thus more readily governable, the above account of the attempt to make Tibetan society “legible” to the Qing state stresses the degree to which this process was driven from the bottom-up by local events and indigenous interests.¹⁰³⁹ Rather than resulting from the initiatives of a centralizing state, this charter (or perhaps “masterplan”) for the political organization of Amdo Tibetan society was the contingent result of a state-centered litigation process. Seemingly intractable inter-monastic feuds were the catalyst for the clarification of local political and religious relationships. Qing officials understood their efforts as primarily delivering a service to indigenous elites. The conflict

¹⁰³⁹ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

and litigation process led to increased Qing involvement in Tibetan affairs, but from the perspective of Qing officials this was not necessarily a welcome development. In brokering the White Earth Slope Accord, Qing officials wagered imperial prestige in an attempt to bring peace to the violent politics of the Gelukpa monasteries and their tulku. Yet this bet did not pay off. Just five months after the ink had dried on the White Earth Slope Accord, it had become a focal point of renewed legal politicking that continued over the next two years as local Tibetan elites contested the meaning of the accord. The imperial guarantee implicit in the agreement meant that the indigenous disputants immediately turned to Qing official forums for redress in the case. And since imperial prestige had been placed on the line, Qing officials were obliged to attempt to salvage the accord.

Although not an annulment of Zuo Zongtang's accord of 1875, the terms of the new accord represented a significant revision. The accord also reflected deepening Qing penetration into Tibetan society. As Cangyun remarked, the process of crafting the accord entailed much closer scrutiny of local society than had occurred in 1875.¹⁰⁴⁰ Where Zuo Zongtang and his advisors had simply handed a large swath of territory north of Labrang over to the Sétsang Lama, the committee members of 1889 had brokered an accord that took into account political alliances at the household level. In doing so Qing officials helped reify an increasingly complex matrix of authorities—Labrang, Terlung, lay headmen, and Qing officials, to name a few. Villagers in contested places such as lower and upper Labula might find themselves and their neighbors in different hierarchies of authority, each of which had profound implications for everyday life both mundane and

¹⁰⁴⁰ QSDG (GX 15), 7-YJ-2684: 《會辦委員等為請示辦結辦法上的稟》.

spiritual. In the following two years, despite their efforts in 1889, Qing officials would be forced to learn even more about local Tibetan affairs.

Round Two, 1890: “Falcons and Hounds,” “Hawks and Wolves”

Indications that all was not at peace in Xunhua began to reach provincial officials just two months after the White Earth Slope case was decided. On December 15, 1889 (GX 15/11/23), messengers arrived at the yamen of the Qinghai amban in Xining with a letter from the Jamyang Zhepa, the Gyangro chiliarch, and other local elders accusing the former manager of Tsö monastery of settling outsiders within the Bora tribe and generally causing trouble. Specifically they argued that a certain community they claimed ownership over had failed to participate in traditional religious activities at Trashi monastery. They also accused the former manager of Terlung monastery of ignoring the recent White Earth Slope Accord and plotting to kill the Gyangro chiliarch. Their direct appeal for aid from the amban was evidently successful, as he subsequently passed the suit to the governor-general, who then ordered the Xunhua subprefect to follow up on the matter.¹⁰⁴¹ The subprefect dispatched a yamen runner who, together with officers from the Hezhou garrison then proceeded to Labrang. They reported that their investigation revealed that the accusations were baseless. In fact, when they met with the Jamyang Zhepa, he personally admitted no knowledge of the original petition and for all he knew there was not such conflict. “He thought that it was the Hua-li-wa *honpo* (華里哇溫布)

¹⁰⁴¹ QSDG (GX 16/01/08), 7-YJ-2958: 《循化廳為卡家案上的申牒》.

and the former manager of the Gyangro estate that had fabricated this matter.”¹⁰⁴² With regards to the Trashi monastery matter, the magistrate determined that official records, including the final terms of a case involving the monastery from 1887, made no mention of the village in question and thus the Gyangro chiliarch’s claims could not be substantiated. The subprefect then waxed nostalgic to his superiors, recalling how enforcement of the principle that “each monastery should govern only itself” had brought a hundred years of peace and prosperity to the “frontier people (邊民):” Citing the instructions of the governor-general, he wrote:

Follow the old statutes: Let each guard their own temples and thereby ensure that the Jamyang does not amalgamate the entire Tibetan world... Just as Rongwo and Terlung are not allowed to swallow up Tibetan subjects of Labrang, Rongwo and Terlung have sole jurisdiction for their subordinate Tibetans at Tsö, Khagya, Longwa and [upper and lower] Labula. The Jamyang [Zhepa] also must not be allowed to occupy others’ monasteries, incite feuds, take on the cases of others, or submit libelous lawsuits.

Yet despite this injunction, the conflict between Gyangro and the representatives of the Sétsang estate at Terlung did not subside. Matters appeared to have come to a head during the period of the Tibetan New Year’s celebrations when conflict between monks aligned with the Gyangro tulku and Khagya chiliarch and those affiliated with the Sétsang tulku brought activity in the main prayer hall of Khagya monastery to a halt. In the early months of 1890 representatives from Khagya arrived at the yamen of the Xunhua subprefect to press their respective cases.¹⁰⁴³ The feud hinged on disparate interpretations of previous Qing decisions, primarily those of 1875 and 1889, on the

¹⁰⁴² QSDG (GX 16/01/08), 7-YJ-2958: 《循化廳為卡家案上的申牒》.

¹⁰⁴³ QSDG (GX 16/05), 7-YJ-2694: 《循化廳為卡加、沙溝爭鬥牒報事》.

nature of the Sétsang lama's (or more precisely, his representatives) authority within Khagya monastery itself and over the lay communities of the Khagya region.

In a petition to the subprefect, the Khagya chiliarch first reported that while Khagya had complied with the stipulations of the White Earth Slope Accord and changed chiliarchs, Terlung had failed to remove and replace either their manager (Dajia 大加) or abbot. He then complained that with regards to the Sétsang estates in Khagya, although the manager (named Jia-yi-qiao, 加乙喬, Tib. ?) had been removed from office, he remained in the area claiming that he was in fact the “steward (管家)” of the monastery and had refused to allow the Khagya chiliarch to assume governance of the monastery and had obstructed the regular observance of the religious calendar.¹⁰⁴⁴ According to later summaries of the case written by the subprefect, the new manager of the Gyangro estate had demanded sole responsibility for governing the monastery based on the perception that the 1875 accord had declared that each monastery should govern itself. Furthermore, the subprefect reported that the Gyangro manager had expressed interest in repossessing estates currently owned by Sétsang: “The new manager of the Gyangro estate stated that the hundred-plus households of Gou-qu-hu tenants (勾曲乎佃戶) should be returned. Although they have tilled on behalf of Sétsang for several years, this year it occurred to us that our Gyangro [lama] owns these tenants. We demand that the Sétsang manager leave.”¹⁰⁴⁵ In another petition, the Khagya chiliarch and Gyangro manager made an

¹⁰⁴⁴ QSDG (GX 16/02/22), 7-YJ-2958: 《卡家新千戶上循化廳的稟》. Similar accusations were lodged by a monk from Khagya who traveled in person to Hezhou. See: QSDG (GX 16/??), 7-YJ-2958: 《卡家稟控沙溝番僧滋事的稟與循化廳的回諭》.

¹⁰⁴⁵ QSDG (GX 16/06/12, 1890-07-28), 7-YJ-2954: 《循化廳為卡家寺、沙溝寺爭鬥上總督、憲台的稟》.

historical argument for the independence of their monastery vis-à-vis Terlung and the Sétsang Lama.

Since the founding of our monastery, there have been eighteen generations of the Gyangro tulku and twenty-one generations of the *honpo*. There have been only three generations of the Sétsang since he fell out with Labrang and moved to Terlung. Our Gyangro tulku took pity on Sétsang and invited him to Khagya monastery where he was apportioned a salary and honored as abbot...In 1875 [Ma Zhan'ao] and the officials decided to take a new road [i.e. establish a new precedent] and made the Sétsang the general administrator—a decision we respected. He was allowed to reside at Khagya and collect alms and oversee his estates, but he was not to manage other affairs. Other than our chiliarch, no one else was to interfere in the recitation of sutras in the monastery or other affairs in the valley.¹⁰⁴⁶

Representatives from the Sétsang countered this argument first by noting that the 1875 decision granted the Sétsang lama the right to appoint a manager to “jointly oversee the administration and prayer ceremonies of the main prayer hall with the Gyangro [tulku].” Second, they argued that Sétsang had owned the hundred Gou-qu-hu households for over a century. Furthermore, the Sétsang representatives argued that the suit from Khagya was not the work of the Gyangro manager or chiliarch, but rather the initiative of the former Gyangro manager who now resided at Labrang and relied on that monastery for support.¹⁰⁴⁷

The subprefect, Cangyun, reported that in the face of these competing interpretations of the 1875 accord, he decided to bring out a Chinese-language version of the document and translate it for the edification of the litigants. According to the

¹⁰⁴⁶ QSDG (GX 16), 7-YJ-4663: 《卡家千戶江洛控沙溝開新路的稟》. Ma Zhan'ao is referred to in this petition as “漠泥溝大人.”

¹⁰⁴⁷ QSDG (GX 16/06/12, 1890-07-28), 7-YJ-2954: 《循化廳為卡家寺、沙溝寺爭鬥上總督、憲台的稟》. The Sétsang manager also accused the Gyangro manager of hiding from public knowledge those stipulations of the 1889 White Earth Slope decision that did not suit his interests. See, QSDG (GX 16/02R/13), 7-YJ-2952: 《歲倉捏力哇狀告卡家寺江洛捏力哇的稟》.

subprefect, clarifying the original content of the document helped provisionally resolve the situation, but he acknowledged that the original wording posed problems. He wrote, “The root of the feud is the content of the fifth article of the charter of 1875 which states ‘Sétsang may dispatch one knowledgeable manager to oversee the main prayer hall and their tenants’ agricultural work. Affairs of Khagya will continue to be handled by the Gyangro chiliarch.’”¹⁰⁴⁸ The subprefect determined that in practice this article of the original decision meant joint or consultative handling of affairs in the main prayer hall by both the Sétsang and Gyangro tulku.¹⁰⁴⁹ With regards to the Gou-qu-hu tenants, he argued that although the original settlement made no specific mention of these households, if Sétsang could provide evidence of ownership, they would be considered tenants and thus remain under his control. However, he noted that the second half of the article—granting control of Khagya to the Khagya chiliarch, was ambiguous and, lacking a specific clause stating that each side retained rights to its own property and tenants, could easily be misinterpreted by Khagya as a legitimization for a blanket claim to all people and property in Khagya.¹⁰⁵⁰

In response to this public re-translation of the original text, the Sétsang representatives reportedly expressed astonishment that the original terms were quite different from the Tibetan language version of the accord. Cangyun did not provide details on what difference was perceived between the Tibetan and Chinese versions of the

¹⁰⁴⁸ QSDG (GX 16/05), 7-YJ-2694: 《循化廳為卡加、沙溝爭鬥牒報事》：“惟起釁之由根系因元年執照內第五款載明，歲倉派一懂事管家看守經堂，照料佃戶耕種，不准干預大家事務，卡家事務歸江洛千戶辦理等因。”

¹⁰⁴⁹ QSDG (GX 16/06/12, 1890-07-28), 7-YJ-2954: 《循化廳為卡家寺、沙溝寺爭鬥上總督、憲台的稟》.

¹⁰⁵⁰ QSDG (GX 16/05), 7-YJ-2694: 《循化廳為卡加、沙溝爭鬥牒報事》.

1875 accord in this particular report. Yet, as will be discussed shortly, the subprefect's subsequent investigations revealed that Tibetan-language versions of the 1875 accord held by Terlung and Rongwo had dropped mention of the Khagya chiliarch's (albeit limited) authority. Thus it would seem that Sétsang had not been aware that despite establishing the Sétsang Lama as *zongguan*, the local headman/tulku, according to prior Qing jurisprudence, continued to have authority in and around the monastery. The practical exercise of these overlapping authorities, which might have worked well in the event that the Gyangro tulku, other Khagya headmen, and the Sétsang lama had amicable personal relations (as they might have had in 1875), proved difficult to negotiate in their absence.

Cangyun reported that at this first round of adjudication both sides committed themselves to observing the magistrate's version of the 1875 accord. For good measure, the subprefect demanded that a monk from each side remain in the subprefectural yamen until such a time as it could be ascertained that Khagya monastery had reopened. Several weeks later Cangyun learned from his yamen runners that "the prayers were being recited and the tea boiled," and that the Gyangro chiliarch and the manager of the Sétsang estates in Khagya had agreed on the appointment of a new head monk from Sétsang within Khagya monastery. The hostage monks were thus duly released on April 27, 1890 (GX 16/03/09).¹⁰⁵¹

Shortly thereafter, Cangyun learned that the problem of divergent texts and divergent interpretations of official pronouncements was more widespread and grave than first realized. While resolving a separate case in Repgong in June, the subprefect toured

¹⁰⁵¹ QSDG (GX 16/05), 7-YJ-2694: 《循化廳為卡加、沙溝爭鬥牒報事》.

Rongwo Monastery. During the visit, the nangso brought out from the monastery's archives Chinese and Tibetan-language versions of the 1875 accord. However, when the subprefect had his clerks read aloud and translate the original Chinese version into Tibetan, the gathering realized that the Tibetan-version held by Rongwo lacked an essential clause: "The articles did not contain the stipulation, '[Although] the manager from Sétsang may reside in Khagya to oversee the prayer hall and farming, the Gyangro chiliarch shall manage the affairs of Khagya monastery. The Sétsang manager shall not interfere."¹⁰⁵² The unauthorized Tibetan translation, the magistrate noted, thus ignored the fact that while certain responsibilities within Khagya had been delegated to Sétsang, the Khagya chiliarch retained overall control of the monastery. Cangyun then ordered the Tibetan text destroyed. Unsurprisingly, the leading monk of Rongwo, the Shartsang lama, and the rest of the audience refused, and the subprefect was unable to force the issue. Still, the dangers of these variant texts and the complexity of these settlements was foremost in Cangyun's concluding thoughts to his superiors. He also complained that official carelessness was at least partially to blame for the ongoing litigation:

I have also learned that Terlung possesses a copy of the settlement issued by [the Hezhou garrison commander] Shen [from 1875] that is the same as the Tibetan language version held here. Last year, when the 'White Earth Slope' decision was issued, committeeman Zhang just ordered the assembled people to observe the old laws and statutes, and did not make a verbatim translation of the Chinese-language decision, thus the audience had only a hazy understanding of the final settlement... The Tibetans do not understand Chinese, nor have they received serious punishment.

¹⁰⁵² QSDG (GX 16/04/27), 7-YJ-2948: 《循化廳差役關於隆務寺所藏沙溝寺執照的稟與同知的批文》：“令兩書吏將執照內漢字各條款一一翻解，通知該沙力倉上下僧眾逐各遵服。惟條款末所載歲倉捏力哇駐扎卡家看守經堂，耕種，望卡家寺事務歸江洛千戶經營，歲倉捏力哇不得干預一層。據沙力倉及新舊昂鎖面回，此層與鄉老所立番字約據不同。旋即呈出番字約據一張，由書辦同該僧等共念一遍，譯出等語果與執照此層不同。當即飭令銷毀。該沙力倉等不肯。因該寺人多勢眾，亦不便勉強，致因此生案，有所籍口也。”

Therefore they take us lightly and are again making trouble. Despite our best efforts, ‘what began as a tiger’s head has become a snake’s tail’ [i.e. a good start but a poor finish!] How lamentable!¹⁰⁵³

More ominously still, Cangyun reported that the new manager of the Gyangro estates returned to the yamen in May (GX 16/04/20) asking for further clarifications of the various settlement. “Fearing that he was about to make trouble,” the magistrate dispatched runners to accompany the manager back to Khagya in order to calm the situation and requested that the Hezhou garrison also send military officials to the region.¹⁰⁵⁴

Their efforts failed. On June 20, Labrang delivered a petition to the subprefecture reporting that feuding had resumed between supporters of the Gyangro and Sétsang lamas resulting in the death of several people allied to the Gyangro tulku. The next day the magistrate’s own runners rushed back from Khagya with a more detailed account of the expanding conflict. Arriving at the head of Khagya valley on the evening of June 15 (GX 16/04/28), this party of subprefectural and garrison personnel encountered the Gyangro manager at the head of a large body of “several hundred Tibetan troops” who were on their way to attack the Sétsang estate’s manager (the “Zhazan lama,” who himself hailed from Khagya). They also learned that just two days earlier the Gyangro headman had led over two hundred men in an attack local supporters of the Sétsang tulku, shooting to death two monks, injuring four others, and taking a further six monks captive. The Gyangro partisans had also attacked another small temple higher up in the hills where the

¹⁰⁵³ QSDG (GX 16/04/27), 7-YJ-2948: 《循化廳差役關於隆務寺所藏沙溝寺執照的稟與同知的批文》.

¹⁰⁵⁴ QSDG (GX 16/05), 7-YJ-2694: 《循化廳為卡加、沙溝爭鬥牒報事》.

Sétsang manager had taken refuge, killing one “lama” and making off with a large quantity of loot. The Sétsang manager then fled to a village below the mountain. Although the Xunhua yamen runners were able to temporarily arrest the march of the Gyangro troops against Sétsang, their nighttime shuttle diplomacy failed to achieve a truce. The next day the Gyangro militia attacked the village of Sétsang supporters, resulting in the death of four more Tibetans and another “lama.” The surviving Sétsang supporters and the tenants from his estates fled the scene. Only then were the runners together with tulku from Tsö and Khagya monasteries able to hammer out a sixteen-day ceasefire.¹⁰⁵⁵

The subprefect departed for the conflict zone just a week after receiving these initial reports. According to the subprefect’s own analysis, the renewed conflict was primarily a dispute over ownership of estates and tenants between Khagya and Terlung.¹⁰⁵⁶ Yet in a letter to the governor-general he also argued that the feud had been exploited by outside powers, primarily Labrang and Rongwo monasteries. Moreover, he despaired at the possibility of ever bringing the managers of the Gyangro and Sétsang estates—men who he placed in the same category as “Han criminals (漢奸)” —to justice: “The Jamyang Zhepa relies on the old Gyangro manager as his ‘falcons and hounds’ and colludes with him to such a degree that he will never deliver up the Gyangro [manager for punishment]. Similarly, Rongwo relies on the power of their ‘hawks and wolves’ —the Jiayi and Zhazan [monks of Sétsang], to preserve their influence among the southern

¹⁰⁵⁵ QSDG (GX 16/05/08), 7-YJ-2948: 《差役馬興、李復祥為卡家、沙溝事稟循化同知》; (GX 16/06/12, 1890-07-28), 7-YJ-2954: 《循化廳為卡家寺、沙溝寺爭鬥上總督、憲台的稟》; (GX 16/05/??), 7-YJ-2694 & 2696: 《循化廳為卡加、沙溝爭鬥牒報事》.

¹⁰⁵⁶ QSDG (GX 16/06/15), 7-YJ-2945: 《循化廳同知長贊為卡家、沙溝衝突上憲台的稟》.

Tibetans and will therefore also not give them up. If [Labrang and Rongwo] are not intimidated and their influence not quickly limited, there will arise such a conflict that neither officials nor local gentry and elders will be able to bring it to an end.”¹⁰⁵⁷

By “local gentry and elders,” the subprefect was referring to the Muslim military commanders from Hezhou who had been instrumental in establishing peace between Khagya and Terlung in 1878: Ma Zhan’ao, Ma Fuwang (馬福旺), and Ma Haiyan (馬海宴).¹⁰⁵⁸ Although Ma Zhan’ao had passed away, Cangyun noted that his son, Ma Anliang was “intimate with the details of the original case.” Therefore, Cangyun, after consulting with the Hezhou garrison commander, delegated Ma Anliang, Ma Fuwang, and Ma Haiyan to proceed to the Tibetan districts to see if they could bring representatives of the warring parties, most importantly the former Gyangro manager and the Jiayi and Zhazan lamas from Terlung to Hezhou to litigate the case. In reports to provincial authorities and the Xining amban, Cangyun expressed hope that the Muslim military officials would resolve the case without necessitating his own personal travel to Terlung, Khagya, or Labrang. Both sides however, refused these summons.¹⁰⁵⁹

In Labrang, the renewed involvement of Hezhou Muslims in the negotiations appears to have been greeted with disgust and concern. Seeking to remove the Muslims

¹⁰⁵⁷ QSDG (GX 16/06/12, 1890-07-28), 7-YJ-2954: 《循化廳為卡家寺、沙溝寺爭鬥上總督、憲台的稟》. Similar sentiments had been previously expressed in the subprefect’s report of a month earlier: (GX 16/05/??), 7-YJ-2694 & 2696: 《循化廳為卡加、沙溝爭鬥牒報事》.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ma Haiyan’s (1837–1900) son Ma Qi would later become the ruler of Qinghai after the fall of the Qing and the province’s first governor in 1928.

¹⁰⁵⁹ QSDG (GX 16/06/12, 1890-07-28), 7-YJ-2954: 《循化廳為卡家寺、沙溝寺爭鬥上總督、憲台的稟》. The monks of Terlung monastery, it was reported, out of anger at the lack of Qing action against Gyangro and his partisans in Khagya, threw rocks at the Qing representatives and refused to even talk. Terlung explained that they felt the Qing was overly partial to Labrang and their opponents in Khagya. See, QSDG (GX 15/08/15), 7-YJ-4534: 《黑錯稟控拉卜楞寺欺壓》.

from the process, the Jamyang Zhepa submitted a petition to the lieutenant governor of Gansu and the provincial prosecutor accusing Ma Anliang and his affiliates of a wide range of crimes.

“We have respected the 1875 decision and this is on record in the Hezhou yamen. [However,] subsequently the son of the ahong of Monigou [i.e. Ma Anliang] has engaged in illegal logging and killed a chiliarch. He has hidden the truth of these crimes from his reports and misled you officials. Moreover, the recent collusion between Terlung and Tsö that violated imperial decisions and led to much deceit and oppression of the poor commoners was all instigated by Ma Anliang, who wishes to overturn the results of previous litigation, harass Khagya and prevent them from peacefully farming and herding. Recently runners from Xunhua subprefecture were attacked with stones at Terlung. It appears that the emperor cannot enforce the law and make investigations. It is difficult to avoid the fact that, observing this state of affairs, various Tibetans will make trouble. As a result we plead that your honors take charge and order Xunhua subprefecture to harshly censure Ma Anliang.”¹⁰⁶⁰

To this list of crimes committed by Ma Anliang, the Jamyang Zhepa also appended two further statements from the Khagya chiliarch, the Gyangro tulku, and various other monks and elders from Khagya. The second of these statements reminded the provincial authorities that the community had made what it felt were considerable sacrifices on behalf of the dynasty:

“Previously, during the Muslim disturbances, our chiliarch led troops to block [the Muslims] and defend [the dynasty]. In all, we killed over three hundred Muslim bandits. In return, over seventy of our people were killed or injured by the Muslim bandits. Evidence of our chiliarch’s great efforts on behalf of the emperor can be found in the yamens of the governor-general, the Xining amban, Hezhou, and Xunhua subprefecture. At the time there were none whose bravery rivaled that of our chiliarch. For his service to the state, Zuo [Zongtang], Liu [Jintang], the Hezhou garrison commander and Xunhua subprefecture awarded him a button for his cap as well as authority over the prayer schedule at Khagya monastery and all other monastic and lay affairs. Sétsang tribe was not to interfere in these matters. [However,] after peace was reestablished, the Sétsang lama and

¹⁰⁶⁰ QSDG (GX 16/07/17), 7-YJ-2934/2944: 《甘肅布政使張、提刑按察使裕札循化廳》.

Terlung, borrowing from the power of the Monigou ahong, Ma Zhan'ao, repeatedly made trouble for the monks and tenants of our monastery.”¹⁰⁶¹

The petitioners then presented a detailed account of how, over the eighteen years since the Muslim rebellion ended, Ma Zhan'ao and his allies had repeatedly sown discord between the Khagya chiliarch/Gyangro tulku and his subjects and neighbors. “As of now, our chiliarch, monks, and elders have filed fourteen suits with either Hezhou or the Xunhua yamen, and [you] have yet to take charge. All this is because Ma Anliang, Ma laoye [?], and Qing-lian-mo-nai-ke have made trouble and not permitted [you officials] to take control.”¹⁰⁶² The petitioners also reasserted their claims to the Gou-qu-hu tenants, stating that the Sétsang lama had merely “rented” them from the Gyangro lama. Finally, they asserted their historical ties to Labrang by arguing that the Jamyang Zhepa had always set the monastic curriculum and appointed cantors in Khagya monastery. With the submission of these petitions, Labrang thus not only attempted to demonstrate the degree to which they had attempted to work within the framework of the local Qing legal system, but also remind the provincial authorities who were their true allies in the region were.

Yet it proved difficult for Labrang and the Khagya chiliarch to capitalize on their demonstrations of loyalty during the Muslim rebellions. Zuo Zongtang’s strategic compromise with the Muslim commander Ma Zhan'ao on the field of battle in 1872 left the dynasty’s local allies in an awkward situation, unable to reap what they felt were the rewards of their sacrifices and dangerously exposed to reprisals from their former enemies. Moreover, these documents hint at the degree to which inter-monastic feuds had

¹⁰⁶¹ QSDG (GX 16/07/17), 7-YJ-2934/2944: 《甘肅布政使張、提刑按察使裕札循化廳》.

¹⁰⁶² QSDG (GX 16/07/17), 7-YJ-2934/2944: 《甘肅布政使張、提刑按察使裕札循化廳》.

provided an opening for the Hezhou Muslims to secure their southern flank and even locate potential Tibetan allies. Ma Zhan'ao's support for Terlung monastery in 1875 and the continued cover his son Ma Anliang provided to the monastery in the 1880s and 1890s suggests that Terlung's silence in the face of Qing attempts to levy troops from the southern districts of Xunhua during the rebellion was an indication of a tacit alliance with the Muslims.

In his own letter to the provincial authorities in Lanzhou, the subprefect rejected the Jamyang Zhepa and the Gyangro chiliarch's positions point by point. First, he wrote that he had carefully investigated the accusations against Ma Anliang and found them to be false. The Jamyang Zhepa's accusations were a bald attempt to remove a potentially hostile party from investigating the case. Ma Anliang's expertise in Tibetan affairs, Cangyun wrote, was essential to handling the case. As for the alliance between Tsö and Terlung monastery, he dismissed the assertion that it was illegal or nefarious: "The two hundred year unity of Tsö and Terlung is because 'In the presence of a powerful neighbor, the weak band together for survival.' The fact that they mutually assist each other is nothing more than normal human nature."¹⁰⁶³ In contrast, the subprefect advised his superiors to reject the argument that there were legitimate historical ties between the two monasteries. He determined that the Jamyang Zhepa's oversight of the curriculum at Khagya monastery did not constitute a political relationship. Finally, he wrote that the Sétsang's estates in Khagya could hardly be considered "rented" since, "as everyone knows," the Sétsang lama had possessed them since the Qianlong reign.¹⁰⁶⁴ The

¹⁰⁶³ QSDG (GX 16/08/08, 1890-9-21), 7-YJ-2945: 《循化廳為沙溝與卡家爭佃上憲臺的稟》.

¹⁰⁶⁴ QSDG (GX 16/08/08, 1890-9-21), 7-YJ-2945: 《循化廳為沙溝與卡家爭佃上憲臺的稟》.

governor-general subsequently concurred with the subprefect and pointedly noted the importance of Ma Anliang's continued involvement in the case.¹⁰⁶⁵ The governor-general also, however, brought the former subprefect Anfu (who had served as subprefect in 1875 and had recently been serving as prefect of Pingliang in eastern Gansu) out of retirement and instructed him return to Xunhua to join a new ad-hoc committee of local officials to adjudicate the case.¹⁰⁶⁶

This committee consisted of the Xunhua subprefect Cangyun and a mid-ranking military officer from the Hezhou garrison. In Hezhou they were joined by several Muslim gentry including Ma Fuwang and Ma Haiyan, and an escort of forty cavalry troopers. This large party departed Hezhou on December 10, 1890 (GX 16/10/29), and arrived three days later at Khagya where they bivouacked amidst a large number of "stewards, *honpo*, and managers from Terlung, Rong'ar and Gyangro," all of whom had come to present various petitions, "each of which had its own perspective making things very difficult to verify."¹⁰⁶⁷ Still, the chief litigants, the former managers of the Gyangro and Sétsang estates had not appeared and the committeemen were forced to bide their time while they waited for them to arrive.

According to Anfu, The Gou-qu-hu households were members of the six tribes of Khagya who had been bequeathed to the Sétsang estate during the Qianlong era in appreciation for services rendered to Khagya by the Sétsang lama. Relations between

¹⁰⁶⁵ QSDG (GX 16/09/26), 7-YJ-2969: 《陝甘總督關於卡家一案給循化廳的札》.

¹⁰⁶⁶ QSDG (GX 16/08/??), 7-YJ-2974: 《陝甘總督、青海大臣 為卡家一案給前署平涼府安福的札》.

¹⁰⁶⁷ QSDG (GX 16/11/09), 7-YJ-2955: 《撫番府長、委員候補府安為處理卡家、沙溝爭鬥上督憲的稟》.

these households (which Cangyun elsewhere counted as approximately one third of the three hundred households of Khagya) and other Khagya households had been amicable until the Tongzhi reign when events during and after the Muslim rebellions poisoned relations between followers of the Gyangro and the Sétsang lamas. Anfu recalled for the provincial officials how Zuo Zongtang's 1875 accord had required further attention from himself and other local elites in 1877. The application of "traditional laws" by "Tibetan and Chinese elders" had eventually established a peace that had held for a decade. This time round, Anfu blamed the absence of tulku in both Terlung and Khagya for the outbreak of violence: "Since the Sétsang lama passed away and his [reincarnation] had yet to be [identified], and because the Gyangro tulku is elsewhere, outsiders took heart and plotted to manipulate the two sides, resulting in new conflict."¹⁰⁶⁸ In a later document, Anfu also observed that the present situation was much thornier than the earlier litigation since this time round outside powers such as Labrang and Rongwo had become directly involved in the conflict.¹⁰⁶⁹ Anfu and Cangyun reported, however, that the blame did not entirely lie with the Tibetans. They ventured to argue that, despite the fact that Zuo Zongtang's original accord was "correct and should be observed forever," it had "omitted necessary details," and would require revisions.¹⁰⁷⁰

It appears to have taken well over a month of protracted negotiations before a settlement was reached on January 21, 1891 (GX 16/12/07). The accord took time to

¹⁰⁶⁸ QSDG (GX 16/11?), 7-YJ-2955: 《委員、循化廳。河州鎮等為處理卡家、沙溝爭鬥請示的稟》.

¹⁰⁶⁹ QSDG (GX 16/12/12), 7-YJ-2955: 《委員、循化廳。河州鎮等為處理卡家、沙溝爭鬥請示的稟》.

¹⁰⁷⁰ QSDG (GX 16/11?), 7-YJ-2955: 《委員候補知府安福、循化廳關於查辦卡家、沙溝爭鬥的稟》.

work out if only because a considerable amount of investigative work had to be conducted in order to verify damage claims and calculate the reparations due to each side. In this case, the Sétsang estate claimed that it had suffered eight thousand *liang*-worth of damage at the hands of the Gyangro supporters. Ultimately, the Gyangro estate was compelled to repay 1,500 *liang* silver. As Gyangro had suffered one less casualty than Sétsang, it was also liable for a life-price valued at 150 *liang*. The more difficult task, however, involved sorting out competing claims of authority within Khagya monastery and in its surrounding lay communities. On January 6, the committee took the unprecedeted step of calling together monks from both sides and reading out two monastic constitutions possessed by the monastery. The Qing officials recorded that the first document, authored by the Sétsang lama, listed the vows required of monks residing at the monastery. The second constitution listed the founding regulations of the monastery as well as rules for apportioning funds and material goods among the monks. Neither document explained the respective roles of the Sétsang or Gyangro lamas at the monastery. Yet it was clear to the officials that the Sétsang lama and the documents produced by his previous generations continued to command respect across the now fractious monastery.¹⁰⁷¹

Despite the protests of Labrang, the committee of Qing officials in consultation with local Tibetans and the Muslim gentry represented by Ma Anliang and Ma Haiyan worked out eight new clauses to add to Zuo Zongtang's original accord. Finally, the officials determined that the former manager of the Gyangro estates was responsible for the violence because he had attempted illegally *shuantou* Khagya in its entirety to

¹⁰⁷¹ QSDG (GX 16/12/12), 7-YJ-2955: 《委員、循化廳、河州鎮等為處理卡家、沙溝爭鬥請示的稟》.

Labrang. The Sétsang *zongguan*, the magistrates wrote, would continue to exercise overall control in the region. Both sides, however, were charged five hundred *liang* of silver in court fees. The officials wrote that by this they hoped to deter further litigation.¹⁰⁷²

1891: The Conclusion of the Case: “Protecting Terlung, Protecting the Frontier”

As if following a fixed seasonal pattern, friction between Khagya, Labrang, and Terlung increased during the late winter and early spring of 1891 and eventually sparked large-scale violence during the summer months. According to the Khagya chiliarch, the feud had resumed just a day after Anfu and Cangyun had departed Khagya on January 23, 1891 (GX 16/12/14) when the representative of the Sétsang’s interests in Khagya, the Zhazan lama again refused to allow the monks to assemble for prayers.¹⁰⁷³ The Terlung general administrator (*zongguan*) reported the first deaths of the year to the subprefecture on August 13.¹⁰⁷⁴ He argued that the Jamyang Zhepa was taking advantage of the fact that there was no adult Sétsang lama to serve as general administrator and that the estate was struggling to collect its dues. The Terlung steward filed a second, more extensive complaint several days later. In his suit, the Terlung steward wrote that the tensions had flared shortly after the Jamyang Zhepa and his entourage had met with the governor-general during his official visit to Hezhou in June. The governor-general had traveled to Hezhou to review the garrison’s troops. “While on his way home … The Jamyang Zhepa

¹⁰⁷² QSDG (GX 16/12/12), 7-YJ-2955: 《委員、循化廳、河州鎮等為處理卡家、沙溝爭鬥請示的稟》.

¹⁰⁷³ QSDG (GX 17/11/18), 7-YJ-4654: 《卡加千戶為札咱喇嘛搶殺上的稟》.

¹⁰⁷⁴ QSDG (GX 17/07/09), 7-YJ-4654: 《沙溝總管狀告嘉木樣的稟》.

dispatched an urgent messenger, the lama Sai-kang-mei-zhou, to Khagya monastery. He gathered together the lay and monastic subjects of the Gyangro, slaughtered a pig, and said that the four head monks of the monastery were all the Jamyang Zhepa's and that the *honpo* is the Gyangro chiliarch.”¹⁰⁷⁵ The Terlung steward then noted that the Jamyang Zhepa had undertook a variety of provocative acts, including monk officials to collect funds and breaking ground on the construction of his own manor at the monastery. Moreover, when arguments broke out concerning the use of local forest resources for building the Jamyang Zhepa's manor, a man who disagreed with the project was stabbed to death. Terlung had dispatched “elders” to investigate the situation, but this move had only resulted in an even larger armed attack by the Gyangro chiliarch that resulted in the deaths of a further five people in Terlung.

The plaintiff then underlined for the subprefect what he felt was at stake in the feud:

When your runners went to instruct and suppress, [Labrang] didn't take the slightest heed! That Jamyang and Gyangro are greater than the power of your dynasty's laws. Since their power is great, that Jamyang now has even seized over a hundred tenant households from the estate of the Xu-hu-jia-cang tulku [許乎加倉佛] in the lower valley of the Qitai district subordinate to Rongwo and resettled them in the Eight-Cornered-Fort at Genkya... Other than on the orders of the imperial law, how can it be possible for others to raise a military force? Ten years ago, when the Jamyang Zhepa ordered the Guan-qu-hu lama to organize and lead a military force, he was arrested and executed according to your imperial law. So there is an example and precedent on the books! If the Jamyang is again able to gather together soldiers and your imperial law does nothing, then what? The area of Genkya is after all under your imperial law, so how can it be that they gather troops? You should look into this!¹⁰⁷⁶

¹⁰⁷⁵ QSDG (GX 17/07/21), 7-YJ-2980: 《沙溝香錯狀告江洛、拉布壩違反舊規事》.

¹⁰⁷⁶ QSDG (GX 17/07/21), 7-YJ-2980: 《沙溝香錯狀告江洛、拉布壩違反舊規事》.

With this incendiary passage, the plaintiffs were clearly trying to goad local Qing officials into taking forceful action against Labrang. Not only did they accuse Labrang of occupying territory and stealing tax-paying Tibetan commoners, but they insisted that the dynasty's sovereignty in the region was at stake. Just a couple weeks later, the Xunhua subprefect found itself receiving additional reports from Rongwo monastery that Labrang had also attacked tenants of the Serkhri reincarnation of Tsö monastery.¹⁰⁷⁷

In early November, the Xunhua subprefect Cangyun reported his own version of events to the Gansu lieutenant governor. He had assembled his own understanding of events based on the investigations of the yamen's clerks and runners. In this case, the yamen staff were also assisted by a tulku from Bayanrong subprefecture who traveled to Labrang and personally interviewed the Jamyang Zhepa. The yamen staff reported that the conflict had begun when someone from Gyangro faction killed a woodworker belonging to Sétsang during an argument over whether the woodworker was owed money for his work on the Jamyang Zhepa's new manor. The Terlung community attacked Khagya with its militia, "in accordance the old Tibetan codes."¹⁰⁷⁸ During the melee, however, the smaller Terlung force ended up trapped in the main prayer hall. In the ensuing battle, nine men from both sides had died. The Gyangro chiliarch then began building stone fortifications around the monastery. Their monk investigator confirmed the yamen runner's reports and added that in his own audience with the Jamyang Zhepa had repeatedly insisted that he "truly wanted Khagya to return to his control" as well as

¹⁰⁷⁷ QSDG (GX 17/08/16), 7-YJ-2980: 《隆務沙力昂鎖、三寺喇嘛、勒工眾僧稟拉卜楞攻打黑錯》.

¹⁰⁷⁸ "番規." QSDG (GX 17/10/03, 1891-11-04), 7-YJ-2985: 《循化廳為番僧調查卡家一案給憲臺的詳報》.

revenues from the district and manor house built at the monastery.¹⁰⁷⁹ The monk also confirmed that indeed Labrang had resettled sixty-one households of Tibetans in the Genkya grasslands. These Tibetans, he wrote, had been enticed by the Jamyang away from their grain-taxpaying communities near Repgong with promises of silver and livestock.¹⁰⁸⁰

This time round the subprefect Cangyun placed the blame squarely on the Jamyang Zhepa. Moreover, his report to the Gansu lieutenant governor expressed in perhaps the strongest terms yet the importance of pursuing a policy of containing Labrang:

Labrang was founded during the Kangxi reign and in the beginning was but a tiny speck. Now it stretches contiguously for thousands of li all the way from the Sichuan border in the south to where it touches the border of Tibet [西藏] in the west. In every new territory it acquires it appoints a monastic official and drives out the local chief. By means of its deep accumulation of capital and material the monastery grows stronger and wealthier day by day. It has only failed to acquire the communities [族] of Tsö, Khagya, Rong'ar, Wanggatan, Terlung, and Hortsang. It already possesses the Mongols. The Tibetan regions of Sichuan as well as Taozhou, Minzhou, and Songpan have all become attached to that monastery. Yet because the Southern Tibetans [南番] still stand in their way, [Labrang] has been unable to unify the strengths of these places into one. Thus [Labrang] slaves night and day over the Khagya community. The moment it acquires Khagya, it will possess the key to the Southern Tibetans, as it will have split Tsö, Longwa, Terlung, and Hortsang in two and can then pick them off at its leisure, one by one, and finally become master of the entire field.

Therefore, in Daoguang 26 [1846] the governor-general placed Tsö monastery under the general administration of Rongwo monastery and not [Labrang] despite the fact that it was hundreds of li away. In the first year of the Guangxu reign [1875], governor-general Zuo placed Khagya under

¹⁰⁷⁹ Translated into Chinese, the Jamyang Zhepa reportedly stated, “惟加木樣末尾向我說，他的真情是要卡加歸他管，要江洛千戶給他熬茶六個分子。” See, QSDG (GX 17/10/03, 1891-11-04), 7-YJ-2985: 《循化廳為番僧調查卡家一案給憲臺的詳報》.

¹⁰⁸⁰ QSDG (GX 17/10/03, 1891-11-04), 7-YJ-2985: 《循化廳為番僧調查卡家一案給憲臺的詳報》.

the control of the general administrator of Terlung and thus also did not return it to [Labrang]. With regards to the White earth slope case of 1889, our [current] governor-general took a far-sighted view of the frontier and issued a license that again placed the tribes of Khagya and Rong'ar under the control of the Terlung General Administrator and did not permit them to be governed by [Labrang]. Near and far there are none who do not look upward with amazement at the wisdom of our governor, whose thought is like a candle illuminating the distance and perceives the treacherous details, his subtle plan brings peace to the frontier and steers/controls the Fan. By protecting Terlung we protect the frontier and split the power [of the Tibetans]. This should certainly not be misunderstood as showing favor to Terlung.¹⁰⁸¹

A month after dispatching this report, the subprefect, together with the former prefect Anfu, headed south from Hezhou with a contingent of forty to fifty cavalry to investigate yet one more time. At around the same time, the Jamyang Zhepa submitted his own account of the conflict directly to the governor-general, much as he had in previous years. First, the Jamyang Zhepa dismissed as “trumped up and concocted” the accusations that he was asserting his hegemony over Khagya monastery. Second, he described how during the Muslim rebellion, the troops led by the Rong'ar nangso had massacred over one hundred households subordinate to Labrang that resided in Genkya. “Ever since, bullies from Rong'ar and Terlung have robbed merchants traveling to Labrang through this region. This year, since our losses were particularly heavy and there was no one in the area to come to the aid [of travelers], I decided to settle commoners at the head of the road through Genkya. Henceforth, if travelers are still attacked, these households will be held responsible.”¹⁰⁸² Finally, the Jamyang Zhepa accused the leaders

¹⁰⁸¹ QSDG (GX 17/10/03, 1891-11-04), 7-YJ-2985: 《循化廳為番僧調查卡家一案給憲臺的詳報》.

¹⁰⁸² QSDG (GX 17/11/09), 7-YJ-2988: 《陝甘總督為拉卜楞嘉木樣呼圖克圖的稟札循化廳查辦事》.

of Terlung of launching attacked on a Labrang ally that resulted in the sacking of a Buddhist chapel and “innumerable deaths.”¹⁰⁸³

The governor-general was unimpressed with this argument, however. In his memorandum to Xunhua subprefecture, he wondered why, if the raiding in Genkya was so egregious, this was the first time the Gansu provincial government was receiving news of it. Unsurprisingly, the committee of Qing officials in Khagya were equally unmoved by this argument. In their final decision, issued on or before January 14, 1892, their censure fell heavily on the Jamyang Zhepa for “plotting to acquire more vassals.”¹⁰⁸⁴ They determined that the settlers in Genkya would be considered subjects of the Xunhua subprefecture and, if after three years their efforts at farming and herding proved successful, they would begin to submit taxes to the dynasty. The Jamyang Zhepa signed a personal pledge to observe this decision. He formally recognized “his guilt” and that the households he had settled in Genkya were now “commoners (百姓),” and therefore “subject to the control of the imperial household (歸與皇上家管束).”¹⁰⁸⁵ In writing (in Chinese) he agreed not to attempt to *shuantou* additional populations of Tibetans.

As for the Gyangro chiliarch and the Zhazan lama of the Sétsang estate, both were to be cashiered. The Zhazan lama, however, was also ordered to serve five years in prison in the jail of Gaolan county (i.e. Lanzhou). With regards to the murders and robberies of the past year, the officials oversaw the negotiation of a new schedule of

¹⁰⁸³ QSDG (GX 17/11/09), 7-YJ-2988: 《陝甘總督為拉卜楞嘉木樣呼圖克圖的稟札循化廳查辦事》.

¹⁰⁸⁴ QSDG (GX 17/12/25, 1892-12-24) 7-YJ-2983: 《委員、循化同知奉委查辦南番各案訊結情形》.

¹⁰⁸⁵ QSDG (GX 17/12/15) 7-YJ-2990: 《拉卜楞寺嘉木樣呼圖克圖所具甘結》.

reparations according to the “Tibetan statutes (番規)” by a group of “Chinese and Tibetan village elders.”¹⁰⁸⁶ This group again included Ma Haiyan and a number of other Muslim gentry from Hezhou as well as leaders from Mewo and Tsö monasteries.

The committee of Qing officials made one further decision of significance. Finding that the enmity between the two factions at Khagya monastery had proven insurmountable despite three years of litigation, they ruled that Khagya monastery would be divided. The Sétsang supporters were to establish a new monastery further up the valley.¹⁰⁸⁷ This was set out in a separate agreement (“甘結”) that was guaranteed by representatives of Mewo and Tsö monasteries and signed by the new Gyangro chiliarch, and the steward of the Sétsang general administrator. The agreement lists in considerable detail the process by which the monastic community at Khagya would be separated and the property divided.¹⁰⁸⁸ The authors of this decision intended that the division of the monastery would put an end to the conflicting claims of the Sétsang and Gyangro tulku (and their estates) to Khagya monastery. However, much as they had a year earlier, the committee resolved that overall administrative authority for the Khagya region remained

¹⁰⁸⁶ QSDG (GX 17/12/25, 1892-12-24) 7-YJ-2983: 《委員、循化同知奉委查辦南番各案訊結情形》.

¹⁰⁸⁷ QSDG (GX 17/12/25, 1892-12-24) 7-YJ-2983: 《委員、循化同知奉委查辦南番各案訊結情形》. The archival record contains some indications that the division of the Khagya monastery was an outcome desired by the Sétsang faction. In a petition from earlier in the year, the Khagya chiliarch accused the Zhazan lama of openly plotting to divide the monastery—a result that certainly was not in the interest of the Khagya chiliarch who had consistently claimed authority over the entire monastery. See, QSDG (GX 17/11/18), 7-YJ-4654: 《卡加千戶為劄咱喇嘛搶殺上的稟》.

¹⁰⁸⁸ The two sides could not be completely disentangled, however. For example, the complexity of this arrangement was such that nine households, although belonging to the Sétsang estate, still had rent obligations to the Gyangro estate. The agreement (甘結) detailed numerous similar arrangements in which specific households had divided obligations. QSDG (GX 16/12/23), 7-YJ-2983: 《黑錯、買吾承保卡家、沙溝等具的甘結》.

in the hands of the Sétsang *zongguan*. By this the officials seem to have meant that any major business that involved Khagya and neighboring communities. In contrast they wrote, “Major public affairs of the Khagya valley shall be in general handled by the chiliarch.”¹⁰⁸⁹

The division of the monastery appears to have successfully brought large-scale feuding between the Khagya chiliarch and the Sétsang lama to a close. It was not until 1898 that another major round of violence would break out between Labrang and its allies and the Rongwo-Tsö-Terlung confederation. Between 1875 and 1892, however, Qing officials, and especially the Manchu bannermen Anfu and Cangyun, had become a familiar presence at Labrang and surrounding monasteries and cases handled by these two officials had led to in several changes in Xunhua. First, among Qing officials, attitudes and policies shifted considerably. Whereas in 1875 Qing adjudicators viewed the case involving Khagya, Rong’ar and Terlung as a local feud, in 1891, tensions between these monasteries were scanned for machinations of Labrang monastery and other “outside” forces.¹⁰⁹⁰ During the last twenty years of the dynasty, Qing officials understood Xunhua and the Sino-Tibetan frontier in general as a zone of contention between large monastic states. As described by the subprefect Cangyun, Qing policy, therefore, was necessarily devoted to blunting their rise and balancing their powers and Labrang in particular had become the focus of an explicit policy of containment. Yet this outcome was contingent on subjective perspectives and the course of events. From the

¹⁰⁸⁹ This particular clause reads in full: “惟江洛仍歸沙溝總管，四溝遇有大公事歸千戶總辦，俾符執照舊章。” See, QSDG (GX 17/12/25, 1892-12-24) 7-YJ-2983: 《委員、循化同知奉委查辦南番各案訊結情形》.

¹⁰⁹⁰ QSDG (GX 16/12/12), 7-YJ-2955: 《委員、循化廳、河州鎮等為處理卡家、沙溝爭鬥請示的稟》.

late 1880s-on, Qing officials worried most about the rising power of Labrang. Yet as recently as 1883 (GX 09), the Xunhua subprefect was on record as claiming that Rongwo represented the greater threat to regional security.¹⁰⁹¹

Second, the litigation process between 1889 and 1892 not only helped reify a system of competing monastic confederations, it also contributed to the general politicization of religious activities in Xunhua. Pious activities such as pilgrimage, almsgiving, itinerant travel by monks or tulkus, and even large prayer ceremonies such as those held during the New Year's celebrations at Khagya monastery become the focus of violent legal politicking with significant implications for religious practice and even freedom of movement within Xunhua. Qing officials found themselves responsible for overseeing the “rectification” of these relationships in a series of new contracts and accords negotiated during this period. The ultimate division of Khagya monastery into two separate entities was an extreme expression of this trend.

Conclusion: Making a “Tibetan World (番字)”

This chapter has explored just a few of moments from an extensive record of “Tibetan cases” that were handled by the Xunhua subprefect and other Qing officials from the administration of Gansu province and Qinghai between 1872 and 1912. The engagement of local Tibetans from Labrang and other monastic polities in Amdo with the Qing’s colonial administration was extensive and intensive, a fact best demonstrated by

¹⁰⁹¹ QSDG (GX 09/07/01, 1883-8-8), 7-YJ-2727: 《循化廳為隆務寺準備攻打河南蒙古上的稟》.

the registers (號簿) of daily business assigned to the clerks and runners of the Xunhua yamen. On a single day in August of 1889, for instance, the magistrate authorized 68 separate items of business touching on Tibetan affairs—most of it relating to feuds or criminal cases.¹⁰⁹² This day was to some degree atypical—it fell in the midst of the magistrate’s busy season (late summer through fall) and during the process of handling a particularly important case. A more typical workload consisted of twenty to thirty items of business per day during the spring and summer.¹⁰⁹³ The contingent handling of these cases and other Tibetan affairs had a profound affect on the both the development of the large monastic polities of Labrang and Rongwo as well as the daily lives of individual Tibetan households.

It has recently been asserted that during the late Qing, Labrang monastery was a polity “ruling an area about the size of Switzerland.”¹⁰⁹⁴ On the basis of the archival record from Xunhua subprefecture, this and other portrayals of Labrang as a unified, contiguous and autonomous domain tamed and organized around the charisma of the Jamyang Zhepa are problematic in several respects.¹⁰⁹⁵ First, it should now be clear that several neighboring monasteries such as Tsö, Rongwo, and Terlung fiercely contested Labrang’s control, resulting in a much more complex patchwork of allegiances and estates. The Fourth Jamyang Zhepa (1856-1916), far from serving as a rallying point for

¹⁰⁹² QSDG (GX 15/07/12, 1889-8-8), 7-YJ-4058: 《會銜差遣號簿》.

¹⁰⁹³ See for instance: QSDG (GX/12/07/22), 7-YJ-4058: 《行轅文移諭示稟各件號簿》; (GX 15/06), 7-YJ-4059: 《光緒十五年六月行轅差遣號簿》; (GX 15/07), 7-YJ-4059: 《光緒十五年七月會銜文移號簿》.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Matthew T. Kapstein, and Gray Tuttle, eds., *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), 601.

¹⁰⁹⁵ For such characterizations, see Nietupski (2011), and Charlene Makley, *The Violence of Liberation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 39-40.

Tibetan Buddhists around the region was to the contrary the focus of ongoing calumny from multiple quarters, including from within Labrang itself. Second, this characterization oversimplifies the layered and multivalent obligations held by many Tibetan households that might have considered themselves affiliated with Labrang. The newly transplanted farming families in Genkya, for instance, probably felt some connection to the Jamyang Zhepa for having assisted with their resettlement, but they also owed tax to the Xunhua subprefect. Labrang itself was not exempted from certain limited tax responsibilities. In the 1870s, Zuo Zongtang compelled Labrang to permit provincial authorities to begin collecting tax duties on transactions in the monastery's marketplace. Third, while Labrang did retain its own internal judicial system, it also participated in a legal order centered on Xunhua subprefecture and other local representatives of the Qing state. And far from being imposed from above, the Jamyang Zhepa and other indigenous authorities linked to Labrang actively sought out this legal regime and helped shape it and the meaning of Qing sovereignty ("王法") through their legal agency. In their own words, Qing sovereignty was directly associated with the operation of the Qing criminal code. In this sense, it would also be a mistake to view Labrang and the broader Amdo region as a northern extension of what James C. Scott has elaborated as "Zomia"—a region of highland Asia in which the indigenous inhabitants actively sought to avoid the trappings of the state.¹⁰⁹⁶ Far from being a region beyond the reach of the Qing colonial state, Labrang was an active participant in the creation of a state-centered pluralistic colonial legal order.

¹⁰⁹⁶ James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), ix-x.

The growing presence of the Qing state in local legal matters and Tibetan affairs more generally was not an outcome universally welcomed by Qing officialdom. In 1899 the governor-general of Shaanxi and Gansu, Tao Mo, found himself deeply involved in one of the most difficult cases the Qing had faced since the recovery of the region in the aftermath of the Muslim Rebellions. Provincial officials handling the case in the field pressured the governor-general to not only dispatch a large punitive military force against Labrang and a local lay headman allied with Labrang, but to also eliminate the fourth Jamyang Zhepa as a political ruler (literally, “melt down the seals of the kūtuktu”).¹⁰⁹⁷

The conflict concerned the appointment of the abbot at the “Old” monastery in Dzögé Mewo, a district located between Tsö and Labrang monastery. According to a petition written in Tibetan by local headmen, during the Xianfeng reign (1851-1861) the leading reincarnate monk and abbot of the monastery, the Tawönba lama (Tib. *TA dbon ba*, Ch. 達瓮巴 or 達羊巴喇嘛) broke with Labrang and moved to Tsö monastery. However, Tawönba suddenly claimed that he had been abducted by Tsö monastery and a conflict erupted between the two regions resulting in the death of 299 people. After an outside tulku negotiated a settlement, the Tawönba lama returned to the original monastery in Dzögé Mewo. Yet the monastic community, deeming him responsible for the mayhem that had engulfed their community, took the radical step of executing the Tawönba. Subsequently, the lay and monastic community of Dzögé Mewo invited Labrang to appoint the abbots and oversee the monastery. Things remained peaceful until the late 1880s when it was suddenly learned that the Tawönba lama had reincarnated in

¹⁰⁹⁷ QSDG (GX 24/03R/25), 7-YJ-2918: 《洮州廳為辦理黑錯與買吾衝突上陝甘總督、甘肅布政使等的稟》. The Taozhou subprefect was particularly incensed by the fact that he had been compelled to prostrate before the Jamyang Zhepa during an audience.

Choné, several days travel to the southeast.¹⁰⁹⁸ The reincarnation of the Tawönba lama posed a number of thorny questions: Should the Tawönba return? Was the child entitled to property and status at his original seat monastery? Tsö monastery thought so. Yet the headmen of Dzögé were adamant that this would not occur. The resolution of these questions had significant implications for their long-standing relationship with Labrang. Where they vassals of Labrang? Did Labrang have a right to *shuantou* Dzögé Mewo? Could Labrang help prevent the return of Tawönba? Tensions became more acute in the late 1890s when the child approached adulthood and a number of monks at the Old Monastery in Dzögé Mewo voiced support for the Tawönba's return. These monks, who all hailed from the local community yet appear to have had educational ties to Tsö, were then subject to a debate over whether their loyalty should lie first with their home lay community in Dzögé Mewo or with their lines of monastic discipleship in Tsö.¹⁰⁹⁹ In 1898, these contentious issues erupted in a spate of violence that quickly dragged in Labrang and Rongwo monasteries and their respective alliances, and resulted in multiple abductions and the deaths of several dozen people, including a headman from Dzögé Mewo. Much of the Old Monastery was also destroyed.¹¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁹⁸ QSDG (Date uncertain), 7-YJ-2911: 《作格全體頭人呈循化廳的稟》. A Tibetan-language petition was also filed under the name of the Tawönba: QSDG (GX 25/02/08), 7-YJ-2930: 《達羊巴佛僧致循化廳的稟》.

¹⁰⁹⁹ QSDG (GX 24/03R/25), 7-YJ-2918: 《洮州廳為辦理黑錯與買吾衝突上陝甘總督、甘肅布政使等的稟》.

¹¹⁰⁰ Among those abducted were the thirteen-year-old Tawonba and numerous monks from Dzögé Mewo. The murder of the Mewo *honpo* was, according to Labrang, gratuitously violent. See, QSDG (GX 25), 7-YJ-2921: 《拉卜楞寺為黑錯不遵約定上循化廳的稟》. For overall summaries of the conflict, see: QSDG (GX 25/12/28, 1900-1-28), 7-YJ-2925: 《會辦番案詳報擬結折稿》; (GX 24/03R/25), 7-YJ-2918: 《洮州廳為辦理黑錯與買吾衝突上陝甘總督、甘肅布政使等的稟》.

The case severely taxed Qing administrative resources over the course of 1898-1899. Litigants in the case rushed to file their plaints with the Qing administration and aggressively “forum shopped.” In the early Guangxu period Dzögé Mewo had been shifted from the jurisdiction of Xunhua subprefecture to Taozhou subprefecture. This meant that two different subprefectural yamens potentially had jurisdiction. Litigants from both Tsö and Dzögé Mewo bounced between the two subprefectural yamens seeking favorable hearings.¹¹⁰¹ Moreover, Labrang and Rongwo both lodged appeals directly to upper levels of the provincial administration (the Jamyang Zhepa even traveled in person to Lanzhou to meet with the governor-general).¹¹⁰² As settlements were successively reached and discarded, Qing officials in Taozhou and Xunhua, as well as the Xining circuit intendant, citing the advice of Ma Anliang, increasingly pushed the governor-general to authorize the Hezhou garrison to impose a solution.¹¹⁰³

The governor-general Tao consistently resisted this strategy. He warned his subordinates that such a move ran the risk of exacerbating the conflict: “Although the Tibetans are brave, wild, and extremely stupid, the moment we dispatch troops to the region, we will also have to provide livestock, grain and fodder to supply them which runs the risk of giving rise to bad old habits (i.e. corruption). The fact that these two sides cannot conclude their matter [peacefully] will cause innocent and good Tibetans to suffer

¹¹⁰¹ Mutual accusations that the other party was attempting to bribe either Taozhou or Xunhua soon followed.

¹¹⁰² In Lanzhou, the Jamyang Zhepa not only represented Dzögé against Tsö, he also accused Ma Anliang of attempting to frame him for various crimes. See, QSDG (GX 24/04/13), 7-YJ-2914: 《循化廳書辦為黑錯、買吾衝突呈循化廳的稟》; (GX 24/03R/15), 7-YJ-2918: 《鎮南營馬統領為奉札會查黑錯、買吾糾紛申請事》; and (GX 24/08/05), 7-YJ-2919: 《循化廳為拉卜楞寺所上稟給襄佐回的諭》.

¹¹⁰³ QSDG (GX 25/10/28), 7-YJ-2935: 《陝甘總督陶為黑錯、買吾番案札循化廳》; (GX 25/11/03), 2923: 《陝甘總督陶為處理南番黑錯與買吾衝突事給循化廳的批文》.

the burden of supplying our troops. We must reconsider this matter.”¹¹⁰⁴ The governor-general’s main argument was that he did not trust his own officials, and perhaps more obliquely Ma Anliang, to not abuse their authority. His son, Tao Baolian, was even more blunt than his father:

When officials and officers of the interior travel out [beyond the passes] on business, regardless of whether they are merely transmitting instructions to the pastures or defending the capital, these great chiefs bully gifts of cash and livestock out of the people who have gathered to greet them. If they take only a little, [the people] are not overly resentful. If they ask nothing, the people are especially relieved. But some seize the opportunity and take as much as they can, even extracting people's treasure and daughters. At this [the people] bite their tongues in silent fury. Therefore, officials lust after such trips as a chance to strike it rich, while the Tibetan tribes [番族] come to see Chinese officialdom as largely corrupt. On the outside they appear respectful to the point of obsequiousness. Yet their hearts could not be further away. The government officials boast, ‘These are the people whom I restrain!’ The people of the felt tents mutter under their breaths, ‘These are the people whom we indulge.’¹¹⁰⁵

Governor-general Tao was concerned, however, with more than just limiting opportunities for official corruption. He was also interested in reversing the direct engagement of Tibetans in the Qing legal order. For instance, from a very early moment in the management of the case he advised the Xunhua and Taozhou subprefects to avail themselves first of whatever local, *Tibetan* intermediaries he could find and make sure that the cases were handled according to the “Tibetan regulations.” These instructions went as far as to recommend that the officials avoid dispatching clerks and runners

¹¹⁰⁴ QSDG (GX 25/10/28), 7-YJ-2935: 《陝甘總督陶為黑錯、買吾番案札循化廳》.

¹¹⁰⁵ Tao Baolian, 241: “內地官弁以事往，無論為牧令、為都守，其豪酋召集男婦跪迎斂錢及羊馬為贐。少納無怨，不納尤感。或因緣多取之，甚至索女索金，亦敢怒不敢言。窮員方羨為利竅，番族視華官多貪鄙，貌甚恭，心益離。官府大言曰：此吾所羈縻者也。氈帳竊曰：此吾所敷衍者也。”

directly to the Tibetan litigants.¹¹⁰⁶ With these instructions the governor-general also revealed the degree to which high-ranking Qing officials were becoming concerned that the Tibetan legal order was not merely being integrated into a centralized legal order, but rather eradicated by it. In this respect, the situation faced by governor-general Tao mirrored that of colonial America, Australia, and India where colonial officials faced pressure from both settler movements and sometimes indigenes themselves to eliminate pluralism and unify the legal order around the legal tradition of the metropole.¹¹⁰⁷

As in the British Empire, the seeming “barbarism” of the indigenous legal order became a rallying point for local efforts to promote greater state sovereignty in indirectly administered regions. In Amdo, the most salient example of this was ongoing effort of some members of the Muslim gentry of Hezhou, and Ma Anliang in particular, to expose the internal legal regime at Labrang as “barbaric” and unjust. Starting in the 1880s, a steady stream of reports arrived in Xunhua subprefecture from Ma Anliang and associated Muslim gentry and traders accusing Labrang of operating a vast jail complex where travelers, both Tibetan and Hui, were subject to arbitrary detention, torture, and expropriation.¹¹⁰⁸ Tibetans, as well, such as the Shartsang Rinpoché of Rongwo

¹¹⁰⁶ QSDG (GX 24/04/15), 7-YJ-4164: 《陝甘總督為查辦買吾、黑錯番案的札》.

¹¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth Kolsky provides an extensive account of these pressures in British India in, *Colonial Justice in British India: White Violence and the Rule of Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 12-15. For examples from colonial America and Australia, see: Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 4, 43, 86, 95.

¹¹⁰⁸ QSDG (GX 15/12/19), 7-YJ-3132: 《馬尕五為桑吉勒贖上循化廳的稟》; (GX 16/01/24), 7-YJ-3131: 《循化廳為馬尕金被害事具的詳報》.

monastery lodged similar accusations against the Jamyang Zhepa.¹¹⁰⁹ Authorities in Hezhou and Xunhua ruled that Labrang's jails were illegal and a violation of the prerogatives of the dynasty. However, other than offering to remove the prisoners and try them according to the "Tibetan Code," Qing officials seem to have taken little direct action.¹¹¹⁰ Yet their continued support for a directly supervised "Tibetan" legal tradition was notable given the pressures brought to bear by the Muslim gentry.

In 1899, the conflict between Dzögé Mewo and Tsö was ultimately resolved without resorting to Ma Anliang's military force. As noted above, Tao Mo's reluctance to sanction the military expedition was a result of his fear that such a force would inevitably do more harm than good. It may also have been a reflection of a desire to reverse the influence of the Muslim military elite of Hezhou in the Tibetan regions of Xunhua. Tao was adamant that he wanted the subprefects to avail themselves first of indigenous Tibetan mediators.¹¹¹¹ However, while the party that negotiated the final settlement included several prominent Tibetans from both Rongwo and Labrang monasteries, several Muslim gentry were also involved and signed as guarantors (although this group did not include Ma Anliang).¹¹¹² Their appearance in this settlement underlines the fact

¹¹⁰⁹ QSDG (GX 15/08/30), 7-YJ-4535: 《循化厅为沙力仓昂锁等稟控拉卜楞私设班房下的谕》. Rongwo was itself also accused of operating an illegal jail: QSDG (GX 09/07/01, 1883-8-8), 7-YJ-2727: 《循化廳為隆務寺準備攻打河南蒙古上的稟》.

¹¹¹⁰ QSDG (GX 16/01/24), 7-YJ-2960: 《嘉木样状告隆务属番族的稟与循化厅回的谕》 & 《循化厅为马尕金被害事具的详报》; (GX 16/02R/07), 7-YJ-3131: 《河州州镇批准循化厅长丞》.

¹¹¹¹ QSDG (GX 24/04/15), 7-YJ-4164: 《陝甘總督為查辦買吾、黑錯番案的札》.

¹¹¹² For the original text of the final settlement, see: QSDG (GX 25/12/26), 7-YJ-2925: 《黑錯、德爾隆與買吾糾紛得調節方案》. For a description of the settlement process, see: QSDG (GX 25/12/28, 1900-1-28), 7-YJ-2925: 《會辦番案詳報擬結折稿》

that in the aftermath of the Muslim rebellions, the newly recognized Hui gentry had become seemingly indispensable interlocutors between the Qing state and Tibetans in Xunhua. For the period covered by the Xunhua subprefectural archive (roughly 1872-1912), it is difficult to locate a “Tibetan case” that did not involve consultation with Muslim gentry from Hezhou or Muslim grain-tax collectors who had formal affiliation with the subprefectural yamen in Xunhua town.

The impact of the gentrification of Muslims in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands was profound. Once Muslim military commanders such as Ma Zhan’ao and his son Ma Anliang were formally incorporated into the local civil and military administrative system, it became institutional habit, as well as a convenience, to turn first to these men for advice on Tibetan affairs. The availability of Tibetan “expertise” within the system reduced the incentive for direct consultation first with indigenous Tibetan elites and therefore opened up a gap between provincial authorities and their Tibetan counterparts. The Jamyang Zhepa might still be able to demand an audience with the Xining amban or the governor-general, but the perspective of the monk was identified as a “petition” or “supplication” (i.e. a *bing* 禀). For confidential advice on policy, high-ranking officials were more likely to draw on the advice of Ma Zhan’ao or his sons, forwarded internally up the bureaucracy in reports and memorandums from Hezhou or Xunhua. Tao Mo, for instance, in choosing a course of action in 1899, was deliberating policy suggestions that originated with Ma Anliang, not the Jamyang Zhepa. As a result, from the 1870s through the early 1900s, from the perspective of Qing officials’ documents from Gansu and Qinghai, Tibetan Buddhist elites went from being “allies” to “indigenes.” This aboriginalization of Tibetans was intertwined with the emergence of the Hui as the key

strategic partner in the governance of the Sino-Tibetan frontier. The scope of the Muslim rebellions had forced Qing policy makers to recognize the power of the Muslims of Gansu in an unprecedented fashion. The “discovery” of the Muslims during the late Qing led to a significant new role for Chinese Muslims in the national politics of the late Qing empire.

Tibetan elites in Xunhua were not passive observers of this process. Tibetan litigants sought out the offices of Muslim gentry and/or *xiejia*, often on the basis of what appear to have been unofficial or tacit alliances that had emerged from the period of Muslim rule in southern Gansu during the rebellion. It appears that Terlung monastery in particular had found reasons for common cause with Ma Zhan’ao and his son Ma Anliang throughout the Guangxu reign. In 1875, 1889-1892, and again in 1898, Terlung found allies for its positions with Ma Zhan’ao and Ma Anliang. Labrang as well eventually found Muslim allies among the sons of Ma Qianling (馬千齡)—Ma Fuxiang (馬福祥) and Ma Fulu (馬福祿). During the Muslim rebellion of 1895 that engulfed much of Xunhua and Hezhou, this lineage of Qing-allied Muslim gentry found refuge at Labrang from the ferocious infighting between Muslim factions in Hezhou. The decision to harbor this lineage bore fruit for Labrang in the late Qing and even in the period of the early Republic. The sons of the family went on to serve the Qing court in the defense of Beijing during the Boxer Rebellion and subsequently rose to positions of prominence both in the Qing military and in the Gansu provincial government. A grandson of Ma Qianling ultimately established himself as the chairman of Suiyuan (Ningxia) province and was a major player in Republican politics during the 1930s. From its powerbase in

Yinchuan, the family offered both financial and political support to Labrang well into the 1940s.¹¹¹³

Yet it was perhaps the pluralistic legal order itself that served to reify and institutionalize the difference between Tibetan, Han, and Hui in Xunhua, despite the fact that the Qing gradually came to view all three of these groups, including the majority of Tibetans in Xunhua, as “tax-paying commoners.” This chapter has labored to argue that the “Tibetan” legal tradition in Xunhua entailed not simply the implementation or adoption of a pre-existing Tibetan legal system. To the contrary, “Tibetan law” (variously Tibetan “codes,” “statutes,” or “regulations”) was a unique fabrication of the Qing colonial context. At their point of origin during the Yongzheng reign, the official “Tibetan code” had emerged (albeit murkily) from what the dynasty perceived to be “Mongol” legal traditions. Around the imperially-sanctioned *idea* of a timeless, “Tibetan” criminal code, Qing officials and Tibetan litigants gradually built a scaffolding of accords, contracts, pledges, and other precedents (or “old roads” according to Tibetans) that established an increasingly elaborate framework for the political-economy of the monastic polities of Amdo. Having formally established the office of the local magistrate as the center of a pluralistic legal order, Qing officials could not help but be exposed to the “foreignness” of Tibetan culture. The subprefects frequently found themselves investigating and adjudicating conflicts that were vastly different from what they had been exposed to within the interior of China proper. Moreover, when Tibetan litigants self-consciously spoke (or wrote) from their “barbarian” script they could not help remind Qing officials of the gap between “Tibetan customs” and those of the interior. By

¹¹¹³ See Ma Hongkui’s autobiography: *Ma Xiaoyun huiyi lu* (Hong Kong: Wenyi shuwo, 1984), 7-19.

default these encounters also accentuated the relative familiarity of the Muslim gentry with their “Neo-Confucian” educations and exam credentials.

During the late Guangxu reign, Qing officials in Gansu (and sometimes their sons) feared the unification of a “Tibetan world” under the auspices of the Jamyang Zhepa at Labrang and sought to postpone its arrival through their adjudication of conflicts between Labrang and its neighbors.¹¹¹⁴ Contingent results of these labors included both the establishment of the Sétsang lama as the general administrator of Terlung and Khagya and eventually the division of Khagya monastery. The institutionalization of a broad alliance of anti-Labrang monasteries centered at Rongwo monastery was of even more significant outcome. Within official circles, the very idea that Tibetans could unify into a single political structure was novel to the Guangxu reign and it coexisted awkwardly with an equally pervasive notion that the Tibetans, unlike the Hui or the Salars, were inherently factious. This latter opinion was voiced by Nayanceng in 1807 when he observed in an oft-cited memorial to the court that, “The Tibetans reside in dispersed tribes. Since their nature is greedy and suspicious, they frequently trespass against each other and cannot act in unison.”¹¹¹⁵ It was for this reason that some Qing officials believed that violence among Tibetans was unlikely to rise to the level of “rebellion” as it was wont in the case of Muslims.¹¹¹⁶

The Tibetans were disunited, but, “Their character is essentially obedient and, although not inherently difficult to govern, as a result of the pollution of their customs,

¹¹¹⁴ QSDG (GX 16/01/08), 7-YJ-2958: 《循化廳為卡家案上的申牒》.

¹¹¹⁵ Memorial reproduced in Song Tingsheng, *Nayancheng Qinghai zousyi* (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1997), 67.

¹¹¹⁶ QSDG (GX 06/10/15), 7-YJ-2697: 《署青海大臣為查辦多娃、蒙古案給循化廳、委員等的札》; QSDG (undated, but probably after 1902), 7-YJ-4288: 《循化廳照抄西寧道告示》.

they have become extraordinarily litigious.” So wrote Huo Leyi (霍勤燦), the second-to-last circuit intendant to serve in Xining before the fall of the dynasty in a proclamation he distributed to the Xunhua subprefect. The litigiousness of the region, the circuit intendant opined, “Was not due to the peoples’ innate stubbornness but a result of the fact that they have rarely received moral instruction, the responsibility for which lies with the officials and not the people.”¹¹¹⁷ This chapter has shown that the Tibetans of Xunhua made extensive use of the Qing judicial apparatus. Unlike Huo Leyi, however, I interpret this as a sign of the relative success of the system as opposed to the moral failure of dynasty’s field officials. While the Tibetans’ use of the system should not be mistaken as a sign that they found it *legitimate*, it can be interpreted as an indication that they saw the potential to turn the litigation process to their own advantage. Moreover, although Tibetans in Xunhua were indeed litigious, they all met before the magistrate as “Tibetans.”

The Amdo region was highly fractured, not merely between different sects but within the Gelukpa as well. All the monasteries mentioned in this chapter identified themselves as Gelukpa, yet this shared scholastic orientation guaranteed no degree of political cohesion. Tibetan Buddhism was not the only way of producing and maintaining “Tibetan” identity across a vast and complex terrain that had engendered a diversity of ways of life and community structures. The ongoing and dialogic negotiation of “Tibetanness” in the context of legal politicking in Qing courts helped make Tibetans. The potential existence of a “Tibetan” ethnic identity was perhaps most visible in the context of “Tibetan law,” a category that itself was perhaps most salient in the context of the pluralistic legal order shouldered by the overworked and ill-equipped local

¹¹¹⁷ QSDG, 7-YJ-4288: 《循化廳照抄西寧道告示》.

subprefects and their Muslim interlocutors. In this respect, the “Tibetan world” was at least partially a product of Qing colonial administrators, despite their best efforts to obstruct its emergence.

Conclusion

Legal Pluralism in the Qing Empire

In the late 1700s, Qing colonial administrators of the Qianlong reign began to view indigenous legal and administrative institutions in Amdo and central Tibet as increasingly defeasible. First, beyond the original (Kangxi-reign) borders of Gansu province, Qianlong's advisors began establishing a series of subprefectures to prepare Tibetan populations for incorporation into the administrative system of the Chinese provinces and the application of the legal code that prevailed therein. Second, in the 1790s, concern for the dangers posed by unregulated and unsupervised divination in central Tibet prompted the Qianlong emperor to impose a suite of new laws regulating these rituals. Over the course of 1792-1793, the desire to monopolize the arts of divination evolved into a much broader assertion of Qing sovereignty in Lhasa—a claim that the Qianlong emperor himself found unprecedented. The Qing imperial residents in Lhasa (the *ambans*) were now representatives of Qing sovereignty (Ma. *toose*) and this novel authority was on display most explicitly through their new duties to supervise the chief ministers of the government in Lhasa (the *kalön*) and coordinate the ritual identification of reincarnations using the Golden Urn. These developments in Amdo and Lhasa marked a sea change in official attitudes towards Tibetans and their future relationship to the Qing state and the interior regions of the empire. As Qianlong stated in his *Discourse on Lamas*, henceforth, Tibetan legal and administrative institutions were in principle and of necessity open to a degree of “rectification,” annulment, forfeiture, and replacement that had not been countenanced just a year earlier in 1791.

Yet, as successive Qing officials such as Gong Jinghan, Sungyun, Wenfu, Nayanceng, and even resident lamas in Beijing pointed out, the replacement of Tibetan jurisprudence and local systems of administration in toto with the criminal code and administrative system of the interior was unrealistic—at least in the short term. Qing emperors as well, from Qianlong through Daoguang, also remarked on the need to find a balance between pushing through changes and supporting the historical prerogatives and customs of the indigenous lay and monastic elites. As a result Tibetan jurisprudence was formally incorporated into what became a Qing-centered, hierarchical, and pluralistic colonial legal order. Historians of Tibet and comparative empire in the early modern world, however, have largely overlooked the existence of legal pluralism in the Qing empire and within Tibetan regions.¹¹¹⁸

A recent analysis of legal culture in Tibetan regions by Fernanda Pirie has argued that prior to 1958 it is inappropriate to speak of legal pluralism in Tibetan regions such as Amdo. According to Pirie, although incorporated into the Qing empire and subject to the “supervision” of the Qinghai amban, Amdo had no “centralized political control or administration” and Qing officials played only a limited administrative role. In contrast, indigenous elites in Repkong, Labrang, and elsewhere exercised “relatively autonomous administrative power.”¹¹¹⁹ Although these local rulers possessed a “set of common norms”

¹¹¹⁸ Recent synopses of this latter field of study by eminent legal historians such as Benton and Ross (2012, 2013) appear to limit their discussion to the jurisprudence of European or Islamic empires (such as the Ottoman) that share common roots in Roman law despite their explicit goal of describing “global” patterns of legal history. With the exception of Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, the Qing has been largely ignored by comparative histories of early modern empires. See Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

¹¹¹⁹ Pirie, “Legal Complexity on the Tibetan Plateau,” *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 53-54 (2006): 81. What Pirie considers to be “centralized” political authority is not defined in this article.

for resolving conflicts, Pirie argues that they should not be considered “laws” let alone a “system” of laws within a larger pluralistic legal order.¹¹²⁰ Pirie is furthermore reluctant to describe the legal environment of Amdo during both the Qing and contemporary People’s Republic of China in terms of “legal pluralism” because she does not observe two or more separate legal orders competing in the same space. Rather, in contemporary Amdo she describes a single legal order in which state law alternately competes with and coexists with local “norms.” Tibetans accept and may be satisfied with state intervention in certain fields of conflict but not others.¹¹²¹

Pirie’s analysis provides a useful survey of the diversity of local forms of governance and the “plurality of norms” that have guided conflict resolution. It is also an important correction to those who might too quickly view the present-day legal scene through the lens of Tibetan “resistance” to the Chinese state and its judicial system through recourse to their own “oppositional” legal system. Yet since she derives her analysis entirely from twentieth and twenty-first century oral accounts, it falls short of a complete discussion of the Qing-era judicial and administrative scene. First, reducing legal traditions in Amdo to a “host of competing norms” does not accurately capture the

Similarly, since the difference between “supervisory” and “administrative” roles is also undefined, the contrast seems like a convenient semantic distinction that does little to clarify the extent or limits of the amban’s authority.

In this dissertation, “supervising” has been understood as a point on a continuum of administrative duties or governing activities. To supervise is to administer or govern, but perhaps with less responsibility for daily, routine, or local aspects of governance. To say that the amban “supervised” the Mongol banners of Qinghai or local Tibetan elites across the border in Gansu, does *not* mean that the Qing did not administer, govern, or otherwise exercise sovereignty in Amdo.

¹¹²⁰ Pirie, 84.

¹¹²¹ Pirie, 78, 95-96. Specifically, Pirie notes how her contemporary Tibetan sources in Amdo view PRC efforts to resolve territorial conflicts between “tribes” as legitimate, but will turn to local Buddhist authorities to resolve other types of feuds.

way in which elite Gelukpa authors and legal petitioners from all walks of life saw their world. In his critique of expanding (or reducing) the definition of “law” to include all social “norms,” Brian Tamanaha has noted that “law” and especially “state-law” should be distinguished from other sources of social norms because people have frequently and explicitly made precisely this distinction.¹¹²² Tibetan annalists and geographers from Amdo in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries such as the second Belmang Pandita and Drakgönpa clearly demarcated legal traditions (Tib. *khrims* or *khrims lugs*) from other sorts of social norms or “customs” that ordered society (Tib. *lugs*, *lugs srol*, or *lam lugs*). Furthermore, we have also seen that Belmang and his students distinguished temporal from religious law codes: *rgyal khrims* and *chos khrims*, respectively. Both forms of “law” were defined as such precisely because they did not derive from custom, tradition, or other historical social practices. On the contrary, its association with Buddhism and rulers distinguished law from other social norms, and the most legitimate codes—codes that defined and delimited their civilization—had been granted by the divinely inspired kings of ancient Tibet.

Second, as both the local, Tibetan-language histories and archival sources demonstrate, indigenous Tibetans, Qing officials, and even Hui Muslims, all concurred that there were indeed a variety of distinctive traditions of law available in Amdo/Gansu province. From Belmang’s perspective, for instance, the Qing court had imposed “Chinese laws” (Tib. *rgyal khrims*, a concept encompassing both criminal punishments and administrative structures) on Tibetan regions, most significantly the government in

¹¹²² Brian Tamanaha, “A Non-Essentialist Version of Legal Pluralism,” *Journal of Law and Society* 27 (2000): 314. See also Paul D. Halliday’s discussion of Tamanaha in, “Law’s Histories: Pluralisms Pluralities, Diversity,” in *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500-1800*, eds. Lauren Benton and Richard J. Ross (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 264-5.

Lhasa in the 1750s. These laws had replaced both earlier divine codes derived from the earliest Tibetan kings and later “Yuan Laws” (Tib. *hor khrims*) of the Mongol descendants of Chinggis Khan. As discussed in Chapter Four, Wangchen Gyab, another nineteenth-century Labrang author, had also chronicled how the monastery’s elite, including the second Jamyang Zhepa, had organized resistance to the criminal codes of the neighboring Khoshot aristocracy of Kokonor.

Well into the late nineteenth century, institutions such as the estate of the Jamyang Zhepas, Rongwo monastery, the royal encampment (“urgé”) of the Cagan Nomunhan, and a host of other local elites and elders handled the vast majority of local crimes and social conflicts according to their own traditions of jurisprudence. Archival documents from the Xunhua subprefecture as well as Labrang itself indicate that monasteries such as Labrang and Repkong possessed written codes for dealing with crimes among their lay and monastic subjects, extensive records of past legal cases, and substantial bureaucratic and physical infrastructure for dealing with criminals.¹¹²³ The Qing court acknowledged and sanctioned these capabilities. In 1807, for instance, Cangling, the governor-general of Gansu, Šingkūi, the general of the Ningxia garrison, and Nayanceng, then serving as amban in Xining, jointly submitted a memorial suggesting that the leading lay rulers in Repkong, the Rongwo *nangso*, be given charge of

¹¹²³ Catalogs of archival materials concerning Tibetan affairs in Gansu province indicate that the archives of the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Hezhuo contain extensive records from Labrang Monastery that deal with judicial matters during the Qing. See: Gansu sheng dang’anguan, Zhongguo Zangxue yanjiu zhongxin, eds., *Gansu sheng suocun Xizang he Zangshi dang’an shiliao mulu* [Catalog of historical and archival materials concerning Tibet and Tibetan affairs held in Gansu province] (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe, 1996); and Danqu, *Labulengsi lishi dang’an bianmu yu labulengsi yanlun zhumu suoyin* [Catalog of historical archives of Labrang monastery and research concerning Labrang monastery] (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 2008).

“all [Tibetan] communities (族) in Xunhua” and advised the court to formally sanction the administrative and judicial responsibilities of various reincarnate lamas in Amdo. The memorialists envisioned these local elites as key elements of the Qing state’s governing apparatus both within Gansu and over the border among the Mongol banners of Qinghai.¹¹²⁴

Cangling *et al.* expected, however, that the subprefects, the Qinghai amban, and provincial officials in Lanzhou would closely supervise the indigenous elite. The latter were required to communicate regularly with the subprefects and pay routine visits to the official yamens in Xunhua, Guide, or Xining.¹¹²⁵ Letters from the subprefects to local Tibetan authorities reveal that Qing officials asserted prerogatives to supervise and directly adjudicate violent crimes, capital cases, feuds, and other conflicts that had either dragged in multiple communities, crossed administrative boundaries, or had persisted for a significant period of time. However, these letters and subsequent communications with superiors within the Qing colonial bureaucracy were just as likely to despair that local elites had either reported nothing at all or only in an extremely dilatory or desultory fashion. In the Guangxu reign, for instance, successive Xunhua magistrates complained that they rarely heard anything from the Repkong nangso and had had little luck reigning in or otherwise supervising the infamous prisons of Labrang and Rongwo monasteries.¹¹²⁶

¹¹²⁴ Palace memorial dated October 10, 1807 (JQ 12/09/12), reproduced in Song Tingsheng, *Nayancheng qinghai zouyi*, 67-68.

¹¹²⁵ In his memorial to the throne, Nayanceng couched this duty to send regular reports up to the subprefects and/or amban as a “privilege.”

¹¹²⁶ See for instance: QSDG (GX 09/06/05) 7-YJ-2726: 《循化廳為隆務寺槍殺郡王稟欽憲來單》; and QSDG (no date) 7-YJ-4709: 《循化廳為西番各族槍殺不已上的稟》. In this latter

Yet despite the existence of numerous indigenous judicial forums and potential legal mediators both lay and monastic, and the frequent obstruction of Qing supervision and information gathering, the subprefects in Xunhua, Guide, and Taozhou directly participated in the adjudication of a significant volume of legal cases involving Tibetans. And much of this caseload was delivered to Qing official yamens at the initiative of local Tibetans. Lawsuits brought by local Tibetans played a key role in expanding the jurisdiction of the Xunhua subprefect over new territories and determining the types of cases that Qing officials would handle. As discussed in chapters Six and Seven, a legal suit originally brought to Xunhua by Labrang monastery against Tsö monastery—a case that was coincidental with the founding of the new subprefecture—ultimately set important precedents for Qing-Tibetan relations in the region. The final ruling established the Labrang monastery as an enclave of Qinghai within Gansu province. Tibetan communities around Labrang such as Tsö and Repkong were henceforth increasingly thought of as “commoners” with routine tax obligations to Xunhua. Tibetan elites in Repkong and its affiliated communities can be heard in subsequent conflicts self-identifying as subjects of Xunhua in order to gain leverage against Labrang or the Khoshot prince to the south.¹¹²⁷ As a “Mongol monastery” subject to the Khoshot prince, the Xunhua subprefect had no clearly articulated responsibility to supervise the administration of justice within Labrang, but the case established Xunhua’s jurisdiction over cases that involved Labrang and neighboring communities and set a precedent for the use of Qing judicial forums by the rulers of Labrang. By the late Guangxu reign,

document the subprefect also expressed dismay that the nangso himself frequently was left in the dark about local crimes and feuds. Not only did Qing officials have trouble gathering information, but local elites did as well.

¹¹²⁷ For another example of this claim, see the following statement from the Rongwo nangso: QSDG (GX 08/05/01) 7-YJ-2720: 《隆務寺沙日倉新舊昂鎖為蒙古趕搶馬匹上的稟》.

Tibetans affiliated with both Labrang and Rongwo monastery in Repkong had become deeply enmeshed in the Qing judicial system and appealed for intervention and support from Qing officials with attestations of diligent observance of the dynasty's laws and demonstrations of how the dynasty's "mother and father officials" had "transformed" (Ch. 王化) them.

The extant legal records from Xunhua during the late Qing (1873-1912) are also almost entirely free of any language concerning the notion of Qing patronage of Tibetan Buddhism. Among the documents examined in the course of this research, the subprefects never justify their involvement or interest in local matters in terms of their support for the Gelukpa or Buddhist faith. Nor is there any indication that the subprefects actively patronized monastic establishments or that Tibetan litigants, either lay or monastic, expected Qing officials to act in a certain way because of religious devotion or other previous displays of piety. Instead, petitioners seem to have couched their appeals to Qing justice primarily in terms of history. As discussed in Chapter Seven, records of past military service to the Qing state, especially in times of rebellion, or of duties delivered—taxes, labor, etc., were seen as essential to crafting a persuasive case. To the extent that the preceptor-donor relationship was enacted, it seems to have been limited to the initiative of high officials such as the governor-general and the amban and a handful of reincarnate monks such as the Jamyang Zhepa or the Setsang lama. In one rare instance, a series of letters between the subprefect and governor-general Tao Mo discussed the discovery of an ornamental tablet in the private office of the manager of the Jamyang Zhepa's estate that read, "Omniscent Bodhi (悟徹菩提)." The estate manager claimed that the governor-general had donated the tablet. Yet with evident consternation,

governor-general Tao informed the subprefect that he had not, in fact, donated the object, and ordered a top-secret investigation of who had.¹¹²⁸ Given the nature of this incident, it appears that such overt demonstrations of patronage by provincial officials were relatively rare.

This hierarchical yet pluralistic, Qing-centered judicial order was the product of both top-down administrative tinkering and bottom-up, periphery-in initiatives. During the Guangxu reign, the Tibetan residents of Xunhua participated in a legal order that was not simply a conglomeration of several distinct and parallel legal systems—Tibetan, Muslim, or Chinese, but rather a single, Qing colonial legal order in which several traditions of jurisprudence were reinterpreted and applied through ongoing and contingent jurispractice. Legal pluralism in Xunhua during the second half of the nineteenth century is therefore best understood as a plurality of laws as opposed to a plurality of distinct legal systems.¹¹²⁹ Tibetans in Xunhua could attempt to resolve conflicts and feuds through indigenous judicial forums or could decide to bring their problems to the Xunhua subprefect or other representatives of the Qing state within Xunhua such as the commanders of the military outposts in Qitai or Bao'an. As has been discussed in chapters Six and Seven, litigants could also “shop” their cases to neighboring subprefects in Guide and Taozhou or civil and military officials in Hezhou. Mongol and Tibetan elites such as the Mongol *junwang* and the Jamyang Zhepa, and sometimes even more humble people who had made astute alliances with well-placed representatives (such as Ma Anliang or other Muslim gentry), could appeal their cases up the Qing administrative hierarchy to higher-ranked officials in Xining or Lanzhou. In all

¹¹²⁸ QSDG (GX 25/02/09) 7-YJ-3165: 《陝甘總督陶為徹查拉卜楞寺牌匾給循化廳的札》.

¹¹²⁹ For the expression “law’s pluralities,” see Halliday, 262, 267-274.

these forums, Tibetans could demand that their cases be adjudicated according to “Tibetan” traditions of jurisprudence.

The distinctive feature of the Qing colonial legal order vis-à-vis that of the British in India was that the Qing magistrate himself was the embodiment of the law’s pluralities. In Xunhua the subprefect might be expected to adjudicate on the basis of what were recognized contemporaneously as three distinctive traditions of jurisprudence: Tibetan, Chinese, and Muslim. The establishment of the “Subprefects for Pacifying the Tibetans” of Xunhua, Guide, and Taozhou and the creation of “Tibetan codes and statutes” brought “Tibetan” jurispractice, if not necessarily jurisprudence, under the umbrella of the Qing administration. From the perspective of Tibetan petitioners, the “royal” or “imperial” law (Ch. 王法, Tib. *rgyal khrims*) of the Qing court could be understood as synonymous with the appropriate exercise and enforcement of Tibetan jurisprudence.

At the official yamen in Xunhua as well as in the more grandiose offices of high-ranking officials such as the Qinghai amban or the Xining prefect, petitioners and officials alike were concerned with maintaining the boundaries between “Tibetan” and “Chinese” law. Yet the fact that the magistrate was far better versed in the jurispractices and jurisprudence of the interior of the empire and rarely if ever from the northwest (and certainly never of Tibetan extraction) introduced additional potential for novel interpretations and renovations of “Tibetan” jurisprudence, combinations of the various traditions, or slippage from “Tibetan” jurispractices to those of the interior. Nayanceng’s reports from the field indicate that Qing colonial officials had been encouraged to employ the standard criminal code of the interior to a variety of crimes, especially crimes involving merchants that crossed the provincial boundaries, murder cases, large-scale

feuding or raiding, and attacks on imperial representatives or property. In the early Jiaqing reign we have seen that there was even some debate about whether to retire the separate “Tibetan laws and statutes” in their entirety. The debate was resolved in favor of the provisional preservation of the Tibetan statutes for most crimes excepting those that threatened the basic stability of Qing imperial rule in the region. But it should be observed that these “Tibetan” codes were the creative product of an early to mid eighteenth-century rectification of diverse local jurispractices—legal practices and procedures that were identified by Qing officials at the time as “Mongol” in origin.

It must be additionally noted that the Qing magistrate was rarely the only jurist in the room. Moreover, “the room,” or site of the adjudication and mediation, was often convened in an ad-hoc fashion in the residencies of local elites, monasteries, or even *en plein air* out in the pastures far beyond the walls of the official yamen in Xunhua town. The major conflicts in Xunhua during the last forty years of the dynasty were ultimately (or, more accurately, provisionally) resolved by special committees of Qing civil and military officials. The composition of these committees also typically straddled the divide between the provincial administration and the colonial administrators responsible to the Lifanyuan (such as the amban and his secretaries). Impartial and respected reincarnate lamas from outside the conflict zone, Muslim *xiejia* in the employment of the magistrate or in private business, Muslim gentry or religious specialists, and other Tibetan or Mongol headmen also performed the essential tasks of arranging ceasefires, persuading litigants to come to trial, gathering evidence, preparing formal statements for the official record, negotiating terms of settlement, and finally guaranteeing compliance. The final, written decisions drew on both local Tibetan precedents and principles of jurisprudence

as well as the diverse experiences and persuasive capabilities of the committeemen. As discussed in Chapter Seven, these decisions rarely derived from the straightforward application of the Tibetan Laws and Statutes and instead required intensive investigation and interpretation of preceding local jurispractice and Tibetan jurisprudence. The final documents might have been seen by contemporaries as embodying the principles of “Tibetan” jurisprudence and receiving the sanction of Tibetan elites, but were usually composites of the empire’s various traditions of jurisprudence. The landmark decisions of 1875, 1889, 1892, and 1899 set legal precedents that brought imperial sanction to transformed social relations in Amdo and should be seen as forming a body of distinctive “Qing” jurispractice in Amdo.

The creation of this novel body of Qing-sanctioned codes, decisions, community compacts, and charters shared important similarities with the invention of a new body of laws guiding the identification of reincarnation. The Qing court was successful in changing the procedure for locating and confirming reincarnate lamas. This success, however, hinged on the cooperation of Tibetan Buddhist elites and their willingness to adapt existing procedures and adopt what had originally been a Ming bureaucratic practice into a Tibetan tradition of divination technologies. As demonstrated by the case of the third Jamyang Zhepa, the legitimacy of children identified by this new procedure also entailed the repeated and long-term efforts of Tibetan biographers and chroniclers over the course of the nineteenth century. It should be noted, however, that Qing involvement in the search process and the use of the Golden Urn seems to have become particularly common for lineages of reincarnations hailing from Kham and Amdo, and less so for lamas from Ü and Tsang. Until the end of the dynasty, the Golden Urn was

used to identify reincarnations of the Jamyang Zhepa, the Cagan Nomunhan, Sumpa Khenpo, and Changkya. Considering that some of these lineages had not previously been identified through consultations with authorities in Lhasa, the Golden Urn had the paradoxical effect of tying these lineages more closely to central Tibet at the same time that it manifested ties to the Qing state.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, neither Tibetan jurisprudence nor the colonial legal order and its diverse legal practices remained static. The fact that the legal order became increasingly Qing-centered did not mean that the Qing court could manipulate legal proceedings in a predictable manner or dictate the ways in which locals understood Qing jurisprudence. Yet in the last decade of Qing rule, despite major setbacks along the maritime frontier the court and its colonial officials became if anything more ambitious in their goals for Tibetan regions. While the history of Qing efforts to bring Kham and central Tibet deeper within the fold of “China” has recently been the subject of much scholarly discussion, the history of Amdo has received less attention.¹¹³⁰ This is probably because Qing efforts to assert greater control in Kham and central Tibet were accompanied by a considerable amount of armed conflict. In Amdo, the shifting goals of Qing colonialism were less visible because they were expressed and implemented by an administrative infrastructure that was already in place. The seeds of Qing colonialism had been violently sown in 1724, not in 1904, as it was the case in Kham. By the 1820s, the majority of Tibetans in Amdo lived under the jurisdiction of subprefects or magistrates

¹¹³⁰ See for instance, Wang Xiuyu, *China’s Last Imperial Frontier: Statecraft and Locality in Qing Kham Tibet* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2011); Dahpon David Ho, "The Men Who Would Not Be Amban and the One Who Would: Four Frontline Officials and Qing Tibet Policy, 1905-1911," *Modern China* 34.2 (April, 2008): 210-246; and Eliot Sperling, "The Chinese venture in K’am, 1904-1911," in *The History of Tibet, Volume 3*, ed. Alex McKay, ed. (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 69-91.

who themselves were overseen by the overlapping jurisdictions of the amban in Xining and the governor-general in Lanzhou.

Despite the lack of large-scale, violent Qing-Tibetan conflict in Amdo, the Xunhua archives reveal growing tensions between locals and the subprefect during the early 1900s. A particularly salient example from this period concerns the government's support for the opening of lead mines in Repkong. In response to repeated petitions of protest from the Shartsang lama of Rongwo monastery, the *nangso*, and various headmen, the subprefect notified the petitioners that they had no authority over the opening of mines and, revealingly, warned him not to submit further petitions to the governor-general or the amban. The subprefect informed the monk that as subjects of the Qing ruler, the dynasty also held rights to the resources of their land: "You Tibetans are also children of the imperial court. Thus the lead in the mountain is the property of the imperial house."¹¹³¹ Subjecthood, according to this missive, entailed obligations that now went well beyond the submission of taxes to Xunhua and loyal support for the imperial house in times of conflict.

As evidenced by their petitions, this is not how the elite of Repkong understood their subordination to the Qing emperors. When the petitioners repeated their claim that their support for the dynasty entailed some degree of discretion over local affairs and resources, the magistrate replied, "Your recitation of prayers for the protection of the state is in principle about the protection of the imperial house. Since the prefect has already informed you that [mining] the lead is also a matter of the imperial house, how

¹¹³¹ QSDG (exact date unclear) 7-YJ-4721 : 《隆務沙力倉等為開辦鉛礦上的稟及批》：“番民亦朝廷赤子，鉛山以皇家地土。”

can you request not to do it?”¹¹³² In other words, offering up prayers for the dynasty now also entailed supplying natural resources. The magistrate further justified the Rongwo’s duty to deliver up its mineral wealth by arguing that their efforts were for the “sake of the wealth and strength of the nation” and that they would be justly compensated according to the “market prices.”¹¹³³ Such language marked a dramatic turn from the discourse of subjecthood employed in official documents from just years earlier. Qing colonial rule in Amdo, much as in Kham and central Tibet, now meant harnessing the latent wealth of the territory to the modernizing demands of the Qing state. The power of prayer alone was no longer sufficient. The rhetorical framework of the “patron and preceptor” relationship no longer resonated with Qing officials. The local rulers of Rongwo, for their part, however, promised violent resistance.

Unfinished Business

This dissertation makes two assertions that require further elaboration and substantiation. First, this examination of legal culture in Tibetan regions during the late Qing has emphasized the degree to which law was constitutive of the “Tibetan” world. Chapter Four argued that from the perspective of Belmang Pandita and other influential scholar-administrators within the Gelukpa leadership in Amdo, law was the essential marker of their civilization and the framework that joined Amdo to central Tibet. Just law was by definition derived from Buddhism and the original dissemination of such laws by

¹¹³² QSDG (GX year unclear/10/20) 7-YJ-4721: 《循化廳為考辦鉛礦給隆務寺沙日倉的諭》：“爾等念保國真經原是保佑皇家，本府奉札辦鉛亦是為皇家辦事，若可以求准不辦？”

¹¹³³ *Ibid.* “為國家籌富強”

the early kings of Tibet distinguished their kingdom from its neighbors. In the early nineteenth century and in the face of fresh efforts by the Qing court to “rectify” the governance of Tibetan regions, writers like Belmang saw the Gelukpa as the sole guardian of their legal tradition and argued that any ruler who entered into preceptor-donor relations with the Gelukpa was obliged to adopt not only their religious tenets but also the jurisprudence of Tibet. According to Belmang and his students, unwillingness to embark on this thorough conversion had undermined the rule of Gushri Khan’s descendants in Amdo and threatened to do the same for the Qing.

Chapters Six and Seven described the establishment of a “Tibetan” tradition of jurispractice within the offices of local magistrates in Gansu province. I have suggested in the conclusion of the final chapter that legal politics within the pluralistic, Qing colonial legal order had a major influence on the development of a “Tibetan” tradition of jurispractice and the consolidation of a broader “Tibetan” national identity at the beginning of the twentieth century. As noted in Chapter Five, “Tibetan,” “Mongol,” “Salar” or “Hui,” “nomad” or “farmer” were fungible labels among the many possible categories of identification that existed in nineteenth-century Amdo. In the yamen of the Xunhua subprefect, ambiguity evaporated and identities hardened, because the law’s pluralities presented both dangers and opportunities. Classification as Tibetan or Han, colonial subject or commoner,¹¹³⁴ meant the application of different traditions of jurisprudence with potentially vastly different forms and degrees of punishment. Appeal to the magistrate under a particular label might also establish protections from outsiders

¹¹³⁴ By “colonial subject or commoner” I am trying to convey the legal distinction between being classified as “min” (民), a common subject of the standard provincial administration of the Chinese interior, and the non-min “Fan” or “Mongol” residents of Qinghai and other colonial territories that were overseen by the Lifanyuan.

demanding cultural change, economic privileges, or territorial acquisitions. Rulers in Beijing as well as local Qing officials did occasionally prove to be responsive to fears that culture and livelihood had been threatened.¹¹³⁵ The subprefect's yamen was even a place where new identities, labels, or categories could be introduced and popularized. For example, for the majority of the Guangxu reign, "Tibetan" petitioners were usually varieties of "Fan." During the last couple years of the Guangxu reign, however, the use of the modern ethnonym *zangzu* (藏族) began to appear sporadically in official documents.¹¹³⁶

The contention that a "Tibetan" identity in Amdo was forged before the gates of the yamen will remain a weak one until more is known about how people in Amdo understood and wrote about their legal traditions both before and after 1696, the year in which the Khoshot princes submitted to Kangxi and their domains began to be incorporated into the Qing empire. What kinds of legal practices existed in and between the Khoshot principalities? Did they distinguish between "Tibetan" and "Mongolian" traditions of jurisprudence? How did the reincarnate rulers such as the Cagan Nomunhan or Jamyang Zhepa administer justice and mediate disputes within their domains? How did they negotiate jurisdictional conflicts and the multiple local traditions of jurispractice that existed in Amdo? How did the residents of Amdo differentiate between "royal" or "religious" law, *rgyal* and *chos* respectively, and do these English-language categories

¹¹³⁵ A good example of this phenomenon was the Qing government's repeated attempts to protect Mongols in Qinghai from incursions by Tibetans and settlers from the interior. Archival documents from the years 1878-1881 and 1883 (GX 04-07, 09) reveal discussions among Qing officials about how to protect the Mongols south of the Yellow River.

¹¹³⁶ See for example, QSDG (GX 30/12/21, 1905-01-26) 7-YJ-3041: 《雙朋頭目呈稟拉卜楞、雙朋兩方糾紛一案始末》. In this document, translators at the Xunhua yamen have translated a request for "Tibetan mediators who understand Tibetan" using the Chinese terms *zangzu* and *zangyu*.

express with any accuracy the indigenous distinctions? What can we learn about Qing justice from contemporaneous Tibetan-language sources? How did the residents of Amdo differentiate between “royal” or “religious” law, and do these English-language categories adequately represent indigenous distinctions between *rgyal*, *srid*, and *chos*?

European and Chinese scholarly discussions of law in Amdo have generally seen a division between “monastic,” “Buddhist,” or “canon” jurisprudence on the one hand and “tribal” or “folk” law on the other. This distinction, which frequently devolves to descriptions of vicious, eye-for-an-eye, “tribal morals,” seems to have only a superficial bearing on how locals may have understood the different local traditions of jurisprudence and jurispractice.¹¹³⁷ As discussed in Chapter Six and Seven, while conflicts between Tibetans in Amdo could often result in bloody raids and reprisals, the threat of spontaneous and unrestrained “barbaric” violence was also a rhetorical pose that Tibetan petitioners carefully and self-consciously deployed in the course of legal wrangling before Qing magistrates. Historians and anthropologists of the early twentieth century, who relied heavily on the memorials, gazetteers, and other semi-official publications of local Qing officials, have read these accounts of “tribal” justice far too literally and taken little account of the biases of Qing officials or the underlying case histories. Moreover, it should be added that both “tribal” and monastic authorities made strategic use of violence. In summary, little is yet known about how Gelukpa hierarchs in Amdo justified the

¹¹³⁷ Yu Shiyu, a Han Tibetologist active during the Republican period and early PRC, published a particularly influential analysis of Tibetan laws and “tribal morals” (部落道德): “Mantan ‘fanli fangui’” in *Li Anzhai, Yu Shiyu zangxue wenlunxuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2002), 326-333. Robert Ekwall, does not mention “tribal morals,” but does introduce the distinction between “folk” and “canon” law in Amdo: “Peace and War Among the Tibetan Nomads,” *American Anthropologist* 66.5 (October 1964): 1119-1148.

accumulation of the extensive temporal or political (Tib. *srid*) responsibilities by the mid-nineteenth century.¹¹³⁸

Fortunately, the resources to address these questions do exist. But they have yet to be thoroughly mined and remain difficult to access. As noted in Chapter Six, at least one Manchu-language report on Mongol legal codes and jurispractices in Qinghai during the Kangxi reign has already been located. This dissertation has used only an insignificant portion of the vast quantity of extant materials in Chinese *and* Tibetan that has survived from the original archives of the Xunhua subprefect. Original Qing-period documents from Labrang monastery's own archives have also survived but are currently held at inaccessible archives in Hezhou and within Labrang monastery itself. The fourth Jamyang Zhepa, whose life overlapped with the extant documents from Xunhua (1875-1911), produced a large body of writings including correspondence with Qing officials. These writings, as well as his biography, have yet to be read against the archival record from Xunhua (which, it should be noted includes several original Tibetan-language letters from the monk).¹¹³⁹

The second main assertion that has arisen in the course of this research is that the transfer of political authority from Mongol nobles to the estates of reincarnate lamas and

¹¹³⁸ Engaging in political affairs and even devoting extensive time to writing or studying them, were both activities that could jeopardize the underlying purposes of the monastic vows and progress towards religious attainments. Belmang himself, in the preamble to his *History*, finds it necessary to apologize for his inappropriate interest in the “stories of kings and talk of war.” Belmang, 481:4.

¹¹³⁹ When attempting to understand Labrang and Amdo during the late Qing, the fourth Jamyang Zhepa’s biography, however, should be used with caution since it was completed only after the monk’s death in 1916. The biography’s portrayal of the Qing and local political relations is probably biased by the fact that the Qing dynasty had been overthrown in 1911.

the concomitant growth of massive, monastery-centered polities in Amdo—a process that began in the late seventeenth century and accelerated dramatically from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth century, was not only unprecedented but also the unique by-product of the Qing colonial context. Political rule by reincarnated Gelukpa hierarchs was not an inevitable feature of Tibet’s Buddhist civilization, nor were the builders of monastic polities in Amdo necessarily modeling their efforts on that of the Great Fifth.

This impression arose originally from my reading of Belmang Pandita’s history of Gushri Khan and his descendants and the subsequent elaboration of this history by his students. According to Belmang, the Fifth Dalai Lama had never ruled as an independent sovereign. His authority rested on the generosity and military might of his patrons, Gushri Khan and his descendants. While such assertions, which echo those of earlier historians from Amdo, might be criticized as the bluster of a Khoshot partisan from Amdo, the counter-claim, made on the basis of the autobiography and biographies of the Fifth Dalai Lama, that the Great Fifth was in fact the sole sovereign in Lhasa, should also be subjected to the same type of critique. Contemporary historians who make this claim for the Great Fifth are not only ignoring the highly diffused and complex power arrangements within the Ganden Podrang government during the second half of the sixteenth century and oversimplifying the relationship between the Great Fifth and his various regents (Tib. “*desi*”), but also overlooking the fact that the historical sources from Lhasa were produced in the context of a very heated and protracted debate over the

nature of the Dalai Lama's political authority and his legacy among Tibetan and Mongol historians.¹¹⁴⁰

From Belmang's perspective it was not obvious that reincarnate lamas such as the Dalai Lama or the Jamyang Zhepa could rule even locally without the support of a royal patron. He therefore portrayed Changkya Rolpé Dorjé's suggestion that the second Jamyang Zhepa replace the descendants of Gushri Khan as the leading prince of Qinghai as something radical and unprecedented. Several years later, however, Drakgönpa's historical geography of Amdo would describe the Jamyang Zhepa as having realized Belmang's vision and fully inhabiting the political role that had previously been played by the Khoshot princes. In the 1850s-1860s, Drakgönpa was documenting a political landscape that looked nothing like it had a hundred years earlier. Moreover, the growing monastic polities of Amdo such as Labrang were not seen locally as reproductions of the Ganden Podrang in miniature.

It is essential, therefore, to look more closely at the Qing, its policies, and the overall social and political environment generated by Qing colonialism in order to understand the rise of large monasteries and even monastic "confederations" or alliances during the nineteenth century. And it is all the more remarkable that these institutions arose despite the fact that the Qing state repeatedly tried to limit each monastery to governing only itself. Chapter Five suggested that the rise of these monastic domains resulted originally from the political vacuum left by the Qing court's overt efforts to eliminate the Khoshot Mongols in Amdo as a strategic threat to the dynasty. The

¹¹⁴⁰ Samten Karmay, for instance, has forcefully argued that as "head of state" the Fifth Dalai Lama was fully sovereign in central Tibet. Gushri Khan was simply "king" of the Mongols in Kokonor. Karmay, "The Fifth Dalai Lama and His Reunification of Tibet," in *Lhasa in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Francoise Pommaret (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 72-73.

introduction of the banner system to Qinghai in 1723 limited the mobility of Mongol populations, placed obstacles in the path of resolving demographic and ecological challenges, and ossified the Mongol nobility by restricting their movement and carefully regulating their political authority, thus denying them the ability to regroup or consolidate power around effective leaders. Mongol commoners quietly slipped away of their own accord, moving into Tibetan communities and adopting Tibetan customs.

The dynasty, however, had a much more difficult time developing a consistent or effective strategy for checking the influence of the Gelukpa monasteries and their accumulation of subject communities. This was something of a paradox for Qing administrators because the majority of the Tibetan communities in Amdo were at least ostensibly under more direct forms of supervision in the subprefectures of Guide, Xunhua, and Taozhou, and closer in proximity to Qing officials than were the Mongols who resided in banner communities scattered across the distant pastures of Qinghai. From the perspective of Qing officials, the challenge of handling Tibetan affairs was frequently attributed to the difficulty of finding magistrates fluent in Tibetan legal customs and in coordinating policies between different branches of government and across a broad swath of territory. Thus we have seen Gong Jinghan, Nayanceng, and other officials repeatedly tinker with the administrative structure of Gansu Province and Qinghai. By the mid nineteenth century, the result of these efforts was a complex web of overlapping jurisdictions. The provincial government in Lanzhou retained the right to oversee appointments and non-Tibetan affairs in Xunhua, but the subprefecture had also been shifted from the purview of Lanzhou prefecture to Xining prefecture. This move placed the amban in Xining in a better position to oversee Tibetans in Xunhua and coordinate

the handling of affairs in Xunhua with those of other districts with large Tibetan populations, as well as across the Qinghai-Gansu frontier. Thus events in Xunhua could be reported up two separate chains of command, presenting jurisdictional tensions that could prove a headache for officials and opportunities for litigants. It also explains why the extant archive of the subprefecture is awash with documents from both Xining and Lanzhou.

This dissertation has argued that the dynamics of a pluralistic legal environment affected the shifting political landscape. The availability of “Gelukpa jurisprudence” at sites such as Labrang, Lamo Dechen, or Rongwo monastery helped undermine the judicial authority of Mongol rulers. In a similar fashion, the presence of alternate legal forums in the subprefectural yamens, at the office of the Qinghai amban, provincial offices in Lanzhou, or even at the Lifanyuan in Beijing, could also undermine the authority of reincarnate lamas. As discussed in Chapter Seven, Labrang’s local opponents could be quite successful in using lawsuits, petitions, and court testimony to delegitimize the fourth Jamyang Zhepa. But the leaders of Rongwo monastery, Labrang, and other smaller religious estates in Xunhua such as that of the Setsang lama also made extensive and strategic use of the Qing legal order to shore up their authority, accumulate “vassals” (*to shuantou*), and build hierarchical confederations of monasteries and lay communities.

The three major legal cases described in Chapter Seven also appear to document the sudden politicization of many types of pious activities and social relationships. Under pressure from growing tension between Labrang and its neighbors, Qing officials were forced to supervise the drafting of a host of new community charters and compacts to “clarify” the relations between the estates of reincarnate lamas and their tenants. In the

process, many communities sought to extract themselves from the burden of supporting religious estates or multiple authorities by claiming status as “royal colonies” administered solely by Xunhua.

These Qing-focused explanations for the rise of Labrang and other monastic domains require further substantiation. Where these institutions truly unprecedented? What was different about the Qing-period expansion of Gelukpa monasteries from the previous emergence of large monasteries such as Rongwo, Jakhyung (Tib. Bya khyung, Ch. 夏琼寺), Gonlung, or Kumbum during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Was the politicization of pious activities in the 1870s through 1890s so unusual? Was the violence of this period typical? Both of these questions require further investigation and the location of additional archival sources or Tibetan-language narratives. The narrative told in this dissertation is limited and potentially distorted by the fact that the extant record from Xunhua extends no earlier than the 1870s.

More must also be learned about the relationship between Mongols, the Gelukpa monasteries, and lay Tibetan communities during the late Qing. Despite the fact that the Khoshot prince’s mansion was burned to the ground in 1883, Mongols remained major donors to Labrang, and the monastery’s leadership, for its part, continued to prioritize the cultivation of Mongol ties. In the 1850s and 1860s, in violation of Qianlong-era laws banning the Gelukpa from seeking donors in Jungharia and western Mongolia, Labrang dispatched several monks to the far western regions of the empire. One of these missionaries, Künga Gyeltsen (Tib. Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan; Ma. Gung’ajaltsan, 1835-1895), achieved empire-wide fame when he became a rallying point for scattered Qing

and Mongol military forces in Xinjiang during the tumultuous years of the Muslim rebellions in the 1860s-1870s.¹¹⁴¹

Finally, insights from this study of ritual law-making in central Tibet and the pluralistic legal order in Amdo suggest that the Qing influence on social, cultural, economic, and political developments in central Tibet during the nineteenth century should also be reconsidered. Much like the situation in Amdo, the *pax Manjurica* in central Tibet was unlikely to have been as “somnolent” as previously assumed. If Belmang and other Tibetan historians from Amdo are to be believed, the consolidation of religious and political authority achieved by the adroit maneuvering of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama represented not a resurrection of the government of the Great Fifth but rather an original feat. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama legitimized his rule by asserting that he was taking up the mantle of the Great Fifth, but this was a mantle that the earlier incarnation had only discursively worn. Seen in this light, what role had Qing policies had on laying the groundwork for the reign of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama? The very fact that there was still a centralized government in Lhasa in 1895—the year in which the Dalai Lama assumed governing responsibilities after over a hundred years of regencies, should force

¹¹⁴¹ Künga Gyeltsen could be accurately described as the “Zeng Guofan” of Tibetan Buddhists. When Muslim rebel groups in northern Xinjiang defeated Qing garrisons in 1864, Künga Gyeltsen began to organize a private military force to protect Junghar, Solon, Sibe, Manchu, and Mongol communities in the region. Ultimately, the monk provisionally abandoned his vows and received official status from the beleaguered Qing court to organize civil and military affairs in the Targhabatai region. Manchu-language communications between Künga Gyeltsen and the Qing court survive in the First Historical Archive, Beijing, and his Tibetan-language biography contains further information. Following the rebellions, he resumed his vows and divided his time between his estate in Choné, southeast of Labrang, and Mongol communities in the Altai Mountains. As a reward for his services, he received the title of “kütuktu” from the Qing court. Of further note, Künga Gyeltsen appears in a number of cases litigated in Xunhua and Taozhou during the Guangxu period and can even be found “purchasing titles” (Ch. 捐輸) on behalf of other monks affiliated with Labrang. For a recent reprint of his Qing-period biography, see: Skal bzang legs bshad, *Rje btsun byams pa mthu stobs kun dga' rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar* (Mtsho ngnon: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1994).

us to think again about the Qing context and the relationship between the Qing court and the regents in particular.

Three of the four reincarnate lineages that supplied the Ganden Podrang with successive regents had received ongoing and direct support from Qing rulers since the Qianlong reign. The seventh Demo Kūtuktu (regent 1757-1777), first Tsemöning Kūtuktu (Tib. Tshe smon gling ngag dbang tshul khrims 1721-1791, regent 1777-1786, and again in 1791), and the eighth Tatsak Rinpoche (Ma. Jirong Kūtuktu, regent 1791-1810), all received strong backing from the Qianlong emperor and their estates derived considerable wealth from imperial patronage. For instance, Kundeling Monastery, the seat of the Tatsak Rinpoche, was established on the basis of donations from Fukanggan and Hailanca in 1792.¹¹⁴² The regent lineages, with their close ties to the Qing court, formed the backbone of a government that in the nineteenth century required none of the major investments of men and material that Qing rulers had repeatedly found themselves forced to make during the eighteenth century. As noted in Chapter One, creating a more self-sufficient and centralized government in Lhasa had been a major objective of Qing colonial agents like Fukanggan and Heliyen in the 1790s and was a goal that they did not see as necessarily conflicting with simultaneous assertions of Qing sovereignty.

The regents were not the only institutions created or reformed under the supervision of Qing authorities in the 1790s and early nineteenth century. Qianlong's program also tackled the Tibetan government's finances, currency, tax administration, postal service, frontier defenses, and military—reforms that, in the context of any other early modern colonial empire would be seen as laying the groundwork for the consolidation of national identities and perhaps even the nation-state. However, since

¹¹⁴² Funds derived, one suspects, from the successful campaign against the Gurkhas.

Petech's path-breaking scholarship on the regents during the 1970s, these institutions as well as the other points of contact between the Qing court, its colonial administration, and Tibetans have been largely ignored.¹¹⁴³ The desire of most non-Chinese scholars to trace the "independent" development of Tibetan society as a clean trajectory from the era of the Great Fifth to that of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama is understandable in light of the events of the twentieth century. But historians do so at the peril of overlooking the degree to which intense and sustained encounters between Tibetans and Qing officials and other agents of Qing colonialism fundamentally reshaped Tibetan communities across greater Tibet during the last century of Qing rule.

Legal Pluralism in Contemporary Gansu and Qinghai Provinces

My arrival in China in 2010 to conduct dissertation fieldwork corresponded with renewed efforts by local governments in Gansu and Qinghai to encourage the "blending" (交融) of Tibetans into "mainstream Chinese culture." In October, the Qinghai provincial government proposed drastic reforms of the bilingual education policy and the central government issued a new law on Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, further restricting the numbers and movements of monks and pointedly forbidding "hierarchical relationships" among monasteries.¹¹⁴⁴ The law claimed that it was trying to prevent the "reestablishment of the oppression, exploitation, and special privileges of the feudal religious system."

¹¹⁴³ Luciano Petech, "The Dalai Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," *Serie Orientale Roma LX* (1988): 125-147.

¹¹⁴⁴ Zhongguo guojia zongjiao shiwu ju (China National Bureau of Religious Affairs), "Zang chuan fojiao simiao guanli banfa," issued 2010-09-30. www.gov.cn/gzdt/2010-10/08/content_1717257.htm, accessed 2012-12-09.

Locals saw this as yet another effort to dismantle the broad network of Buddhist education, pilgrimage, wealth, cultural production, and political resistance embodied by Labrang Monastery and other major Gelukpa monasteries. The promotion of the law represented an admission by the Bureau of Religious Affairs that the People's Republic had failed to adequately supervise, restrict, and disperse the power of the Gelukpa in Amdo.

The resulting street protests, coming as they did in the aftermath of even greater ethnic violence in 2008 and 2009, generated handwringing among the scholars in both northwest China and Beijing. The result was unprecedented discussions, both in private and public, of questions such as why ethnic minorities did not “identify” with China (the “国家认同问题”) and whether it was time to institute a “second generation” of ethnic policies (“第二代民族政策”). Some scholars took the position that the entire system of *minzu* identification should be annulled. Others, however, suggested that the PRC focus on promoting a form of “Chinese” citizenship less closely identified with or characterized by Han culture and history. My research on Qing-period attempts to grapple with a complex colonial legal order provides a historical perspective on these contemporary debates.

That the contemporary Chinese state is still attempting to resolve the tensions between transformation and preservation of its non-Han periphery—tensions that the Qing failed to reconcile—is hardly noteworthy. But what remains underappreciated is the degree to which specific PRC efforts to incorporate Tibetan regions are similar to policies of the Qing and, much like those of the past, continue to generate difficult to control dynamics and unexpected consequences. The Qing placed legal restrictions on Tibetan

monasteries and repeatedly tried to outlaw the proliferation of branch monasteries and the establishment of inter-monastic alliances and hierarchies under the rubric of “each monastery should govern itself (各管各寺).” Much like the British in India, Qing officials from the 1820s-on expected that the extension of imperial supervision of local legal traditions would have a “soothing” effect on indigenous peoples. The dynasty’s promise of justice—exercised either through Tibetan or Chinese codes, was central to its claims of legitimacy. Yet in the 1890s Qing officials observed with dismay that the extension of the Qing legal system to Tibetan communities not only failed to “transform” them, but to the contrary, had resulted in an ever-increasing stream of litigation and violent feuding. Moreover, the expedient inclusion of Tibetan laws and statutes within in the Qing code only seemed to further reify and unify an oppositional Tibetan identity across the region.

The Qing emperors and the Communist Party have both attempted to legitimize and stabilize their rule by enshrining a degree of pluralism in the structure of their state. The Lifanyuan supervised a separate system of administration with distinct legal codes in its diverse Inner Asian territories. In 1954, the People’s Republic formally established a constitutional system of *minzu* autonomy. The PRC has not, however, formally tolerated the continuation of distinctive traditions of *minzu* jurisprudence. Instead it has asserted a uniform criminal code throughout the country. Yet in practice, the Communist party has tolerated a variety of local traditions of jurisprudence, especially when they have proved effective in resolving local conflicts. Officials of both Han and Tibetan extraction in Gansu and Qinghai have made astute use of local Tibetan traditions of jurispractice and

the Buddhist authorities. What distinguishes the PRC from Qing is the degree to which legal pluralism has been formally enshrined in the administrative structure of the state.

Thus, we should not be surprised to observe that, much like they did at the offices of the Qing subprefects in Xunhua, Tibetans in Gansu and Qinghai have continued to seek out agents of the PRC to resolve local grievances. And the system continues to generate paradoxical and potentially destabilizing outcomes. The aggressive use by Tibetans of PRC courts and local government offices to address criminal and especially civil disputes can and do produce legitimacy for the People’s Republic. At the same time however, the desire to see things handled in “Tibetan” ways sustains ethnic and cultural boundaries and the propensity of government cadres, police, and judges to abuse their power generates further disillusionment with the promises of *minzu* autonomy enshrined in the constitution of the PRC. Tao Baolian’s Guangxu-era critique of Qing officialdom should serve therefore, as a timely reminder to the cadres of the Xi Jinping-era that they should not jump to conclusions about the mood of ethnic minorities who make regular and intimate use of the government. “On the outside they appear respectful to the point of obsequiousness, yet their hearts could not be further away. The government officials boast, ‘These are the people whom I restrain!’ The people of the felt tents mutter under their breaths, ‘These are the people whom we indulge.’”¹¹⁴⁵

¹¹⁴⁵ Tao Baolian, 241.

Appendix: Translation of the Qianlong Emperor's *Discourse on Lamas*

Translated from the Tibetan text¹¹⁴⁶

An edict concerning the succession of lamas:

As for the Buddha's teaching, it arose in the land of India and spread eastward to Tibet¹¹⁴⁷ (also [known as] "Tangut" or "Zang"). It is the tradition that monks of Tibet are called 'lama.' This term 'lama' does not exist in the documents of China. In the Chinese-language books of the Yuan and Ming courts¹¹⁴⁸ there is the incorrect expression 'la mu.' (According to the written record *Chuogenglu*¹¹⁴⁹ composed by Tao Zongyi,¹¹⁵⁰ during time of the Yuan court the preceptor of the king was called 'la mu'a.' In the book Unofficial History of the Ming [Emperor] Wu Zong¹¹⁵¹ written by Mao Qiling¹¹⁵² there was written the word 'la ma.' Because they all wrote according to their own ideas, there was not a uniform way of writing.) When I carefully consider this matter, in the Tibetan language, 'bla' means superior and 'ma' means 'not'; thus 'lama' means 'unparalleled.'

¹¹⁴⁶ O. Franke, and B. Laufer, *Lamaistische Kloster-Inschriften aus Peking, Jehol und Si-ngan; mit Unterstützung der Hamburgischen Wissenschaftlichen Stiftung* [Inscriptions from Lamaist temples in Beijing, Jehol, and Xi'an] (Hamburg: Verlag von Dietrich Reimer (Ernst Vohsen) in Berlin, 1914), plate 4. Parentheses indicates interlinear commentary in the original.

¹¹⁴⁷ Tib. *Bod.*

¹¹⁴⁸ Tib. *gur.*

¹¹⁴⁹ Ch. 《輟耕錄》.

¹¹⁵⁰ Ch. 陶宗儀

¹¹⁵¹ Ch. 《明武宗外記》.

¹¹⁵² Ch. 毛奇齡.

This is similar to calling “shang zhin,” “hwa shang” in the language of China.¹¹⁵³ The lama’s learning is called the teaching of the ‘Yellow Hats.’ The Tibetan¹¹⁵⁴ lama of sublime superior knowledge, ‘Phags pa (also called, “Phas ba”), from the time of the Yuan court until the Ming court was celebrated by all as the both the “Preceptor of the King” and “Preceptor of the Court.”

(Shizu of the Yuan first presented the title of “Preceptor of the Court” to the Royal Preceptor, ‘Phags pa lama. Later, [he] titled [‘Phags pa], “Preceptor of the King, Great Precious Sutra Prince,” and another famous person named Bstan pa was also titled “Preceptor of the King.” After that, the number of other so-called “Court Preceptors” was innumerable. In just the first year of King Hongwu of the Ming court’s reign, the titles of “Court Preceptor” and “Great Court Preceptor” were given to at least four or five people. In the reign of the Yongle emperor, there were two people who received the titles of “Sutra Prince” and “Son of the Buddha of India.” There were an additional eighteen people who were titled “Court Preceptor who upholds the teaching.” Up through the reigns of Jingtai and Chenghua there again were an uncountable number [of entitled lamas].)

In my dynasty, only the Changkya Kūtuktu, having been entitled “Court Preceptor”

¹¹⁵³ Tib. *rgya nag skad la*.

¹¹⁵⁴ Tib. *bod gyi bla ma*

during the time of King Kangxi,¹¹⁵⁵ has from then until now continuously [held this title].

(Although my state holds in esteem highly the Yellow Hat teachings, as for establishing title of the so-called ‘Preceptor of the King,’ this as not [been done]. In the forty-fifth year of Kangxi reign, according to edict, Changkya Kūtuktu was given the [title] ‘holder of the teaching State Preceptor,’ and after his death, in the twelfth year of Yongzheng it was [permitted] to give the title to all his subsequent emanations/incarnations.)

As for the titles of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni, we have followed the old practices of bestowing titles [begun] by the Yuan and Ming courts, and other than carving new seals, have not added additional honors.

(As for the origin of the flourishing of the Yellow Hat teachings, it arose from the lama Tshong kha pa of the Ming dynasty. Tsonghaba was born in the fire-bird, fifteenth year of the Yongle [reign] and attained nirvana in the 14th year of Chenghua. He had two main disciples: One is called the Dalai Lama and the other one is called the Panchen. The Dalai Lama is of higher status, named Monlam Gyatso, and his successive rebirths are the Holders of the Teaching of the Yellow Hats. The name of the first incarnation was Gendun Drupba. The second was Gendun Gyatso [1476-1542]. The third was Sonam Gyatso [1543-1588]. At the time of the Ming his name [was written as, *sic*] “gson po so nan gyin tshu.” The fourth was Yonden Gyatso. The fifth was Ngawang Lozang Gyatso. In the seventh year of the reign of Wesihun Erdemungge [1643] of my dynasty, the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni both presented valuable goods from their country. In the

¹¹⁵⁵ Tib. *bde skyid rgyal po*

eighth year, letters¹¹⁵⁶ were sent to both of them, written according to the old practices of the Yuan and Ming dynasties. Having taken control of the central land,¹¹⁵⁷ seals of office were sent to them both, establishing them as the governing lamas of the entire Yellow Teaching.)

Those two have taken charge of the Yellow Hat teaching in the Outer and Inner, and obtained the veneration of (11) the Mongols of many regions. As for [our] high esteem for the Yellow Hat teaching, it is in accordance with the desires of the Mongols and therefore not only important but also necessary. It is not like during the time of the Yuan dynasty/court when the lamas were venerated by flattery and gifts.

(During the Yuan dynasty, due to the high esteem for lamas, the royal laws¹¹⁵⁸ were broken and great injury arose. At that time, the pronouncements of the preceptor to the king were obeyed as if they were edicts of the king. At the place of audiences, the ministers stood while the preceptor of the king knelt on one knee on the edges of the hall. Among the preceptor's monks there were those offered positions as minister of the treasury, minister of the household, and court duke; and having obtained gifts of seals made from gold and jade, there was disorder on account of their pride, and following their desires they engaged in lewd acts. Thus in every direction problems arose. In their conceit they raised taxes on the resources of their subjects, they beat ministers, and even, having robbed a queen/consort of a great lord, dragged her down from her carriage and

¹¹⁵⁶ I.e. containing titles.

¹¹⁵⁷ Tib. “yul dbus su dbang bsgyur nas...” Ch. “中國.”

¹¹⁵⁸ Tib. *rgyal khrims*, Ch. 政事.

beat her. All this was done without punishment. Moreover, there were laws that if a servant struck a lama, his arm would be cut off and if a [lama] was insulted, the tongue would be cut out. There has been no such veneration of lamas by me. The Mongols hold high the Buddha and have faith in the lamas, [therefore] as one leads a horse, they must be taken care of.)

As for the title of ‘kūtuktu’ by which they are praised: Since the lamas have no children, they are given disciples like one provides a son, searching for a child with insight and auspiciousness. The tülku¹¹⁵⁹ (in the language of China, this is called ‘a person who is born generation after generation’) having filled that role, he is given the title of ‘hutuktu’ and gradually takes up the teaching. Over many years this practices continues and it is difficult to cut off. Now it has become a frequent occurrence that after successive generations the tülku have all begun to emanate among their near relatives, which is like a son taking the office of his father, and causes my thoughts to become alarmed. Not to mention, if the Buddha himself was never was reborn, where do all these common tülku come from? With regards to this, they cannot be done away with, for if today there were no more reincarnations of hutuktu, the thousands of lamas would no longer have that which they rely on.

(An examination of the successive generations of the Dalai Lama: As for the first birth, he reincarnated at the place *Sha do da* in Tsang. As for the second, [he was reborn] at *Ta na do rdo rje* in Tsang. As for the third, [he was born] at *Rdo rengs* in Lhasa. The fourth was born in the household of the Mongol Altan Khan; the fifth was born at Chung skyā in

¹¹⁵⁹ Tib. *sprul sku*.

Lhasa; the sixth was born at a place in Litang, and the current seventh was reborn at *Li kang* in *Thob rgyal* in Tsang. Since the locations are all different is there still any need to discuss further that they hailed from different families? As for the Panchen Erdeni, after the previous one passed away into nirvana, the reincarnations of the present Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni, as well as the Jebtsundamba Kūtuktu of the four Khalkha all have been reborn as relatives, sharing the relationships of uncle and nephew. If great Holders of the Teaching such as these all share familial relations then it is no different from the inheritance of titles within a lineage. Nowadays, the tülku venerated by jasaks of the outer and inner [Mongols] have also begun to emanate as sons of their princes and dukes! The Siletu¹¹⁶⁰ Kūtuktu is the uncle of the Khalkha qinwang *Gu run E ha pu lha dbang rdo rje*. The *Stag pa* Kūtuktu is the son of the Alashan qinwang Lozang Dorjé. The *No yon chos rje* Kūtuktu is the son of the *Dur pan He'u hed junwang Bkra shis yar 'phel*. The reincarnation of the Khenpo Nominhan Jampal Dorjé is the son of the Thu she thu han, Tsédan Dorjé. It is impossible to have such a [large] number of this type! After the death of the previous Jebtsundamba Kūtuktu, the queen of the Tüsiyetü Khan became pregnant. It was proclaimed to all that this would be the reincarnation of the Jebstundamba. However when the time arrived a daughter was born. This affair was laughable. Thus due to this matter the Mongols came to be disdained.

Moreover there is the arrogant behavior of the Šamarba lama¹¹⁶¹ who coveted the treasures of Trashilhünpo. Because he was a brother of the Panchen Erdeni and Drungpa

¹¹⁶⁰ Tib. *Shi re thu*; Ma. *Siletu*.

¹¹⁶¹ Tib. *Zhwa mar ba*, Ma. *Šamarba*.

Kūtutku,¹¹⁶² he claimed a share [of the former's wealth] and passed secrets on to the Gurkhas. As a result bandits from a distant land assailed and plundered the land of Tsang. Recently, an army was dispatched which, having frightened the Gurkhas, forced them to beg forgiveness for their transgressions. However, if the source of this evil is not rooted out, in the future such reciprocal relations based on self-interest¹¹⁶³ will make it impossible to restore the teachings of the Yellow Hats. Once doubts have arisen among the Tibetans and Mongols it is possible that there will be trouble.¹¹⁶⁴ Therefore [I] have commanded, when there is a search for an important lama of Dbus gtsang, in accordance with their tradition (lugs), the whereabouts of the [incarnation] shall be identified by the special means of reciting scriptures and receiving [oracles] when the La mo chos skyong and the other four [protectors] descend to the medium. Rolls of paper¹¹⁶⁵ with the name of each of the children shall be placed in a golden urn that will have been sent from the palace. Then, having chanted, before the Jowo Sakyamuni, the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni, together with the appointed ambans, will jointly pick out roll of paper. That will

¹¹⁶² The original text reads, “drug pa ho thog thu,” which is a misspelling. Later in this text this lama’s name is spelled correctly as “drung pa.”

¹¹⁶³ Tib. *gang ‘dod*. Literally, “however one pleases” or “however one wishes.” Here the phrase refers to acting in one’s own interest or according to one’s own concerns. The Chinese reads, “私相授受,” connoting the illicit or private transfers that work to the advantage of all involved, but not necessarily society more generally. Here Qianlong is addressing the shared self-interests that bind aristocrats and monks in pursuit of mutual advantage.

¹¹⁶⁴ “Doubts” here is my interpretation of the expression, “two minds” (Tib. *bod sog yid gnyis*). I take this phrase not to mean a conflict between Mongols and Tibetans, but rather the state of having mixed feelings or suspicions about those recognized as trulku. Qianlong worries that if doubts continue to surface about the legitimacy of trulkus, these doubts will inevitably lead to succession conflicts between the supporters of different candidates.

¹¹⁶⁵ Tib: *shog gril*. Ch: 書籤. The connotations of these two terms are different, leading to different implications. The Tibetan term implies something rolled up, which perhaps lends itself more readily to the Tibetan divination tradition of encasing answers in balls of dough. The Chinese term refers to a long thin slip, possibly made of paper but also of other materials, frequently used as a bookmark, but in this case to be used as a lot.

be the reincarnation. I have ordered that the identification occur in this manner. Although this may not entirely eliminate the evils of doing things according to their individual desires, [I] believe that this is better than letting them make a decision regarding the identification however they please. Additionally, in accordance with the proclamation issued by the Mongol Yamun,¹¹⁶⁶ and following the newly established tradition of Ü-Tsang, the important tulku of the Mongols must be identified having had their names placed in the Golden Urn before the image of the Buddha at Yonghegong jointly by the seal-holding minister of the capital and the Seal-holding Da Lama. If it is done in that fashion, the true incarnation will have been identified and there will be no further dispute over the selection like there would be if it was made according to their own wishes.)

Last year's raid on the region of Tsang by the Gurkhas who trusted in the words whispered by the Šamarba offers what lessons? Having been terrorized by [our] military, [the Gurkhas] sought forgiveness and Gtsang was returned to peace. Furthermore, when a new tulku emerges and is reborn again within the same family, this is a decision [motivated by] their own desires.¹¹⁶⁷ The Buddha had no concern for himself.¹¹⁶⁸ The royal law is indispensable. Now that I have cast the Golden Urn and had it dispatched to Ü-Tsang, paper scrolls with the written names of those who are suspected of being tulku shall be placed in the urn. Although the evils will not be completely eliminated by means

¹¹⁶⁶ Tib. *sog po'i ya mun*; Ch. 理藩院.

¹¹⁶⁷ Tib. *rang 'dod*: personal, individual desires.

¹¹⁶⁸ Tib. *rang don*: one's own purpose/welfare/interest, concern for oneself, selfish reasons. Whereas in the earlier passage, Qianlong seems to be directing his ire at aristocrats and monks who which to manipulate the selection process out of personal ambition, here Qianlong seems to impugn the motives of reincarnate lamas themselves. By extension Qianlong is appropriating authority to fully judge and control the process of incarnation.

of this, [I] have ascertained that this will be superior to identifications that are the decision of individual people. When making a judgement about a matter, it is necessary to examine relevant tradition/custom concerning the matter. If I had not previously studied the Tibetan religion,¹¹⁶⁹ I would be unable to discourse in this matter. When I first started studying, there were some Chinese who said that I placed excessive importance in the teachings of the Yellow Hats. If, according to the Chinese books, the [teachings of the Yellow Hats] were simply famous for nothing, how is it that today, the new and old Mongols have been subjugated and for several tens [of years] have lived in peace and contentment?

Nowadays, as for the recent execution, conducted according to law, of the lamas responsible for the troubles in the region of Tsang, was any similar action ever taken during the Yuan dynasty? (Last year when the Gurkhas raided Tsang, after the Drungpa Kūtuktu fled, the great monks and sangha also, having heard a mistaken divination that they would be forced to break their vows, all fled and the thieves [were therefore able to] pillage. Having been especially detained and brought to Ü, the Jédrung was defrocked and punished according to the law. The Drungpa Kūtuktu was dispossessed of his so-called palace. The Yuan dynasty venerated its lamas and not only did not punish them but allowed them to damage the royal law. Although I supported the teaching of the Yellow Hats, [I] have done so according to a passage that appears in the *System of the King*: “One should improve their teachings not replace their teachings. One should improve their laws,

¹¹⁶⁹ Tib. *Bod chos*: This is a striking elocution because here we see Qianlong identifying Tibet or Tibetaness in terms of a particular set of teachings and also implicitly drawing a contrast with the teachings of China. This usage suggests that the notion of a category of “Tibetan Buddhism” or at least “Tibetan Teachings” existed in the late 1700s.

not replace their traditions.”¹¹⁷⁰ Those who incite turmoil will be punished according to the law in the same manner as subjects of the interior. In the five hundred years since Phagpa Lama became the holder of the teachings, and over the course of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, and until now, have there been great lamas who have had been defrocked and punished according to the law? Vagabonds cannot say to me that I have excessively honored the teaching of the Yellow Hats!)

When undertaking a great enterprise, one must not only [act] at the appropriate time and context but also in accord with what is just and brilliant. If opportunity presents itself, yet one is unable to make a just and brilliant decision, then it will not be accomplished. If one makes a just and brilliant decision, but at an inopportune moment, then it has been made in vain and nothing will come of it.

As for the recent establishment of a new procedure for the identification of tülku in the aftermath of the subjugation of the Gurkhas, it was easily accomplished because the moment was fortuitous. Eradicating the selfish desire of tülku to emanate among their kinsmen, is in harmony with the wishes of both the outer and inner Mongols. Now I am in my eightieth year, and approach the end of my rule, yet I have accomplished this great undertaking and established peace in the region of Tsang. The restoration of the outer peoples and the happiness and welfare of the both the dynasty and each household—an enduring achievement—is the fulfillment of my desires and I am glad of heart.

¹¹⁷⁰ *System of the King*: a chapter of the *Book of Rites* (《禮記》：《王制》“修其教，不易其俗，齊其政，不易其宜。）。

Written by the king during the waxing days of the first month of winter, water-mouse
year, Qianlong fifty-seven.¹¹⁷¹

¹¹⁷¹ Approximately the second half of the month of December, 1792.

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