The Monarch as Manjushri

Tibetan Buddhism in the Formation of Qing Governing Ideology

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Introduction

Chinese history saw an immense flowering of culture and relative peace during the reigns of the first Qing Emperors[1], who were largely capable and genuinely concerned with the well-being of the people which they governed. Under the Shunzhi, Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong Emperors, China began its first prolonged contact with the West and solidified its hold over frontier regions like Xinjiang and Taiwan.

At the same time, the Manchu emperors began to reach out to other polities on China's periphery with which cordial ties had been of comparably less importance during previous dynasties. Apart from an immense projection of diplomatic power to foreign lands during the Yongle Emperor, relations with the nations on the Chinese periphery tended to be defined by hostile actions.

Of special note were the close links eventually began to be forged between China and Tibet, first in the Ming[2], then with greater emphasis in the Qing. Its importance in the latter was in no small part due to the fact that its emperors were devout Tibetan Buddhists, and that several members of the imperial family were prominent in the Tibetan sangha themselves[3]. They bestowed the inaugural title of "Dalai Lama" upon Tibet's spiritual

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[1] Lux, Louise. *The Unsullied Dynasty & the Kang-Hsi Emperor*. Philadelphia: Mark One Printing, 1998. 1

[2] Kapstein, Matthew T. *Buddhism between Tibet and China*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2009. 155

[3] Lux, Louise. 72

rulers[4] and kept in close contact with their new appointees, asserting an active role in keeping their politico-religious tradition separate from other influences (save their own). With traditions and imagery markedly distinct from existing Chinese Mahayana customs, the Manchu emperors' faith brought new ideals, images and ways of thinking about religion to China. In the course of this religious transplantation to China, the emperors promulgated new conceptions of the monarchy and its role as a spiritual entity, rather than a purely worldly one.

Chief among these new images of the Manchu monarchs was an image that combined both traditional perceptions of Chinese emperors with new conceptions of their role in society. For many dynasties, previous emperors had been largely content to play a sideline role in determining Buddhist policies in their state, sponsoring occasional donations of goods and wealth to preeminent monasteries and temples but doing little else. In the Qing, however, the sovereign began to play an active role in the intricacies of their state religion, Tibetan Buddhism, instead of merely appropriating it as a means of protecting the state as previous dynasties, like the Sui, Tang, and Ming had.

With this junior paper, I aim to demonstrate that this transformation signaled the introduction of a more mystical perception of the Chinese monarchy - one in which the monarch himself played an important and central role in the spiritual pantheon. No longer was he a mere intermediary between the supernatural world and the earthly realm, but rather became an integral component of Chinese religion. This new imagery, however, served as more than mere religious hyperbole - it was an active means to court the

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[4] Mullin, Glenn H. *The Fourteen Dalai Lamas*. Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 2001. 204

populace and a means to impress their new position upon the populace of the lands they ruled, subtly but surely changing traditional popular attitudes towards Buddhism.

Tibetan Concepts of Political and Spiritual Authority

Tibetan Buddhism has always been very distinct from the traditions of its Chinese cousin, perhaps even proudly so. However, Chinese Buddhism certainly had its share of early religious influence in Tibet, with Princess Wencheng of the Tang Dynasty bringing Chinese Mahayana texts and statues as part of her marriage to the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo in 641 CE.[5] Despite the story's prominence in Chinese Buddhism and in narratives of Tibetan history by contemporary pro-PRC sources,[6] the princess' contributions to Tibet's spiritual heritage were ultimately quite minor. In fact, Tibetan records seem to have particularly emphasized with pride the country's emerging primacy of Indian Buddhism vis-à-vis Chinese Buddhism: A "great debate" held between representatives of the two traditions held during the reign of Trisong Deutsen in 791-792

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[5] Mullin, Glenn. 29

[6] bLo-bzang, Dung-dkar 'phrim-las. *The Merging of Religious and Secular Rule in Tibet*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991. This text serves as an example of the bias inherent in many PRC sources, which is peppered with references to the importance of Princess Wencheng's contributions to Tibetan Buddhism at the expense of the other queen, Princess Bhrikuti of Nepal.

CE resulted in the expulsion of Chinese Chan monastics and the immediate cessation of the translation of Chinese-sourced sutras.[7]

The result was a deeply Buddhist state solely influenced by the Indian religious concepts of Tantra (also termed Vajrayana) and similar constructs regarding the societal position of its rulers, with Michael terming it "an assertion of Tibet's cultural as well as political independence from the great [and contemporaneous] Chinese Tang Empire.[8] Compared to China's fellow neighbors Korea and Japan, Tibet did not adopt the Confucian-based ideology of monarchical rule, nor the titular "Mandate of Heaven" so often claimed by these rulers. Rather, Tibet's governmental ideology was from the outset built around the *mandala* and *chakravartin* systems of government, similar to contemporaneous concepts of governance eventually adopted in the India-influenced Khmer and Srivijaya empires. [9] This conscious separation of Tibet from Chinese spheres of intellectual influence resulted in a style of Buddhist governance that was markedly different from even that of the most devoted pre-Qing Buddhist emperors.

The first indication of these differences can be seen in the Tibetan narrative of the formation of their nation, which attempts to define an intimate connection between their land and Buddhism. In the Tibetan narrative, we find an account where in 433 CE, "a casket filled with several Buddhist scriptures and various other holy objects fell from the

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[7] Mullin, Glenn. 36-37

[8] Michael, Franz. *Rule by Incarnation*. Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1982. 30-31

[9] Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja. *The Buddhist Conception of Universal King and Its Manifestations in South and Southeast Asia*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1987. 40-41

sky into the courtyard of the Yambu Lagang Palace…"[10] Though the traditions acknowledge that the sutras were unreadable at the time, apparently they were imbued with sufficient awe that they prompted King Latho Thori to preserve the items for future generations.[11]

The presence of an elaborate myth to commemorate Buddhism's entrance into a region is a tradition hardly peculiar to Tibet. Similar Chinese religious chronicles exist of the religion's introduction to the Middle Kingdom:[12] the primary motive of these stories were intended to promote in its people an image of a land ordained by the Buddhas as a sacred and unique place. However, we can see several distinctions between the Chinese stories and the Tibetan narrative: Firstly, the Tibetan story seems to accord the land of Tibet an inherently sagacious nature. While the Chinese accounts are driven by human beings with occasional spiritual guidance or intervention, the Tibetan account accords the spiritual realm with having specifically selected Tibet for the future expansion of the Dharma[13], illiterate (but virtuous) inhabitants notwithstanding. As such, the story is forges purported early links between Buddhism and Tibet, and ultimately, the role of the

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[10] Mullin, Glenn. 26

[11] Thondup, Rinpoche. *Buddhist Civilization in Tibet*. New York: Routledge & Kagan Paul Inc., 1987. 26

[12] Many traditions regarding the advent of Buddhism in China were soon developed in Chinese literary circles hundred of years after, most of which incorporated myths that various emperors saw visions and had an awareness of the Buddha. However, the most famous anecdote was certainly the legend in which Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty dreams of a golden man, learns of the Buddha, and dispatches emissaries to search for him. (李國榮. 佛光下的帝王. Beijing: 團結出版社, 1995. 20-30)

[13] Mullin, Glenn. 27

king in this myth is of little consequence - the entire focus is on the land as a *bodhimanda*. (道場) Contrastingly, the Chinese accounts seem designed to elevate Buddhism to a faith which possessed glorious imperial patronage, and little emphasis is made of China's territorial role in Buddhism's future.

A further distinction of Buddhist governance was that the Tibetan political system soon evolved to a model where the sovereign of the country was not invested merely with worldly power, but also with spiritual authority, especially an authority closely linked to a Buddhist deity.[14] Tibetan kings were also frequently given the epithet of *chakravartin* (I have covered the Indian concept of the *chakravartin*, or "wheel-turning sage king" (轉輪聖王) in section two of my previous junior paper, so I will not go into it extensively) but it is clear that the title was deemed of secondary importance in Tibet, according to Walter.[15] While devout kings had sponsored the early introduction of Buddhism, these monarchs were *not* members of the Buddhist *sangha* and are thus classified as laity in the Buddhist assembly.

However, a series of political struggles in the eleventh century resulted in monks from the Sakyapa order exercising governmental power in Tibet - culminating in the appointment of Drogon Chogyal Phagpa as the rule of all Tibet by Kublai Khan, making this "the first time that the supreme secular authority was held by a monk."[16] Yet, as

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[14] I have adopted the current academic nomenclature of labeling Tibetan Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and sages as "deities," despite the non-theistic nature of these spiritual entities. The usage of this term in no way implies that the entity itself is ascribed divinity.

[15] Walter, Michael L. *Buddhism and Empire*. Leiden: Brill, 2009. 216-217

[16] Thondup, Rinpoche. 29

monks are celibate and do not have children by which succession can be achieved, a novel concept to ensure that "highest religious leadership, as well as of political authority" was maintained within the religious order was formed: Reincarnation.[17]

This ideology, with a sect's central figure held to be the reincarnation of a central Buddhist deity (*tulku*), possessed two ramifications: First, the identification of their religio-political leaders with deities further entrenched the notion of a divinely protected and endowed Tibet. As the Dalai Lama was held to be a reincarnation of Avalokitesvara[18] and the Panchen Lama an incarnated Amitabha Buddha, the political legitimacy and the capability of these leaders rested solely in their status as spiritual entities themselves. The notion of political legitimacy through the ruler's identification with a deity was a distinctively Tibetan tradition with no parallels in the Chinese political arena of ideas, but one that grew greatly in importance during the Manchu emperors' reigns.

A final note on Tibet's religious administration was the great importance ascribed to religious matters. As the rulers were themselves leaders of prominent sects of the Buddhist sangha, a keen interest in matters of doctrine and faith was required. While this was accepted as normal in an area so throughly religious as Tibet (and with sect leaders as rulers), it was far from a regular occurrence in China, especially considering that the overarching state ideology remained Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism. Yet, the prominence given to religious matters began to increase in empires deriving their

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[17] Michael, Franz. 35-37

[18] Michael, Franz. 16

religious ideals from Tibet, including the Mongol Yuan Dynasty, and ultimately the Qing as well.

Tibetan Buddhism in Chinese Governance

The Buddhism that had been introduced to China beginning in the late Han Dynasty and flourished in the Sui, Tang, and Song primarily consisted of non-Tantric Mahayana schools. These regimes saw the proliferation of a wide variety of sects: the Tiantai, Avatamsaka, Pure Land, and Chan were just a few of the prominent schools that flourished throughout China. Buddhist Tantric schools existed, but they never gained the widespread popularity among the elite and citizenry that the other sects commanded.[19] Certainly, the aforementioned expulsion of the Chinese sangha from Tibet did little to further ecclesiastical exchange between the rapidly diverging forms of Buddhism, or encourage the spread of Tantric practices amongst Buddhists in China.

As a result, Tibetan Buddhism exerted its influence initially not on "Han" Chinese, but rather on other non-Chinese ethnic groups who they came into military or cultural contact with, and it was through these means that the Mongol Yuan Dynasty first adopted the Buddhism of Tibet as an imperial faith, with several lamas playing a central role in matters of Mongolian culture and administration.

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[19] The tantric Shingon sect was based off of Chinese teachings (the Zhenyan school) and gained a moderate following in Japan, but its parent organization in China never reached quite the same level of success.

One lama in particular, Drogön Chögyal Phagspa (八思巴), played an immensely important role in the early Yuan. After a spirited debate between Buddhists and Taoists in which Phagspa was victorious[20], Kublai Khan appointed him to the position of State Tutor (國師) and gave him authority over all Buddhist matters empire-wide as well as complete military and political control over Tubo (吐蕃, Tibet)[21]. This perhaps marked the first time that a governing authority in Beijing had asserted its control over the Tibetan region, but in accordance with the governing principles of many of the Mongol Khanates, the delegation of local control of frontier regions to leaders such as Phagspa was commonplace.

Perhaps of greater importance was the over-arching authority given to Phagspa in Buddhist matters. According to Ya and Ren, Phagspa was not just given authority over the Tibetan Buddhist sangha, but over the entire monastic community of the Yuan Empire - an immense responsibility for a monk from a sect with hardly any representation in the bulk of the empire. Unfortunately, details on Phagspa's actual exercising of ecclesiastical authority are scant, as he is died in 1280 at the young age of forty-five.[22]

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[20]任宜敏. 中國佛教史（元代）. 北京: 人民出版社, 2005. 87

[21] Ya, Hanzhang. *The Biographies of the Dalai Lama*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991. 7-8

[22] Ya, Hanzhang. 10

Yuan emperors considered themselves *chakravartin*[23], and identifications of members of Genghis Khan's descendants as reincarnations (within the *Golden Family*, 黃金家族) of Buddhist deities was by the 16th century commonplace.[6] Despite the patronage of Tibetan Buddhism by the Yuan emperors and this close identification with Buddhism, Jin describes the Yuan dynasty's approach to religion as fundamentally different from Tibet - while Tibet was a "theocracy" (政教合一), the Yuan continued to utilize place religion and governance under separate authorities (政教二道), a "key component of Mongol political theory."[24] They did not wholly base their governing ideology around Buddhist principles as had the Tibetans, but rather a "dual system of legitimacy - Buddhism and the will of [the traditional Mongol] God."[25] The multifaceted nature of this relationship was one of the reasons Kapstein sounds a skeptical note about the ulterior motives behind Mongol support of Tibetan Buddhism. He notes, "the extent to which the Chinese and Mongol leaders were genuinely interested in the religious components of Tibetan Buddhism, or were trying to manipulate Tibetan Buddhism for political leverage, cannot be determined definitively."[26]

Regardless of the ultimate aims of the Yuan emperors, the penetration of Tibetan Buddhism into the popular consciousness could hardly be described as through, but it

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[23]金成修. 明清之際藏傳佛教在蒙古地區的傳播. 北京: 社會科學文獻出版社, 2006. 21

[24]金成修. 8-10

[25] Elverskog, Johan. *Our Great Qing the Mongols, Buddhism, and the State in Late Imperial China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006. 42

[26] Kapstein, Matthew T. *Buddhism between Tibet and China*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2009. 183

seemed certainly to be enough to secure continued patronage by emperors in the Ming Dynasty. The Ming, though founded upon the "drive out the barbarians and restore the Chinese"[27] slogan of Zhu Yuanzhang, did not take measures to proscribe Tibetan Buddhism: Several large-scale printings of the Tibetan Tripitaka were conducted, with the most notable ones made during the Yongle, Wanli, and Chongzhen reigns.[28] According to Mou, the Yongle Emperor also invited the head of the Gelugpa School to Beijing at the start of his reign in 1403 to oversee a large Dharma assembly, and further exchanges were made between the governments of the two countries.[29]

Thus, despite the installation of a completely new regime in China, Tibetan Buddhism continued to receive support in China. However, it was still substantially overshadowed by the Chan School[30] and it took the Qing Dynasty for it to attain greater prominence in Chinese religious circles.

The Manchus and Buddhism

Originally, the Manchus appear to have followed the tribal-shamanistic traditions characteristic of many Southern Siberian peoples - records show tribal rituals remained

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[27]「驅除胡虜，恢復中華　。」

[28]牟鍾鑒. 中國宗教通史. 北京: 社會科學文獻出版社, 2000. 766

[29]牟鍾鑒 768-769

[30]牟鍾鑒 770

on the books during the dynasty and ceremonies to *Shangdi* persisted until Kangxi's reign.[31] However, Tibetan Buddhism became increasingly integral to the self-identification of the Manchu monarchy and its nation-state early on, with devotion to the Bodhisattva Manjushri (文殊師利菩薩, variant 曼殊師利) becoming the most visible symbol of this new Buddhist ruling family and polity.

In order to understand the reasoning behind the Manchu identification with Manjushri, it is imperative to analyze the symbology of Manjushri's qualities. Much like the Tibetan assumption of Avalokitesvara as a national symbol, the Manchu selection of Manjushri spoke great volumes about the ideals and standards early Manchu rulers hoped to embody.

The Symbology of Manjushri

In Mahayana Buddhism, the popular worship and devotion to several prominent bodhisattvas has always been important. While initial devotion often centered around the future Buddha (and current bodhisattva) Maitreya, popular Chinese Buddhism soon centered around the veneration of the Four Great Bodhisattvas (四大菩薩): Manjushri (文殊), Samantabhadra (普賢), Ksitigarbha (地藏), and Avalokiteshvara (觀音).

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[31]牟鍾鑒 870

Of these four, the latter two became most popular in temples throughout China and in depictions through painting and sculpture, primarily due to their vows to universally take an active role in saving living beings. Sacred texts demonstrating their miraculous abilities to rescue people from difficult calamities[32] and deceased family members from the hells[33] greatly influenced popular adherence to their devotional sects. In stark contrast to the universality of Ksitigarbha and Avalokiteshvara, Samantabhadra remained primarily a bodhisattva emphasized in esoteric and doctrinal circles and not an object of popular veneration.

Manjushri, however, struck a balance between the appeals of the two. According to Lagerwey, he was certainly well known among Chinese Buddhists by the fourth century CE and Mount Wutai in Shanxi was also identified as his abode and bodhimanda around that time[34]. Eventually, Tibetan scholars began to equate the whole of China as Manjushri's land of teaching, with the *History and Records of China and Tibet* (漢藏史記) writing, "the bodhimanda of Manjushri is at Mount Wutai, and its surroundings the Chinese empire." [35] The Ming Dynasty-era text *Green History* (青史) further mentioned Manjushri, noting that "legend has it that China is the Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound's

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[32] 妙法蓮華經，二十四品《觀世音菩薩普門品》

[33] 佛說地藏菩薩本願經

[34] Lagerwey, John, and Lu Pengzhi. *Early Chinese Religion*. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2010. 1371-1372

[35]王俊中. 東亞漢藏佛教史研究. 台北: 東大圖書公司, 2003. 74-75

area of salvation; and the land of Tibet is the country where Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Mahasattva teaches."[36]

This narrative of Manjushri having taken up spiritual residence in China was a particularly evocative one, and was picked up and promoted by Emperor Daizong in the Tang[37] and Empress Wu Zetian in her Zhou Dynasty.[38] Gu notes that her patronage of Manjushri was likely due to the content of texts such as the *Sutra of the King of Great Teaching and a Thousand Hands and Bowls*. In this text, it is stated that if a ruler were to build way-places to honor Vajrayana (密宗) teachings, Manjushri would be sure to "cause his country to be peaceful, the king to be long-lived, his empress and concubines' lives extended, the submission of the [peoples of] myriad directions, and peace, happiness, and good seasons for the people."[39] Gu argues that the presence of this and other similar texts[40] assuring sovereigns of Manjushri's protection helped cement imperial support for his worship.

Though these texts emphasize the blessings a ruler could receive from Manjushri if he protected the Buddhadharma, they do not explain why an emperor would wish to *identify* with Manjushri himself. We can find those answers in descriptions of what Manjushri embodied: The ultimate perfection of wisdom that each Buddhist ultimately

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[36]王俊中. 75

[37]王俊中. 56

[38]古正美. 從天王傳統到佛王傳統. 台北: 商周出版, 2003. 383

[39]古正美. 388

[40]古正美. 397

sought.[41] As the teacher of Shakyamuni Buddha himself in a past life[42], he was a bodhisattva without parallel and who had in fact become a Buddha himself a long time ago, choosing to appear as a bodhisattva in order to continue helping beings.[43] With this depiction as an entity with all-knowing wisdom and knowledge, it certainly would be attractive for leaders to try and demonstrate to their citizens comparable power.

Finally, Manjushri was often depicted with the sword of wisdom[44] to sever the attachments and afflictions of living beings[45] - but it also revealed a more martial and aggressive side to the Bodhisattva. Though the usage of the sword is theoretically pure allegory, the Vajrayana school often depicted the bodhisattva in an extremely wrathful and terrifying form (Yamantaka), as seen in plate 55 of Halen.[46] As a conqueror of men and demons but also their savior and educator, Manjushri in this Tantric form simultaneously projected an image of benevolence yet righteous fury – rendering his image highly appropriate for emperors seeking to strike the right balance between compassion and justice, as the Qing emperors sought.

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[41]羅偉國. 話說文殊. 上海: 上海書店出版社, 1998. 11

[42]羅偉國. 17

[43]弘學. 佛教圖像說. 成都: 巴蜀書社出版, 1999. 271

[44] Kimburg-Salter, Deborah, and Eva Allinger. *Buddhist Art & Tibetan Patronage*. Leiden: Brill, 2002. CL98 72.5

[45]弘學. 276

[46] Halen, Harry. *Mirrors of the Void*. Helsinki: National Board of Antiquities (Finland), 1987. 55

Pre-Qianlong Efforts for Qing Tibetan Buddhism

Concrete records on the reason behind the Jurchens' motivations to change their tribal name to *Manchu* in the 17th century are scant, and according to Wang, imperial scholars were already confused about the name change within a century of the Qing's establishment.[47] Part of the investigation into the Manchu origins hypothesized that *Manzhou* (滿洲) was derived from *Manshu* (曼殊), which was in turn a shortening of *Manshushili Da Huangdi* (曼殊師利大皇帝), a term used by Tibetan emissaries to refer to the Jurchen leaders. Thus, the scholar Agui (阿桂) concluded, "the current Chinese terming of Manzhou as "the Land of the Manchus" is not a result of describing the land (州) but of borrowing the sound [from the word Manjushri]."[48] According to this study, then, the very name of the Manchus derived from an identification with Manjushri, initially as a result of Tibetan appellation, but later as a form of self-association. There exists some disagreement over the extent to which the Tibetans used that title to address the Qing Emperor, but it is fairly clear that "the Emperor Manjushri" became the standard epithet used to address the Qing Emperor by Tibetans and Mongols in the thirteenth year of Shunzhi's reign.[49]

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[47]王俊中. 82

[48]王俊中. 83

[49]王俊中. 88

Given this early relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and the early Manchus, one would expect the Qing emperors to be fairly religious Tibetan Buddhists, and they indeed were, for the most part. Emperor Shunzhi (順治) was known to harbor strong aspirations to leave the home-life, famously lamenting "*I was originally a monk in the West; why have I fallen into the imperial family?*"[50] Despite the ultimate frustration of his spiritual dreams by the imperial court, he nevertheless hosted the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1652 at the Forbidden City, officially granting him the title of Dalai Lama, and formally solidifying a relationship both political and religious with Tibet.[51] Thus, the relationship between the two entities was not just seen as between two emperors, but as one between two reincarnations of Bodhisattvas – Avalokitesvara and Manjushri.

Unfortunately, Emperor Shunzhi died at the young age of 22 in 1661 CE from complications relating to smallpox. It is interesting to note that at the time of his death, he was preparing for a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai, abode of Manjushri.[52] It would thus take his descendants to formalize and strengthen the imperial house's relationship with Manjushri Bodhisattva.[53]

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[50] 李國榮. 335

[51] Norman, Alexander. *Holder of the White Lotus*. London: Little, Brown, 2008. 266-268

[52] 李國榮. 338-339

[53] It is worth noting, however, that a popular legend soon grew up surrounding the mysterious death of the Shunzhi Emperor, asserting that the emperor had not actually died, but had instead entered the monastic life and went into seclusion at Mount Wutai. Li notes that it is completely unsubstantiated by the court records, but the existence of this myth is a testament to the strong influence the Qing emperor's relationship with Manjushri and Mount Wutai had in the public consciousness.

After Shunzhi's death, his son Kangxi was in contrast fairly dispassionate about religious matters, including Buddhism and Daoism. In comments, he remarked: "Those of the ages who have been enamored with the Buddha's and Laozi's teachings have only received harm and no benefit. [Emperor] Wu of Liang was extremely fond of Buddhism, offered his life to the temples… [and] eventually starved to death in Tai City. [Emperor] Huizong of Song was addicted to Daoism, and both father and son were abducted by the Jin. We may study and learn from these [examples]."[54]

In another speech, Kangxi remarked, "From birth, I have never been fond of immortals or Buddhas,"[55] an attitude that likely resulted in an imperial edict in the twenty-second year of his reign criticizing the veneration given to Taoists and Buddhist priests. In the edict, Kangxi proclaimed that "all sanghans and Taoist priests cannot be overly held in esteem, for if they overly esteemed for a period, they will become loose and lax in the days following, and perhaps engage in wanton ways. We should recognize this."[56]

Despite this apathy, Kangxi's successor and son Yongzheng was far more favorably disposed to Buddhism. Chan writes that Yongzheng "received religious instructions from a Tibetan Lama and assumed a Buddhist name, 'Yuanming Jushi' (圓明居士)," though he was extremely interested in Chan Buddhism.[57] Considering Shunzhi's early death and Kangxi's apathy for religion, Yongzheng's religiosity marked the first concerted and

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[54] 李國榮. 342

[55] 李國榮. 343

[56] 周叔迦. 清代佛教史料輯稿. 台北: 新文豐出版公司, 2000. 36

[57] Chan, Sin-Wai. *Buddhism in Late Ch'ing Political Thought*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1985. 14

lasting efforts on the part of the Qing state to shape and manipulate Buddhism to its own uses, a strategy that ultimately reached its effective zenith under Qianlong.

As noted previously, Emperor Yongzheng's primary interests in Buddhism lay in Chan, not in Tibetan Buddhism; and as a result, the works he commissioned and contributed to (including the *Sayings of the Chan Masters Selected by the Emperor,* 御選語錄*)* were all Chan publications. Wang remarks that Yongzheng was a rare emperor who "genuinely possessed experience in [Buddhist] cultivation, and was not merely putting up arty pretenses."[58] Aside from this personal practice, he also "had a passion for ideological and behavioral conformity, which he deemed important to imperial authority."[59] Yongzheng declared that he would "work fervently for the [Chan] sect… to cause the Tathagatha's proper teachings to be revitalized. Such are my deep vows."[60] Such a declaration effectively placed the promotion of Buddhism as a national goal and as an objective for the state to achieve.

Qianlong's Efforts and Identification with Manjushri

[58] 王俊中. 171

[59] Chan, Sin-Wai. 14

[60] 王俊中. 179

Qianlong continued his father's policy of state control of Buddhism but revived emphasis on Tibetan Buddhism, the original adopted religion of the Manchus. He was very devoted to Tibetan traditions, going so far as to learn the Tibetan language himself.[61] His adoption of a different led to marked differences in the implementation of policy. First, while Yongzheng had been content to label himself a *jushi*, or upasaka (居士/優婆塞), Qianlong adopted the wholly Tibetan doctrine of bodhisattva reincarnation and applied it to the imperial family and himself. His laodicean grandfather Kangxi was posthumously honored as an incarnation of Amitabha Buddha in a stele erected in the seventeeth year of his reign, stating: "My imperial grandfather and benevolent emperor, is the Buddha of Limitless Life manifesting as a chakravartin, [complete with] blessings, wisdom, and awe-inspiring spirit."[62]

Reincarnation through Paintings

An even further step for the emperor was identifying himself as a Buddhist figure of wisdom, benevolence, and omniscience - primarily as Manjushri, but as other forms of Buddhist sages as well. It was an act done not by imperial proclamation or edict, but by depictions of the imperial personage himself. Most telling are two contemporaneous paintings of Qianlong in the Tibetan *thangka* style, one of which specifically denotes him as Manjushri in the Tibetan script beneath.[63] In both, Qianlong is sitting serenely dressed

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61 秦永章. 乾隆皇帝與章嘉國師. 西寧: 青海人民出版社, 2007. 75

62 《永佑寺牌文》王俊中. 93

63 故宫博物院. 清代宫廷繪畫. 北京: 文物出版社, 1995. 209

in Tibetan monastic robes, with his hands in the samadhi *mudra*,[64] and surrounded by a pantheon of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and monks. Berger describes the scene as hinting "at the dissolution of a different two [styles of art] - a mythic, Indian past and a Qing dynasty present - into one."[65] With this image, Qianlong not only invokes the Tibetan myth of Manjushri as ruler of China, but also conveys an ageless presence as a chakravartin ruler.

Another contemporaneous painting of Qianlong invoking Manjushri is one by Ding Guanpeng (丁觀鵬), this time depicting the emperor as the elder Vimalakirti (維摩詰) conversing with Manjushri Bodhisattva regarding matters of Buddhist doctrine. In the eponymous *Vimalakirti Sutra* (維摩詰所說經) the elder Vimalakirti is an extremely learned man - in fact, a Bodhisattva who merely took the form of a layman to teach beings. Despite being *the* bodhisattva unparalleled foremost in wisdom, Manjushri speaks of the elder in utter awe, saying, "World-honored One, that superior one is difficult to respond to. 'He has profoundly attained the true characteristic, and he is good at explaining the essentials of the Dharma. His eloquence is unhampered, and his wisdom is unhindered. He completely understands all the deportments of the bodhisattvas, and he has entered into all the secret storehouses of the Buddhas."[66] In this painting, then, Qianlong is arguably portraying himself as one even greater than the Manjushri he was depicted in prior! Certainly, the painting bears that theory out: Manjushri is shown

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[64] Elliott, Mark C. *Emperor Qianlong: Son of Heaven, Man of the World*. New York: Longman, 2009. 74

[65] Berger, Patricia. *Empire of Emptiness*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003. 2

[66] 「世尊。彼上人者難為詶對。深達實相善說法要。辯才無滯智慧無礙。一切菩薩法式悉知。諸佛祕藏無不得入。」 Translated by McRae, John. *The Vimalakirti Sutra*. <http://www.numatacenter.com/default.aspx?MPID=81> Accessed on May 3, 2010.

placing his palms together in reverance towards Qianlong/Vimalakirti, whose hands are placed in the teaching *mudra*. Several bodhisattvas, arhats, and attendants gaze on, all struck with similar looks of wonderment, with the exception of Shariputra, who is "visibly annoyed" and stymied by Qianlong/Vimalakirti's arguments.[67]

Another depiction of Qianlong as a bodhisattva by the same artist, Ding Guanpeng, exists. This time, however, Qianlong is depicted as Samantabhadra, serenely gazing on as attendants wash his majestic white elephant mount. The painting, however, does not illustrate any specific text.

If the former four painting all symbolized attempts by Qianlong to demonstrate spiritual authority, a painting titled the *Myriad Dharmas Returning as One* (萬法歸一圖) portrays a more politico-religious side: Qianlong's reception of "the Mongol tribes at Chengde and the singular visit of the Sixth Panchen Lama in 1780."[68] Qianlong appears as himself in this painting, but it is notable in that he is depicted as sitting at the left side of the focal point, a statue of the Buddha. Zito posits that the painting "certainly… presented a rhetoric of togetherness in the dharma visible to any who would like to read it that way."[69] By showing Han, Manchus, Mongols, and Tibetans all together in the service of the Buddha, it was a Tibetan-style painting with clear political intentions: To use the Buddhadharma as a unifying force for all these disparate ethnicities.

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[67] Berger, Patricia. 2

[68] Berger, Patricia. 11

[69] Zito, Angela. *Of Body and Brush*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. 23

Yet, the extent of Qianlong's patronage of Buddhism and his identification with Manjushri did not rest solely on paintings commissioned by the court. He visited Mount Wutai no less than six times during his reign, marking each visit with many retreats at the many different temples at the mountain.[70] Elliott writes that Qianlong had converted many formerly Chinese Buddhist monasteries at Mount Wutai to Tibetan Buddhist temples instead, staffing them with lamas and Tibetans,[71] clearly a move to consolidate religious singularity around a narrative he supported.

Even at home in Beijing, Qianlong continued to push for Tibetan Buddhism: Halls within the Forbidden City were consecrated as Buddha halls for the practice of Vajrayana, and Tibetan Buddhist ritual dances became an important component of palace life.[72] In all such appearances, he had truly turned himself into the committed spiritual authority in the entire empire – not only was he himself Manjushri, the palace itself had become another Mount Wutai from which a bodhisattva could ensure peace for his people.

Conclusion

The Qing Emperors' methods of integrating Buddhism into governing policies were ultimately quite successful: Tibet and Mongolia both remained under the influence of the Qing empire well until the late nineteenth century. This unique mix of both personal and

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[70] Elliott, Mark C. 73

[71] Elliott, Mark C. 73

[72] 李國榮. 358-259

political religion by the emperors both affirmed their status as moral, upstanding Buddhists while claiming the legitimacy of rulership as spiritual manifestation of the deities they themselves venerated.

Of course, the infusion of this plethora of religious propaganda and attempts to shape ways in which the emperor was viewed can rightly be viewed with skepticism - did the emperors genuinely believe in Buddhism, or were they merely utilizing it as a pure political ploy? It is a question that can rightfully, and should be asked. However, it is telling that Qianlong was buried in a crypt (裕陵) that was covered with Tibetan and Sanskrit mantras (and the notable absence of any Chinese or Manchu writing), with many Buddhist gods and bodhisattvas (including Manjushri) carved into the walls.[73] Here, in a locale not accessible to the public, Qianlong continued to liberally embue his resting place forever with the same Buddhist faith. Perhaps, then, he truly believed.

But if the legacy of these first emperors were the careful management of religion in order to promote a harmonious society under a divine emperor, the later years of the Qing Dynasty was characterized by the exact opposite. The widespread rise of religious-fueled insurrections began in Qianlong's final years, and his inability to quell the White Lotus Rebellion foreshadowed a Qing court which was completely unable to stem heterodox teachings. Hence, the 19th century saw the Muslim rebellions, the Taiping rebellions, and the Boxer rebellions, all of which were religious movements. For all the tactful manipulating of religious imagery and institutions conducted previous, the ultimate downfall of the Qing lay very much in its inability to control fanaticism.

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[73] 清東陵。 北京: 中國世界語出版社. 1997

Further avenues for research might include how early Qing control of religion might have influenced the later bouts of sectarianism, and how the Qing's legacy of religious control has persisted to this very day in the form of the PRC's immense involvement in the religious affairs of its people. Though the leaders of China no longer proclaim themselves to be incarnations of Manjushri, they are still very much subject to the interplay between religion and government that has characterized so much of Chinese history.

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